

Shakespeare: The Evidence

THE AUTHORSHIP QUESTION CLARIFIED



ROS BARBER

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Ros Barber

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Contents

I	Fundamentals	1
1.	Introduction	3
1.1	The Authorship Question Summarised	6
1.2	Nominal Coincidence	8
1.2.1	Shakespearean Drownings	8
1.2.2	Arden, Black Will and Shakebag	10
2.	Core Evidence: William Shakspere/Shakespeare	12
2.1	Evidence: Existence	15
2.2	Evidence: Financial and Business Dealings	16
2.3	Evidence: Theatre Shareholder	18
2.4	Evidence: Actor	21
2.4.1	Payment to Lord Chamberlain's Men	21
2.4.2	John Manningham's Diary	23
2.4.3	Shakespear The Player By Garter	25
2.4.4	King's Men Licence	27
2.4.5	'Players' of 1604	28
2.4.6	Will of Augustine Phillips	29
2.4.7	John Davies of Hereford's Epigram	30
2.4.8	Cast Lists of 1616	31
2.4.9	Cast List of 1623	33
2.4.10	Sharers Papers 1635	34
2.4.11	Summary	35
2.5	Evidence: Writer	36
3.	Arguments Against The Authorship Question	37

CONTENTS

3.1	Fundamental Invalidity	37
3.2	Argumentum Ad Hominem	38
3.2.1	Snobbery	39
3.2.2	Conspiracy theory	40
3.2.3	Psychology	41
3.2.4	Amateurs	43
3.2.5	Anti-Shakespearians	45
3.2.6	Deniers	46
3.3	Arguments Relating to Evidence	47
3.3.1	No authorship doubt before 19th Century	47
3.3.2	Gaps in the Historical Record are Normal	49
3.3.3	Negative Evidence	50
3.3.4	Occam's Razor	51
3.3.5	Collaboration	52
3.4	Arguments Related to Plausibility	54
3.4.1	Secrecy impossible to maintain	54
3.4.2	Multiple Candidates Prove the Authorship Question is Invalid	57
3.4.3	No Use of Fronts in Period	59
APPENDIX A: Non-Literary Evidence		61
A-1	Baptismal record	61
A-2	Marriage licence	61
A-3	Marriage bond	62
A-4	Baptismal record: Susanna	62
A-5	Baptismal record: Hamnet and Judith	62
A-6	Legal action: Mary's property	62
A-7	Royal payment to LCM	63
A-8	Burial record: Hamnet	63
A-9	Coat of arms application	64
A-10	Writ against Wayte and Shakspere	64
A-11	Purchase of New Place	65
A-12	Tax Defaulter 1	65
A-13	Bill of sale: stone	66
A-14	Letter from Abraham Sturley to Richard Quiney	66

CONTENTS

A-15 Grain holding	67
A-16 Tax Defaulter 2	67
A-17 Letter from Richard Quiney to William Shakspere	68
A-18 Letter from Adrian Quiney to Richard Quiney	69
A-19 Letter from Abraham Sturley to Richard Quiney	70
A-20 Tax Defaulter 3	70
A-21 Coat of arms application 2	71
A-22 Globe theatre lease document	71
A-23 Inventory of Sir Thomas Brend	71
A-24 Tax Defaulter 4	71
A-25 Loan to John Clayton	72
A-26 Tax Defaulter 5	72
A-27 Will of Thomas Whittington	73
A-28 Deed transferring The Globe Theatre	73
A-29 Coat of arms complaint	73
A-30 Shakespear ye player by garter	74
A-31 Coat of arms defence	76
A-32 John Manningham's diary	76
A-33 Shakspeare buys 107 acres from John Combe	77
A-34 Chapel Lane cottage	77
A-35 New Place re-conveyed	77
A-36 Warrants for Letters Patent	78
A-37 Royal patent	78
A-38 New Place lease endorsement	79
A-39 Shakspeare vs Philip Rogers	79
A-40 Master of Wardrobe's record	79
A-41 Rowington Manor survey	80
A-42 Bequest from Augustine Phillips	80
A-43 Shakspeare buys tithes from Ralph Hubaud	80
A-44 Inventory of Ralph Hubaud	81
A-45 Survey of Rowington Manor	81
A-46 Shakspeare vs John Addenbrooke	81
A-47 Shakspeare's title to Combe land	82
A-48 Shakspeare vs tenants	82
A-49 Shakspeare lobbies parliament on road repairs	82

CONTENTS

A-50 Robert Johnson inventory	83
A-51 Witness statement, Bellott vs Mountjoy	83
A-52 Shakspeare bequest from John Combe	83
A-53 Conveyance for Blackfriars Gate-house	84
A-54 Mortgage for Blackfriars Gate-house	84
A-55 Earl of Rutland's impresa	85
A-56 List of landowners	85
A-57 Compensation for Shakspeare on his tithes	85
A-58 Thomas Greene's Diary 17 Nov 1614	86
A-59 Thomas Greene's Diary 23 Dec 1614	86
A-60 Thomas Greene's Diary 9 Jan 1615	87
A-61 Thomas Greene's Diary 11 Jan 1615	87
A-62 Complaint, Blackfriars gate-house	87
A-63 Answer, Blackfriars gate-house	87
A-64 Thomas Greene's Diary Sep 1615	88
A-65 Thomasina Ostler vs John Heminges	88
A-66 Will of William Shakspeare	89
A-67 Burial record	94
A-68 Ben Jonson: cast list for <i>Every Man In His Humour</i>	95
A-69 Ben Jonson: cast list for <i>Sejanus His Fall</i>	95
A-70 William Shakspeare's gravestone epitaph	96
A-71 First Folio cast list	97
A-72 Letter from Cuthbert and Winifred Burbage to Philip Herbert	98

I Fundamentals

Appeal to tradition

(argumentum ad antiquitatem)

A conclusion supported solely
because it has long been held to be true.

“It is better to debate a question without settling it,
than to settle a question without debating it.”

- Joseph Joubert.

1. Introduction

It has long been understood by certain postmodern historians that history is not the past; it is a story about the past. Those who appreciate the difference also understand that the story we are told about the past may not necessarily be correct. Where the story came from, who told it and why, how it has grown and been embellished, are all factors that deserve consideration. Evidence does not, on its own, tell a story. Writing a history requires the interpretation of evidence, and that interpretation is never neutral. All historians come to the act of writing history from a framework of beliefs that affect both perception and understanding. Appreciating our lack of neutrality, and the mutable nature of history (as opposed to the fixed nature of The Past), histories may be re-evaluated and re-written. Occasionally a radical new vantage point will yield a very different way of regarding the traces that the past has left us to examine. Shakespeare biographies, however, are not on the whole written by historians.

The Shakespeare authorship question, despite having arisen over 150 years ago, is still considered taboo in academia; very few English literature departments tolerate even the mention of it and Shakespeare conferences have been known to specifically exclude it from discussion. Until recently, there was no need for such caveats: with Shakespeare sceptics widely dismissed as lunatic fringe conspiracy theorists, no self-respecting academic would consider it a viable research topic. Where scholars have occasionally addressed it in passing, they have tended to dismiss it out of hand. It is unthinkable that anyone other than William Shakespeare of Stratford wrote the works, goes the response. Anyone who suggests otherwise is ignorant, deluded, or some kind of snob.

Nevertheless, outside the academy, and to a smaller degree within

it, Shakespeare scepticism continues to increase. The problem, from a historian's perspective is this: there is a marked lack of primary source evidence supporting the idea that the famous glover's son from Stratford wrote the works attributed to him. As Diana Price demonstrated in *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (the first book on the subject to be published by an academic press), Shakespeare is unique, among the two dozen most well-known writers of his period, in leaving no literary paper trail. More time has been expended on researching the life of Shakespeare than on all other writers of the period put together. Over seventy documents relating to the Stratford man have been unearthed, yet they are overwhelmingly of a legal nature: they illustrate a man who bought and sold property, land, and tithes, and lent money. A neutral historian coming to the data without preconceptions would surmise that this man was a man of business, not a man of letters. Unlike every other writer of note in the Early Modern period, there is no evidence that he mixed with other writers. The documentary record suggests that he was not resident in London to the extent that is commonly assumed, that he was not known in Stratford as a writer, and that literate men of the time did not link the famous author William Shakespeare with the Stratford resident.

This book is not yet another book arguing that Shakespeare didn't write Shakespeare, or indeed, that he did. Rather it is intended as a comprehensive, summarised compilation of the key evidence and arguments relating to the Shakespeare Authorship Question. With orthodox academics finally entering the debate (marked first by James Shapiro's *Contested Will*, and then by Stanley Wells & Paul Edmondson's *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*) it has become clear that neither side fully understands the other's position. The orthodox scholars who defend the traditional candidate in these two books fill pages listing evidence that is not in dispute: that between 1593 and 1616, the name 'William Shakespeare' appeared on numerous plays and poems, and that writers of the period paid tribute to a writer that published under that name. Other more critical issues,

which are very much disputed (even by other orthodox scholars) are treated as settled, and hardened assumption is treated as fact. Non-Stratfordians, on the other hand, have been known to accuse other orthodox scholars of deception and protecting vested interests when it is more likely that those who are convinced that ‘Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare’ simply consider this to be established *fact* and any ideas to the contrary to be wishful thinking.

The purpose of this book is simply to lay out all the evidence so that anyone, coming from either side of the debate, may understand the perspectives of the other side, locate weaknesses in their (or their opponents’) argument, and identify areas for further clarification or research. I also hope it will prove a valuable resource and entry point for the open-minded and curious, who are interested in understanding why Shakespeare’s authorship is questioned, and deciding for themselves whether scepticism or at least agnosticism is justified.

Though I possess a PhD in English Literature (the focus of which was early modern literary biography and the Shakespeare authorship question), my background is in science. Science (whose own paradigms advance, in Max Planck’s famous phrase ‘one funeral at a time’) has demonstrated repeatedly that the human brain is wired to see only evidence that fits with its pre-existing beliefs. As a result, Stratfordians and non-Stratfordians alike are guilty of cherry-picking evidence, and ignoring data that doesn’t suit their thesis. The idea that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare holds sway in the mainstream media and public consciousness chiefly because the assertions of eminent Shakespearean scholars are taken as fact. It is my hope that in creating a comprehensive repository of evidence and relevant arguments, Shakespeare studies, like medicine before it, will move from being eminence-based, to evidence-based.

Ros Barber

1.1 The Authorship Question Summarised

For anyone unfamiliar with the Shakespeare authorship question, I have included a summary of the debate.

History

- Doubts that William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon wrote the works attributed to him were first expressed openly in the 1850s. Some scholars say veiled doubts were expressed in the 16th century.
- Famous doubters include Sigmund Freud, Mark Twain, Henry James, Walt Whitman, Orson Welles, Sir Derek Jacobi and Mark Rylance.
- Those who believe Shakespeare of Stratford wrote the works are called 'Stratfordians'. Those who doubt it are called 'anti-Stratfordians' or 'non-Stratfordians'.

Stratfordians say

- Doubt about Shakespeare's authorship is due to snobbery: not wanting to believe a working-class grammar school boy could write works of genius.
- In his lifetime, many of the plays were published with his name on them, and writers of the period paid tribute to the genius of William Shakespeare.
- The Shakespeare authorship question is a conspiracy theory, and has recently gained ground only because of the popularity of conspiracy theories generally.
- Those who doubt Shakespeare's authorship are deniers of historical evidence; deniers of truth.

Non-Stratfordians say

- William Shakespeare of Stratford did not leave behind any books, manuscripts, letters or other evidence usually associated with having been a writer; unlike other successful writers of the era.
- There are many anomalies in the Shakespeare evidence that don't fit with his being the author of the works attributed to him.
- No-one who knew him personally – including a published poet who lived in his house and kept a diary – left any evidence they considered him a writer.
- His name is on the 'Shakespeare' plays, but it was also published on plays and poems by others. The evidence points to him being a play-broker, not a writer.

1.2 Nominal Coincidence

Both sides in this debate occasionally have to appeal to coincidence. When one's opponent appeals to 'coincidence' it can naturally be very frustrating, and it can be tempting to wonder what the odds might be that such a coincidence could occur. However perplexing and inexplicable, coincidence is nevertheless a real phenomenon. Its existence is amply illustrated, in the case of Shakespeare, by the following fascinating examples, both linked to coincidences of name.

1.2.1 Shakespearean Drownings

The following two drownings have been put forward as '[models for Ophelia](#)':

- In 1569, Jane Shaxpere drowned while picking flowers (just as Ophelia would do, some thirty years later, in *Hamlet*) twenty miles from Stratford-upon-Avon.¹
- On 17 December 1579, Katherine Hamlett was drowned in the River Avon (at Tiddington, just over a mile East of Stratford-upon-Avon).²

But the fact there are two possible models suggests what we have is coincidence. Even more so when you take into account a further drowning, six months before that of Katherine Hamlet:

- On 6 July 1579, one William Shakespeare (of Warwick, 9 miles from Stratford-upon-Avon) drowned while bathing in the River Avon.³

¹See this [Guardian article](#).

²*Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon* Vol III 1577-1586, ed. E.I.Fripp (Dugdale Society Vol V), pp.50-1. See O. Hood Phillips, *Shakespeare and the Lawyers* 2005, p.36.

³*Minutes and Accounts*, pp.129-30. See *Shakespeare and the Lawyers* 2005, p.36.

The fact is that

- death by drowning was one of the most common deaths in the period.⁴
- Both Hamlet(t)/Hamnet and Shakespeare/Shaxpere were fairly common names.⁵

⁴Michael MacDonald, 'Ophelia's Maimèd Rites', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37.3 (1986), p.311.

⁵See Samuel Schoenbaum's *Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life* 1987, p.13 for just a few of the Shakespeares in the local record. Mark Eccles' *Shakespeare In Warwickshire* (1963) has more examples. Hamnet/Hamlet was both a forename and a surname; William Shakspere's neighbour (assumed to be godparent to his son of the same name) was called [Hamnet](#), a variant of Hamlet. The neighbour is named as 'Hamlett' on William Shakspere's will.

1.2.2 Arden, Black Will and Shakebag

The anonymous play *Arden of Faversham*, first published in 1592, has three characters named Arden, Black Will, and Shakebag. By [stylometry](#), scholars have attributed the middle portion of this play to William Shakespeare.⁶ Using a different method, another scholar attributed the play to Thomas Kyd.⁷ Christopher Marlowe has also been suggested as the author, since his father came from Ospringe (one mile from Faversham) and the play bears stylistic similarities to his other plays.⁸ Whoever the author may have been, what is striking is the combination of names that appear to point to William Shakspeare of Stratford:

- The villains are called Black Will and Shakebag.
- They are hired by Mrs Arden to murder Mr Arden.
- Arden was the maiden name of Will Shakspeare's mother.

But the play is based on a real murder that took place on 14 February 1551 in Faversham, and all the names were in place in the historical record by the time William Shakspeare was 13.

- The real life couple were indeed called Arden (Thomas and Alice).
- The real life murderers were Black Will and George Loose-bagg.⁹
- The story featured in the 1577 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, where the name Loose-bagg was changed to Shakebag.¹⁰

⁶Hugh Craig & Arthur Kinney, *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp.78-99.

⁷Brian Vickers, "Thomas Kyd, Secret Sharer," *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 April 2008, pp. 13-15. But see this [critique of Vickers' method](#).

⁸See [Arden of Faversham's Wikipedia page](#).

⁹See this account in John Britton, *The Beauties of England and Wales* (1808), p.728.

¹⁰See Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* Vol 3](<http://bit.ly/U6xjmo>) (1808), p.1027. An *EEBO* search confirms that 'Shakebag' first appeared in the 1577 edition.

Therefore, no matter who wrote *Arden of Faversham*, the combination of these three names in the play has nothing whatsoever to do with Will Shakspeare, son of Mary Arden. The names are simply historically accurate. Two of the names came from a historical event before his birth and the third was altered to become more like his many years before he was involved in the theatre scene. It is another example of coincidence.

2. Core Evidence: William Shakspere/Shakespeare

The core evidence falls into five categories:

- Evidence for the existence of William Shakspere
- Evidence that he was a businessman/broker
- Evidence that he was a theatre shareholder
- Evidence that he was an actor
- Evidence that he was a writer

Certain terms pertaining to evidence are worth defining, as they will be used to assess the evidence that has been marshalled by both sides in the authorship debate.

Extant

This term serves as a reminder that the evidence we have is only partial; after four hundred years, much has been lost or destroyed. We can only speculate about what no longer exists, but sound argument can only be made from what has survived. Where an argument is not supported by evidence, it must be flagged as a supposition or assumption. However, there are some complications: see [Absence of Evidence](#).

Unambiguous

All evidence – even that in legal documents – is open to interpretation. Consider, for example, the number of scholarly interpretations of Shakspere's will, in which he bequeathes to his wife the 'second best bed'. However, what is unarguable is that he bequeathed the second best bed to his wife. In John

Davies' epigram 159 to Mr Will: Shake-speare, however, what is being communicated is unclear: the text itself (and not just the motivation behind it) is open to multiple interpretations, and therefore ambiguous. According to William Empson, we have ambiguity when 'alternative views might be taken without sheer misreading'.

Contemporaneous

Evidence from the subject's lifetime has higher evidentiary value than posthumous evidence. Posthumous evidence is certainly important – we cannot ignore, for example, Shakspere's funeral monument, which appears to both depict and reference him as a writer. However, historians would expect posthumous evidence to be supported by, or tally with, evidence from when he was alive.

Personal

Personal testimony is evidence that either:

- demonstrates the writer knew the subject personally, or
- is produced by a writer documented to have known the subject personally.

Impersonal evidence is written 'about' or 'to' the subject but with no demonstrable personal connection. In Shakespeare studies, a personal connection has often been inferred from such evidence, but in the absence of documented personal connections such evidence only attests to awareness of a writer of that name, not physical acquaintance with him. In modern terms, anyone can write 'John Le Carré writes brilliant thrillers'. That doesn't mean they are personally acquainted with the author, or are aware that John Le Carré is a pen name, the writer's real name being David Cornwell. For obvious reasons, personal evidence has a higher evidentiary value than impersonal evidence: the distinction is the best way to show that a reference to someone as a writer is based on direct and

not hearsay evidence. The different evidentiary value of personal and impersonal testimony is widely recognised by historians. It is a strong feature of the authorship debate in its current form that orthodox Shakespeare scholars refuse to recognise any distinction between personal and impersonal testimony.

2.1 Evidence: Existence

The following records attest the existence of an individual whose name was William Shakspere (or a close variant of this name) who was born, married and died in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England.

Date	Record	Item
26 April 1564	Baptismal record: ‘Gulielmus Shakspere’	A-1
27 Nov 1582	Marriage licence: ‘wm Shaxpere et Anna whateley’	A-2
28 Nov 1582	Marriage bond: ‘willm Shagspere ... and Anne hathwey’	A-3
25 March 1616	Will of ‘William Shackspeare’	A-66
25 April 1616	Burial record: ‘William Shakspeare’	A-67
1616-1623	Funeral Monument: ‘Shakspeare’	B-73

2.2 Evidence: Financial and Business Dealings

The following records attest to the business dealings of an individual called William Shakspere (or a close variant of this name), in both Stratford-upon-Avon and London. Theatre-specific business dealings are excluded, being dealt with in the next section.

Date	Record	Item
4 May 1597	Buys New Place, Stratford	11
15 Nov 1597	Tax defaulter in London	12
12 Jan 1598	Pays 10 pence for a load of stone, Stratford	13
25 Jan 1598	Wants to buy tithes, Stratford	14
4 Feb 1598	Grain holding recording, Stratford	15
1 Oct 1598	Listed as tax defaulter in London	16
25 Oct 1598	Richard Quiney letter re loan, Stratford	17
Oct/Nov 1598	Adrian Quiney letter to son R re loan	18
4 Nov 1598	Abraham Sturley letter to R Quiney re loan	19
1598/99	Listed as tax defaulter in London	20
6 Oct 1599	Delinquent owing back-taxes in London	24
1600	Suit against John Clayton for debt, London	25
6 Oct 1600	Tax bill still outstanding, London	26
16 Mar 1601	Anne holds former shepherd's money, Stratford	27
1 May 1602	Buys 107 acres of land in Stratford	33
16 Sep 1602	Buys Chapel Lane Cottage in Stratford	34
Oct/Nov, 1602	New Place in Stratford reconveyed to him	35
1604-16	Mentioned in Stratford leasehold	38
1604	Sues Philip Rogers for payment, loan, damages, Stratford	39
24 Oct 1604	WS rental income, land survey, Stratford	41
24 July 1605	Buys tithes from Ralph Hubaud, Stratford	43
1606	Inventory: owes money to Ralph Hubaud, Stratford	44
1 Aug 1606	Mentioned in land survey, Stratford	45
1608-09	Sues John Addenbrooke & his surety, Stratford	46
1610	Title to 1602 Stratford land purchase confirmed	47

Date	Record	Item
1611	Joint legal action (tithe leasehold), Stratford	48
11 Sep 1611	On list of Stratford residents re road repairs	49
5 Oct 1611	Named in inventory of Robert Johnson, Stratford	50
May-Jun 1612	Witness in Bellott-Mountjoy case	51
28 Jan 1613	Bequeathed £5 by John Combe	52
10/11 Mar 1613	Buys/mortgages Blackfriars Gatehouse, London	53+
5 Sep 1614	On list of landowners, Stratford and Welcombe	56
28 Oct 1614	Makes covenant relating to his Stratford tithes	57
1614-15	Thomas Greene re Shakespeare & enclosures	58+
Apr-May 1615	Action re Blackfriars property documents, London	62+

2.3 Evidence: Theatre Shareholder

The following section covers evidence supporting the idea that William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon was a shareholder in the theatre company The Lord Chamberlain's Men (later The King's Men) and in The Globe Theatre. Since this evidence requires some discussion, it is not presented in tabular form.

- A Payment to the [Lord Chamberlain's Men](#) on 15 March 1595 for performances during Christmas 1594 is to 'William Kempe, William Shakespeare and Richard Burbage, servants to the Lord Chamberleyne'. This is the first time the name William Shakespeare appears in the historical record in a theatrical context.

We assume this is William Shakspeare of Stratford because of the later evidence that links him to Augustine Phillips, Richard Burbage, John Heminges and Henry Condell of the King's Men. It seems likely that those listed are shareholders of the company. All three are later shareholders of The Globe.

- In late autumn 1596 a [surety of the peace](#) is taken out against 'William Shakspeare', Francis Langley and two women. Langley was the owner of The Swan Theatre.

This documents a man named William Shakspeare in the company of a theatre owner. It is evidence someone of this name moved in these circles though not evidence he was a shareholder himself. We cannot know for sure it was William Shakspeare of Stratford.

- On 21 Feb 1599 the [Globe's lease](#) was drawn up (no longer extant). According to King's Men shareholders John Heminges and Henry Condell, testifying twenty years later, 'William

Shakspeare' was one of five members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men to own a tenth share. Cuthbert and Richard Burbage owned the other half of the lease.

The original document being missing, this evidence is posthumous, but we have no reason to suspect the testimony given in 1619 is inaccurate. This supports William Shakspere as a Globe leaseholder therefore probable theatre company shareholder.

- On 16 May 1599 [Sir Thomas Brend's inventory](#) describes the new Globe Theatre (in Latin) as 'occupied by William Shakespeare and others', presumably as leaseholders.
- A [deed for the Globe](#) dated 7/10 October 1601 names 'Richard Burbage and William Shakspeare gentleman', presumably as leaseholders.

The name William Shakespeare (or close variant) on these legal documents supports the idea William Shakspere was a shareholder and perhaps a business manager of the company. The structure of the lease suggests Richard Burbage is representing one half (him and his brother), and William Shakspere the other (him and four other shareholders of the company).

- On 17/18 May 1603, [warrants for letters patent](#) list 'William Shakespeare' as one of the named members of the company.
- On 19 May 1603, a [royal patent](#) makes the Lord Chamberlain's Men the King's Men, and William Shakespeare is second listed, along with other shareholding and acting members.
- On 15 March 1604, the [Master of the Wardrobe's record](#) lists 'William Shakespeare' as one of the 'Players' given scarlet cloth to be worn for the King's Royal Procession through London.

‘Players’ are all members of the King’s Men.

- On 4 May 1605, the [will of Augustine Phillips](#) of the King’s Men gives a bequest to ‘my fellow william Shakespeare’.
- On 9 Oct 1615, [Thomasina Ostler sues her father John Heminges](#) over shares in the Globe and Blackfriars theatres. ‘Willemo Shakespeare/Shakspeare’ is mentioned as having been a shareholder in both when the leases were first arranged.
- [Shakspere’s will](#), dated 25 March 1616 contains an interlineation (added line) that reads ‘*and to my fellowes John Heminges, Richard Brubage, and Henry Cundell, xxvj.s. viij.d. a peece to buy them ringes* John Heminges, Richard Burbage and Henry Condell were all shareholders in the King’s Men.

CONCLUSION

That William Shakspere of Stratford was a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain’s Men and subsequently the King’s Men is well-supported by extant primary source evidence.

2.4 Evidence: Actor

The following section covers evidence supporting the idea that William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon was an actor. The idea became popular posthumously, but is not well-supported by contemporaneous evidence. Therefore each piece of evidence will be critically examined.

2.4.1 Payment to Lord Chamberlain's Men

EVIDENCE

- A Payment to the [Lord Chamberlain's Men](#) on 15 March 1595 for performances on 26 and 27 December 1594 is to 'William Kempe, William Shakespeare and Richard Burbage, servants to the Lord Chamberleyne'.
- This is the first time the name William Shakespeare appears in the historical record in a theatrical context.

ARGUMENT

- The other two members named, William Kemp and Richard Burbage, were both actors.
- This document demonstrates that Shakspere was a prominent member of this acting company.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- The document demonstrates that Shakspere was a shareholder of the company (as were Kemp and Burbage), but it is not evidence that he was an actor.

- Had he been a prominent actor, there is no doubt there would be corroborating evidence to this effect, but there is not, which is why most scholars only argue for him taking only small parts.
- His prominence on this document therefore cannot be explained by his being an actor, only by his being a shareholder on equal terms with Richard Burbage and Will Kemp.

2.4.2 John Manningham's Diary |

EVIDENCE

- [John Manningham's diary](#) of 13 March 1602 records an anecdote he heard from 'Mr Curle' regarding Richard Burbage (in his capacity as an actor) and William Shakespeare.
- John Manningham knew Thomas Greene, who would move to Stratford the following year, move in with the Shaksperes subsequently, and in 1614-5 referred to William Shakspere as his 'cousin'.¹
- Greene knew William Shakspere's Richard Quiney (a friend of Shakspere's, according to Quiney's letter), helping him represent the Stratford Corporation in 1601.
- He described a performance of *Twelfth Night* in the Middle Temple Hall on February 2, 1602.

ARGUMENT

- The anecdote places someone called 'William Shakespeare' in the theatre alongside actor Richard Burbage.
- Therefore it supports the idea that William Shakspere of Stratford was an actor.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- Nothing in the anecdote suggests William Shakespeare was an actor.
- *Richard III* was one of the first plays published under the name William Shakespeare (1598) which might explain why a story about Richard Burbage playing Richard III involves someone called Shakespeare.

¹Manningham's diary reveals he knew Thomas Greene. He quotes him in his diary for February 5, 1603: 'There is best sport always when you put a woman on the case.'

- The anecdote appears to be a joke and as such very likely invented.
- Having been heard from 'Mr Curle', it cannot be accorded an evidential status beyond hearsay.
- John Manningham's Diary was discovered by John Payne Collier, the notorious forger. Like all documents to have passed through Collier's hands, it must be treated with caution.

2.4.3 Shakespear The Player By Garter |

EVIDENCE

- In 1602, York Herald Peter Brooke lodged a complaint against the recent grant of arms to people he considered inappropriate. One of these was John Shakspere, William's father.
- On a document associated with his complaint, the Shakspere crest is accompanied by the words 'Shakespeare the player by Garter'.

ARGUMENT

- This demonstrates that Peter Brooke, the York Herald, knew William Shakspere to be an actor.
- Though the arms were officially granted to John Shakspere, who was not a 'player', it is clear that the herald is aware that the person who is pushing (and presumably paying) for the arms to be granted - his son - is a player.
- For those who consider [spelling](#) to be relevant, note that this 'player's name is spelt 'Shakespeare'.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- The reference may be to Edmund Shakspere.
 - There is no forename on this document.
 - William Shakspere was not referred to as 'a player' in any official records: not on [his deposition](#) and not on his death certificate. His brother Edmond, however, *was* - he is referred to as 'Edmond Shakespeare a player' [on his burial record](#).
 - No-one knows which Shakspere brother pushed for the grant of arms, or which Shakspere brother is being referenced by Peter Brooke.

OR

- Peter Brooke assumed William Shakspere to be a player because he was a sharer in the playing company (and most sharers were also actors). This does not mean that William Shakspere acted. It is entirely possible he held a share in the playing company in a purely business capacity.

2.4.4 King's Men Licence

EVIDENCE

- On 19 May 1603 the Lord Chamberlain's Men were licensed as the King's Men.
- The document lists members of the company as 'Lawrence Fletcher, William Shakespeare, Richard Burbage, Augustyne Phillipps, Iohn Heninges, Henrie Condell, William Sly, Robert Armyrn, Richard Cowly'.

ARGUMENT

- This document demonstrates that Shakspere was a prominent member of this acting company.
- His prominence is indicated by his being listed second, behind Lawrence Fletcher, who was the king's favourite actor, having acted for King James in Scotland.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- The document demonstrates that Shakspere was a shareholder of the company (as were the others who are named), but it is not evidence that he was an actor.
- Had he been a prominent actor, there is no doubt there would be corroborating evidence to this effect, but there is not, which is why most scholars only argue for him taking only small parts.
- His prominence on this document therefore cannot be explained by his being an actor.
- It is more likely that he is listed second after the king's favourite because his name was associated by this time with the plays that James was known to enjoy.

2.4.5 'Players' of 1604

EVIDENCE

- On 15 March 1604, the [Master of the Wardrobe's record](#) lists 'William Shakespeare' as one of the 'Players' given scarlet cloth to be worn for the King's Royal Procession through London.

ARGUMENT

- 'William Shakespeare' is listed first of the 'Players'.
- All the others listed as 'Players' are known to have been actors.
- William Shakspere of Stratford was a documented shareholder of the company along with others on this list.
- This document clearly identifies William Shakspere of Stratford as an actor.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- The primary position of 'William Shakespeare' at the top of this list reflects the fame of the author of that name, whose plays the company performed.

2.4.6 Will of Augustine Phillips

EVIDENCE

- The will of Augustine Phillips was executed on 5 May 1605 and proved on 16 May 1605.
- It bequeaths ‘to my Fellowe william Shakespeare a Thirty shillings peece in gould, To my Fellowe Henry Condell one other thirty shillinge peece in gould... To my Fellowe Lawrence Fletcher twenty shillings in gould, To my Fellowe Robert Armyne twenty shillings in gould’.

ARGUMENT

- Henry Condell, Lawrence Fletcher and Robert Armyne – the other people Phillips calls his ‘Fellowes’ – were actors.
- Therefore the first ‘Fellowe’ in the list, ‘William Shakespeare’, was also an actor.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- The term ‘Fellowe’ is simply an indication of shareholder status; all of those named were fellow shareholders in the King’s men.

2.4.7 John Davies of Hereford's Epigram

- In his collection of epigrams, *The Scourge of Folly* (1610), John Davies of Hereford included an [epigram addressed to 'Mr Will. Shake-speare, our English Terence'](#).
- It begins:

SOME say good Will (which I, in sport, do sing)
Had'st thou not plaid some Kingly parts in sport,
Thou hadst bin a companion for a King ;
And, beene a King among the meaner sort.

ARGUMENT

- Davies' reference to Will playing 'some kingly parts in sport' is a reference to his acting.²

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- This epigram is extremely cryptic. There are a number of non-Stratfordian interpretations. See [counter-arguments in Part 2](#) and [arguments in Part 3](#) relating to this epigram.
- There are several other interpretations of playing 'some kingly parts in sport' (varying candidate to candidate) which are just as valid as the orthodox interpretation of this line.
- In addition, all of Shakespeare's kings are major roles. There is no evidence that he took major roles (such as kings) and most scholars do not believe he did.

²Stanley Wells is among those who use this piece of evidence to support the argument that Shakspere was an actor.

2.4.8 Cast Lists of 1616

EVIDENCE

Cast lists first published in November 1616 in Ben Jonson's *Works* name: * 'Will Shakespeare' (top left) under 'principal Comoedians' in the 1598 production of *Every Man In His Humour*. * 'Will Shake-Speare' (top right) under 'principal Tragoedians' in the 1603 production of *Sejanus his Fall*.

ARGUMENT

- These cast lists are a true record of the casts of the productions thirteen and eighteen years earlier.
- William Shakspere of Stratford is the referent.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- This evidence is posthumous.
 - By normal historical methods, a piece of posthumous evidence not corroborated by contemporaneous evidence has a lower evidentiary value (secondary evidence) than evidence produced during the person's lifetime (primary evidence).
 - There is no record of the original casts of these 1598 and 1603 productions dating from the time of those productions. Jonson's cast lists were published 13-18 years later.
- This evidence is suspect:
 - No modern scholars argue that William Shakespeare was a principal actor of any sort. If he acted, it was in minor roles. Jonson's listing him at the top of a cast of 'principal' actors in these productions is therefore untrue. One must ask what purpose it serves, if not the truth.

- The insertion of a hyphen in the name on the 'Tragoe-dian' list raises questions - see [Hyphenation](#).
- The hyphenation of one name and not the other can be taken to indicate he is referring to two different people. In a non-Stratfordian reading, one (the hyphenated pseudonymous author) principally tragic, the other (the non-hyphenated front man) principally comic.
- [Ben Jonson](#), the age's great satirist, wrote a number of conflicting and enigmatic things about Shakespeare, and this piece of evidence must be considered in the context of all the Jonson evidence.

2.4.9 Cast List of 1623

EVIDENCE

Cast list first published in November 1623 in Shakespeare's *First Folio* has 'William Shakespeare' heading a list of twenty-six '[Principall Actors in all these Playes](#)'.

ARGUMENT

- These cast lists are verifiable (acting) members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later The King's Men) acting company.
- William Shakspeare of Stratford is the referent.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- It is widely accepted that Ben Jonson was editor of the *First Folio* and arranged the prefatory material. For Jonson's unique relationship to authorship question issues see [Ben Jonson](#) and [Ben Jonson anomalies](#).
- It is possible that William Shakspeare of Stratford was a 'principle actor' only in the sense that he was a successful front for the real author of these works, and that this is the purpose of both this and the [Ben Jonson cast lists](#).

2.4.10 Sharers Papers 1635

EVIDENCE

- A [letter from Cuthbert Burbage and Richard Burbage's widow Winifred](#) petitioning the Earl of Pembroke (then Lord Chamberlain) for a greater slice of the profits from the Globe and Blackfriars theatres names 'Shakspeare' as a player:

it was considered that house would be as fit for ourselves,
& so purchased the lease remaining from Evans with our
money, & placed men players, which were Heminges, Condell,
Shakspeare etc.

ARGUMENT

- Though posthumous, this is personal testimony: Cuthbert Burbage and Winifred Burbage were in a position to know William Shakspeare personally.
- This piece of evidence, together with others, suggests William Shakspeare of Stratford was an actor.³

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- The term 'players' might mean 'members of the playing company'.
- Heminges and Condell, though they certainly acted, were named in a business capacity.
- In this instance, though he is referred to as a 'player', 'Shakespeare' is named in a business capacity too.

³This evidence, however has been used to argue *against* Shakspeare being the author Shakespeare. See [Sharers Papers](#) in Part 3.

2.4.11 Summary

Unless it can be corroborated that non-playing shareholders were ever referred to as ‘players’, [the 1604 Players list](#) is a reliable primary source document supporting the idea that William Shakspere the theatre shareholder was also an actor in his company, and personal testimony given posthumously ([in the 1635 Sharers Papers](#)) also support his being a ‘player’.

However, three cast lists that position him as a principal actor are not corroborated by appropriate evidence, and most scholars believe he only took minor roles. Two of these lists – possibly all three – were published at the instigation of [Ben Jonson](#). Given that most scholars (rightly, given the lack of corroboration) believe the man named only took minor roles, it is therefore worth considering in what respect either the theatre shareholder or author was a ‘principal actor’, a ‘principal tragedian’ or a ‘principal comedian’, and the reasons he might have been listed thus.

Many other documents used to support the idea he was an actor are reliable evidence of his being a shareholder, but the prominence of his name, when set against the lack of contemporaneous support for his taking major roles, suggests that prominence derives from the fame and success of the plays with which it had become associated.

2.5 Evidence: Writer

EVIDENCE

That there was a writer whose works were published under the name ‘William Shakespeare’ is not in dispute. The name appears within Shakspere of Stratford’s lifetime on numerous plays and poems, and other writers referred to works by William Shakespeare.

ARGUMENT

- William Shakspere of Stratford is documented as a share-holder of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, later the King’s Men, a part-owner of the Globe Theatre and of the Blackfriars theatre.
- The plays associated with the name William Shakespeare are exclusively associated with the company of which he was a share-holder.
- Therefore he is the author of the plays (and poems) published under the name William Shakespeare.
- This argument is explored fully in Part 2 [‘Stratfordian Arguments’](#).

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- There is no unambiguous contemporaneous personal testimony supporting the idea that these plays were written by William Shakspere of Stratford and not merely published under his name.
- There is also contemporaneous evidence that can be argued to support the idea that he was not the writer of these plays and poems.
- This argument is explored fully in Part 3 [‘Non-Stratfordian Arguments’](#).

3. Arguments Against The Authorship Question

3.1 Fundamental Invalidity

ARGUMENT

- The Shakespeare authorship question is fundamentally invalid. There is no question to answer.
- Anti-Stratfordian methods of attribution are not valid.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- Longevity: If the question were invalid, it would not have persisted, (openly) for over 150 years.
- Provenance: The first doubts over Shakespeare's authorship were raised (covertly) within his lifetime.
- High-profile doubters include Sigmund Freud, Mark Twain, Ted Hughes, Orson Welles, a number of high profile lawyers including two Supreme Court Justices, historian Hugh Trevor-Roper and Shakespearean actors including Sir John Gielgud, Sir Derek Jacobi, John Hurt and Mark Rylance. The existence of such widespread doubt amongst intelligent and Shakespeare-loving people suggests there is a question to answer.
- Despite a powerful academic taboo, there are now professional academics, including historians and English Literature specialists, who openly question Shakespeare's authorship.
- Thus the Shakespeare authorship question is a valid question and worthy of serious investigation.

3.2 Argumentum Ad Hominem

An argumentum ad hominem is an attack against the person, rather than the argument. Often the first arguments that non-Stratfordians meet when broaching the subject of the authorship question are ad hominem attacks. In the past these have included accusations of insanity and comparisons with the Nazis. Though personal attacks have been somewhat toned down in recent publications,¹ they remain primary responses in both personal and online discussions. In all defences of the orthodox position, the focus remains strongly on questioning the moral and rational integrity of sceptics rather than addressing the evidential causes of their scepticism. Since these arguments are so often utilised as a first line of defence, it seems pertinent to examine them and their validity before focusing on arguments relating directly to evidence.

¹e.g. *Contested Will* (2010), *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* (2013).

3.2.1 Snobbery

ARGUMENT

- Shakespeare sceptics almost exclusively suggest alternative candidates who are of the nobility or have a university education.
- The Shakespeare authorship question is therefore an issue born out of snobbery.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- The two reasons why noble candidates and/or candidates with a university education have been advanced are as follows:
 - Shakespeare's plays contain material for which even a very good Elizabethan grammar school education cannot account (see [Learning, University Language](#)).
 - The plays also display considerable in-depth knowledge suggesting the author was familiar with pursuits favoured by the nobility (see [Nobility](#)).
- Calling one's opponent a snob is not a valid defence of the orthodox position.

3.2.2 Conspiracy theory

ARGUMENT

- For the author's identity to have been successfully hidden and remain hidden would require a network of people to maintain secrecy i.e. a conspiracy (see [Secrecy](#)).
- Shakespeare sceptics are therefore conspiracy theorists, and to doubt the traditional attribution is equivalent to believing in alien abduction, faked moon landings, or that the US government killed its own citizens on 9/11.²

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- This is a logical fallacy known as false equivalence.
- There is a fundamental difference between the word 'conspiracy' and the term 'conspiracy theory'.
- 'Conspiracy theory' is a derogatory and relatively recent term used to dismiss a hypothesis without consideration. It denotes something that exists only in fantasy.
- The word 'conspiracy' has been in use for over 600 years (*OED* c1386) and exists because it represents an observed component of human behaviour. It denotes something that exists in reality.
- The late 16th and early 17th century was an age of conspiracies: the Babington Plot, the Main and Bye Plots and the Gunpowder Plot being the most famous in Shakespeare's era.
- Shakespeare wrote repeatedly of conspiracies and mistaken identities, demonstrating how and why such things can occur.
- Calling one's opponent a conspiracy theorist (i.e. a fantasist) is not a valid defence of the orthodox position.

²In both *Shakespeare Bites Back* and *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*, Wells and Edmondson urge that the Shakespeare Authorship Question be renamed 'the Shakespeare Authorship Conspiracy Theory'.

3.2.3 Psychology

ARGUMENT

- Since most people (and the majority of English literature academics) believe William Shakspere of Stratford is the author William Shakespeare, it is therefore a reality, a fact.
- Thus anyone who doubts the orthodox view is suffering some kind of psychological issue or pathology.³
- Alternatively it arises out of the need to challenge orthodoxies and define oneself as 'other'.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- Shakespeare sceptics (beginning with Delia Bacon, and including the famous examples of Sigmund Freud and Mark Twain) have made it clear that their doubt arose from a fundamental mismatch between the author Shakespeare (as experienced through his works) and the known biography of William Shakspere of Stratford.
- Shakespeare entirely lacks the kind of literary evidence (personal, unambiguous, contemporaneous) that exists for other writers of the period.⁴
- The authorship question became popular in the 1850s when other 'established facts' without supporting evidence (such as creationism) were being challenged.
- It coincided with the realisation that no further significant evidence relating to Shakspere of Stratford was likely to be found.

³'The phenomenon of disbelief in Shakespeare's authorship is a psychological aberration of considerable interest.' - [Stanley Wells](#) The chief focus of James Shapiro's *Contested Will* is on the psychology of early doubters Delia Bacon, Sigmund Freud and Thomas Looney.

⁴See [Literary Paper Trail](#). Historian and broadcaster Michael Wood, author of *In Search of Shakespeare* (2003), referred to a 'man shaped hole' in the historical evidence. (*The Shakespeare Bookshop Newsletter* Issue 12, 2008.)

- The absence of this evidence causes some rational people to doubt Shakespeare's authorship.

3.2.4 Amateurs

ARGUMENT

- Very few, if any, professional scholars of English Literature (i.e. tenured academics) doubt the Stratford man's authorship of the works attributed to him.
- Shakespeare sceptics are amateurs ignorant of the period and of the methods and standards of scholarship.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- This situation arises from a professional taboo.
 - The Shakespeare authorship question has for many years been taboo in the English Literature departments of UK & US universities.
 - Academics in the humanities understand that to openly espouse Shakespeare scepticism is to risk their professional standing.
 - Thus the professional scholars who accuse authorship questioners of amateurism are responsible for creating and maintaining the state of affairs they criticize.
 - Until the authorship question is accepted as a valid research topic in UK & US universities it will remain largely the province of independent scholars.
- Professionalisation is nevertheless underway.
 - Despite a general taboo, the authorship question has been studied at Concordia in the US; Brunel, Goldsmiths and Sussex in the UK.
 - In recent years, several English Literature PhDs focused on the Shakespeare authorship question have been awarded.
 - The Spring 2016 edition of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies* entitled 'Shakespeare: Biography, Authorship

and Collaboration' featured articles by both Stratfordian and non-Stratfordian scholars. |

- Thus the study of the authorship question is no longer entirely the province of amateurs.
- Shakespeare studies have never been entirely the province of professional scholars.
 - The foundations of Shakespearean biography were built by 'amateurs' - antiquarians such as Edmond Malone, whose authoritative opinions, hardened over time into 'facts', have become unquestionable even though in some cases they are patently wrong (see, for example, [Chettle's Apology](#)).
 - There are plenty of amateur enthusiasts on *both* sides of the authorship debate with limited grasp of the period, the literary texts, historical method and the importance of arguing from evidence.
 - The same Stratfordian scholars who accuse non-Stratfordians of amateurism flout scholarly standards by ignoring key contributions to the authorship debate. ⁵
- Shakespearean scholars are usually literary specialists without expertise in either historical methods or the analysis of evidence.

⁵*Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* (Wells & Edmondson, 2013) ignored the research and arguments of (for example) the first book on the subject to be published by an academic press *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Price, 2001), *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy* (Roe, 2011), and a Marlovian reading of the sonnets published in peer-reviewed Routledge Journal *Rethinking History* (Barber, 2010).

3.2.5 Anti-Shakespearians

ARGUMENT

- ‘To deny Shakespeare of Stratford’s connection to the work attributed to him is to deny the essence of, in part, what made that work possible ... Shakespeare was formed by both Stratford-upon-Avon and London.’
- Therefore ‘anti-Stratfordians’ should be referred to as ‘anti-Shakespearian’.⁶

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- The contested connection between William Shakspere of Stratford and the work attributed to him is the authorship question. Were that supported by incontestable evidence, the authorship question would not exist.
- The term ‘anti-Shakespearian’ is fundamentally inaccurate: the person Ben Jonson referred to in the First Folio as ‘the AUTHOR William Shakespeare’ is esteemed as highly by those who question the current interpretation of his identity as by those who don’t.
- The adoption of the term ‘anti-Shakespearian’ is an attempt to invalidate the question and close down debate through semantics, by pre-supposing the correctness of the orthodox position. If the author simply went by the *pen-name* William Shakespeare, traditionalists themselves may yet be shown to be the ‘anti-Shakespearians’.
- Name-calling is not a valid defence of the orthodox position.

⁶This was first proposed by Professor Stanley Wells and Dr Paul Edmondson of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in their 2012 e-book *Shakespeare Bites Back*. In their 2013 book *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* (Cambridge University Press), the term ‘anti-Shakespearian’ was used by most of the contributors.

3.2.6 Deniers

ARGUMENT

- Shakespeare sceptics can reasonably be called ‘Shakespeare deniers’.
- Shakespeare sceptics deny evidence and/or deny history.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- The use of the term ‘denier’ is inflammatory, subconsciously linking ‘Shakespeare deniers’ and ‘Holocaust deniers’.
- Some high-profile Stratfordians have indeed made this link explicit.⁷
- The association of Shakespeare sceptics with Holocaust deniers through the use of this term is an example of the logical fallacy of false equivalence.
- Apparent denial (or ignoring, or re-interpretation) of ‘inconvenient’ evidence is apparent on both sides of the debate.

⁷‘you deny the reality of Shakespeare one moment, you can deny the reality of the Holocaust the next.’ - [Jonathan Bate](#) See also [Jonathan Bate in the New Statesmen, April 2013](#)

3.3 Arguments Relating to Evidence

3.3.1 No authorship doubt before 19th Century

EVIDENCE

- Delia Bacon's 1857 book *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded* was the first book to openly question the authorship of the Shakespeare canon.⁸

ARGUMENT

- Since open doubt about Shakespeare's authorship did not arise until the traditionally-ascribed author had been dead for 241 years, the Shakespeare authorship question is invalid.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- Evidence that some Elizabethan writers doubted the authorship of the Shakespeare canon begins with the very first publications to bear the name 'William Shakespeare'; see the entries for [Gabriel Harvey \(1593\)](#) and [Marston/Hall \(1598/99\)](#).
- The doubts of Shakespeare's contemporaries were not expressed openly because it was an age of repression and censorship, and many authors wrote anonymously or pseudonymously in order to avoid getting into trouble for their writing (see [Censorship and Repression](#)).
- It is possible that there was official stifling of the authorship question from the outset. Several of the works doubting Shakespeare's authorship appear on the [1599 Bishops' Ban](#) list of books to be brought to the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of London to be burnt.

⁸Though doubts were certainly published earlier. See this piece from *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* No. 448, Vol 18, New Series, August 7, 1852.

- If the identity of the author or authors of the Shakespeare canon was deliberately masked, there is no question that masking was successful, and that for 400 years the majority of people have believed the traditional attribution to William Shakspeare. That does not mean, however, that the masking did not occur.

3.3.2 Gaps in the Historical Record are Normal

EVIDENCE

- After 400 years, the historical record is not complete.

ARGUMENT

- Gaps in Shakespeare's record are to be expected and entirely normal when compared with other writers of the period.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- Though gaps are expected, Shakespeare's literary biography is a 'man-shaped hole'.⁹
- Diana Price demonstrated that this is not at all comparable with other writers of the period: when compared with the top 24 writers of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, William Shakespeare alone lacks a personally, contemporaneous [literary paper trail](#).
- Although Diana Price's book was the first on the authorship question to be published by an academic press (2001), it has been entirely ignored by the second academic book on the subject, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* (2013).
- This unscholarly treatment suggests that orthodox scholars do not have answers to the questions posed by Price's research.

⁹in the words of Michael Wood, historian and presenter of the BBC series *In Search of Shakespeare*.

3.3.3 Negative Evidence

ASSERTION

- Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.¹⁰

ARGUMENT

- Just because there is no evidence from his lifetime that William Shakspere was a writer, it does not mean that he was not.¹¹

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- ‘Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence’ is a well-known logical fallacy, known as ‘argument from ignorance’. It is often invoked to argue for the existence of God.
- When evidence is absent where we would fully expect it to exist, this is itself an important piece of evidence that any explanatory narrative must account for.¹²

¹⁰Frequently stated. For example see [Stanley Wells](#). The term ‘negative evidence’ is defined as ‘[evidence for a theory provided by the non-occurrence or absence of something](#)’.

¹¹In fact very few Stratfordians would agree with this statement, since most accept impersonal testimony, such as that listed in Chapter 5(#Direct) as equivalent to personal testimony.

¹²David Schum’s paper ‘Some Evidence Issues in Intelligence Analysis’ delivered at *Enquiry, Evidence and Facts: An Interdisciplinary Conference*, British Academy, 14 Dec 2007.

3.3.4 Occam's Razor

ASSERTION

- All non-Stratfordian theories fall foul of [Occam's Razor](#), since they involve unnecessarily complex hypotheses.

ARGUMENT

- The simplest solution to the authorship question – that Shakspeare of Stratford wrote the works attributed to him – is, by Occam's Razor, the correct one.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- This is a simplification and/or misunderstanding of Occam's Razor.
 - Occam's Razor states that among competing hypotheses, the hypothesis with the fewest assumptions should be selected. One proceeds to simpler theories until simplicity can be traded for greater explanatory power.
 - The Stratfordian hypothesis contains easily as many assumptions as non-Stratfordian hypotheses. The considerable anomalies (evidence which cannot be easily explained under the Stratfordian hypothesis) suggests it is ripe for substitution by a hypothesis with greater explanatory power.

3.3.5 Collaboration

EVIDENCE

- Certain plays in the Shakespeare canon show signs of co-authorship.

ARGUMENT

- Shakespeare therefore sometimes worked in collaboration with other writers.
- Collaborative working is one of the strongest arguments against a hidden or secret author of the Shakespeare canon.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT ¹³

- Collaboration is an inaccurate term, suggesting a process of working together that may not have happened.
- Co-authorship can come about in a number of ways: an unfinished play, for example, being handed over to another to finish.
- The plays that have been suggested as being co-authored are largely at the beginning and end of the canon and might easily be viewed as apprentice pieces (early plays) and unfinished works (late plays).
- Since we do not know the means of transmission of the manuscripts for either Quarto or Folio versions of Shakespeare's plays – and whether or not they have been altered by writers or editors in the process – it is not necessarily meaningful to analyse them for 'other hands' in this way.

¹³A chapter on [co-authorship](#) – addressing the details of individual arguments – will follow in due course.

- The inaccurate term ‘collaboration’ is used specifically to undermine the validity of the authorship question, but for high standards of scholarship to be upheld, only ‘co-authorship’ can be considered a valid term in this discussion.
- The practice of stylometry used to uncover evidence of co-authorship is in its infancy and unreliable. ¹⁴

¹⁴A chapter on [stylometry](#) – addressing individual studies – will follow in due course.

3.4 Arguments Related to Plausibility

3.4.1 Secrecy impossible to maintain

ARGUMENT

- If someone other than William Shakspere of Stratford wrote the Shakespeare canon, it would have entailed a number of people keeping this secret.
- Those required to keep quiet would include printers and members of the acting company.
- The idea that numerous people would co-operate to keep the author's identity secret is implausible.
- Even if such a secret was kept for a while, there is no plausible reason why secrecy would continue after the real author's death.

COUNTER-ARGUMENTS

The counter-arguments fall into two parts:

1) Hidden author

- It is incorrect to assume a large number of people would need to know about the hidden author.
- Printers and publishers could receive their texts from anyone; not necessarily the author.
- Many of the Shakespeare texts published in Shakspere's lifetime are poor versions, considered to have been printed without the author's permission.
- Authorised texts could be received from the author's representative; for example William Shakspere in a brokerage role.

- There is evidence that can be read as certain writers of the period expressing their suspicions that the author was hiding their identity (see [Marston and Hall](#)). This is not the same as those people being ‘in the know’; in the possession of any secret they could potentially spill.
- Though the number of people ‘in the know’ need not have been more than a handful, there is no reason to think that even large groups of people cannot keep secrets.
 - ‘Ultra’ for example, though it involved hundreds of individuals, was kept secret for 29 years after the end of the Second World War; no-one broke the silence on this secret until the ban on doing so was lifted in 1974.
 - Several of the early texts that have subsequently been discerned to contain doubt about Shakespeare’s authorship were on the [Bishops’ Ban](#) list. This could be coincidental, or it could be an indication of official involvement in wishing to keep the author concealed. Francis Bacon’s [1603 letter to John Davies](#) can also be read in this capacity.
 - If this were the case, the successfully kept secret should not be a surprise; Governments (and [repressive regimes](#) in particular) can be effective at controlling the information and maintaining an ‘official’ version of events.

2) Broker established as author

- There is evidence supporting William Shakspeare’s [playing a brokerage role](#) in more than one capacity (grain, a marriage) and a possibility that the works by other writers that appeared under his name did so as a result of his being a playbroker.
- In his [Poet-Ape Epigram](#), Ben Jonson writes of a play broker who represents the work of others under his own name.
- If Shakspeare is the broker, no great secrecy is required, only (for reasons of personal safety), discretion.

- Those texts by Marston and Hall, Robert Greene, Ben Jonson and Francis Bacon that are addressed to the issue of **hidden authors**, do so without directly naming names.
- This can be read as a symptom of the **repressive regime** under which they were living; an attempt to keep both themselves, and any anonymous author, out of trouble.
- It is these conditions that would create the ‘open secret’ which some Stratfordians say is implausible.

3.4.2 Multiple Candidates Prove the Authorship Question is Invalid

EVIDENCE

More than seventy candidates have been advanced as the ‘true author’ of Shakespeare’s works.

ARGUMENT

- The proliferation of authorship candidates is proof that the question itself is inherently absurd.
- ‘Mathematically, each time an additional candidate is suggested, the probability decreases that any given name is the true author’.¹⁵
- No candidate has a better claim than any of the others.¹⁶

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

- The ‘probability’ argument is rhetoric, and not based in mathematics /probability.
 - Even if this were mathematically true, it must apply to all candidates including the incumbent.
 - But it cannot be true, since despite multiple candidates, for the canon to exist, at least one person must have written it.
- An unbiased review of supporting evidence shows that some candidates have a considerably better claim than others.
- The proliferation of authorship candidates merely indicates a central problem of historical research: evidence is open to multiple interpretations.

¹⁵*Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* (2013), p.50.

¹⁶‘Don’t start arguing against an individually named alternative; start by reminding the person putting forward the claim that their preferred nominee is in no way more valid than any of the others’ – *Shakespeare Bites Back*

- The proliferation of authorship candidates also indicates there is a significant problem with the traditional attribution.
- Authorship questioners may field different candidates, but they do agree on the most important point: there is insufficient unambiguous personal contemporaneous evidence supporting William Shakspeare's authorship.

3.4.3 No Use of Fronts in Period

ASSERTION

- We have no evidence that writers of the period used the names of other real people to protect their identities.¹⁷

EVIDENCE (TO THE CONTRARY)

- Sir Thomas More published his work *Responsio ad Lutherum* (1523) under the pseudonym Guilielmus Rosseus ('William Ross'). There was more than one living person of the name William Ross at the time it was published.
- [Robert Greene](#), in *Farewell to Folly* (1591), wrote of certain authors who 'get some other Batillus to set his name to their verses. Thus is the ass made proud by this underhand brokery. And he that cannot write true English without the aid of clerks of parish churches will need make himself the father of interludes.' [Interludes = a 16th century term for stage plays]
- [Joseph Hall](#) (1598) in reference to the first two works published under the name William Shakespeare, stated that the author was concealing his identity 'under another's name'. Whether or not his suspicions were right, this is reasonable evidence that the practice occurred.
- 11 July 1599 John Hayward was interrogated before the Star Chamber. The Queen "argued that Hayward was pretending to be the author in order to shield 'some more mischievous' person, and that he should be racked so that he might disclose the truth"¹⁸

¹⁷Andrew Hadfield asserts 'early modern authors did not ever pretend to be other people', *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*, p.72.

¹⁸Sohmer, Steve. "12 June 1599: Opening Day at Shakespeare's Globe." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 3.1 (1997): 1.1-46

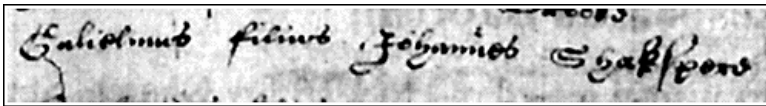
COUNTER ARGUMENT

- There is more than one mechanism by which William Shakspere might have come to be regarded as author of the works now associated with him without being the author:
 - by directly pre-arranged brokerage (as described by [Robert Greene](#)) via Stratford-born publisher [Richard Field](#)
 - by Field's suggesting or choosing the name of a childhood associate as a pseudonym, and William Shakspere, following curiosity about his namesake, subsequently adopting the role of front (or broker) to protect the writer's anonymity in return for a share of profits.
- It would not be unusual for a chosen pseudonym to coincide with the name of a real living person.
 - There was more than one person named William Shakespeare in the period. Many scholars argue that the William Shakespeare who loaned £7 to John Clayton in London in 1592 and sued for its return in 1600 was not William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon.
- See further evidence of [authors of the period hiding their identities](#).

APPENDIX A: Non-Literary Evidence

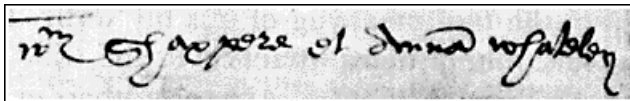
The following list of documentary evidence includes personal, business and theatrical evidence relating to (or said to relate to) William Shakspeare. It excludes all literary evidence, i.e. references to William Shakespeare as an author. Literary evidence follows in Appendix B.

A-1 Baptismal record



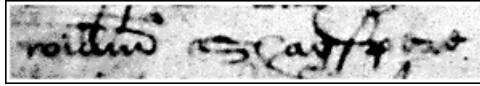
26 April 1564: **Church record** Baptismal record reads “Gulielmus filius Johannes Shakspeare” which translates as “William son of John Shakspeare” (Stratford Parish Register of Holy Trinity Church, f. 5).

A-2 Marriage licence



27 Nov 1582: **Church record** Marriage licence granted to “wm Shaxpere et Annam Whateley de Temple Grafton.” (Bishop of Worcester’s Register, Worcestershire Record Office).

A-3 Marriage bond



28 Nov 1582: **Church record** This marriage bond for “willm Shagspere ... and Anne Hathwey of Stratford” allowed them to marry under the special condition of a single asking of the banns. (Bishop of Worcester’s Register, Worcestershire Record Office).

A-4 Baptismal record: Susanna

26 May 1583: **Church record** Baptismal record for William and Anne Shakspere’s first child, Susanna.

A-5 Baptismal record: Hamnet and Judith

2 Feb 1585: **Church Record** Baptism of William Shakspere’s twins Hamnet and Judith Shakspere, apparently named after Stratford neighbours Hamnet and Judith Sadler.

A-6 Legal action: Mary’s property

Michaelmas Term, 1588: **Legal record** John and Mary ‘Shackespere’ and their son William are named in legal action concerning Mary’s property. The complaint states that on 26 Sep 1587, John, Mary and William Shakspere met the defendant in Stratford to discuss a settlement. Further to this, John Shakspere filed suit. William Shakspere is named twice as his son: “Willielmo Shackespere filio suo”.

A-7 Royal payment to LCM

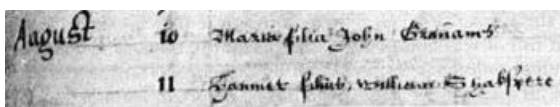
15 Mar 1595: **Royal record** Entry in the Treasurer of the Chamber's accounts recording £20 to the Lord Chamberlain's Men for plays performed for the Queen at Christmas 1594. Text reads:

To William Kempe, William Shakespeare and Richard Burbage, servaunts to the Lord Chamberleyne, upon the Councille's warrant dated at Whitehall XVth Marcij 1594, for two severall comedies or enterludes shewed by them before her majestie in Christmas tyme laste part viz St. Stephen's daye and Innocents daye..."

(National ArchivesNational Archives, Pipe Office, Declared Accounts No. 542, f. 207b).

The discrepancy in dates (the record says 1594 but means 1595) is due to the fact that until 1752, the new year officially began on Lady Day (25 March).

A-8 Burial record:Hamnet



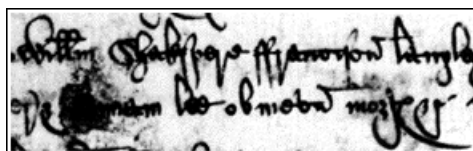
11 Aug 1596: **Church record** William Shakspeare's son, Hamnet, buried. He was eleven and a half years old.

A-9 Coat of arms application



20 Oct 1596: **Heraldic documents** relating to John Shakspere, William's father. John Shakspere applies for a Coat of Arms. This is not immediately approved: he is referred to as a yeoman rather than a gentleman in a document of 1597 (College of Arms, MS. Vincent. 157, art. 23; art. 24).

A-10 Writ against Wayte and Shakspere



Michaelmas Term 1596: **Court records** A 'writ of attachment' (surety of the peace) taken out by William Wayte against William Shakspeare and three others. The magistrate directed the Sheriff of Surrey to produce those accused, requiring them to post bond swearing to keep the peace, or forfeit the security. Co-accused Francis Langley has been identified as the owner of The Swan Theatre, which opened some months earlier, and where Pembroke's

Men would be contracted to play from Feb 1597. [This writ followed a similar writ](#) lodged by Langley, against William Wayte and his step-father, William Gardiner. The entry (translated from Latin) read:

A England. Be it known that William Shakspere, Francis Langley, Dorothy Soer wife of John Soer, and Anne Lee, for fear of death [ob metum mortis] and so forth. Writ of Attachment issued and directed to the Sheriff of Surrey, returnable the eighteenth of St. Martin.

(National Archives, Court of King's Bench, Controlment Roll, Michaelmas Term 1496, K.B. 29/234).

A-11 Purchase of New Place

4 May 1597: **Property documents** 'Williellmum Shakespeare' bought New Place, paying a £60 fine; we do not know the full cost. The house was the second largest in Stratford: the property had ten fireplaces and included two barns, two gardens, and two orchards (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust MS., item 1, case 8, in New Place Museum, Nash House; National Archives, Court of Common Pleas, CP. 24(1)/15; C.P. 25(2)/237).

A-12 Tax Defaulter 1

15 Nov 1597: **Tax Record** The Petty Collectors for Bishopsgate Ward listed 'William Shackspere' as a tax defaulter on the Kings Remembrancer Subsidy Roll. Shakspere had been assessed in October 1596 for five shillings on property valued at five pounds. (E. 179/146/354).

A-13 Bill of sale: stone

12 Jan 1598: **Bill of sale** William Shakspere paid ten pence for a load of stone. Wyllyn Wyatt Chamberlin “Pd to Mr. Shakespere for one load of stone xd” (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Corp. Rec., Chamberlain’s Accounts, 1585-1619, p. 44).

A-14 Letter from Abraham Sturley to Richard Quiney

25 Jan 1598: **Letter** Abraham Sturley wrote to his brother-in-law about Shakspere buying tithes:

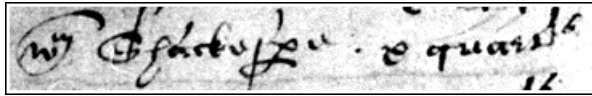
A This is one speciall remembrance from vr fathers motion. It semeth bj him that our countriman, Mr Shaksper, is willinge to disburse some monei vpon some od yardeland or other att Shottri or neare about vs ; he thinketh it a verj fitt patterne to move him to deale in the matter of our tithes. Bj the instruccions v can geve him theareof, and bj the frendes he can make therefore, we thinke it a faire marke for him to shoote att, and not unpossible to hitt. It obtained would advance him in deede, and would do vs mucho good. Hoc movere, et quantum in te est permouer, ne negligas, hoc enim et sibi et nobis maximi erit momenti. Hic labor, hoc opus esset eximiae et gloriae et laudis sibi...

(Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Misc. Doc. I, 135).

Google translate gives the Latin as: ‘This move, and as much as in you is not deeply affecting someone, do not bestow carelessly, for this is the greatest will be important, both to themselves and to us. In this case, the labor, this work would be to themselves exceptional,

and of glory and praise.' If you have better Latin than Google, I would welcome your help.

A-15 Grain holding



4 Feb 1598: **Grain holding** Shakspere is named as having 10 quarters (80 bushels) of malt or corn during a shortage

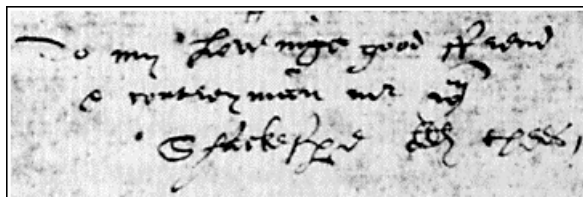
Stratford Burrowghe, Warrwicke. The noate of corne & malte
Taken the iiij th of ffebuarij 1597 in the xl th yeare of the raigne
of our moste gracious Sovereigne Ladie Queen Elizabeth
etc...â Chapple street warde...Wm. Shackespere. x quarters.

(Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Misc. Doc. I, 106).

A-16 Tax Defaulter 2

1 Oct 1598. **Tax record** In the King's Remembrancer Subsidy Roll for Bishopsgate ward, 'William Shakespeare' is listed as a tax defaulter who failed to pay an assessed 13s 4d (E. 179/146/369).

A-17 Letter from Richard Quiney to William Shakspere



25 Oct 1598. **Letter** Richard Quiney of Stratford-upon-Avon wrote a letter asking Shakspere to arrange a £30 loan. It is the only letter in existence addressed to William Shakspere, and was not delivered. It is addressed:

H[aste] To my Loveinge good ffrend & contreyman Mr Wm. Shackespere deliver thees.”

Loveinge Contreyman, I am bolde of yowe as of a ffrende, craveinge yowre helpe with xxxll vppon Mr Bushells & my securytee or Mr Myttons with me. Mr Rosswell is nott come to London as yeate & I have especiall cawse. Yowe shall ffrende me muche in helpeinge me out of all the debettes I owe in London, I thancke god, & muche quiet my mynde which wolde nott be indebted. I am now towards the Cowrte in hope of answer for the dispatche of my Buysenes. Yowe shall neither loase creddytt nor monney by me, the Lorde wyllinge, & now butt perswade yowre selfe soe as I hope & yowe shall nott need to feare butt with all hartie thanckefullenes I will holde my tyme & content yowre ffrende, & yf we Bargaine farther yowe shalbe the paiemaster yowre self. My

tyme biddes me hasten to an ende & soe I committ thys [to] yowre care & hope of yowre helpe. I feare I shall nott be backe thys night ffrom the Cowrte. Haste. The Lorde be with yowe & with vs all Amen. ffrom the Bell in Carter Lane the 25 October 1598. Yowres in all kyndenes Ryc. Quiney.

(Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, MS. ER 27/4).

A-18 Letter from Adrian Quiney to Richard Quiney

Oct/Nov 1598: **Letter** Adrian Quiney wrote to Richard Quiney, addressing the letter: “To my lovyng sonne Rycharde Qwyney at the Belle in Carter Leyne deliver thesse in London.”

A Yow shalle, God wylling, receve from your wyfe by ye baylye, thys brynger, aswraunce of xs.... Yff yow bargaen with Mr Sha. . or receve money therfor, brynge your money home yf yow maye, I see howe knite stockynges be sold, ther ys gret byinge of them at Evysshome. Edward Wheat and Harrye, your brother man, were both at Evyshome thys daye senet, and, as I harde, bestow 20ll. ther in knyght hosseyngs, wherefore I thynke yow maye doo good, yff yow can have money....

(Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Misc. Doc. I, 135).

A-19 Letter from Abraham Sturley to Richard Quiney

4 Nov 1598: **Letter** from Abraham Sturley to Richard Quiney. It is addressed: “To his most lovinge brother, Mr Richard Quinej, att the Bell in Carterlane att London, geve these.”

A Vr letter of the 25 of October came to mj handes the laste of the same att night per Grenwaj, which imported . . . that our countriman Mr Wm. Shak. would procure vs monej, which I will like of as I shall heare when, and wheare, and howe; and I praj let not go that occasion if it may sort to any indifferent condicions. Allso that if monej might be had for 30 or 40l, a lease, &c., might be procured. Oh howe can v make dowbt of monej, who will not beare xxxtie or xll towards sutch a match? ... Now to vr other letter of the 10 of November receved the 3d of the same.... For present advise and encouragmente v have bj this time Mr Bailj . . . Mr Parsons supposeth that Wenlock came the same daj with Mr Bailj that v writt vr letter . . . From Stretford Novem. 4th 1598 . . . Abrah. Sturlej.

(Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Misc. Doc. I, 136).

A-20 Tax Defaulter 3

1598/9: **Tax record** In the Lord Treasurer’s Remembrancer Accounts of Subsidies, Shakspeare is listed among those in London’s Bishopsgate ward who have moved out of the district (E. 359/56).

A-21 Coat of arms application 2

1599: **Heraldic document** John Shakspere sought to add his wife's family arms (Arden) to the recently acquired Shakspere arms (College of Arms, MS. R. 21). There is no evidence his application was approved.

A-22 Globe theatre lease document

21 Feb 1599: **Property document** (Not extant). A tripartite lease for the Globe Theatre was drawn up between Sir Nicholas Brend (leasing the site), into two moieties (half shares): one half being brothers Cuthbert and Richard Burbage, the other half comprising five members of the Lord Chamberlain's company: 'Willelmum Shakespeare', John Heminges, Augustine Phillips, Thomas Pope, and William Kemp. Thus Cuthbert and Richard Burbage each had a quarter share in The Globe, and the other five signatories had a tenth share in The Globe. The lease was described by John Heminges and Henry Condell in their testimony during the 1619 Court of Requests action *Witter v. Heminges and Condell* (National Archives, 10 documents).

A-23 Inventory of Sir Thomas Brend

16 May 1599: **Inventory** of the property of Sir Thomas Brend, whose son Nicholas leased the site of The Globe. It describes The Globe as 'de novo edificata' (newly-erected) and 'in occupacione Willielmi Shakespeare et aliorum' (in the occupation of William Shakespeare and of others).

A-24 Tax Defaulter 4

6 Oct 1599 **Tax record** 'Willelmus Shakspeare' among those listed in the Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer Residuum London accounts

as delinquents owing back-taxes (E. 372/444). There is a marginal notes 'Surrey' and a reference to 'Residuum Sussex', added later. These indicate Shakspeare was thought to have moved south of the river, possibly to Bankside.

A-25 Loan to John Clayton

1600: **Court record** 'Willelmus Shackspere' brought suit against John Clayton for a £7 debt. Not all scholars agree that "Willelmus" was William Shakspeare of Stratford, since the debt was acknowledged in Cheapside (East London) on 22 May 1592. However, Cheapside in the Elizabethan era had become home to silk merchants, linen drapers and hosiers. Given that John Shakspeare's business was the clothing trade (as glove-maker and wool-merchant), his son's presence in an area populated by clothing merchants does not seem particularly unlikely.

A-26 Tax Defaulter 5

6 Oct 1600 **Tax record** 'Willelmus Shakspeare' was listed in the Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer Residuum Sussex accounts (E. 372/445) with a tax bill of 13s.4d. still outstanding. Schoenbaum notes "The notation Episcopo Wintonensi in the left-hand margin indicates that the Court of Exchequer had referred [Shakspeare's] arrears to the Bishop of Winchester, whose liberty of the Clink in Surrey lay outside the sheriff's jurisdiction. The natural inference is that [Shakspeare] now lived in the Clink, although it is a curious fact that his name has not been traced in any of the annual lists of residents of the Clink parish (St. Saviour's) compiled by the officers who made the rounds to collect tokens purchased by churchgoers for Easter Communion, which was compulsory" (Schoenbaum 1975, p.163).

A-27 Will of Thomas Whittington

26 Mar 1601 **Will** of Thomas Whittington. former shepherd of the Hathaway household. Whittington stated that forty shillings of his money was ‘in the hand of Anne Shaxpere’, and asked his executors to retrieve it. Some scholars have assumed this was a loan to Anne, but it is possible that she was keeping his money for safe-keeping, since there were no banks. Text: “Item I geve and bequeth unto the poore people of Stratford 40s that is in the hand of Anne Shaxspere, wyf unto Mr. Wyllyam Shaxspere, and is due debt unto me beyng payd to myne Executor by the sayd Wyllyam Shaxspere or his assigns, accordyng to the true meanyng of this my wyll.” (Worcestershire Record Office).

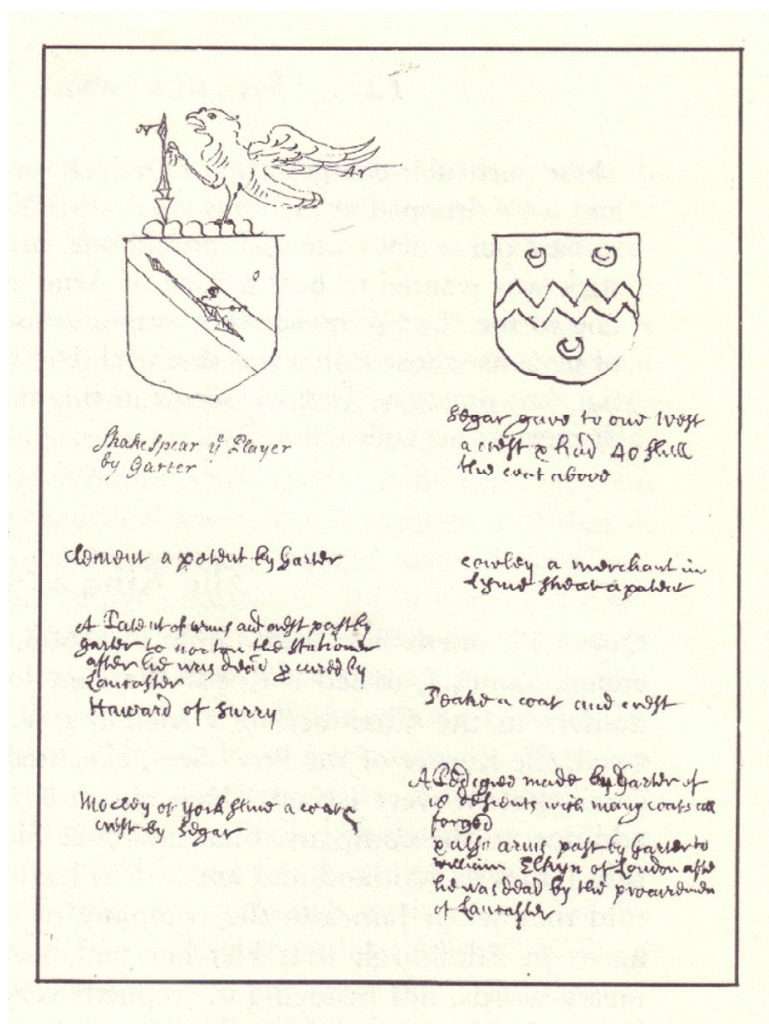
A-28 Deed transferring The Globe Theatre

7/10 Oct 1601 **Deed** transferring the Globe and other Southwark properties from Nicholas Brend to Sir Matthew Brown and John Collett as security for a £2500 debt. “Richard Burbadge and William Shackspeare gent.” In the updated version three days later, “Richard Burbage and William Shakspeare gentlemen” (Charles William Wallace, “New Light on Shakespeare” (Part 2), *The Times*, May 1, 1914, p.4.)

A-29 Coat of arms complaint

1602 **Heraldic document** Peter Brooke (York Herald) accused Sir William Dethick (Garter King-of-Arms) and his associate William Camden (Clarenceux King-of-Arms) of “elevating base persons, and assigning devices already in use.” Brooke’s complaint against twenty-three different grants of arms listed ‘Shakespeare’ at number 4. (Folger Shakespeare Library, MS. V.a.156)

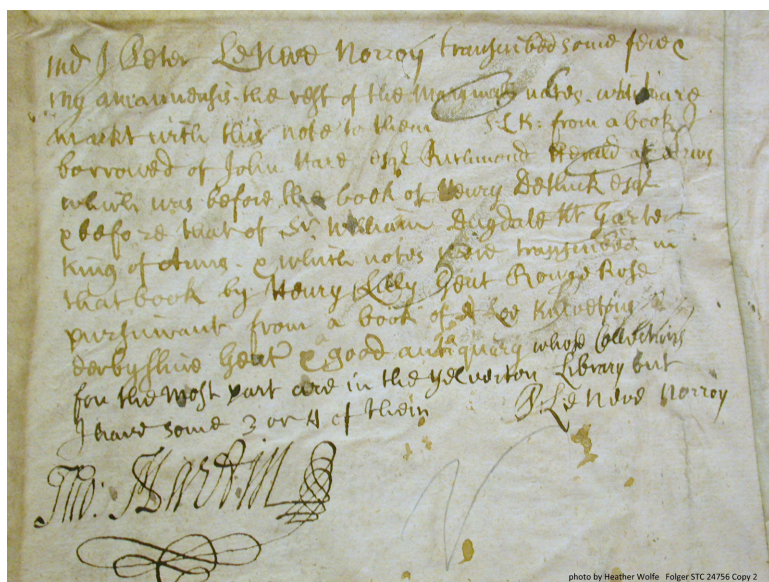
A-30 Shakespear ye player by garter



1602/c.1700 **Heraldic document** Associated with Brooke's complaint is a separate sheet entitled 'A Note of Some Coats & Crests' which includes, on the top left corner, a drawing of the Shakspeare

arms, underneath which is written 'Shakespear ye Player by Garter.' It is *not* the original document, but is believed to have been copied from the original some hundred years later by Peter Le Neve, an officer of the College of Arms. (Folger Shakespeare Library, MS. V.a.350).

Compare the handwriting with this sample of Peter le Neve's, which not only appears to be in a similar pale brown ink but usefully contains the word 'Garter'.



This image was taken from [this article](#) published by the Folger library.

A-31 Coat of arms defence



1602 **Heraldic document** The reply of Sir William Dethick and William Camden to Peter Brooke's complaint defends the granting of arms to John Shakspeare, saying "the person to whom it was granted hath born magistracy and was Justice of the peace at Stratford-upon-Avon; he married the daughter and heir of Arden and able to maintain that estate." Brooke's charges were dismissed. (Bodleian Library, MS. Ashmole 846, f. 50).

A-32 John Manningham's diary

13 March 1602 **Diary entry** John Manningham wrote:

A Vpon a tyme when Burbidge played Rich. 3. there was a citizen greue soe farr in liking with him, that before shee went from the play shee appointed him to come that night vnto hir by the name of Ri: the 3. Shakespeare overhearing their conclusion went before, was intertained, and at his game ere Burbidge came. Then message being brought that Rich. the 3.d was at the dore, Shakespeare caused returne to be made that William the Conquerour was before Rich. the 3. Shakespeare's name William. (Mr Touse?) (BL Harlean MS 5353 fol 29b [John Manningham's Diary](#), p.39)

‘(Mr Curle)’ is the source more usually given. Mr Curle was presumably a relative of Anne Curle, whom John Manningham would marry in 1605. But though ‘Mr Curle’ is always given in scholarly texts the [Camden Society transcript of 1868](#) actually says ‘(Mr Touse?)’. As does [this one](#) which also makes clear the chronological confusion. In this version, which supposedly follows its source closely, the entry is dated 13 March 1601, and is inserted between entries for 25 June 1602 and 2 March 1602.

A-33 Shakespere buys 107 acres from John Combe

1 May 1602 **Property document** Conveyance of 107 acres of land from William and John Combe to ‘William Shakespere of Stretford-uppon-Avon’ for £320. (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, [ER 27/1Ê \(18/10043\)](#)).

A-34 Chapel Lane cottage

28 Sep 1602 **Property document** Sep 28 Transfer of copyhold title of a quarter-acre of land with a cottage and garden (Chapel Lane Cottage) from Walter Getley to ‘Williellmus Shakespere’. (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, [ER 28/1Ê \(18/10075\)](#)).

A-35 New Place re-conveyed

Michaelmas Term, 1602 **Property document** New Place was re-conveyed to Shakspere from Hercules Underhill, gent. ‘Williellmum Shakespeare’ paid a fee equal to one quarter of the property’s annual value (National Archives, Court of Common Pleas, Feet of Fines, C.P. 25(2)/237).

A-36 Warrants for Letters Patent

17/18 May 1603 **Royal documents** Warrants for Letters Patent authorising

A William Shakespeare...and the rest of their Associates freely to use and exercise the Arte and faculty of playinge Comedies Tragedies histories Enterludes moralls pastoralls Stageplaies and suche others like as theie have already studied or hereafter shall use or studie aswell for the recreation of our loving Subjectes as for our Solace and pleasure when wee shall thincke good to see them duringe our pleasure...

(National Archives, Privy Seal Office, Warrants for the Privy Seal, P.S.O. 2/22; Chancery, Warrants for the Great Seal, C. 82/1690).

A-37 Royal patent

19 May 1603 **Royal document** A Royal Patent stating

A Wee...doe licence and authorize these our Servauntes Lawrence Fletcher, William Shakespeare, Richard Burbage, Augustyne Phillipps, Iohn Heninges, Henrie Condell, William Sly, Robert Armin, Richard Cowley, and the rest of their Associates freely to vse and exercise the Arte and faculty of playing Comedies, Tragedies, histories, Enterludes, moralls, pastoralls, Stageplaies and Suche others like as theie haue already studied or hereafter shall vse or studie aswell for the recreation of our loving Subjectes as for our Solace and pleasure when wee shall thincke good to see them duringe our pleasure.

After the document was issued, the Lord Chamberlain's Men became known as The King's Men (National Archives, Chancery, Patent Rolls, C. 66/1608, m. 4).

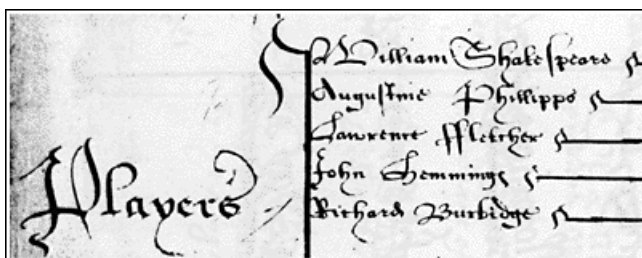
A-38 New Place lease endorsement

1603-1616 **Property Document** Endorsement on lease of property east of New Place; Stratford. "The barne on the west sid bounds by Mr William Shaxpeare of Pynley Holt, and on the est side on the Kinges land." (Chambers II, p.96)

A-39 Shakspere vs Philip Rogers

1604 **Court record** In Stratford, Shakspere sued the apothecary Philip Rogers for 35s.10d plus 10s damages, seeking to recover the unpaid balance on a sale of twenty bushels of malt and a small loan. Name given as 'Willielmus Shexpere'. (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, MS. ER 27/5).

A-40 Master of Wardrobe's record

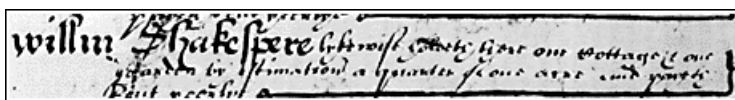


15 March 1604 **Royal record** In the Master of the Wardrobe's record, 'William Shakespeare' is listed among "Players" who were given scarlet cloth to be worn for the King's Royal Procession through London. The names, in order are:

William Shakespeare Augustine Phillipps Lawrence ffletcher
 John Hemming[es] Richard Burbidge William Slye Robert
 Armyne Henry Cundell Richard Cowley

(National Archives, Lord Chamberlain's Department, Special Events,
 L.C. 2/4(5), f. 78)

A-41 Rowington Manor survey



24 Oct 1604 **Land survey** A survey of Rowington manor reported that “William Shakespere Lykewise holdeth there one cottage and one garden by estimation a quarter of one acre and payeth rent yearly ijs vjd” (National Archives, Exchequer, Special Commission, E. 178/4661).

A-42 Bequest from Augustine Phillips

4 May 1605 **Will** of Augustine Phillips. “Item I geve and bequeathe to my ffellowe william Shakespeare a Thirty shillings peece in gould” (National Archives, Prob. 10/232).

A-43 Shakspeare buys tithes from Ralph Hubaud

24 July 1605 **Property documents** Shakspeare purchased tithes from Ralph Hubaud for £440 “William Shakespeare Lykewise holdeth a

half-interest in a lease of ‘Tythes of Corne grayne blade & heye’ in three nearby hamlets ... along with the small tithes of the whole of Stratford parish, with certain exceptions honouring former rights” (Schoenbaum 1975, p.192-3). Ralph Hubaud’s bond (for the performance of covenants with respect to the indenture) reads: ‘To William Shakspre, gentleman’. (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, MS. ER 27/2; Misc. Doc. II, 3)

A-44 Inventory of Ralph Hubaud

1606 **Inventory** for Ralph Hubaud. After his death, an inventory of Hubaud’s land and goods included the notation that “There was Owinge by Mr. Shakspre xxli^o. There is no mention of this in standard biographies. It can, however, be found in Roland B Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents* (Stanford University Press, 1940) and Catherine Loomis, ed. (2002), *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Volume, Dictionary of Literary Biography*, p.263.

A-45 Survey of Rowington Manor

1 Aug 1606 Aug **Survey** of Rowington Manor; part relating to Chapel Lane cottage mentions “Willielmus Shakespere” (Chambers II, p.112)

A-46 Shakspere vs John Addenbrooke

7 June 1608 to 8 Aug 1609 **Court records** Shakspere brought suit against John Addenbrooke for £6, plus 24s. damages. Shakspere won and an order was issued for Addenbrooke’s arrest. Addenbrooke failed to appear in court and an attempt was made to force Addenbrooke’s surety, the blacksmith Thomas Horneby, to pay the full amount. Seven separate documents. (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Misc. Doc. V, 116; Misc Doc V, 139; Misc Doc V, 127a; Misc Doc V, 127b; Misc Doc V, 115; MS. ER 27/6; MS. ER 27/7)

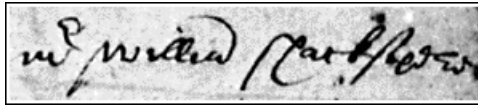
A-47 Shakspeare's title to Combe land

1610 Property documents A Court of Common Pleas fine served to confirm Shakspeare's title to 107 acres of land and 20 acres of pasture purchased in 1602 from William Combe (National Archives Feet of Fines, C.P. 25(2)/365; C.P. 24(2)/7).

A-48 Shakspeare vs tenants

1611 Court records In a Stratford Court of Chancery Bill of Complaint (Richard Lane et al. versus Doninus Carewe et al., Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Misc. Doc. II, 11), the "complainants, of whom Shakespeare was one, asked that the other tenants pay their portion of the mean rent of £26.13s.4d. reserved for John Barker, who held the original lease on the tithes" (@ Schoenbaum 193). William Combe answered the complaint, agreed to pay more than twice what he had been, and asked that the other tenants pay their share (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Misc. Doc. X, 9).

A-49 Shakspeare lobbies parliament on road repairs



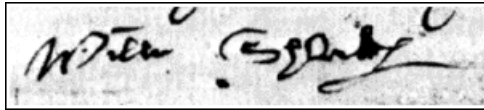
11 Sept 1611: List of Contributors The name "mr William shackspere" appears on a list of those supporting "the Charge of prosecutyng the Bill in parliament for the better Repayre of the highe waies and amendinge divers defectes in the Statues alredy made." This Bill would have made the national government responsible for repairs

previously funded by local residents.” (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Misc. Doc. I, 4)

A-50 Robert Johnson inventory

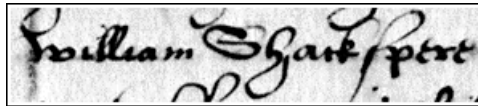
5 Oct 1611: **Inventory** of goods of Robert Johnson, late of Stratford, mentions “Mr. Shaxper” (Chambers II, p.32)

A-51 Witness statement, Bellott vs Mountjoy

A black and white photograph of a handwritten signature in cursive script. The signature appears to read "W. Shakspeare" and is written on a piece of paper with some visible texture and slight discoloration.

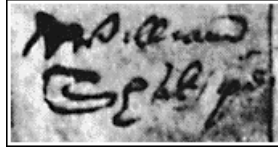
11 May to 19 June 1612. **Court records** Shakspeare was called into court and asked to resolve a dispute regarding the amount offered by him as dowry when he helped negotiate a marriage in 1604 (National Archives, Court of Requests, Bellott v. Mountjoy; etc.). The first of William Shakspeare’s surviving signatures was written at the bottom of his deposition.

A-52 Shakspeare bequest from John Combe

A black and white photograph of a handwritten signature in cursive script. The signature clearly reads "William Shakspeare" and is written on a piece of paper with some visible texture and slight discoloration.

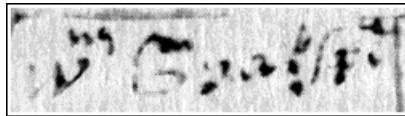
28 Jan 1613 **Will** of John Combe. He bequeathed £5 to “mr William Shackspere” (National Archives, Prob. 11/126).

A-53 Conveyance for Blackfriars Gate-house



10 March 1613: **Property document** Conveyance for Blackfriars Gate-house. Henry Walker's gate-house was bought by Shakspeare, William Johnson, John Jackson, and John Hemming for £140. The second surviving signature is on the conveyance for the Blackfriars Gate-house. The property was later rented to one John Robinson, who was present in Stratford-upon-Avon as a witness to Shakspeare's Will. (MS. in the Guildhall Library)

A-54 Mortgage for Blackfriars Gate-house



11 March 1613: **Property document** Mortgage for the Blackfriars Gate-house. The deal involved "elaborate arrangements, calling for trustees and a mortgage [whose] practical effect would be to deprive Shakespeare's widow of her dower right to a third share for life in this part of the estate; for in a joint tenancy, Chancery would not recognize Anne's privilege unless her husband survived the other trustees" (Schoenbaum 1975, p.223). The third surviving signature is on this mortgage document. (British Library, MS. *Egerton 1787*).

A-55 Earl of Rutland's impresa

31 March 1613: **Record of payment** For work on the Earl of Rutland's impresa, payments were made "To Mr. Shakspeare in gold, about my Lordes impreso, xlvivs.; To Richard Burbage for painting and making it, xlvivs." The "impreso" was a symbolic design on a shield which the Earl displayed during a tilt. (Belvoir Castle, Accounts of the Steward of the Earl of Rutland, Rutland MSS. iv. 494). Charlotte Stopes argued (in *The Athenaeum*, 16 May, 1908) that 'Mr. Shakspeare' was John Shakspeare, a fashionable bit-maker of the time, who features in multiple entries in the Wardrobe Accounts of Charles I, both as prince and king. Among other things he made 'guilt bosses charged with the arms of England': an appropriate person to undertake the metalwork of an impresa.

A-56 List of landowners

5 Sep 1614: **List of Landowners** The Memorandum lists "Auncient ffreeholders in the ffildes of Oldstratford and Welcombe." It was written by Town Clerk Thomas Greene, who was concerned about a scheme for land enclosure promoted by Arthur Mainwaring. "Shakspeare" is listed as holding "4 yard land". (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Misc. Doc. I, 94).

A-57 Compensation for Shakspere on his tithes

28 Oct 1614: **Property document** Shakspere made a covenant with Mainwaring's attorney William Replingham (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, MS. ER 27/3), which "undertook to compensate William Shackespeare or his heirs or assigns 'for all such losse detriment & hinderance' with respect to the annual value of his tithes, 'by reason of anie Inclosure or decaye of Tyllage there

ment and intended by the said William Replingham” (Schoenbaum 1975, p.231).

A-58 Thomas Greene’s Diary 17 Nov 1614

17 Nov 1614: **Diary entry** Thomas Greene made several notes regarding William Shakspere in relation to the land enclosure problem. Greene had recently invested £300 in a half-share of tithe-interests; Shakspere owned the other half-share. Text:

Jovis 17 No. At my Cosen Shakspeare commyng yesterday to towne I went to see him howe he did he told me that they assured him they ment to inclose noe further then to gospell bushe & so vpp straight (leavyng out part of the dyngles to the ffield) to the gate in Clopton hedge & take in Salisburys peece: and that they meane in Aprill to servey the Land & then to gyve satisfaccion & not before & he & Mr Hall say they think there will be nothyng done at all. . . .

(Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Corporation Records, Misc. Doc. XIII, 26a, 27-9)

A-59 Thomas Greene’s Diary 23 Dec 1614

23 Dec 1614. **Diary entry** by Thomas Greene.

23 Dec. 1614. A Hall. L(ett)res wrytten one to Mr Manneryng another to Mr Shakspeare with almost all the com(panyes) hands to eyther: I alsoe wrytte of myself to my Cosen Shake-

speare the Coppyes of all our oathes m(a)de then alsoe a not
of the Inconvenyences wold gr(ow) by the Inclosure. . . .

(Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Corporation Records,
Misc. Doc. XIII, 26a, 27-9)

A-60 Thomas Greene's Diary 9 Jan 1615

9 Jan 1615: **Diary entry** by Thomas Greene: "Mr. Shakspeare" Text to follow.

A-61 Thomas Greene's Diary 11 Jan 1615

11 Jan 1615: **Diary entry** by Thomas Greene: "my cosen Shakspeare" Text to follow.

A-62 Complaint, Blackfriars gate-house

26 April 1615. Court record. On a Court of Chancery bill of complaint, Shakspeare is listed among those who sought to obtain Blackfriars property documents (Bill of Complaint in Bendishe, et al. v. Bacon.) (Chambers II, p.159).

A-63 Answer, Blackfriars gate-house

5 May 1615: **Court record** Answer to Bill of Complaint in Bendishe et al. v. Bacon refers to "William Shakespeare" (Chambers II, p.161)

A-64 Thomas Greene's Diary Sep 1615

Sep 1615: **Diary entry** Thomas Greene "W Shakspeare" (Chambers II, p.143)

A-65 Thomasina Ostler vs John Heminges

9 Oct 1615 **Court record** Thomasina Ostler, daughter of John Heminges who had married the young Kings Men actor William Ostler. Ostler bought shares in both the Globe and Blackfriars Theatres, but died in his twenties, leaving his shares to Thomasina. John Heminges took control of Ostler's shares and Thomasina sued her father for their return. The portions of the document relevant to Shakespeare as shareholder of both the Globe and Blackfriars theatres are reproduced in both Latin and English:

...quibusdam Willelmo Shakespeare Cuthberto Burbadge hen-
rico Condell Thomae Evans de londonia praedicta generosis.

... to certain gentlemen of the aforementioned London: William
Shakespeare, Cuthbert Burbage, Henry Condell, Thomas Evans.

... quibusdam Cuthberto Burbadge & Ricardo Burbadge de
Londonia generosis, prefato Willelmo Shakspeare & Augustino

Phillips & Thome Pope de Londonia generosis defunctis, predicto Johanni Hemynges, & Willelmo Kempe nuper de Londonia generoso defuncto ...

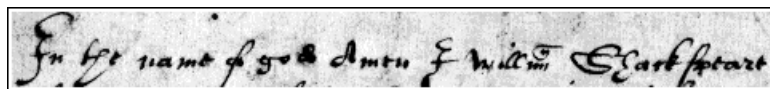
... to certain persons, Cuthbert Burbage and Richard Burbage, gentlemen of London, to the aforesaid William Shakespeare [“prefato” is singular, so refers just to him], and to Augustine Phillips and Thomas Pope, deceased gentlemen of London, to the aforementioned John Hemmings, and to William Kemp, a deceased gentleman recently of London...

From Plea of Thomasina Ostler in suit of *Ostler v. Heminges*, Coram Rege Roll 1454. “Court plea of Thomasina Ostler listing Shakespeare as shareholder in the Globe and Blackfriars property” (Chambers II, p.58-63)

A-66 Will of William Shakspere

25 March 1616: Will of William Shakspere. Crossings out that are still legible are marked with square brackets, interlineations are denoted by italics.

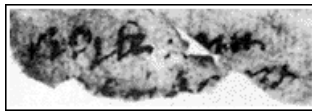
Page One



In the name of god Amen I William Shakspeare

In the name of god Amen I William Shackspeare, of Stratford upon Avon in the countrie of Warr., gent., in perfect health and memorie, God be prayesd, doe make and ordayne this my last will and testament in manner and forme followeing, that ys to saye, ffirst, I comend my soule into the hands of God my Creator, hoping and assuredlie beleeveng, through thonellie merites, of Jesus Christe my Saviour, to be made partaker of lyfe everlastinge, and my bodye to the earth whereof yt ys made. Item, I gyve and bequeath unto my [sonne and] daughter Judyth one hundred and fyftie poundes of lawfull English money, to be paid unto her in the manner and forme foloweng, that ys to saye, one hundred poundes *in discharge of her marriage porcion* within one year after my deceas, with consideracion after the rate of twoe shillings in the pound for soe long tyme as the same shalbe unpaied unto her after my deceas, and the fyftie poundes residwe thereof upon her surrendring of, or gyving of such sufficient securitie as the overseers of this my will shall like of, to surrender or graunte all her estate and right that shall discend or come unto her after my deceas, or *that shee* nowe hath, of, in, or to, one copiehold tenemente, with thappurtenaunces, lyeing and being in Stratford upon Avon aforesaied in the saied countrie of Warr., being parcell or holden of the mannour of Rowington, unto my daughter Susanna Hall and her heires for ever. Item, I gyve and bequeath unto my saied daughter Judith one hundred and fyftie poundes more, if shee or anie issue of her bodie by lyvinge att thend of three yeares next ensueing the daie of the date of this my will, during which tyme my executours are to paie her consideracion from my deceas according to the rate aforesaied; and if she dye within the saied tearme without issue of her bodye, then my will us, and I doe gyve and bequeath one hundred poundes thereof to my neece Elizabeth Hall, and the fyftie poundes to be sett fourth by my executours during the lief of my sister Johane Harte, and the use and proffitt thereof cominge shalbe payed to my saied sister Jone, and after her deceas the saied l.li.12 shall remaine amongst the children of my saied sister, equallie

to be divided amongst them; but if my saied daughter Judith be lyving att thend of the saied three yeares, or anie yssue of her bodye, then my will ys, and soe I devise and bequeath the saied hundred and fyftie poundes to be sett our *by my executours and overseers* for the best benefitt of her and her issue, and the stock not to be paied unto her soe long as she shalbe marryed and covert baron [by my executours and overseers]; but my will ys, that she shall have the consideracion yearelie paied unto her during her lief, and, after her ceceas, the saied stocke and consideracion to be paied to her children, if she have anie, and if not, to her executours or assignes, she lyving the saied terme after my deceas. Provided that yf suche husbond as she shall att thend of the saied three years be marryed unto, or att anie after, doe sufficientlie assure unto her and thissue of her bodie landes awnswereable to the porcion by this my will gyven unto her, and to be adjudged soe by my executours and overseers, then my will ys, that the said cl.li.13 shalbe paied to such husbond as shall make such assurance, to his owne use. Item, I gyve and bequeath unto my saied sister Jone xx.li. and all my wearing apparrell, to be paied and delivered within one yeare after my deceas; and I doe will and devise unto her *the house* with thappurtenaunces in Stratford, wherein she dwelleth, for her naturall lief, under the yearlie rent of xij.d. Item, I gyve and bequeath



Page Two

unto her three sonnes, William Harte, -- Hart, and Michaell Harte, fyve pounds a peece, to be paied within one yeare

after my deceas [to be sett out for her within one yeare after my deceas by my executours, with thadvise and direccions of my overseers, for her best frofitt, untill her mariage, and then the same with the increase thereof to be paied unto her]. Item, I gyve and bequeath unto [her] *the saied Elizabeth Hall*, all my plate, *except my brod silver and gilt bole*, that I now have att the date of this my will. Item, I gyve and bequeath unto the poore of Stratford aforesaied tenn poundes; to Mr. Thomas Combe my sword; to Thomas Russell esquier fyve poundes; and to Frauncis Collins, of the borough of Warr. in the countie of Warr. gentleman, thirteene poundes, sixe shillings, and eight pence, to be paied within one yeare after my deceas. Item, I gyve and bequeath to [Mr. Richard Tyler thelder] *Hamlett Sadler xxvj.8. viij.d.* to buy him a ringe; to *William Raynoldes gent., xxvj.8. viij.d.* to buy him a ringe; to my dogson William Walker xx8. in gold; to Anthonye Nashe gent. xxvj.8. viij.d. [in gold]; *and to my fellowes John Hemynges, Richard Brubage, and Henry Cundell, xxvj.s. viij.d.* a peece to buy them ringes, Item, I gyve, will, bequeath, and devise, unto my daughter Susanna Hall, *for better enabling of her to performe this my will, and towards the performans thereof*, all that capitall messuage or tenemente with thappurtenaunces, *in Stratford aforesaid*, called the New Place, wherein I nowe dwell, and two messuages or tenementes with thappurtenaunces, scituat, lyeing, and being in Henley streete, within the borough of Stratford aforesaid; and all my barnes, stables, orchardes, gardens, landes, tenementes, and hereditamentes, whatsoever, scituat, lyeing, and being, or to be had, receyved, perceyved, or taken, within the townes, hamletes, villages, fieldes, and groundes, of Stratford upon Avon, Oldstratford, Bushopton, and Welcombe, or in anie of them in the saied countie of Warr. And alsoe all that messuage or tenemente with thappurtenaunces, wherein one John Robinson dwelleth, scituat, lyeing and being, in the Balckfriars in London, nere the Wardrobe; and all my other landes, tenementes, and hereditamentes whatsoever, To have and to hold all and singuler the saied premisses, with their appurtenaunces, unto the saied Susanna Hall, for and during

the terme of her naturall lief, and after her deceas, to the first sonne of her bodie lawfullie yssueing, and to the heires males of the bodie of the saied first sonne lawfullie yssueinge; and for defalt of such issue, to the second sonne of her bodie, lawfullie issueing, and to the heires males of the bodie of the saied second sonne lawfullie yssueinge; and for defalt of such heires, to the third sonne of the bodie of the saied Susanna lawfullie yssueing, and of the heires males of the bodie of the saied third sonne lawfullie yssueing; and for defalt of such issue, the same soe to be and remaine to the ffourth [sonne], ffyfth, sixte, and seaventh sonnes of her bodie lawfullie issueing, one after another, and to the heires



Page Three

males of the bodies of the bodies of the saied fourth, fifth, sixte, and seaventh sonnes lawfullie yssueing, in such manner as yt ys before lymitted to be and remaine to the first, second, and third sonns of her bodie, and to their heires males; and for defalt of such issue, the said premisses to be and remaine to my sayed neece Hall, and the heires males of her bodie lawfullie yssueinge; and for defalt of such issue, to my daughter Judith, and the heires males of her bodie lawfullie issueinge; and for defalt of such issue, to the right heires of me the saied William Shackspeare for ever. *Item, I gyve unto my wief my second best bed with the furniture,* Item, I gyve and bequeath to my saied daughter Judith my broad silver gilt bole. All the rest of my goodes, chattel, leases, plate, jewels, and household stuffe whatsoever, after my dettes and legasies paied, and my funerall expenses dischardged, I give, devise, and bequeath to

my sonne in lawe, John Hall gent., and my daughter Susanna, his wief, whom I ordaine and make executours of this my last will and testament. And I doe intreat and appoint the saied Thomas Russell esquier and Frauncis Collins gent. to be overseers hereof, and doe revoke all former wills, and publishe this to be my last will and testament. In witness whereof I have hereunto put my [seale] *hand*, the daie and yeare first abovewritten.

Witnes to the publyshing

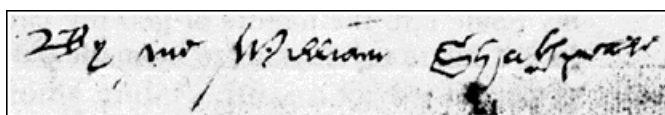
hereof Fra: Collyns

Julyus Shawe

John Robinson

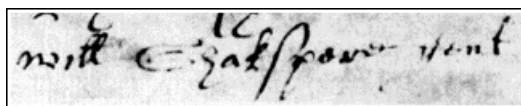
Hamnet Sadler

Rovert Whattcott


 A black and white photograph of a handwritten signature in cursive script, which reads "Wm Shakespeare". The ink is dark and the background is light and slightly textured.

(National Archives, Principal Probate Registry, Selected Wills, Prob. 1/4).

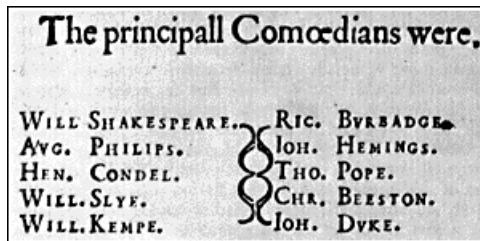
A-67 Burial record


 A black and white photograph of a handwritten entry in a parish register. The text is written in cursive and reads "Will Shakspeare gent". The handwriting is somewhat slanted and the ink is dark.

25 April 1616: **Burial record** The burial of “Will Shakspeare gent” is recorded in the Stratford parish register (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, DR 243/1).

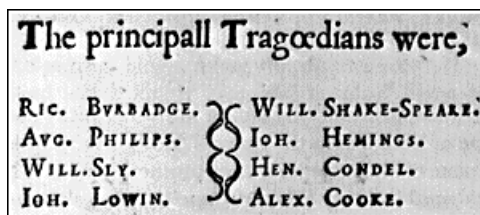
POSTHUMOUS EVIDENCE

A-68 Ben Jonson: cast list for *Every Man In His Humour*



1616: Cast list First published in Ben Jonson's Works (November 1616): The cast list of *Every Man In His Humour* which was produced by the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1598, has "WILL SHAKESPEARE" heading the list of "principall Comedians" (Jonsons' Works, p.72).

A-69 Ben Jonson: cast list for *Sejanus His Fall*



1616: Cast list First published in Ben Jonson's Works (November 1616), the cast list of *Sejanus his Fall*, which was produced by the King's Men in 1603, has "WILL SHAKE-SPEARE" on the top right of the list of "principall Tragedians" (Jonson's Works, p. 438).

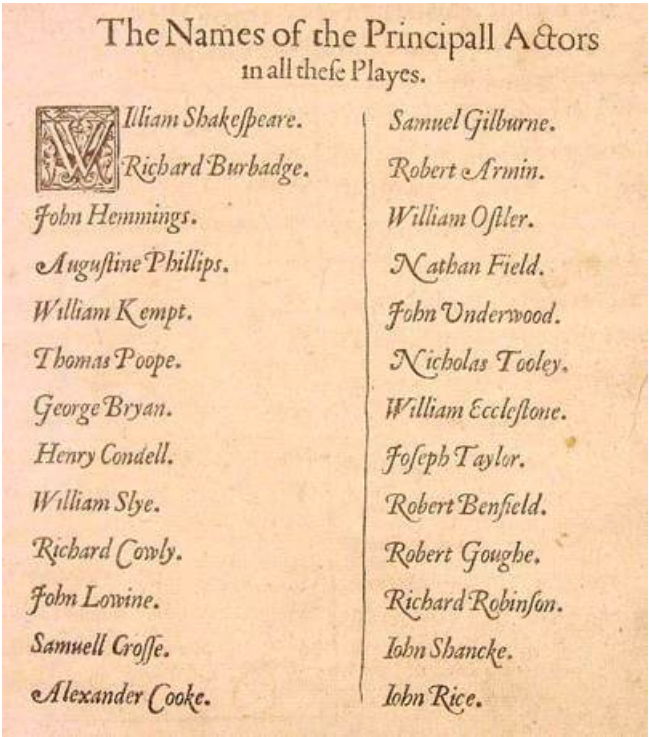
A-70 William Shakspere's gravestone epitaph



1616: **Epitaph** at some point after April 1616, inscribed upon the stone slab covering Shakspere's grave. Given that it doesn't have his name it is unlikely to have been what was there before the erection of the monument c. 1621. The original became very worn and has been replaced. The text reads ('Yt'='That'):

GOOD FREND FOR IESVS SAKE FORBEARE,
 TO DIGG THE DVST ENCLOSED HEARE.
 BLESSE BE YE MAN YT SPARES THES STONES,
 AND CVRST BE HE YT MOVES MY BONES.

A-71 First Folio cast list



1623: Cast List included in the prefatory material of the First Folio of Shakespeare’s plays.

The Names of the Principall Actors in all these Playes

William Shakespeare.
 Richard Burbadge.
 John Hemmings.
 Augustine Phillips.
 William Kempt.
 Thomas Poope.
 George Bryan.
 Henry Condell.
 William Slye.
 Richard Cowly.
 John Lowine.
 Samuell Crosse.
 Alexander Cooke.

Samuel Gilburne.
 Robert Armin.
 William Ostler.
 Nathan Field.
 John Underwood.
 Nicholas Tooley.
 William Ecclestone.
 Joseph Taylor.
 Robert Benfield.
 Robert Goughe.
 Richard Robinson.
 Iohn Shancke.
 Iohn Rice.

A-72 Letter from Cuthbert and Winifred Burbage to Philip Herbert

1635: Letter to Philip Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke & Montgomery, from Cuthbert Burbage, and Winifred, Richard Burbage's widow. This document is part of what are known as the 1635 Sharers Papers, and answers a complaint by King's Men sharer John Shank against the Globe and Blackfriars theatre shareholders.

Right honourable & our singular good Lord, we, your humble suppliants, Cuthbert Burbage, & Winifred, his brother's wife, & William, his son, do tender to your honourable consideration for what respects & good reasons we ought not in all charity to be disabled of our livelihoods by men so soon shot up, since it hath been the custom that they should come to it by far more antiquity and desert than those can justly attribute to themselves; And first, humbly showing to your Honour the infinite charges, the manifold lawsuits, the lease's expiration by the restraints in sickness times & other accidents that did cut from them the best part of the gains that your Honour is informed they have received: The father of us, Cuthbert &

Richard Burbage, was the first builder of playhouses, & was himself in his younger years a player.

The Theater he built with many hundred pounds taken up at interest. The players that lived in those first times had only the profits arising from the doors, but now the players receive all the comings in at the doors to themselves & half the galleries from the housekeepers. He built this house upon leased ground, by which means the landlord & he had a great suit in law, & by his death the like troubles fell on us, his sons.

We then bethought us of altering from thence, & at like expense built the Globe with more sums of money taken up at interest, which lay heavy on us many years, & to ourselves we joined those deserving men Shakspeare, Heminges, Condell, Phillips and others, partners in the profits of that they call the house, but making the leases for 21 years hath been the destruction of ourselves & others, for they dying at the expiration of 3 or 4 years of their lease, the subsequent years became dissolved to strangers, as by marrying with their widows, & the like by their children.

Thus, right Honourable, as concerning the Globe, where we ourselves are but lessees. Now for the Blackfriars, that is our inheritance. Our father purchased it at extreme rates, & made it into a playhouse with great charge and trouble, which after was leased out to one Evans that first set up the boys commonly called the Queen's Majesty's Children of the Chapel. In process of time the boys growing up to be men, which were Underwood, Field, Ostler, & were taken to strengthen the King's service, & the more to strengthen the service, the boys daily wearing out, it was considered that house would be as fit for ourselves, & so purchased the lease remaining from Evans with our money, & placed men players, which were Heminges, Condell, Shakspeare etc.

And Richard Burbage, who for 35 years' pains, cost and labour made means to leave his wife and children some estate, & out of whose estate so many of other players and their families have been maintained, these new men that were never bred

from children in the King's service would take away with oaths & menaces that we shall be forced, & that they will not thank us for it, so that it seems they would not pay us for what they would have or we can spare, which, more to satisfy your Honour than their threatening pride, we are for ourselves willing to part with a part between us, they paying according as ever hath been the custom & the number of years the lease is made for.

Then to show your Honour against these sayings that we eat the fruit of their labours, we refer it to your Honour's judgment to consider their profits, which we may safely maintain, for it appeareth by their own accounts for one whole year last past beginning from Whitsun Monday 1634 to Whitsun Monday 1635 each of these complainants gained severally, as he was a player & no housekeeper, £180. Besides Mr Swanston hath received from the Blackfriars this year, as he is there a housekeeper, above £30, all which being accounted together may very well keep him from starving.

Wherefore your Honour's most humble suppliants entreat they may not further be trampled upon than their estates can bear, seeing how dearly it hath been purchased by the infinite cost & pains of the family of the Burbages & the great desert of Richard Burbage for his quality of playing, that his wife should not starve in her old age, submitting ourselves to part with one part to them for valuable consideration, & let them seek further satisfaction elsewhere, that is of the heirs or assigns of Mr Heminges & Mr [sic?] Condell, who had theirs of the Blackfriars of us for nothing. It is only we that suffer continually.

Therefore humbly relying upon your honourable charity in discussing [sic?] their clamour against us, we shall, as we are in duty bound, still pray for the daily increase of your Honour's health & happiness.

Nina Green)