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This issue dedicated entirely to the Shakespeare debate

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Comments on A. D. Wraight.

At first sight of her book "*The Story that the Sonnets Tell*" you get some apprehension of her method. She has divided the sonnets of Shakespeare under different headings, one part dealing with Henry Wriothesley, another part with the poet's own fate, another with the dark lady, and so on, totally cutting up the unity of the collection to place the 154 sonnets under different labels. This almost gives an impression of sacrilege, especially since the order of the sonnets probably was arranged by the poet himself for the first edition of 1609, the order creating a wonderful art form almost like a five act play. There are reasons to suppose that the poet himself never dreamed of that his sonnets would be sorted up like this in different columns.

Eventually your misgivings disappear as you read her book and understand the meaning of the division. She has lived with the sonnets wondering about their mystery for 30 years and only gradually entered on the idea to divide them under different headings just to come closer to their secret. And the result of her methodology is, to say the least, wonderful.

Just her work-out attitude is enough to raise the greatest acclamation, being of the fullest sincerity. She approaches the problem in the same way as Heinrich Schliemann decided to deal with the problem of Troy: assuming that what the poet himself has written is as close to the truth as you can get. Following that principle Schliemann discovered Troy and Mrs. A. D. Wraight solved the mystery of the Sonnets.

The basic mistake committed by all interpreters of the Sonnets is that they have assumed that there was only one man depicted in them. Dolly Wraight has found out that they are at least three, and she has successfully identified all three of them. The first one is of course Henry Wriothesley, to whose seventeenth birthday the first seventeen sonnets were commissioned by Lord Burghley to inspire him to marry his granddaughter. But the dashing earl nevertheless failed to swallow the bait, and the girl was later married to William Stanley instead. That was one of the reasons why there were not more than seventeen sonnets written to that earl.

The second young man of the Sonnets is a certain William Hatcliffe, one of two possible 'Mr. W.H.', who in real life actually was elected a sort of 'king of beauty' in a certain society, which implies that he really must have been of some handsomeness falling in the eye of not only the poet but also of the beautiful lady Lucy Morgan, a notorious beauty, who is the dark lady of the Sonnets. Apparently Hatcliffe and Miss Morgan played the poet false with each other.

The third man is Thomas Walsingham, Christopher Marlowe's sponsor, protector and truest friend, who stood him by as he unjustly dishonoured was forced into exile, for which constancy the poet was indebted to him for the rest of his life, which the most beautiful sonnets illustrate. The highlight of the entire book is the miraculous ways in which the author succeeds in proving this man's identity.

A.D.Wraight founds her arguments on the clearest basis of solidity, her research is the most painstakingly laborious and exact during almost an entire lifetime, and her work to solve the riddle of the Sonnets is unparalleled. At the same time she continues the work of a long row of predecessors, who have shown her the way, and also their research results from many decades is gloriously exposed and brought to fruition by her work.

So her hypotheses are really not even new. Most of them have been expressed before. Her main ideas were published already in the 1950s by Calvin Hoffman but unscientifically improvised in mainly conjectures without references. One can say that she has erected a completed cathedral on the sketches and ideas of amateur architects.

The scientific pregnancy and solid methodology of her work results in a definite breakthrough in Shakespeare research. She explains all the great mysteries quite satisfactorily, and all that's still missing is only occasional small pieces.

In a sequel called "*New Evidence*" she goes further, analyzing the results of discovering the secret archives of Anthony Bacon, which have remained sealed for 400 years. But here the clear scientific foundation and solid methodology, which is so impressing in the Sonnets book, is not of equal ripeness. She identifies the hand-writing of the secret agent Louis Le Doux with that of Marlowe but without being able to certify beyond any shadow of a doubt that their hand-writings really are identical: this verification she leaves to future experts. Of course, there are many positive arguments for their being the same person, but it's equally probable that Louis Le Doux in fact is that very Louis Le Doux of a Huguenot family in Canterbury who grew up there at the same time as Marlowe and who later on in life might have continued to have dealings with him. There are different possibilities. Louis Le Doux might have been a fellow agent with Marlowe in France and handled their papers, which one can assume was difficult for Marlowe to do himself, since his real identity could not be discovered without risking the security of several important persons in England. Another alternative, and perhaps the most plausible possibility of all, is that Marlowe "borrowed" the identity of Le Doux, like he "borrowed" that of W. Shakespeare, like a good playwright thus entering and impersonating their characters and playing their parts. There is very much to investigate in the archives of Anthony Bacon, which still might contain any number of secrets and wonderful or controversial discoveries.

Since we definitely seem to have slipped down along the Marlowe trace in this Shakespeare debate, we might as well present the whole case again from the beginning as concisely as possible:

The Marlowe Case - Another Presentation.

It's not about Philip Marlowe, the magnificently hard-boiled detective of Raymond Chandler's, who never could solve a case so that his readers could follow or understand anything of it, since Mr. Chandler never wrote anything without considerable alcoholic preparations.

Neither is it about the severely tried partner of Scrooge's, that poor Mr. Marlowe, whom the relentless Charles Dickens condemned to walk around for ever carrying around the heaviest and direst iron chains as a warning to all living beings and especially to that poor old miser Mr. Scrooge.

Instead I will present facts in a much stranger case much further back in time, namely the case of Christopher Marlowe, born 23rd February 1564 in the same year as Galilei and Shakespeare, exactly two months before Shakespeare and five days after the birth of Galilei and the death of Michelangelo. Yes, Michelangelo died and Galilei was born on the very same day, and Christopher Marlowe was born the week after in

Geoffrey Chaucer's old Canterbury as the son of a shoe-maker with interests in law; and also the mother of the poet was according to witnesses a remarkable personality. He was brought up in the shade of the cathedral and apparently proved so bright a pupil, that he was sent by the clerics of Canterbury with a scholarship to Cambridge, where as a young man he came in touch with all the leading intellectuals of the age at the court of Queen Elizabeth, first of all Sir Walter Raleigh, who searched for Eldorado in South America, and Sir Philip Sidney, whose friend was Giordano Bruno, who was burned at the stake for maintaining that earth orbited the sun instead of the contrary. Giordano Bruno's greatest challenge against his age was his insisting on the right of science to objective thinking as more important than any religion, and such thoughts were shared by all in the circles of Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Walter Raleigh, which included the free-thinker Marlowe.

He had been sent to Cambridge to become a cleric, but instead he became the first real dramatist of England creating the English verse drama, which later developed fully under the name of Shakespeare. Marlowe's first verse drama about the Albanian freedom fighter Scanderbeg is lost, but the major break-through of his art and of English drama was "Tamburlaine the Great", a titanic play in two parts and ten acts, which pretends to illustrate the great khan Tamerlane's life and deeds but which in fact is modelled on the brutal life of Ivan the Terrible. This was in 1588, the same year as the Great Armada sailed against England and met with its ruin and England was established as a major world power.

Marlowe then enjoyed five years of considerable success as a dramatist, especially with "Doctor Faustus", which two centuries later inspired Goethe to his life's work. He also wrote dramas about the massacre at Paris in 1572, about Dido and Aeneas, about the Turkish invasion of Malta, and introduced the great English chronicle plays with the impressive "Edward II", in which we already find the fully developed Shakespearean art brought to perfection. He also wrote poems of love.

In May 1593 he vanished without a trace. The story went about that he had been killed in a regular tavern brawl. His sudden disappearance was surrounded by whispers and rumours of scandals. It appeared he had been denounced to the English inquisition court, the Star Chamber, for heresy, blasphemies and homosexuality. His own closest associate, Thomas Kyd, also a dramatist, with whom he had collaborated and shared quarters, did himself accuse Marlowe of these crimes as he was tortured and ransacked, the police having found atheist writings at his place. Thomas Kyd claimed these belonged to Marlowe, who was arrested in the middle of May but released with instructions to keep in touch. It was to be expected, that if Marlowe was apprehended by the inquisitional court, also his other free-thinking friends would be arrested, which included not only Sir Walter Raleigh but also the philosopher Francis Bacon and a whole company of England's leading intellectuals. So when Marlowe disappeared he couldn't have done so at a more suitable moment. After his disappearance the inquisitors had nothing more to work on.

As late as in 1925 the coroner's report in the case of Marlowe was found. It seemed very fishy indeed: nothing in it made any sense, and there was reason to suspect a set-up. According to the report, Marlowe would have spent an entire day in the company of three notorious fellows, they would have dined together and had a nice day and afternoon at a private house in Deptford, and then suddenly there would have risen a

quarrel about the bill. Marlowe would then have rested on a bench behind the three companions seated at a table with their backs towards Marlowe, who suddenly would have assaulted the middle one from behind with a dagger, whereupon this man in the middle, squeezed in between the two others, would have defended himself and given Marlowe a deadly thrust above the eye, of which Marlowe would instantly have died. The cause of death as it is explained in this coroner's report is scientifically and medically impossible.

The corpse would then immediately have been shuffled down in an unknown grave somewhere abouts there in Deptford, so that no one could locate it. The three fishy companions were all acquitted and set free almost at once. They were all in the service of Thomas Walsingham, Marlowe's closest friend and protector, sponsor and employer, cousin of the late Sir Francis Walsingham, head of Queen Elizabeth's secret service, in which Marlowe himself had been an agent on missions to France. In brief, nothing in this murder case makes any sense.

That was in May 1593. The next month there is a debutant in English literature. A poem is published which immediately becomes popular and loved for its beautiful language and love story, and the poet is a certain totally unknown William Shakespeare from Stratford, recently arrived to London, an actor about whom no one knew anything. Later it would turn out that he had temporarily abandoned his much older wife and certain economical difficulties in Stratford to try his luck in London. He would make a fortune as a broker and house proprietor, actor and director and regular theatre business man with his hands full all the time. He died in 1616. Seven years later his complete works are published, 36 plays and a collection of poems, most of the works never published before and without Shakespeare actually ever having made any claims on them during his lifetime - those which had been printed before had generally been pirated.

I just present the problem. I will say nothing more at the moment.

The Difficult Case of Sir Francis Bacon.

The only thing you can be quite sure of concerning the greatest philosopher of the Elizabethan age is that his case never can be appropriately investigated. It invites to speculation for ever.

And although he was a pioneer in so many fields, predominantly philosophy and science, in which he decisively stressed the precedence and right of lucidity and logic to religious thinking, supposition and superstition, he was remarkably inept at bringing any order and clarity into his own life in the eyes of the afterworld.

We have here one of the most complicated personalities of the Renaissance, a definite universal genius where something went wrong from the start, so that his entire life (apart from his brilliant career as a thinker and writer) became dominated by a hopeless self-destructiveness. In this he demonstrates a striking resemblance with Leonardo da Vinci, another excellent genius who excelled everyone else in all fields but couldn't complete or finish anything, leaving his life's work behind him in an inextricable chaos of brilliance.

You would think that you could have expected better of Sir Francis Bacon, since he at least reached the very pinnacle of society with finally only the king above him. He worked himself up the long way in the government service as a lawyer and had generally a difficult time but came into some fortune by the relationship with the Duke of Essex, the Queen's favourite, who took Bacon under his wings from 1591. When Essex rebelled and was decapitated, Bacon was one of the leading parties of the prosecution. (Lytton Strachey has analysed and elucidated this case in his very readable work "*Elizabeth & Essex*".) Bacon then rose to power under James I and got his hands full with government business from 1613, when the production of new Shakespeare plays suddenly ceased. He was made Lord Chancellor in 1618, the highest office of the realm next to the king's, in order to after only three years be completely dishonoured, bereft of all his duties and disappear from public life with his career and reputation ruined. But it was during his last five years that he wrote his most important works mainly in Latin. He died after catching a cold from a scientific experiment involving stuffing chickens with snow in order to preserve their meat: the first deep-freeze experiment.

Even during his lifetime there were some who believed he was the man behind the Shakespeare plays. There are striking similarities in their personalities and views: the same rational attitudes towards life, 1591-1613 Bacon had provedly very much spare time to be able to write any amount of extra literature, he was educated at Cambridge (which the Shakespeare plays indicate that their author was, and which William Shakespeare from Stratford wasn't,) and a number of Shakespeare key plays were first performed at Gray's Inn, where Bacon was at the centre of things.

At this point Bacon and Marlowe seem the strongest candidates in our Shakespeare debate, both having been educated at Cambridge, which several of the plays indicate that their author must have been, and which neither the Stratford man nor Derby was.

Bacon and Marlowe are also the most tragic candidates, but the fall of Bacon appears more titanic, as he at the top of his career at the age of 60 is suddenly publicly disgraced for having taken bribes as Lord Chancellor. His disgrace couldn't have been worse, and he has to survive it. He was fined £40,000, a more than astronomical amount at that time, which of course he could never pay. It was an impossible sum, and the king remitted most of it, but Bacon could never again show his face in public. His case is like a ghostly manifestation of both King Lear and Timon of Athens, although both plays were written much earlier.

This tragedy seems to have followed him into the Shakespeare debate. Towards the end of the 19th century people found out that Bacon must have been Shakespeare, and as advocates of this theory appeared great authorities like Mark Twain, Henry James, Bernard Shaw and Daphne du Maurier. But the Baconians gradually demonstrated the same self-destructiveness as Bacon himself. They lost themselves into cryptogram speculations, the belief that Bacon had left behind a lot of cipher writings, there were legends told about him of the very kind which he himself most of all had detached himself from, they tried to make him the great prophet of the freemasons in England, and all this made the Baconians appear more and more ridiculous. Other candidates, like Oxford, Derby and Marlowe, then appeared less ridiculous in comparison.

To all this comes the inevitable backstage life of Bacon. He was sickly in all his life, probably chronically neurotic and overstrung, he made himself socially impossible by his arrogant manners, (he was not at all a brilliant courtier like Leonardo da Vinci,) his

overbearing ambitions made him an intolerable careerist, and like his brother Anthony Bacon he was notorious for being a homosexual, for which he was even prosecuted as a young man, just like Leonardo da Vinci. All his life he kept a small court of young men around him, mostly servants, clerks and pages, whom he shared beds with. In his forties he married a rich heiress of 14, which improved his economy while the marriage was without issue.

This backstage life, which gives us a less attractive picture of Bacon as an opportunist, egoist and materialist, is difficult to join with the exalted and self-effacing art of Shakespeare. At the most it's possible to assume that Bacon could have been the final editor of "*The First Folio*" 1623, but it's very difficult to turn him into the sole author of all the plays and poems. He appears as something like the Joker of the business, whose importance to the whole deck of cards is unoverstimable but at the same time undefinable.

Fact and Speculation in the Case of John Penry.

John Penry was hanged on May 29th 1593. He was no ordinary criminal but highly educated at Cambridge and Oxford with contacts among the highest in intellectual society, notably among free-thinkers like Francis Bacon and the Earl of Essex. He was a Presbyterian of honest faith and is still regarded in his home area of north Wales as a martyr. But strangest of all about this execution was, that he was not allowed to say farewell to his wife or his four daughters. He was hanged suddenly and in secret and was actually fetched without warning directly from his dinner to his scaffold. Neither was he honoured with any funeral, but his body disappeared without a trace, and no grave of his has ever become known. What heinous crime could deserve such a dishonourable dismissal? He had been too outspoken. He had dared to criticize highly honoured bishops and archbishops, and these had taken their revenge by having him libelled as a revolutionary and a dangerous traitor. One person especially had good motives for getting even with the pious John Penry, namely the Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift, notoriously well known as the leading witch-hunter of free-thinkers. Also John Penry had studied at Cambridge at the same time as Marlowe, they were about the same age and of the same intellectual capacity. One who fully shared John Penry's criticism of the ecclesiastical authorities was 'Martin Marprelate', a notorious and unknown writer of pamphlets, whose identity remains a mystery to this day. This Martin Marprelate could, in his pamphlets, call the Archbishop of Canterbury names like "Beelzebub of Canterbury", "Canterbury Caiphas", "monstrous anti-Christ", "bloody tyrant" and things like that. This Marprelate affair is an entirely local phenomenon in Canterbury 1588-89, where Christopher Marlowe's family had its home and where John Penry was busy at the time. The caustic mockery of the Marprelate pamphlets is shatteringly ironic and has been compared with Jonathan Swift and Mark Twain. So they are actually funny. The essence of his argument is: NO MORE BISHOPS! He calls all the bishops of England, Wales and Ireland 'petty popes' and 'petty Anti-Christ's' and doesn't hesitate to name them all. The chief target for this poison was the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, who tried to answer with the full solemnity of his high office, whereupon Marprelate used his (i.e. Whitgift's) own words to ridicule

him even more. The provocative unorthodoxy of John Penry was well known, since he preached in public, so it was logical to suspect him of being 'Martin Marprelate', especially since his writings provedly came from the same printing-press as the Marprelate pamphlets. But John Penry denied with firmness that he even knew who Martin Marprelate was, and this is accepted today as the truth, since John Penry, a solemn preacher, didn't demonstrate much sense of humour, while the mocking ironies of 'Marprelate' are those of a clown.

It falls easier to combine the character of Marprelate with that of Marlowe. (Compare also 'Oliver Martext' in "As You Like It".) The Marprelate mocking style is identical with what we find in Marlowe's most maliciously ironic plays like 'Doctor Faustus', wherein he transcends all limits of decorum and decency. Marlowe might very well have been the man behind Martin Marprelate's ruthless chaffing of the Anglican establishment; but he must have been aware of John Penry's criticism of the episcopal authorities, which might have served as inspiration to Marprelate's boldness. But John Penry got all the blame.

His house was searched and his writings confiscated and, if he had not managed to escape to Scotland in disguise, he would have been arrested. But his trials had only started. The Queen demanded of King James of Scotland that he be extradited, but King James said he could not be found. Yet he returned to England after two years and was arrested on March 22nd 1593. They tried to convert him from the heresies of Wycliffe and Luther, but he remained firm in his Separatist convictions. On May 21st he was put to trial for "rebellion and insurrection", and his own confiscated writings were used as evidence against him, just like the writings found in the quarters of Thomas Kyd were used against that unfortunate playwright together with torture to extort confessions of heresy and conspiracy. Although nothing could be proved against John Penry, he was condemned to death for treason. He protested his loyalty to the Prime Minister Lord Burghley and the Earl of Essex, but May 25th was fixed as the day of execution. But when his family and friends came on that day to witness the execution it was postponed, and they had to return home. Instead he was executed in secret four days later without any witnesses. Perhaps the authorities feared the effects of a public execution of such a famous and revered person. It was one of the worst judicial murders of the time and, after the Mary Stuart affair, perhaps the darkest stain on the glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth.

This strange business coincides almost exactly with the arrest and 'murder' of Christopher Marlowe, officially 'murdered' the day after John Penry. This remarkable coincidence must give rise to suspicions. As a well-informed government spy, Marlowe must have been aware of the arrest of Penry since March and maybe even of his sentence to death. David A. More presents a theory that the body inspected by coroner Danby on June 2nd actually was that of John Penry, which during the night darkness would have been smuggled into Deptford only four miles from where John Penry had been executed on the road to Canterbury. Psychologically the theory would fit, although it seems too far-fetched to be credible: any body could have been used, and during these days of the plague there were bodies galore. A connection between John Penry and Christopher Marlowe has never been established, but if Marlowe was 'Martin Marprelate' (and there is hardly any other candidate who would fit that clown's measure) it would be very unlikely that two secret pamphleteers using the same

printing-press would know nothing about each other. Dave More's theory suggests other theories, one of them being that Marlowe as a dramatic genius actually staged his own death, although there is no proof of it, but it's not unthinkable. Another one is that Marlowe allowed his brother of destiny, John Penry, to depart as a martyr under his (Marlowe's) name. We can't here present all the various possibilities of Marlowe's own attitudes to his situation and what he made of it at this point. All we can do is to try to consider all possibilities. If Marlowe knew about Penry's trial and sentence, it must have motivated him to abandon the scene. This suggests that Marlowe was part in the strange staging of the set-up at Eleanor Bull's. All that was needed to fool the coroner's 16 witnesses was to inflict an extra deep wound in the head of a fresh corpse. Since John Penry was presented fully dressed, if it was he, or any hanged corpse, the jurors would not have noticed any noose marks round the victim's neck and even less bothered to look for any such thing. There was no need to be particular, fresh corpses were common in those days, they appeared everywhere in Queen Elizabeth's London, especially in the days of the Plague, and only in rare cases were investigations carried out and then without any exaggerated meticulousness. Further, Coroner Danby must have had access to any number of fresh corpses and, if he was in the plot, could easily have produced one. But circumstances actually point to that the dead body of 'Marlowe' could very well have been John Penry.

Thus Marlowe, his past settled, especially his problematic associations with Penry and Kyd, could, like a phoenix, be born anew and continue his work but under completely different names than Christopher Marlowe. For he was now officially dead and liberated from the risk and burden of ever again being an embarrassment to anyone.

Although Dave More's theory can't be proven, it certainly invites investigation.

Apology for Shakespeare, by John Bede.

With all due respect to all your candidates like Bacon, Rutland, Derby, Marlowe, Heywood, Oxford and others, but wouldn't William Shakespeare at least deserve a place in the sun along with them? After all, he has nothing else. Marlowe is credited with the invention of the Elizabethan drama in blank verse, and no honour is greater than that. Both Derby, Rutland and Oxford were Earls and couldn't get any more established nor more honourable positions in life. They got all the good things out of life without having to bother to write any ever-living poetry, which their titles and honours hardly motivated them to aspire to. As for Bacon, he rose to become the richest and most powerful man in England at that time, and more than that: of Ireland and Scotland as well, so why would he have bothered to foster ambitions to become the greatest of poets as well? It doesn't make sense. All his writings breathe unilaterally of only worldly not to say materialistic ambitions. When he blundered and lost everything all the Shakespeare tragedies were long ago written, and why would he have felt like writing such dark tragedies while being only and entirely successful?

Thomas Heywood had his own speciality of domestic plays and, like Rutland, was too young to have been capable of for instance the great Henry VI tragedies. Of course, let's give credit where it is due: Thomas Heywood continued after Jonson and

Shakespeare and kept the stage going and did a marvellous lot of editing as well, probably, since he confessed to having been meddling with at least 220 Elizabethan plays. That's a confession to respect, and there is nothing to disprove it. But he did not confess to having composed any of the Shakespeare plays.

So who is left? William Shakespeare. He has nothing left without his plays. Rob him of his authorship, and exactly nothing remains. Who can be so cruel? Especially since he actually might have written them, since there is nothing to disprove it.

I admit, there is no evidence of his authorship. His canon was published long after he was dead, and no one attended his funeral. No one praised him as a playwright before "The First Folio" seven years after his death. But all the poems and compliments of "The First Folio" can not be disproved. There is nothing, absolutely nothing to argue against their authenticity and honesty. Shakespeare *might* have been the sole author of the 36 plays and probably some more, and he was the first one to be acknowledged as such.

And you must admit, that there is a grain of convincing authenticity in John Aubrey's anecdotes, how Shakespeare held speeches at the death of his father's, the butcher's cattle. He was handsome and of a stately figure, prerequisites for a good actor. No one has ever questioned him as an actor. Can you find a single professional actor among all the other candidates? And who but an actor could have written so perfectly for the voice?

Please grant William Shakespeare what hasn't been denied him since 1623. Why start harassing and dishonouring him now? None of the others needed the glory of William Shakespeare. They had their own glories. William Shakespeare's sole glory is his plays. Don't take them away from him, please, if you are gentlemen.

- John Bede.

Presenting a Baconian problem.

During the years 1594-96 Sir Francis Bacon made some notes in a book which he called "The Promus of Formularies and Elegancies", usually called just "Promus". For 200 years it was unknown, and it wasn't published until 1883. Since then it has been the strongest argument of the Baconians that Bacon wrote all of Shakespeare's works, since this diary happens to contain a great number of Shakespeare quotations from plays that in 1596 had not yet been written.

Of course this was an unbearable insult to all Stratfordians. It was the first great hit under the waterline in the bulk of Shakespeare orthodoxy, the acknowledged and self-evident fact since 1623 that the works of Shakespeare could have no other author than William Shakespeare. And there was no lack of arguments against the testimony of the Promus. Such quotations that were found in Bacon's diary, Stratfordians said, were daily expressions of that time used by anyone and no idiosyncratic expressions of Shakespeare's at all. And those Shakespeare quotations from the Promus which matched exactly with expressions used in the plays were less than a few. Someone else, who had been close to Bacon, might have used the Promus and its smart formulations. If you examine closely the details of the Promus you can explain away almost every indication that Bacon would have been Shakespeare.

But you can't explain everything away. Certain things are too obvious to be ignored. The Promus is written in all those languages mastered by Bacon, that is English, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish and French. It's exactly those languages that the writings of Shakespeare bear witness of that their author must have known. The first Stratfordian never entered a university, remained at home among the illiterates of Stratford until he was almost thirty, whiled away his time in Stratford mostly on petty processes and quarrels about money with his neighbours being otherwise busy only with his much older wife and their three children, and concerned himself in London as a practical theatre business man only with making money. He never went abroad and didn't leave to posterity one single letter or book. His own daughter couldn't even write her own name. In brief, everything speaks loudly about his being totally uneducated but having a good nose for making money.

Strangest in the Promus are all the quotations from "King Lear", which wasn't written until ten years after the Promus was penned down. There are also other links between Bacon and King Lear. The play is founded on an earlier play, "King Leir", with a difference. In "King Leir" the king does not go mad, and his daughters do not try to declare him incapacitated. Shortly before "King Lear" was written, a strange case had its course in the courts of Bacon and his colleagues: an old servant to the crown was getting soft-headed, and his two eldest daughters tried to have him declared insane, so that they could take over his property. His third daughter appealed as far as possible, trying in vain to prevent the tragedy of Sir Brian Annesley, who had served the Queen well in all his life, ending up as a publicly pronounced madman. In the height of this controversy, Sir Brian died. The name of his youngest daughter happened to be Cordell.

How many could have been familiar with this peculiar law case? Very few outside court. Most of Shakespeare's plays betray a professional familiarity with court proceedings, while William Shakespeare was just an actor and theatre business man with no legal training at all.

If Bacon really wrote Shakespeare's plays, he must have been extremely careful about hiding this authorship, since that's what he succeeded in to perfection: still today it is impossible to bind him to any of the plays and poems, although many have tried in various ways. But we can't neglect the possibility. In view of all the other things that Bacon wrote, highbrow philosophy in Latin with ambitions to reform the world, he could have amused himself with writing intriguing plays off-hand, which he then would have had every reason to keep separate from his more serious authorship. Whoever wrote them, (and the more we learn, the more the improbability appears that it was Shakespeare,) he had every reason to hide that authorship. William Shakespeare was probably the ideal play-broker who knew to keep silent about secrets that fattened his pockets.

At least it is evident that Sir Francis Bacon must have had something decisive to do with at least the final edition of Shakespeare's works. The problem is to have his part in the set-up defined - if he acted as an author or editor, partly or wholly.

"There's more to it than meets the eye."

The Perfect Set-Up - A Summary of the (lack of) Evidence.

There is no proof that Shakespeare wrote the works of Shakespeare, and there never was. But by "The First Folio" in 1623 it was established that Shakespeare had written them, and no one objected to it. It was very safe to establish Shakespeare as the sole author in 1623 since he had been dead for seven years. No one bothered about the fact that the texts in "The First Folio" did not correspond to the quarto texts issued while Shakespeare had been alive. The first objections were raised when it was far too late to raise any objections, was the main argument of the established Shakespeare academicians. No matter how overwhelmingly logical the arguments are against Shakespeare as the author, the established Shakespeare academicians can always point at the authentic texts of "The First Folio" and say: "There you are. As long as you can't prove these texts to be wrong you have no argument. Evidence, please!" And complacently they can continue acting as established Shakespeare academicians.

But their position is untenable, and gradually they find it more difficult to defend their case. The circumstantial evidence against Shakespeare in favour of Bacon, Oxford, Derby or Marlowe is constantly getting more attention and on their nerves. The Bacon case is clear: everything points to him as the editor of "The First Folio" with the assistance of Ben Jonson, who made his career getting paid for writing lies. But there is one flaw in the Bacon case - the Sonnets, which can't be fitted into Bacon's life. Concerning Oxford, no one fits the Shakespeare personality better, and "Hamlet" could be Oxford's autobiography. But there is one problem with Oxford: by 1604 he was already dead. But he had a son-in-law, a theatre maniac like himself, William Stanley, one of the most mysterious characters among the Elizabethans, who has left no trace of himself in history except some printed music, a handful of letters, some quarrels with his wife suggesting the character of Othello, a long poem about his journeys all over Europe including Turkey and Russia as a youth, the fact that Richard Lloyd (the man behind Holofernes in "Love's Labour's Lost") was his tutor and chaperon on his journeys, a fabulous position as governor of the Isle of Man, the important ownership of some London theatre companies, and three sons. His brother and predecessor as Earl of Derby, Ferdinando, was one of the leading theatre enthusiasts and free-thinkers until he was poisoned by Catholics in April 1594 because he wouldn't take on their cause although he was a Catholic and cousin to the Queen. They wanted him for a candidate to the crown, and after his death they also investigated William's possible candidature but found him too busy writing comedies. No one knows what happened to those comedies, nor have they ever been identified. The Stanley brothers also had a cousin called William Stanley in Spain who was a traitor. So Will Stanley had every reason to keep as low a profile as possible, his elder brother being poisoned and his cousin (with his own name) being a traitor. And his name always has a startling effect in Shakespeare discussions: whenever the 6th Earl of Derby is mentioned, all Shakespeare arguments fall silent. The fact that after his death in September 1642 all the theatres of England were closed down by the Puritans and the civil war started, adds to his mystery. Many high academicians and experts of literature have believed him to be the real Shakespeare, but the Sonnets don't quite fit into his life either.

Finally we have Christopher Marlowe, the main creator of the Elizabethan blank verse drama, who officially was done away with under suspicious circumstances

around Pentecost in 1593. In 1905 an accidental scientific investigation conducted by Doctor Mendenhall in Boston of texts by Bacon, Shakespeare and Marlowe indicated with overwhelming clarity that Shakespeare and Marlowe used identical language and word techniques. In 1925 Leslie Hotson discovered Coroner Danby's report on the murder of Christopher Marlowe, a report which in 1925 didn't fool anyone any more, since it could scientifically be proved a fake. In 1955 Calvin Hoffman launched the theory that the murder of Christopher Marlowe had been a set-up to save Marlowe's life, and he produced a body of work of 700 pages to prove it. Of course, it was only circumstantial evidence. The Stratfordians could remain calm as usual and neglect it as "no evidence". In 1995 A.D. Wraight published "The Story that the Sonnets Tell", the most thorough study of the Sonnets ever made and the only one successfully explaining the mysteries of most of them. Her work clearly shows that the Sonnets fit Christopher Marlowe perfectly and no one else.

So it all points to Marlowe having continued his work as a dramatist under the cover of William Shakespeare, maybe also under the cover of others like John Webster, perhaps collaborating with Beaumont & Fletcher, perhaps borrowing even other occasional names. If it was he, he most probably spent some years up in Lancashire under the protection of Derby, where he learnt much Lancashire expressions demonstrated in plays like "Hamlet". And most probably, Francis Bacon must have been one of his associates and maybe his protector. Bacon and Derby had much legal business together.

But the Stratfordians can remain calm. There is still no proof against Mr. Shakespeare being the sole author of the entire First Folio. Shakespeare's name remains established since 1623, and things like "The Story that the Sonnets Tell", Calvin Hoffman's findings, Doctor Mendenhall's accidental research with its astonishing results that no one expected, Coroner Danby's fabrication, "Hamlet", the Sonnets, the strange fate of Marlowe - they are just stories.

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The Agincourt and Balaclava day.

Melancholy.

The first great dramatic play of the English Renaissance is 'The Spanish Tragedy', after his death attributed to Thomas Kyd. It's a very melancholy work about grief, injustice, madness and revenge, a perfect prelude to the great Elizabethan tragedies, offering even ghosts and a play in the play. Already here Elizabethan tragedy is ripe. But who wrote it?

Thomas Kyd himself only put his name under translations. He shared quarters with Marlowe, and most scholars believe they collaborated, for instance in 'The Spanish Tragedy', 'Arden of Feversham' and 'The Murder of John Brewen'. It is certain that Kyd did no dramatic work after the success of 'Tamburlaine' in 1588. Marlowe was the star, and Kyd did not challenge him. That fact makes it quite possible that Marlowe wrote all the works of Kyd except the translations. The strong melancholy of 'The Spanish

Tragedy' also dominates many if not most of the plays under the names of Marlowe and Shakespeare, culminating in the Sonnets, the tetralogy of Henry VI and the great tragedies.

'The Winter's Tale' is the last instance, but then it suddenly reappears in the works of John Webster and Robert Burton - after Shakespeare had retired from the stage.

There are many startling reminiscences of Marlowe in Webster's three greatest plays, 'The White Devil', 'The Duchess of Malfi' and 'The Devil's Law-Case'. Like 'Henry VIII', 'The White Devil' has the ambition to be true to reality - and succeeds very well. It's a shattering drama about a Venetian courtesan unaware of the havoc she creates in the lives of her lovers, ruining them all; but the main character is the knave Flamineo, a clown in wit comparable with Hamlet and Falstaff, recalling the early villains of Marlowe. Already 'Pericles' has a melancholy scent of Marlovian nostalgia - not to speak of 'As You Like It' and other comedies.

But from where did John Webster get the story of the Duke of Bracciano with its intimate shocking details? There is a story that Marlowe served the Bracciano family, the duke of Orsino, whom he gives the leading part in 'Twelfth Night' to honour him during his visit to England in 1600. This story would explain the expert knowledge 'from inside the family' about the fatal whore of Venice in an earlier generation.

In his preface to 'The White Devil', John Webster explicitly states, that he wishes to be read in the lights of Chapman, Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Shakespeare, Dekker and Heywood. Why does he not mention Marlowe in this context, the one dramatist he resembles the most? Maybe because he was Marlowe in disguise, a Marlowe already a professional in hiding. The one obvious characteristic of the author behind all the Shakespeare works is a complete self-effacement. Nothing is known about this 'John Webster', not even when he was born or when he died, and it was a name common enough.

Both the Webster tragedies also bring up Portia, from 'The Merchant of Venice' and the wife of Brutus. In early Kyd-Marlowe literature the Portia character is mentioned as a future project. The court scene in 'The White Devil' is in direct continuity from all the court scenes in Shakespeare - there is another even greater one in 'The Devil's Law-Case', - and there are obvious parallels between the character of Vittoria Corombona and the Dark Lady of the Sonnets. Both the Webster tragedies also treat the most typical Marlowe theme of all - banishment and exile.

'The Duchess of Malfi' is even more melancholy than 'The White Devil'; but the most melancholy work of all is Robert Burton's deeply religious 'The Anatomy of Melancholy', a giant work of perfection, in architecture very much reminiscent of the Kyd-Marlowe-Shakespeare-Webster drama.

If Marlowe wrote this work in his old age (quoting all the Marlowe-Shakespeare sources, especially Ovid, but Marlowe more than Shakespeare,) it would explain why he left off writing plays - he grew religious. There is an old saying, that 'when the devil comes of age he becomes religious.'

My point is the reflection that all this overwhelming flow of eloquent melancholy in great Elizabethan literature could come from one and the same source.

If Marlowe survived 1593, he had reasons enough for melancholy. It's more difficult to find any depths of melancholy in Derby with his settled family life. Oxford did of

course have reasons for melancholy, but he died in 1604, while the melancholy literature continued and grew greater without him.

I am not stating this theory as a fact. But since there are other 'super' theories, like the 'super-Oxford-theory', the 'super-Bacon-theory' and the 'super-Derby-theory', a 'super-Marlowe-theory' deserves equal attention and consideration.

The Mystery, by Laila Roth.

Oxford - the vain bully, turning his theatre company into a street gang, boasting his vanity, killing his guardian's servant for nothing, ridiculed but tolerated and given a pension of £1000 a year by the Queen - for what? For his Sonnets, that merely preluded those that followed, or for all his lost plays, finished off by others? We shall never know. But the end of his 54 years saw the Advent of Hamlet, Othello and King Lear.

Bacon - the snob, the ambitious universal genius, England's Leonardo da Vinci, scientist, lawyer and politician, but playwright? Hardly. He was too aloof for that and too busy about political intrigue against Essex, his benefactor, the romantic Earl, the embodiment of all Shakespearean heroes and the extreme opposite of all that was Sir Francis Bacon.

Derby - the stealthy Earl with the initials W.S. and the given name of Will, the owner of various theatre companies, maybe even of the Lord Camberlain's men, who staged most of Shakespeare's plays, mad with jealousy about his beautiful but wanton wife, king of the Isle of Man, the universal traveller and perfect diplomat, who left no trace of himself to posterity and whose home and library were destroyed by the Puritans - for what? For sealing the Shakespeare secret for ever?

Marlowe - the rebellious pioneer, the dramatic genius, the dynamic creator of effects, on stage and backstage, in social life and in society, who somehow got stuck in his problem with Doctor Faustus' pact with the Devil and never got out of the Devil's clutches himself.

Shakespeare - the honest business man from the country, who knew all about delivering and transacting speeches, who brought the seeds of Marlowe into the world's most lasting and beautiful winter garden, perhaps the most English of Englishmen, leaving behind him an unfathomable enigma of a perfect poker face on stage for ever.

Webster - the final dramatist, mainly interested in court cases, making a lot of fuss about women, perhaps having some difficulty with their essence, leaving behind him the deepest mystery of all - a perfected English drama of neither tragedy nor comedy but only of ambiguity, mocking posterity more than all his predecessors did, by not leaving behind him a single known fact about his life - as if he never existed.

What shall we think? Six characters, but one mystery? And what name has that mystery? Marlowe was the first to die, if he died. Oxford died at the peak of the English drama. Shakespeare died before its decline. Bacon died dishonoured in loneliness after having been the most powerful man in England. We shall never know when Webster died or if he died. And when Derby died, all the theatres of England closed down, and the final civil war broke out, destroying all evidence of who really wrote the works of Shakespeare.

Laila Roth

More Marlowe Theories.

Of course I would never exclude Shakspeare completely from any share in the honour of the excellent work of the First Folio. On the contrary, I would grant him any honour in it - except the exclusive authorship, which, mark well, he never even claimed himself.

Yes, his name was used for the plays and poems, but in those days it was common among the players to "own" the plays they acted, occasionally selling them to publishers when they needed some extra money. That's probably how all the Quartos were published, which also accounts for their many corruptions and truncations, one example being "Richard Duke of York" published anonymously in 1595 and not published again until about 30 years later in the FF as "Henry VI part 3" by William Shakespeare. But "Richard Duke of York" is considered by experts like John Bakeless, Edward Thomas, Tucker Brooke and Allison Gaw among others to be by Marlowe, Thomas giving good reasons for his natural assumption, there being so many reminiscences of "Edward II" and the language of Marlowe. In fact, the language of Marlowe's last and Shakspeare's first works are so like each other as to be almost identical. For instance, "Venus and Adonis" and "Hero and Leander" are both written as if both authors knew the other poem by heart, which is pointed out by Charles Norman, who does not (in 1948) suggest they were written by the same man.

But that idea is irrejectable, since there are so many curiosities and phenomena pointing in that direction. If Shakspeare wrote "Henry VI part 3" and not Marlowe, he must have stolen the entire idea and all the central scenes from Marlowe, which would make him a thief. Few would accept that. The other idea is that there must have been a singular collaboration between Marlowe and Shakspeare, which possibility many would support, including myself.

But what would the nature of this collaboration have been? It would be very difficult to reconstruct and define, but it must have been very special. My theory is that it must have been one of those extremely rare coincidences of destiny, when two fates met at a crisis and joined hands to save each other from a mutual dilemma but of two very different natures.

I think a certain pseudonym called 'Benedict' hit the point when he depicted the situation in a theatrical scene, which shows publishers brooding over the already completed printing of "Venus and Adonis", realizing they can't publish it in the author's name, since he has been totally scandalized, his name having become anathema, branded forever by Puritans as Atheist, the worst libel of all. The realism of the situation is that if they publish it in his name they won't succeed in selling a single copy.

At that moment a certain Stratford man comes to London trying his luck, having been forced to leave Stratford for its desperate unemployment situation in these difficult times of the Plague, coming to London for the sole purpose of making money in order to support himself and his family. He has done some acting, so he looks for something to do at the theatre in the precise moment when the news is spread that the great Marlowe of "Tamburlaine the Great" is dead, the whole free-thinking upper class giving a sigh of relief, since they all knew he had been under threat of arrest and torture for Atheism, Thomas Kyd having already been racked and made to confess. With the ensured total silence of Marlowe, the safety of the Walsinghams, the Cecils, the Bacons, the Catholics

Oxford and Derby, Sir Walter Raleigh, Northumberland and many others was also ensured.

But who was this fresh country actor from Stratford? He was found to be a decent chap of good humour and honesty, with a nice flow of speech, a reliable actor of some talent and stability of mind. Why don't we help him along? What about using that untarnished unknown name for that exquisite poem, unpublishable in the name of Marlowe? He might need some money, Marlowe has left us so he won't object, and Sir Thomas Walsingham will surely agree. Let's give Will Shakspere a chance of making an honest career. And Will Shakspere, needing some money rather badly, was not so stupid as to decline the offer. The publishers contributed some convincing dedicatory epistle in flattery of the young earl of Southampton for his covering some of the costs - and it all turned out a greater success than expected. This started the triumphant victory path of the trademark William Shakespeare, and the honest man who had appeared on the right spot at the right moment did not object but knew how to play his part and sustain it, since his livelihood was saved.

Meanwhile Marlowe kept away most probably in Italy for many years, keeping busy writing new Italian plays in Verona and later making friends with the Duke Orsino di Bracciano, for whom he wrote "Twelfth Night" to be staged in London to welcome the Duke at the court of Queen Elizabeth for a few days around Twelfth Night in 1600. It's quite possible and even probable that Marlowe and Shakspere never met each other. The business between them was wholly transacted by agents, through Sir Thomas Walsingham and through Sir Francis Bacon and his brother Anthony, who kept up the network of all English agents around Europe. No one else needed to know except those very few who were needed to arrange delivery and production. For Shakspere, it was purely a business matter - no questions asked, since there was nothing to complain about. Mum was the only word needed to keep up business.

Enter Ben Jonson, who being so much younger knew nothing about the Marlowe crisis. So he would suspect nothing if he was told nothing. His admiration of Shakspere was totally unreserved and sincere, and there is no reason to suspect any conscious falsity on his part. He knew Shakspere from his fellow actor's best side, and he did not bother about what he did not know. His style is totally alien from the Marlovian-Shakespearean romanticism, which fact marks the Marlowe-Shakespeare style more sharply as unique and united.

But of course, the show could not go on forever, and in the end Shakspere was satisfied enough to pull out of business and enjoy his last years at home without having to put on any acts any more. He had made enough money to be the richest citizen of Stratford, so he had nothing to complain of and just continued to keep his silence about the best deal of his life. He retired, and Marlowe suddenly found himself without a reliable nom de plume agent.

Will Shakspere was a most common name in those days, and it had done well enough as a trademark. Why not repeat the successful formula? Enter John Webster.

Nothing is known about John Webster. It's an even more common name than Will Shakspere, a thousand John Websters have been found from that time and many of them studied law, so it was a perfect name to use for continued concealment.

In some respects, John Webster differs from Marlowe and Shakspere. His pen doesn't flow easily, he complains himself about the slowness of his invention, his

intrigues are more morbid and melancholy, and his clowns aren't funny. They are just melancholy. There is a dark shadow growing ever darker on John Webster, and he hasn't left us many plays, only one handful: "The White Devil", "The Duchess of Malfi", "The Devil's Law-Case", "The Fair Maid of the Inn" and "Appius and Virginia", every single one of them set in Italy, the last one being a Roman complement to "The Rape of Lucrece". Every one of them fights with the devil and melancholy, and in most of them you find the classical Marlowe-Shakespeare arguments of the problems of exile and injustice, the dominant theme of the Sonnets. All of them dramatize trials and court-cases very much reminding of those in Shakespeare, and "The White Devil" is like a dramatization of the 'black lady incident' in the Sonnets: you recognize her at once.

So John Webster is entirely within the Marlowe-Shakespeare romantic tradition, and they have all three exactly the same human outlook, which only Jonson differs from. Webster continues harping on the old Marlowe-Shakespeare themes, he loves Montaigne and Philip Sidney (long ago dead), and there are some stunning direct reminiscences of Marlowe here and there. In his only foreword his main argument is against ignorance, thus echoing the program of Marlowe: "I hold there is no sin but ignorance," and you find everywhere in his writings that same self-destructive tendency which marks all of Marlowe's and Shakespeare's heroes. The "Rhymer" Webster characterizes thus:

"A rhymer is a fellow whose face is thatched all over with impudence, and should he be hanged or pillored, it is armed for it. He is a juggler with words, yet practises the art with most uncleanly conveyance. He doth boggle very often, and because himself winks at it, thinks it is not perceived: the main thing that ever he did was the tune he sang to. There is nothing in the earth so pitiful, no, not an ape-carrier, he is not worth thinking of, and therefore I must leave him as nature left him: a Dunghill not well laid together."

And this is the very Finale of his 32 "Characters", anonymously published in 1615. Whose voice is this? Haven't we heard it before? Yes, it's the dying Greene, cursing his own profession, entreating his "prophet Marlin" to abandon it, scolding all actors universally for their conceit. There were more echoes of it in Thomas Kyd as he denounced Marlowe to the authorities, trying to avoid further strain in show-business himself, cowardly betraying his own calling. It's the suicide monologue of Hamlet and the "tomorrows" of Macbeth. And the author is still harping on that dismal tune of total doubt through the empty name of John Webster. The disillusion is still as total as when Greene and Kyd denounced him and Baines informed against him, forcing him to renounce his own name, career and character in order to save others:

"Thus men must slight their wrongs, or else conceal them,
when general safety wills us not reveal them."

- John Webster, Appius and Virginia, act II scene 2,

which could stand as a motto for the life's work of this romantic Marlowe-Shakespeare-Webster poet.

Another typical Marlowe reminder in Webster: in his one preface he explicitly honours all the theatre poets of his day, in whose light he wishes to be read: Chapman, Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Shake-speare, Dekker and Heywood - in that order. Only Marlowe was left out, and yet no one resembles Marlowe more than Webster. The corollary is of course that Webster could have left out Marlowe because he was Marlowe.

Of course there is a lot more to it than that. This was only an introduction to the puzzle, and I have tried to make it as simple as possible, sticking only to the basics in the case. Let me just give you one more mystery.

One of the first and greatest Elizabethan plays was "The Spanish Tragedy" attributed to Thomas Kyd, who lived and worked together with Marlowe. Kyd died in 1594, and some ten years later "The Spanish Tragedy" was supplied with many extra lines. It has been assumed that they were written by Jonson, but they are contrary to the style of Jonson, who never wrote anything like them. They are rather like the fury of king Lear; but why would Shakspeare have added extra highly inspired lines to a play by a dead poet whom he never knew? But many found these extra lines very Websterian in nature. So of course it was Webster. But again: why would Webster have added so mighty inspired lines to a classical play by a dead poet who died before Webster even had come of age? There is no connection, and there is no possibility to solve the riddle of those extra lines entirely in the high romantic Marlowe-Shakespeare-Webster tradition, unless you include Marlowe himself in the picture, who lived and worked with Thomas Kyd and must have loved him, no matter how much Tom Kyd later cowardly betrayed him.

This is all of course just a theory, but as a theory it will stand in the name of Marlowe against all anti-Marlovians until it is proven false.

The Shakespeare Debate

In May 17-19th there will be a Shakespeare seminar in Gothenburg conducted by the Gothenburg Writing Society, during which the authorship issue will be discussed thoroughly. We hardly expect to reach any solution to the problem. The best we can hope for are new research results that might add to what little lights we have in this dark issue. In due order the five foremost candidates to the honour of having written Shakespeare's works will be presented with their main arguments: William Shakespeare, Sir Francis Bacon, Earl Edward de Vere of Oxford, his son-in-law Earl William Stanley of Derby and Christopher Marlowe. Sir Walter Raleigh and the Earl of Rutland will probably also appear in the discussions. Our main purpose is to bring forth what constructive arguments there are for all these five candidatures. We have no purpose to refute any of them, although the discussion and presentation of counter-arguments also naturally will be inevitable. Our basic view is that all these seven were more or less responsible for the emergence of these works which are considered the perhaps finest literary and poetical treasure of the western world comparable only with the Bible, Homer and Dante.

Gothenburg, April 23rd, 2002.