



CHRISTINA G WALDMAN

Author



Bacon-Shakespeare Bibliography 2: Commentary

Introduction

One of the best places to start exploring the Bacon-Shakespeare authorship question is the “Francis Bacon’s New Advancement of Learning” website which now has a new look, <https://sirbacon.org/>. Over 1,000 pages of content are Google-indexed for searching. The bibliographies are at <https://sirbacon.org/biblio.html>. *Baconiana*, the journal of the Francis Bacon Society, which publishes its members’ research, going back to 1885, may be read there, as well as at the **Francis Bacon Society** website. First, a brief note on **Shakespeare, Bacon and law**:

One of the main points in favor of Bacon’s authorship of Shakespeare is the way the Shakespeare plays and poems seem to show that their author’s mind was steeped in law. William Shaxpere of Stratford is not known to

have studied or practiced law. Stratfordians have tried to say he could have picked up his knowledge of the law from living in a litigious society, being involved in lawsuits himself, or by asking his lawyer friends to explain things to him. Or, perhaps he clerked for a lawyer, although all of the above is mere speculation; there is no evidence of it. In contrast, law was Francis Bacon's profession at which he excelled. He not only studied law at Gray's Inn; he was admitted to the *bar* and *practiced* law (although he argued only two cases before the age of 40). His name is associated with many of the leading cases of the time—Slade's Case, the Case of the Post-Nati, etc. You can read his "Arguments of the Law," which he recorded for his fellow Gray's Inn students so they would have models from which to learn (as was done on the Continent). He was the first to do this in England. See James Spedding, ed., *Works of Francis Bacon*, vol 7 (Longmans ed., 1857-1874), 517 – 726.

Bacon had quickly risen to the highest level of leadership at Gray's Inn; he was its treasurer for years. His statue and the gardens he designed still stand there today. In 1594, he wrote speeches for a masque performed at the 1594 "Christmas Revels" held at Gray's Inn; those were the revels for which Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors" was first performed. Barry Clarke has a chapter on it in his book, *Francis Bacon's Contribution to Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 2019). Bacon devoted much of his energies to law reform, continuing the work his father Sir Nicholas Bacon had undertaken, as directed by Queen Elizabeth. Francis Bacon was the first "Queen's Counsel," a position Queen Elizabeth created just for him as her special adviser (unpaid). He served King James in a similar role (paid). (See, generally, my book, *FBHH*, 42-49, and sources cited therein).

"As a judge, Bacon earnestly tried to put into practice the reforms articulated by his speeches, essays, and proposals. Some of his reforms ... failed outright. Others, such as those incorporated in the "Ordinances in Chancery, "to a large extent, fixed the practice of the court [Chancery] till the reforms of the last century." Daniel R. Coquillette, *Francis Bacon* (Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 1992), 210, citing William Holdsworth, *A History of English Law*, vol 5, p. 253.

The Shakespeare works are used as teaching tools in law schools today. What can we learn from Bacon, and "Shakespeare," about how to be better lawyers—and people—in today's challenging times? For that matter, what can "they" teach us about what is timeless?

Weight of Authority or Weight of Evidence?

James Shapiro, *Contested Will*. The "traditional," "authorized" view is that Shakespeare of Stratford wrote the plays of Shakespeare. But, one may reasonably ask, where is the proof? One may fairly disagree with **opinions** that are not supported by facts. The "**Oxford Bibliographies, Renaissance and Reformation**" page for Francis Bacon (last modified October 25, 2012)

states that the bibliography omits scholarly works which explore the **question of Bacon's authorship of Shakespeare** because it has been **"dismissed by most scholars."** DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780195399301-0138. Granted, bibliographies must set perimeters, but surely the basis for such dismissal must exist somewhere. This Oxford Bibliography refers readers to **James Shapiro's** book, *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010). However, In *Contested Will*, the author does not delve critically into the pros and cons of **evidence**, for any individual claimant, to provide a **reasoned** opinion for his conviction (**opinion**) that Shaxpere wrote the works of Shakespeare. Instead, he touts himself as an expert, based on his years of teaching Shakespeare. This book does not, however, give the reader the benefit of his analysis and reflection. Rather, he takes a bemused, condescending tone in providing a historical overview of the personalities involved, as if the matter were simply not worthy of his serious attention. Reviews go both ways, of course. Here are two by those challenging the "Stratfordian" view: (1) "James Shapiro's *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?*" The Shakespeare Authorship Coalition, accessed 9/28/20, https://doubtaboutwill.org/contested_will and (2) Brian McClinton, "Shakespeare in the Psikhushkas," advance review, *Humani*, April 1, 2010 (published May/June, 2010), The Humanist Association of N. Ireland, <https://brighthumani.blogspot.com/2010/04/shakespeare-in-psikhushkas.html>. Shapiro does make an effort to provide balanced bibliographical references.

William and Elizebeth Friedman, *The Shakespeare Ciphers Examined*. Shapiro and others (such as **Jonathan Bate**) point to husband-and-wife **William and Elizebeth Friedman's** 1957 book, *The Shakespeare Ciphers Examined: An analysis of cryptographic systems used as evidence that some author other than William Shakespeare wrote the plays commonly attributed to him* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, reprinted in 2011) as if it settles the question once and for all as to whether there were any codes or ciphers of any kind in the Shakespeare works. The Friedmans' actual response was, however, qualified. The **Friedmans** were respected cryptographers who helped end World War II. One challenges their authority with caution. However, Francis Bacon did teach that one ought not rely on expert opinions *per se* without making one's own inquiry into the facts. He was, of course, trying to break the world free from Scholasticism. The **Friedmans** may have had a confirmation bias towards finding no ciphers. They did seem to wish to deter amateurs from poking around looking for them (the Friedmans, p. 288). Moreover, they were writing sixty years ago, before modern advances in computers.

The **Friedmans** wrote, "It must be remembered that the biliteral cipher [the one invented by **Francis Bacon** when he was a teenager that became the basis for the modern computer] is the one reputable system among all

those proposed so far in support of anti-Stratfordian theories— that is, it is the only cipher which the professional cryptologist could admit as a valid system in itself. Yet we think we have shown decisively that it was not used” (the **Friedmans**, 287). Later, Mr. **Friedman** acknowledged, ” ...the fact that Bacon invented this cipher and described it in such detail lends plausibility to a theory entertained by many persons that Bacon wrote the Shakespeare plays and that he inserted secret messages in those plays by using his cipher” (William Friedman, lecture 2, “Six Lectures in Cryptology,” National Security Agency, 30–36, 33: *search* “William Friedman” at www.nsa.gov).

The **Friedmans** did not even find **William Stone Booth**’s evidence of acrostics persuasive (**William Stone Booth**, *Subtle Shining Secrecies* (Boston: Walter H. Baker, 1925). Kenneth Patton disagreed, and so must I. Kenneth Patton’s *Vindication of William Stone Booth*, www.SirBacon.org (discussed in C. Waldman, *Francis Bacon’s Hidden Hand in Shakespeare’s ‘The Merchant of Venice’: A Study of Law, Rhetoric, and Authorship* (New York: Algora, 2018) (hereafter, *FBHH*), 231–232; Neil Fermor’s untitled article, *Baconiana* LX, no. 177, November, 1977 (search: “Friedman” at www.SirBacon.org); and Penn Leary’s *Second Cryptographic Shakespeare*, revised edition (Omaha NB: Westchester House, 1990). Let readers make open-minded inquiry before deciding for themselves. Not everyone accepts evidence of ciphers. British barrister N. B. Cockburn, in *The Bacon Shakespeare Question: The Baconian Theory Made Sane* (London: The Francis Bacon society, 2024 [1998]), did not. Evidence of ciphers is not essential to the Bacon-Shakespeare argument. I was not looking for ciphers when I stumbled upon the play, *The Tragedy of Anne Boleyn*. I was searching for a line from *The Merchant of Venice* on Google, and Google provided just one other reference: the play, *The Tragedy of Anne Boleyn*. This intrigued me, so I investigated it further (See C. Waldman, *FBHH*, 230–232).

David Simpson, “Francis Bacon (1561-1626),” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (undated): Simpson claims it is a “**virtual certainty** that Bacon did not write the works traditionally attributed to William Shakespeare” (<https://iep.utm.edu/bacon/>). “Virtual certainty” would seem to imply that the matter had been “almost or very nearly,” or “in essence, if not formally” factually proven, according to dictionary definitions which also include the definition: “existing in the mind, especially as the product of the imagination.” <https://www.yourdictionary.com/virtual>. Hmm. In law, evidence must meet a “standard of proof” to be considered probative, capable of proving a fact or case. The general standard in a civil case is a preponderance of the evidence: even a feather’s weight more on one side will tip the scales. Proof must be based on

facts, however. Prof. **Simpson** provided **no** facts, sources, or reasoning underlying this opinion. When I emailed him, he responded that he would stand by his statement, until the “scholarly community” was convinced that Bacon did “edit..., revise..., add... to, or in some other way contribute... to those works” ... “traditionally attributed to William Shakespeare.” (Simpson to me, email of October 14, 2020).

It is disturbing that, both in the IEP bibliography and at his Oxford Bibliographies page, Francis Bacon—Philosophy, Simpson cites 19th century **MacAuley’s unfairly negative and discredited essay** on Bacon, but does not cite available, contrary evidence of his good character, particularly in response to the bribery charge, or to put it in historical context (See, e.g., **Nieves Matthews**, *Francis Bacon: The History of a Character Assassination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) (see chs 8–15 on the trial). For example, Bacon’s biographer **William Hepworth Dixon** was “always a defender of Bacon’s good name” (**Matthews**, 57; see also 96–97, 169–70, 213, 341–2, 442). It took **James Spedding**, chief editor of the standard edition of Bacon’s *Works* (London, Longmans, 1857–1864), no less than two volumes to adequately rebut **MacAuley’s “deplorable” essay** on Bacon (*Evenings with a Reviewer: Or, Macauley and Bacon*, 2 vols. (London, 1881), as **MacAuley’s** own biographer, **J. Cotter Morison**, called it, with its “quite astounding inaccuracies, misrepresentations, and even falsifications of truth” (**Alfred Dodd**, *The Martyrdom of Francis Bacon* (London: Rider, 1946), excerpted at <http://www.sirbacon.org/links/martyrdom.htm> (pars. 10–11). Other Bacon defenders who put the alleged offenses into proper perspective include **H. Crouch Batchelor**, *Francis Bacon Wrote Shakespeare: The Authors Pro and Con Frankly Dealt With* (London: Robert Banks & Son, 1912), 7–15), **Edward D. Johnson**, *Francis Bacon versus Lord MacAuley* (London: George Lapworth, 1949), even **J. M. Robertson** (“Bacon,” *Pioneer Humanists* (1907), 44 (as cited in **N. Matthews**, *History of a Character Assassination*, ch. 3, 21), and, in modern times, **Brian Vickers**, ed., intro., *Francis Bacon: The History of the Reign of King Henry VII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xi–xii and **J. H. Baker**, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 3d ed. (London: Butterworths, 1990), 129. The dead cannot defend themselves against defamation (See **Don Herzog**, *Defaming the Dead* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017)).

Collaboration?

The long-prevailing view that **Shaxpere-Shakespeare** was the sole author of the Shakespeare works, rather than a pseudonym, **is changing**. This is largely due in part to evidence of **collaboration** among playwrights on the works of Shakespeare (See, e.g., **Brian Vickers**, *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 2004); **Daniel Pollack-Pelzner**, “The Radical Argument of the New Oxford Shakespeare,” *The New Yorker*, February 19, 2017; **Jonathan Bate** and **Eric Rasmussen**, *William Shakespeare and Others: Collaborative Plays*, RSC Shakespeare Series (macmillan international, 2013). Prof. **Covington’s** response to my email acknowledged that a prevailing scholarly opinion can change when confronted with convincing controverting evidence (emails of October 14–15, 2020). Long ago, in 1857, **Delia Bacon** had suggested a “group theory” led by **Francis Bacon**. Peter Dawkins and the Francis Bacon Research Trust have long been proponents of such a theory. To confuse matters further, Bacon wrote in a variety of styles and was skilled at mimicking other people’s styles as well (see Brian McClinton, *The Shakespeare Conspiracies: A 400-Year Web of Myth and Deceit*, 2d ed. (Belfast: Shanway Press, 2008), 336–340).

In terms of Shakespeare collaboration, there is still contention over “who wrote what.” Some highlights: **Prof. Brian Vickers** has taken issue with the methods used in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2016) and its companion volume, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion* (Oxford University Press, 2017), edited by **Gary Taylor** and **Gabriel Egan**. **Brian Vickers** disapproves of the methods used (Brian Vickers, “Infecting the teller: the failure of a mathematical approach to Shakespeare’s authorship,” *TLS [The Times Literary Supplement]*, April 17, 2020, <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/infecting-the-teller-essay-brian-vickers/>). There is also **Jack Malvern**, “Two households reprise ancient grudge over Shakespeare,” April 16, 2020, *The Times*, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/two-households-reprise-ancient-grudge-over-shakespeare-x8s3570xm>). The dispute over methods between **Taylor** and **Vickers** goes back at least to 2008. (See **Richard Lea**, “No Kyding: eminent Shakespeare scholar seeks publisher,” *The Guardian*, April 2, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/apr/02/no-kyding-eminent-shakespeare-scholar-seeks-publisher>).

In an interview, **Taylor** reportedly said that Bacon’s authorship was “just a wonderful story” (**Danica Kirka**, “Oxford says Shakespeare will share credit for Henry VI,” AP [The Associated Press], October 24, 2016, <https://apnews.com/article/9f361922133840029f03be40e4a60645>). Perhaps in the future reporters could ask such experts to support such statements with facts.

Bacon is “virtually” ignored in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, as well (609, 612, 219, 222, 358, 712). Joseph Rudman criticized this book for not including writers in the collaborative vein such as **Barry R. Clarke** who has explored such a role for Francis Bacon in three plays (*Love’s Labours Lost*, *The Tempest*, and *The Comedy of Errors*, “even if the editors do not agree” (**Joseph Rudman**, review of **Gary Taylor** and **Gabriel Egan**, eds., *The New Oxford Shakespeare Authorship*

Companion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 34, no. 3, September, 2019, 703–705, published July 20, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqz044>.

In *FBHH*, I point out that *The New Oxford Shakespeare's* changes in spelling from “Launcelot” to “Lancelet” and from “Gobbo” to “Iobbe” (150 n 6). The history of texts is a valuable component of their analysis. Clues to past meaning can be wiped out when spellings are changed. For example, I have seen this elsewhere where *cy pres* was changed to “cypress” by someone who did not know that *cy pres* was a legal term. William Barksted wrote, “Cypres, thy brow shall fit” in his 1607 poem, *Myrrha, the Mother of Adonis*, a “prequel” to Shakespeare’s poem, *Venus and Adonis* (see *FBHH*, 102). However, perhaps Barkstead did intend his word “cypress” in that poem to mean a wreath worn on the brow, or perhaps he was suggesting *cy pres* as well. Hugh Holland wrote a eulogy for King James, “A Cypress Garland for the Forehead of Our Late Sovereign King James” (London, 1625). Holland also wrote the prefatory poem, “Upon the Lines and Life of the Famous Scenic Poet, Master William Shakespeare,” for the First Folio.

The Case Against Bacon’s Authorship ...

... is, when it comes down to it, largely based on interpretation of fact; hence, opinion. When one sees an opinion by an expert, one assumes there are facts and reasoning underlying it. If one sees a bare opinion, one is entitled to ask what factual basis supports it. Therein lies the rub, for there is **no conclusive fact-based reason** why Bacon could *not* have authored Shakespeare. Is not the heart of the case against Bacon: “Since **Shaxpere** wrote **Shakespeare**, **Bacon** could not have done it”? The question is so often dismissed these days as not worthy of serious scholarly attention, but on what basis? Stratfordians refer readers to James Shapiro’s *Contested Will*; yet he refers readers to Brian McClinton’s *The Bacon Shakespeare Conspiracies* and SirBacon.org on the question of Bacon. Of course, many books have been written based on the *assumption* that Shaxpere is Shakespeare. See, **Paul Edmonson and Stanley Wells, eds.**, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Tom Reedy and David Kathman’s website, “How We Know That Shakespeare Wrote Shakespeare: The Historical Facts,” <https://shakespeareauthorship.com/howdowe.html> does not make a strong case against Bacon (Kathman and Reedy are members of a Facebook group called “Oxfraud.” There is also a website, Oxfraud.com). **Kathman** has also authored ch 110, “Authorship Controversy,” of *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare*, edited by Bruce R. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, online 2019), 851–856, DOI:10.1017/9781316137062.110. Kathman states that Francis Bacon left no books or manuscripts in his Will (p. 855). See, contra, “The Last Will of

Francis Bacon, Viscount St. Albans,” Spedding 14:539–545, 539–540.

“**Sixty Minutes with Shakespeare: Shakespearian Experts Address the Authorship Question**,” a podcast of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in which each of sixty speakers is given just one minute to talk, pays incredibly short shrift to evidence of Shakespeare authorship.

<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/podcasts/60-minutes-shakespeare/>.

For example, in his brief, undated segment (1 min. 14 secs.) of that podcast (no. 45, **Alan Stewart**, one of the editors of the <http://Oxford Francis Bacon>, opines that Bacon could not have written the works of Shakespeare because the masques Bacon wrote show that he lacked the required talent: “In short, Francis Bacon had no drama.” In that “sound bite” experience, there was no discussion of evidence pro and con, just Stewart’s opinion (“Sir Francis Bacon and Shakespeare Authorship with Alan Stewart,” <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/podcasts/60-minutes-shakespeare/sir-francis-bacon-and-shakespeares-authorship/>). But surely that is not the whole case against Bacon’s authorship! Much has been written about Bacon’s masque-writing (as well as directing, producing, etc.) **Peter Dawkins**, founder-principal of the Francis Bacon Research Trust, discusses Bacon’s work with masques, comparing it to Shakespeare’s (**Peter Dawkins**, *The Shakespeare Enigma* (London: Polair Publishing, 2004, 243–247). He points out that “Five speeches of the *Philautia Device* (written to be presented on November 17, 1595 by the Earl of Essex before Queen Elizabeth—the one which **Alan Stewart** criticizes) are preserved among the “Northumberland papers” which connects the names of Bacon and Shakespeare close together on the enclosing folder and includes the Shakespeare plays *Richard II* and *Richard III* in the list of contents once contained within it (**Dawkins**, *The Shakespeare Enigma*, 245)). Christine Adams writes about *The Masque of Flowers*, in “Francis Bacon’s Wedding Gift of ‘A Garden of a Glorious and Strange Beauty’ for the Earl and Countess of Somerset,” *Garden History* 36, no. 1 (Spring, 2008), 36–58, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25472393>. Bacon wrote an essay, “Of Masques and Triumphs.” Moreover, in his very brief podcast, Stewart does not address the fact that Bacon may have written plays under a pseudonym.

Some Responses to Arguments Against Bacon or in Favor of Shaxpere

1. Relying on **N. B. Cockburn**, *The Bacon Shakespeare Question*, the **anonymous blogger** “Unfoldyourself” counters **Alan Stewart’s** ch 2, “The Case for Bacon,” in **Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells’** book, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), at “**Bacon was Shakespeare—Authorship Evidence**,” September 21, 2013, <https://bacon-shakespeare->

evidence.blogspot.com/2013/09/shakespeare-beyond-doubt-21-chapter-2.html. Another response is **John M. Shahan and Alexander Waugh** (Oxfordian), *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing An Industry in Denial* (Tamarac FL: Lumina Press, 2013; The Shakespeare Authorship Coalition, Create Space, 2016). Prince Philip was not convinced by Edmondson and Wells's book (April 12, 2021, <http://www.sirbacon.org/newpage.htm>).

2. The following is *based on* a comment (edited and augmented here, 4-19-23) which I posted to Loretta G. Bruening, "Shakespeare's True Identity Helped Me Understand Myself," *Psychology Today*, November 25, 2019: Some refutations to **J.M. Robertson** who said the words and phrases in Bacon's "**Promus**" notebook were in common use by other writers at the time were made by: **Sir Granville George Greenwood** in 1916, *Is There a Shakespeare Problem? With a Reply to Mr. J.M. Robertson and Mr. Andrew Lang* (London and New York: John Lane, 1916), 115 (sequence: according to Brian McClinton in *The Shakespeare Conspiracies* (pp. 68-69), Greenwood first wrote *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (1908), including a chapter on Shakespeare and the law, to which Robertson responded with *The Baconian Heresy: A Confutation* (1913), to which Greenwood responded with *Is There a Shakespeare Problem?* (1916) and *Shakespeare's Law* (1920); **James Phinney Baxter**, *The Greatest of Literary Problems: The Authorship of the Shakespeare Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), 364-371; and **N.B. Cockburn**, *The Bacon Shakespeare Question*, ch. 33, "Parallelisms," 425-564 (509-564 on the **Promus**), rebutting: Robertson (Cockburn, 450, 555 (non-**Promus**, 436); H.N. Gibson's *The Shakespeare Claimants: A Critical Survey of the Four Principal Claimants* (Cockburn, 512, 556-558, 564); E.E. Halliday, *The Cult of Shakespeare* (Cockburn, 514), and Charles Crawford (Cockburn, 514-516). See also **Edwin Reed**, *Bacon and Shakespeare Parallelisms* (Boston: C.E. Goodspeed, 1902). Cockburn concluded: "...[it] is not merely that the 1100 or so genuine parallels establish common authorship by their total cumulative weight, but that smaller groups within the 1100 each individually prove common authorship...If anyone could show equal weight of coincidence between the works of Bacon or Shakespeare and those of any other Elizabethan playwright (mutual borrowing to be excluded), I would modify my view as to the effect of the parallels. But such equal weight has not been shown so far, and I do not expect it to be demonstrable" (N. B. Cockburn, *The Baconian Theory Made Sane*, 559).

Brian McClinton, *The Shakespeare Conspiracies: Untangling a 400-Year Web of Myth and Deceit*, 2d ed. (Belfast: Shanway Press, 2008), see pp. 68, 245 (addressing Robertson) and 346-347 (addressing Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935). Addressing Caroline Spurgeon's arguments also is F.E.C.H. and W.S. M., "Professor Spurgeon and her images," from *Baconiana* Sept. 1969, 43-57.

An essay of Lang's on Shakespeare authorship, "The Shakespeare-Bacon Imbroglio," published in *The Valet's Tragedy and Other Studies* (Alexandria: Library of Alexandria, 1903) is reprinted at the website, The Bacon/Shakespeare Controversy, William Shakespeare Online, Shakespeare-1.com, which gives a c/o address of a law firm, Mayer, Dearborn, & Pillizarro (see "About Us,"), <http://www.shakespeare-1.com/bacon-controversy/index.html>. Lang also wrote *Shakespeare, Bacon, and the Great Unknown* (posthumously published, London: Longmans, Green, 1912, reviewed not altogether favorably by G. O'Neill in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 2(5): 916-921 (March, 1913), JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25700935>), in reply to Greenwood's book, *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (London: J. Lane, 1908). **Please note that Sir Granville George Greenwood (1850-1928) published a response to Lang (1844-1912) in 1916 (as noted in my comment to *Psychology Today* just above).**

One also finds responses to Lang's arguments in *Baconiana*, the Journal of the Francis Bacon Society and to Robertson's; search the index to *Baconiana* at SirBacon.org. For example, as to Lang, see W. T. Smedley, "Shakespeare, Bacon & The Great Unknown," *Baconiana* 11(43), 3d series (July, 1913), 33-45. As to Robertson, see: n.a., "The Baconian Heresy," *Baconiana* 11(42), third series (April, 1913), 69-104; continued in *Baconiana* 11(43), third series (July, 1913), 133-152; concluded in *Baconiana* 11, third series (October, 1913), 185-216 ("The space available in *Baconiana* is not sufficient to accommodate exposure of the hollowness of the arguments of Mr. J. M. Robertson" (185). There is a wealth of good reading in *Baconiana*, available either from the Francis Bacon Society website or SirBacon.org.

3. For more criticism of *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*, see Diana Price's website, <http://shakespeare-authorship.com/?page=peerreview>. Price is the author of *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem* (first published by Westport CT: Greenwood Press, no. 94, 2001). See also E. M. Dutton, *Homeless Shakespeare, His Fabricated Life From Cradle to Grave* (e-book, copyright 2011 by E.M. Dutton, Silo.Pub, <https://silo.pub/homeless-shakespeare-his-fabricated-life-from-cradle-to-grave.html>); also at Internet Archive, https://ia800303.us.archive.org/10/items/HomelessShakespeareHisFabricatedLifeFromCradleToGrave_991/Homeless_Shakespeare_upload.pdf

The Case for Bacon's Authorship ...

... is too voluminous to be presented entirely here. It is largely presented in the many resources collected at the website, Francis Bacon's New Advancement of Learning, www.SirBacon.org. Recent books include Barry R. Clarke, *Francis Bacon's Contribution to Shakespeare: A New Attribution Method* (New York: Routledge, 2019), Brian McClinton, *The Shakespeare*

Controversies: Untangling a 400-year Web of Myth and Deceit, 2d revised edition (Belfast: Shanway Press, 2008; first pub. Aubane, IE, Aubane Historical Society, 2007); **Peter Dawkins**, e-book, *On Second-Seeing Shakespeare* (Book Baby, first edition April 6, 2020), and my own *FBHH* (New York: Algora, 2018). Cogent arguments have been made by churchmen such as **Walter Begley**, literary figures such as **Mark Twain** (who prefers Bacon to Shakespeare in “Is Shakespeare Dead?” *The Complete Essays of Mark Twain: Now Collected for the First Time*, edited by Charles Neider (Garden City NY: Doubleday & Co., 1963)), lawyers such as **William Lowes Rushton**, *Shakespeare a Lawyer* (London, 1858; reprinted Clark NJ: Law Book Exchange, 2006), et al., and **Sir George Greenwood**, *Shakespeare’s Law* (London: C. Palmer, ca. 1920) et al.; and judges such as St. Louis judge **Nathaniel Holmes**, *The Authorship of Shakespeare*, 2 vols (Hurd and Houghton, 1866) and British judge, Lord **Penzance** (James Plaisted Wilde), *A Judicial Summing Up: Lord Penzance On The Bacon- Shakespeare Controversy*, edited by M. H. Kinnear (London: S. Low, Marston & Col. 1902). Individuals are encouraged to read and weigh the fact-based evidence for themselves, and not let the “weight of authority” tip the scales (For an example from legal history of the use of drama to teach lawyers this precept, see C. Waldman, *Francis Bacon’s Hidden Hand*, 59-60).

Some Points in Favor of Bacon

— **Bacon’s authorship of Shakespeare has never been factually ruled out as impossible, and there is no fact-based reason why it should be. In fact, there are many good reasons for thinking Bacon *did* play a major role in Shakespeare authorship.**

— **Bacon kept a scrivenery of writers he called his “good pens” which he kept busy. He also led a group of writers known as the “Shakespeare Circle”** (James S. **Spedding**, Robert Leslie Ellis and Douglas Denon Heath, eds., *The Works of Francis Bacon, Baron of Verulam, Viscount St. Alban, and Lord High Chancellor of England*, XIV, 406, 429 (good pens), HathiTrust, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006685889>; **Peter Dawkins**, “The Shakespeare Circle,” Francis Bacon Research Trust, https://www.fbrt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/The_Shakespeare_Circle.pdf; **Peter Dawkins**, “Shakespeare,” Francis Bacon Research Trust, <https://www.fbrt.org.uk/shakespeare/>). ; **Peter Dawkins**, “The Shakespeare Circle,” paper read at the Globe Theatre Authorship Conference, July, 2005, <http://www.sirbacon.org/shakespearecircle.htm>. **Bacon** wrote a “**Writer’s Prayer**” that sounds as if it were to be used for leading a writer’s group (**Basil Montagu**, ed., *The Collected Works of Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor...*, vol 2 (of 3), 396, 406, reprinted from **Thomas Tonnison’s Baconiana...**(London, 1679); “Shakespeare,” Francis Bacon Research Trust, <https://www.fbrt.org.uk/pages/shakespeare.html>).

— -The word “author” can mean taking “authority” for a large literary project to which others have contributed. This meaning goes back at least to the Middle Ages. One example of this meaning of authorship is Herrad, abbess of Hohenberg, ’s claimed authorship of the encyclopedic *Hortus deliciarum* (Fiona J. Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 54–56; 86–91; 92–95 (Seneca, the bee metaphor). She did not write every word; rather, she compiled and organized the contributions of others, as well as writing some of it herself. Even today, a modern multi-volume treatise may have multiple contributors but one, overall “author.”

Ironies

The problem is **not a dearth of evidence** pointing to Bacon, **but an abundance** of tantalizing facts gathered, the way a bee gathers nectar from flowers, a little here and a little there. The challenge lies in ever succeeding in organizing all the evidence together in one place. So much has already been written, and more evidence will likely be unearthed. I say “unearthed” because the evidence is not generally on the surface. It requires digging, contrary to **Charlotte Stopes** (1889) who expressed her **opinion** that the answers to Baconian statements were “so simple and self-evident” that the question could be put to rest “once and for all” (C. Stopes, *The Bacon–Shakespeare Question Answered*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, first pub. 1889), 199). Perhaps the authorship of “Shakespeare” was intended to be a secret, for future readers’ sheer joy in discovery. Not everyone will care, but for those who do, there are many more pieces to the puzzle waiting to be discovered. The availability of old texts online, along with computer programs’ search capabilities, should make it difficult for the truth to stay hidden forever.

Debate is a way of getting at the truth. That is why, in courts of law, two sides present their opposing cases as adversaries. In at least one online academic forum for Shakespeare discussion, the last time I checked, **Shakespeare authorship was not allowed to be discussed!** Yet, how can “most scholars agree” mean anything if contrary opinions have no voice in discussion? Ironically, discussions of Shakespeare and personal liberty do not seem to be censored. It was heartening to see **Barry R. Clarke’s book, *Francis Bacon’s Contribution to Shakespeare: A New Attribution Method*** published by Routledge in 2019.

Respectfully, assumptions and opinions are not facts. Good evidence cannot simply be ignored. Nor should it be twisted and distorted, as with Cinderella’s slipper, to fit a particular pet theory. Francis Bacon taught the world a scientific method for determining the truth of a matter. In it, a scientific fact remains a theory, subject to challenge with new data. It does not matter how many people believe a thing to be true if the proof is

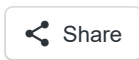
lacking. Let us strive to care as much about the *truth* as Bacon did.

Why does it matter who wrote Shakespeare? For one, it is a fascinating literary problem that has engaged, and likely will continue to engage, many intelligent people over the years. Another is that critical thinking is an important skill to learn, and not just so that people can realize when others are trying to “dupe” them the way Shylock tricked Antonio. There is much to weigh and consider in the Shakespeare authorship debate that can help hone such a skill—as can study of the plays themselves, of course.

Happy researching!

Last edited Nov. 18, 2024.

Share this:



Like this:

Loading...