

PART XII

THE HISTORICAL WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Peter Holland, University of Notre Dame, United States

One of the principal purposes of biographical inquiry, of the centuries of investigation into the details of the life of The Historical William Shakespeare (THWS), has been driven by a yearning to make connections between what we have uncovered about Shakespeare's life and the works he wrote. The works precede the biographical inquiry and control it. The facts of the life are thus read as passing through the writer to create the works. The blank space in the middle – what was actually happening in Shakespeare's mind or his emotional life – is filled by the biographer with the specific way in which the outer traces (the material traces of the life and those of the writings) are designed to match up.

This chapter is not a summary of what we know of Shakespeare's biography. Instead, it explores what has been done and what might be done with the facts, how they can make it possible – but more often impossible – for us to fill in the blank space in the middle. Attempts to do so produce frustrations, and the cradle-to-grave format of traditional biography has always had too many gaps to acknowledge, too many hypotheses and possibilities. An alternative mode recently has been to explore a version of microbiography, concentrating on, for instance, a single year in Shakespeare's life, on his time as a lodger with the Mountjoy family in London, or on his wife. The pieces of the puzzle that such works of scholarship explore stand as signs not for the whole but of the impossibility of there ever being a recoverable whole.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Three deaths and one memory
- From life to works
- Questioning William Shakespeare
- Naming the author
- “None else of name”
- Two wills
- Stories and legends
- Reinventing Shakespeare biography

108. LIFE DOCUMENTS

Robert Bearman, independent scholar, United Kingdom

Shakespeare's life is not as poorly evidenced as is sometimes supposed. This chapter catalogs the surviving documents of Shakespeare's personal life, excluding documents relating to his theatrical interests.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- The Stratford-upon-Avon parish register
- Shakespeare's marriage, 1582
- Grant of arms, 1596
- Early residence in London, 1596–1598
- The purchase of New Place, 1597
- The “Quiney letters,” 1598
- The “note of corn and malt,” 1598
- Thomas Whittington, 1601
- Purchase of 107 acres in Old Stratford, 1602
- Copyhold property in Chapel Lane, 1602
- Purchase of a share in the Stratford tithes, 1605
- The Addenbrooke case, 1608–1609

- Ownership of Shakespeare's birthplace
- Highways Bill, 1611
- The Bellot/Mountjoy case, 1612
- Purchase of the Blackfriars gatehouse, 1613
- The Welcombe enclosure, 1614–1616
- The Combe family
- Shakespeare's will, 1616

109. EDUCATION AND READING IN SHAKESPEARE'S WORK

Lynn Enterline, Vanderbilt University, United States

Whether staging scenes of Latin language instruction, making fun of pedagogues such as Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*, quoting snippets of Latin recalled from contemporary school texts, or turning entire stories from the Greco-Roman past to dramatic purposes, Shakespeare shows both an intimate knowledge of and a career-long fascination with the texts and techniques of humanist instruction. Following the guidelines of Erasmus and focused almost exclusively on language skills – first Latin grammar, then rhetorical facility – humanist schoolmasters drew their initiates from a wide spectrum of social groups. Advocating that learning by imitation was far superior to learning by rule or “precept,” they inducted young boys into a program of reading, writing, and public speaking founded on the principle, widely attributed to Cicero, that “wisdom and eloquence are one.”

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Students and teachers
- Curriculum and textbooks
- Tropes, transactions, discipline
- Cultural capital and its discontents

110. AUTHORSHIP CONTROVERSY

David Kathman, independent scholar, United States

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, some people have argued that William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon did not write the plays and poems published under his name. These “anti-Stratfordians” claim that Shakespeare of Stratford lacked the education and experience that they feel the author of the plays must have had, and these critics have generally argued for some alternative candidate of higher social station, such as the seventeenth Earl of Oxford or Francis Bacon. Mainstream Shakespeare scholars have generally been dismissive of these arguments, because anti-Stratfordian ideas are based on fundamental misunderstandings about Shakespeare, the theater of his time, and the nature of historical evidence.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Origins and history of the controversy
- Rise of the Oxfordians
- How we know that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare
- Shakespeare of Stratford, actor and playwright
- Posthumous evidence for Shakespeare's authorship
- Why somebody else didn't write Shakespeare
- The claim for the Earl of Oxford
- Anti-Stratfordian ignorance of historical context
- Anti-Stratfordian double standards
- Documentary evidence versus biographical speculation

111. LIKENESSES: PRINTS AND PAINTINGS

Erin C. Blake, Folger Shakespeare Library, United States

What did William Shakespeare look like? Prints and paintings from Shakespeare's world are obvious sources for this information, but the evidence is not straightforward. How accurately did the artist capture Shakespeare's likeness? Does the portrait really date to Shakespeare's era? If so, is it really a portrait of Shakespeare, or has it simply come to be called that? There has been no shortage of supposed likenesses of Shakespeare through the years, and no shortage of skepticism about those likenesses. This chapter considers prints and paintings of Shakespeare before 1660.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Printed portraits
- The Droeshout engraving
- Painted portraits
- The Chandos portrait
- The Janssen and Cobbe portraits
- The Sanders portrait

112. LIKENESSES: MEMORIAL BUST

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In Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon, a monument within an arched niche on the north wall of the chancel displays Shakespeare's head and torso in soft limestone. A Latin inscription on a panel below it commemorates Shakespeare as a great writer and records the date of his death as 23 April 1616. Ample evidence from visitors to the church confirms that the monument was already in place by the 1620s. This chapter provides a full examination of the monument, including conflicting details in drawings and engravings made in the seventeenth century.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Gheerart Janssen or Gerard Johnson
- Repairs and recolorings
- John Hall's renovations of 1748–1749
- Further alterations: overpainting and restoration
- Dugdale's drawing and Hollar's engraving: sources of controversy
- Toward a resolution: some relevant principles
- The inadequacies of Dugdale's drawing
- Pen, paper, and cushion
- What Hollar made of Dugdale's drawing
- George Vertue and the monument's integrity confirmed
- Early references to the monument
- Other matters: cherubs, masks, position
- John Hall's pre-1748 painting
- The Darmstadt death mask
- Has the monument been moved?