Reply to Sothis

Sothis has left a new comment on your post "Stratfordian Absurdities by Samuel Blumenfeld":

I am puzzled. Robert Logan is one of many highly learned academics in the field English Literature, and his book is the product of meticulous research.

Why and how are you so sure he's wrong?

His arguments seem perfectly sound to me.

Dear Sothis,

Your comment is much appreciated. There is no doubt that Professor Logan has high standing as an academic and that his book is the result of meticulous research. But unfortunately, his speculations about Shakespeare's early years as a "writer" are based not only on erroneous premises but on no documentary evidence whatsoever. Like so many academics, Professor Logan put himself in the Stratfordian straitjacket for his own professional reasons. He became president of the Marlowe Society and knew of Calvin Hoffman's assertion that Marlowe was not killed at Deptford in 1593 as reported. But Logan rejected Hoffman's thesis, and chose to believe that Marlowe's life ended on May 30, 1593.

But there are many of us who strongly believe, with very good and palpable evidence, that Marlowe did not die in 1593, and therefore see events in a different light. As Wayne Dyer wisely noted in his book, *The Power of Intention*, "When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."

When you believe that Marlowe continued writing plays after the events at Deptford, you see his and Shakespeare's biographies in an entirely new light, and you see the plays from an entirely new and fascinating point of view. Of course, I am sure you know that Marlovians are not the only ones who reject Shakespeare's authorship. There is a whole library of books on the subject.

I suggest you start your investigations by reading my book, *The Marlowe-Shakespeare Connection,* Daryl Pinksen's book, *Marlowe's Ghost,* and viewing Mike Rubbo's highly entertaining video, *Much Ado About Something.*

I have no reason to doubt Professor Logan's academic integrity or his sincere adherence to views which I believe are wrong. But if you accept the premise that there is no authorship problem, and that Shakespeare was a writer, despite the lack of evidence to support that view, then, of course, you will accept Logan's arguments. As a Marlovian, I not only believe that Stratfordians are wrong, but also Oxfordians and Baconians are wrong. So there you have it.

Sam Blumenfeld

For example, most orthodox Stratfordians believe that Shakespeare knew, or had some sort of relationship, with the Earl of Southampton because of the dedication to the Earl in Venus and Adonis. But before Shakespeare's name appeared under that dedication, he was a completely unknown entity. Yet, St

Before Shakespeare's name appeared in Venus and Adonis under the dedication to the Earl of Southampton, he was a completely unknown entity. Robert Greene's reference to a "Shakes-scene" in his famous Groatsworth of Wit, published in 1592, was a reference to the actor Edward Alleyn, not the unknown Shakespeare.

It should be noted that both Christopher Marlowe and the Earl of Southampton were students at Cambridge during an overlapping period of two years. Marlowe was at Cambridge from 1580 to 1587. The Earl, a ward of Lord Burghley, was at Cambridge from 1585 to 1589. Since Burghley wanted Southampton to have the best education possible, he may have had Marlowe tutor the Earl in the years 1585 to 1587 to give him a leg up in his studies.

Hi All,

Everything Daryl says is true. But I don't worry about the standards needed to prove Shakespeare's authorship or to prove Marlowe's authorship. I wrote my book because, since we agree that the FF is the work of the greatest literary genius in history, I thought we ought to know who he was and what kind of a life he lived. Calvin Hoffman's book made me realize that there was no proof that William Shakespeare was a writer except that his name appeared on a number of Quartos and the First Folio. All of us college students just assumed that Shakespeare's life as a writer had been proven beyond the shadow of a doubt. When I became aware that it wasn't, I wanted to know what human being had the incredible genius to write those plays. Hoffman made it quite clear to me that it was Marlowe. I don't consider myself in a battle royal with Stratfordians. I am simply an advocate of an alternative story that makes more sense to me than anything else I've heard or read, including the massive tomes about Oxford. In fact, when writing my book I was eager to find any fact that would make my theory about Marlowe untenable. I found nothing. Everything fits: the dates, the education, the relationships, the works themselves. Why do we discount the work by Thomas Mendenhall? And what about the very strong probability that Thomas Shelton, the translator of Don Quixote, was actually Christopher Marlowe. The translation was published by Ed Blount, Marlowe's executor and friend and later publisher of the First Folio. I agree with Daryl that converting Stratfordians to our point of view is very difficult if for no other reason than the fact that many Stratfordians have a vested interest in the Shakespeare industrial complex. After all, promoting Marlowe is a labor of love. You won't get rich at it. Whereas Stratfordians have great university professorships, their books are published by the top houses, their royalties from editing new editions of the plays are considerable. Let's not forget that economics plays a very imporatant role in this authorship contest.

Sam Blumenfeld

Carlo,

The themes of exile and banishment, the use of disguises, faked deaths, and mistaken identities can be found in *Richard II, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, Measure for Measure, King Lear, Coriolanus, The Winter's Tale, All's Well That Ends Well,* and *Cymbeline.*

There are faked deaths and resurrections in *Romeo and Juliet, The Winter's Tale, Much Ado About Nothing, and All's Well That Ends Well.*

Obviously, Marlowe, who was forced to live in exile and banishment and whose death was faked, could write about all of this from experience. He also, no doubt, used disguises to hide his identity. We believe that he used the name Thomas Shelton for his translation of *Don Quixote,* which was published by his executor Ed Blount.

When Mowbury, in *Richard II,* is sent into exile, he laments:

> A heavy sentence, my most sovereign liege,
> And all unlook'd for from your highness' mouth….
> The language I have learnt these forty years,
> My native English, now I must forgo;…
> Within my mouth you have enjail'd my tongue….
> What is thy sentence then but speechless death,
> Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath?

We can imagine that these were Marlowe's own thoughts when he went into exile after the events in Deptford. And when he was aboard ship on his way to France, he no doubt suffered the same feelings expressed by Bullingbrooke when he too was sent into exile:

> Then, England's ground, farewell; sweet soil adieu,
> My mother, and my nurse, that bears me yet.
> Where ere I wander, boast of this I can,
> Though banished, yet a trueborn Englishman.

As for faked deaths, the most graphic instance of one is in *Much Ado About Nothing,* in which Hero is persuaded by the Friar to pretend to die in order to gain the sympathy of the man who had jilted her at their wedding. The Friar says: "Come Lady, die to live." And the ruse works.

"Die to live" was the simple and obvious rationale behind Marlowe's faked death at Deptford.

From
Bate, Jonathan, "Scenes from the Birth of a Myth and the Death of a Dramatist," p. 103-125.
found in
Nolen, Stephanie with Jonathan Bate, Tarnya Cooper, Marjorie Garber, Andrew Gurr, Alexander Leggatt, Robert Tittler, and Stanley Wells. 2002. *Shakespeare's Face.* Canada: Alfred A. Knopf.

"Spring 1616. The most brilliant dramatic talent of the age is no more. A man who came to youthful fame with a witty and erotic narrative poem taken from the classical mythology of Ovid. Who wrote occasional verse but found his true vocation in the theatre. Whose gifts were such that even the prodigiously learned Ben Jonson deferred to him in the art of playmaking. He has written for the leading acting company of the age, the King's Men, the actors who bore the livery of James himself and played at court more than any other company.

There is only one place to lay such a man to rest: in Westminster Abbey, close to the tombs of Geoffrey Chaucer, father of English verse, and Edmund Spenser, greatest poet of the Elizabethan age. For the first time in the nation's history, a man of the theatre is acknowledged as equal to the makers of courtly verse. Move over, Chaucer and Spenser. The triumvirate of English genius is complete. Make room for the fallen star, cut off in the prime of his thirty-third year: Francis Beaumont is dead.

Spring 1616, take two. It is three weeks after Beaumont's death. Master William Shakespeare has for some time been retired in his homnetown of Stratford-upon-Avon. Now he is redrafting his will. Maybe he knows he is dying. His gaughter Judith has finally married, but within weeks of the ceremony she has endured the humiliation of her new husband's being accused of "incontinence" with another woman, who has just died as a result of giving birth to his illegitimate child. Shakespeare must change the terms of the will to protect his daughter's [end page 107] interests. He also takes the opportunity to add in a bequest of money for the purchase of memorial rings to "my fellows John Hemynnges Richard Burbage & Henry Cundell." They were fellows in more than one sense: friends, but also fellow actors and fellow shareholders in a highly successful business venture dating back over twenty years. That venture was of course the theatre company, established on a joint stock basis in 1594 as the Lord Chamberlain's Men and upgraded to the title of King's Men.

A month later, Shakespeare is dead. We do not know the cause, though tradition speaks of the unfortunate aftereffects of a drinking bout on the occasion of a visit from the dramatist Ben Jonson and the poet Michael Drayton. The latter was a local man, a patient of Shakespeare's son-in-law the highly reputable Dr. John Hall.

The town's most famous son is buried in the parish church. A monument is erected (the most likely commissioner of it is Dr. Hall). It shows Shakespeare holding a quill pen in his right hand and a piece of paper in the left. For the desk, he has a tasselled cushion. Beneath, there is an inscription that tells of how "Quick Nature died" with him but "Living Art" remains in the pages that manifest his "wit". A latin motto compares him to the very greatest geniuses of antiquity: he had the wisdom of the philosopher Socrates, the literary skill of the poet Virgil and the good judgment of the legendary Nestor. This would be a very strange set of claims if the man in question were anything but an author.

News travels slowly between the provinces and London. We do not know when the theatre world hears of its master's end. Certainly not in time to arrange for a burial inWestminster Abbey. Such is the unfortunate fate of the man who dies away [end page 108] from the capital. And besides, theatre is a fickle business. Shakespeare is yesterday's news. It is the death of Beaumont, so young and still in the prime of his writing, that has captured the imagination of the court and the literary world. Even to contemplate bringing the body of yesterday's man up from the country would take the shine off Beaumont's glory.

Less familiar than Beaumont's burying place is his opinion of the older playwright who died so soon after him. Sometime before his untimely end, Beaumont

wrote two verse epistles from the country. The two letters share the same easygoing style and the same addressee (Ben Jonson). One of them is nostalgic for literary company and "full Mermaid wine," while the other included an account of the art of their fellow dramatist William Shakespeare. It was an art that concealed art:

> Here I would let slip
>
> (If I had any in me) scholarship,
>
> And from all learning keep these lines as clear
>
> As Shakespeare's best are, which our heirs shall hear
>
> Preachers apt to their auditors to show
>
> How far sometimes a mortal man may go
>
> By the dim light of Nature. [end page 109]

Jonson himself would later reiterate this characterization. He too knew that Shakespeare had outshone his predecessors (Marlowe, Kyd, Lyly) so far that his plays rivalled those of the ancients (Aeschylus, Euripedes, Sopocles, Senca), despite the fact that the writer of them had "small Latin and less Greek." We must not forget, though, that Ben Jonson liked to show off his own prodigious learning in the classical languages. Small Latin by his standards may well be great by ours.

It is regrettable that Beaumont's letter remianed unpublished for three hundred years. Here is another dramatist and drinker saying that the distinctive feature of Shakespeare's writing is its lack of learning. Amd yet one of the main causes of the authorship controversy has been – what was it now? oh, yes – the supposed irreconcilability between Shakespeare's writing and his lack of learning.

Let us here and now put to rest for good the image of Shakespeare as an ill-educated country bumpkin. As witnesses for Will's defence, I call upon his Stratford friends the Quineys. There is a surviving letter from Richard Quiney, the town bailiff, to Shakespeare, addressing him as "good friend" and "loving countryman." Quiney's roguish son Thomas was the man who married Judith Shakespeare. But a glance at his eldest son gives us a revealing picture of the level of learning common in Shakespeare's Stratford. At the age of just eleven, Richard Quiney Jr. wrote a letter to his father requesting new schoolbooks. Nothing unsual about that, except that the letter was written in perfect Latin. Elizabethan England was not a place where ordinary people were ignorant and wealthy aristocrats were learned. On the contrary, the eleven year old Stratford boy Quiney had, as we shall see, much better Latin than the mighty Earl of Oxford! [end page 110]

The myth of Stratford as a backwater devoid of all learning was born in the eighteenth century as another incidental consequence of the apotheosis of Shakespeare. It was a fiction that allowed people to believe that Shakespere's genius was a freak of nature. It gave Romantic spirits the opportunity to gasp at the miracle of such a man coming from such a place.

The consensus in the immediate aftermath of Shakespeare's death was that he had been a great dramatist but no freak of nature. Soon after 1616, a minor Oxford poet called William Basse made the pilgrimage to Stratford, saw the monument to the playwright's memory, noted the month and year of his death and wrote these lines:

> Renowned Spenser, lie a thought more nye [near]
>
> To learned Chaucer, and rare Beaumont lie
>
> A little nearer Spenser to make room
>
> For Shakespeare in your threefold fourfold tomb.
>
> To lodge all four in one bed make a shift

Until Doomsday; for hardly will a fifth
Betwixt this day and that by fate be slain
For whom your curtains may be drawn again.
If your precedency in death doth bar
A fourth place in your sacred sepulchre,
Under this carved marble of thine own
Sleep rare tragedian Shakespeare, sleep alone
Thy unmolested peace, unshared cave
Possesse as lord not tenant of thy grave,
That unto us and others it may be
Honor hereafter to be laid by thee. [end page 111]

This moving little poem circulated in numerous manuscripts in the seventeenth century, testimony to the admiration in which Shakespeare was still held in the immediate aftermath of his death, despite the fact that he had written nothing in the last few years of his life. For Basse, the trinity was not enough: Shakespeare was as good as Chaucer, Spenser and Beaumont. The four of them made up sufficient English genius to last until the crack of doom. Still, however, Shakespeare is one among others. He may be *rare* but he is not *unique*. At this moment then, there was no need to attribute the writing of the plays to someone else. " p.107-112

Sam Blumenfeld said...
R.S. Abrinaud asks an excellent question about the relationship of Marlowe to the Earl of Southamption. There is, indeed, a very interesting connection between Marlowe and the Earl of Southampton. The young Earl was one of Lord Burghley's wards and lived in his household. The Earl's eccentric father had died at the age of 36, leaving his 8-year-old son without the love and guidance of a father. Burghley took him under his wing because he saw in the very wealthy Earl, a possible future husband of one of his granddaughters.

At age 12 the Earl was admitted to St. John's College at Cambridge, Burghley's alma mater. Burghley was also Chancellor of the University. The Earl spent the years 1585 to 1589 at the college. Marlowe, 9 years older than the Earl, had entered Corpus Christi in 1580 and remained there until 1587. Thus, both men were at Cambridge during Marlowe's last two years. Since Marlowe had been recruited into the Secret Service he was well known to Burghley, since Burghley had also signed the famous letter from the Queen that got Marlowe his Master's degree.

Also, Marlowe may have been asked by Burghley to actually tutor the Earl. We know that it was at Cambridge that the Earl developed his love of books and writers and later became a patron of literature. In fact, later in life he made a substantial gift of manuscripts and books to St. John's library. If indeed Marlowe tutored Southampton, the budding poet may have given the Earl his translation of Ovid's Amores to read, as well as his earliest play, Dido, Queen of Carthage.

Another interesting side to this story is that Marlowe was probably asked by Burghley to write a series of Sonnets to persuade the young Earl to marry. Those Sonnets are the first 26 of "Shakespeare's" Sonnets that are addressed to a handsome young man, urging him marry and duplicate himself in future offspring. Of course, Southampton refused to marry Burghley's granddaughter and remained single in order to pursue military adventure with the Earl of Essex. But he finally did marry one of Elizabeth's pretty ladies in waiting, Elizabeth Vernon. Apparently the marriage was not a happy one, and the Earl was later imprisoned for his complicity in Essex's attempt to overthrow Elizabeth. Essex was beheaded, but Southamption remained in prison until King James set him free.

Nicholas Skeres, one of the three men who were at Eleanor Bull’s house in Deptford, was an agent in the Babington affair. Park Honan writes: “It is quite certain, then, that Nicholas Skeres, a witness to Marlowe’s murder, was an early associate of Thomas Walsingham.” Honan also writes (p.326): “A minor tool of the earl of Essex, Skeres had helped as an informer but he did not work for Marlowe’s patron; he was a half-educated thug, often in and out of a gaol, a tough shadowy veteran of Francis Walsingham’s bleak network.” Apparently, it was Frizer who recruited Skeres to help him in the Deptford plot. Probably both men were responsible for retrieving Penry’s body and bringing it to Deptford for the Coroner’s Inquest. Also, both Poley and Skeres would be the two needed witnesses to the killing of Marlowe by Frizer in self-defense.