The Life of Shakespeare: The Growth of Literature

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Abstract.

This essay will explore not only the contribution of Shakespeare to English literature but will also discuss biographical research that sheds new light on his life and artistic development. Beyond the well-known accounts provided by Rowe and Malone, recent studies provide insights into Shakespeare's early life, particularly the collaboration with his father in private trading. This aspect of his life significantly shaped his acquisition of cosmopolitan culture, which later became crucial for his work as a playwright. These new findings reflect how historical research continually develops our understanding of literature, with Shakespeare's life becoming a focal point for new ideas. While some of these ideas remain hypothetical, they are grounded in evidence that complements the established narrative, illustrating how literary study itself is an ever-evolving landscape.

Key Words: William Shakespeare, Literature, Private Trading, Cosmopolitan Culture, John Shakespeare.

Introduction

Shakespeare's early life has remained something of a conundrum despite extensive research into his background. His writing is universally recognized as the outstanding contribution to the history of literature, yet he was the son of a provincial artisan of limited literacy. His father John Shakespeare was a Stratford glover and unable to provide his son with a full education. This has led to the description of Shakespeare as 'the Stratford boor'[1] [1], accounting for why many scholars are unable to accept that he was the author of his plays. His work has been attributed to an extensive range of people of high social and elite status, including among others, Francis Bacon, the Earl of Oxford, and Christopher Marlow.[2] More recently Lena Cowen has suggested that 'we must picture Shakespeare participating in the intellectual culture of Oxford … Shakespeare is nearly certain to have taken in lectures and sermons in college chapels.'[3][2]. Again, this is pure speculation without any convincing evidence to support it.

The problem is that scholars are unable to accept that the son of a provincial artisan with limited education could have been the author of the plays, and most have invented classical sources to address this conundrum. But as Ben Jonson argued, Shakespeare 'had little Latin and less Greek', and did not adhere to classical rules in writing his plays. However, he showed a unique understanding of vernacular language in creating both his comedies and tragedies.

There is also the conundrum of where Shakespeare went after he fathered three children in Stratford before appearing in London, which has been designated as the "lost years". Some have speculated that he spent this period on the continent of Europe or other places enabling

[1] S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, 1992, p. viii.
[2] Ibid, pp. 385-451.
[3] L. C. Orlin, *The Private Life of William Shakespeare*, 2021, p. 248.

him to acquire the sophisticated culture necessary for the writing of the plays.[4] None of these ideas have any credible evidence to support them but there is evidence in plain sight to resolve these difficulties.

According to Nicholas Rowe, Shakespeare worked for his father after he left school at an early age: 'Upon his leaving School, he seems to have given intirely into the way of Living which his Father propos'd to him … tho' he was his eldest Son, he could give him no better Education than his own Employment …'[5][3]. What other biographers have not realized is that John Shakespeare was not just a glover but was a private trader involving participation in a highly sophisticated and metropolitan community.

Nicholas Rowe's *Life of Shakespeare* was the first full biography of Shakespeare, published in 1709.[6] It was largely based on information provided by the actor Thomas Betterton, who made a special visit to Stratford to collect information on Shakespeare's life. Rowe also used material reputed to have originated from Sir William Davenant, rumoured to be the natural son of Shakespeare.

The biography has attracted a great deal of criticism[7] [4]. much of it based on Edmund Malone's work on Shakespeare. As Schoenbaum has written, 'it is largely through Malone's achievement the inadequacies of Rowe's essay were now recognized'[8][5]. Given the importance of Rowe's biography, I will be evaluating Malone's criticisms of Rowe where they are subject to checks using economic, social and demographic research, as well as documentary sources on the lives of both Shakespeare and his father John. There has been a proliferation of biographies on Shakespeare's life – Nicholl claimed that 'there have been many hundreds of them'[9] – as well as resulting controversies and speculations. Given the latter, I will wherever possible rely on published documentary sources which I will quote fully, but with an acknowledgment of different interpretations of these sources.

This essay will also examine issues beyond the different biographical accounts written by Rowe and Malone. This includes Shakespeare's work with his father in private trading and its influence on his acquisition of the cosmopolitan culture necessary for his later work as a playwright. This research has generated radical new ideas about Shakespeare's life, some of which are necessarily of a hypothetical nature, but based on sources consistent with known evidence.

The Reliability of Parish Registers

Malone implied that Rowe relied exclusively on information derived from the Stratford parish register. Yet as Schoenbaum has pointed out, 'the identity of the poet's bride, first published by Rowe', was only unequivocally confirmed in September 1836 by a marriage bond of 28 November 1582.[10] It therefore appears that Betterton managed to obtain information from local sources beyond the information in the Stratford parish register. Also, Rowe stated that

[4] Ibid, p. 441.
[5] C. Nicholl (ed), *Nicholas Rowe the Life of Shakespeare*, 2009, pp. 26, 28.
[6] Ibid.
[7] K. Duncan Jones, *Shakespeare an Ungentle Life*, 2010, p. 97; Nicholl, *Nicholas Rowe*, p. 7.
[8] S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives,* 2006, p. 169.
[9] Nicholl, *Nicholas Rowe*, p.7.
[10] Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, p. 192.

John Shakespeare was 'a considerable Dealer in Wool',[11] and it is only in the last few years that this statement has been documented in research into legal documents.[12]

Malone also assumed that parish registers were a reliable source of information on births and deaths and believed that John Shakespeare only had eight children. New research however has established that between a fifth and a third of all deaths and births in the period 1550-1650 were omitted from parish registers, due to the unreliable practices of clergymen and their clerks[13][6, 7]..This was probably true of the Stratford parish register, indicated by the omission of the burial of John Shakespeare's first daughter Joan, who had a sibling of the same name baptised at a later date.

The poor quality of parish registration is suggested by the practices of John Frith the local clergyman of Temple Grafton, the location of Shakespeare's marriage ceremony. According to Whitgift's 1586 survey of the Warwickshire ministry: 'John Frith, vicar, an old priest and unsound in religion, he can neither preach nor read well, his chiefest trade is to cure hawks that are hurt or diseased, for which purpose many do usually repair to him.'[14]

The quality of birth registration is revealed in the pattern of baptisms of John Shakespeare's children[15] [8]:

Name	Baptism Date	Year	Burial Date
Jone	15th September	1558	
Margaret	2nd December	1562	30th April 1563
William	26th April	1564	
Gilbert	13th October	1566	
Jone	15th April	1569	
Richard	11th March	1574	
Anne	28th September	1578	4th April 1579
Edmund	3rd May	1580	

The usual gap in births during this period was between two and three years, and yet in the periods 1558-1562, 1569-1574, and 1574-1578 it is in the Shakespeare family between four and five years, suggesting the possibility of some missing births. Although not conclusive, it indicates that Nicholas Rowe may have been right about John Shakespeare's ten children.

John Shakespeare as Wool Dealer and Private Trader.

Edmund Malone was not fully aware of John Shakespeare's activities as a dealer in wool and challenged the designation of him as a "woolman". He knew that John Shakespeare was a member of the Stratford council in the late 1550s and 1560s, occupying all roles in the council from borough constable to mayor.[16] [9] However, four legal cases involving John Shakespeare

[11] Nicholl, *Nicholas Rowe,* p.26,

[12] It should also be noted that the monument to Shakespeare in the Stratford Church did not originally depict him with a quill in his hand but merely had him resting on a woolsack – which according to Nichol, made him look 'more a wool merchant than a poet.' Nicholl *Nicholas Rowe*, pp.74, 75.

[13] P. E. Razzell, *Mortality, Marriage and Population in England, 1550-1850*, 2016, pp. 18-21; P.E. Razzell, The measurement of the reliability of parish registration through same-name methodology, *Academia Online.*

[14] Ibid, p. 87.

[15] Malone, *The Plays*, pp. 610, 611.

[16] F.E. Halliday, *Shakespeare Companion,* pp. 441.

came to light in the Exchequer court, chronicled by D.L. Thomas and N.E. Evans in their article 'John Shakespeare in the Exchequer'. They reveal that the Stratford glover was engaged in subsidiary wool dealings and money-lending transactions, which indicated that John Shakespeare was a dealer in wool on a large scale[17][10, 11]. An informer revealed that in 1572 John "Shaxspere" of "Stretford super Haven" and John Lockesley of the same place had illegally bought 200 tods (i.e. 5,600 pounds) of wool, and later that year John Shakespeare was accused of buying 100 tods of wool.[18]

At an earlier date on the 4th November 1568 John Shakespeare alleged that he had sold John Walford twenty-one tods of wool at Stratford, and that £21 owing in cash had never been paid.[19] It is likely that John Shakespeare traded wool on other occasions, which did not result in prosecutions.

According to Bowden in his study of the wool trade in Tudor and Stuart England, glovers dealt in wool through removing wool in the preparation of the sheep skins. John Shakespeare also traded in a variety of other products: according to Lee, 'he soon set up as a trader in all manner of agricultural produce. Corn, wool, malt, meat, skins, and leather were among the commodities in which he dealt.'[20] [12] He had dealings with people living in London, Worcestershire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Coventry, Nottingham and Stoke in Staffordshire.[21]

Nicholas Rowe's description of John Shakespeare as a "considerable dealer in wool" is appropriate given his activities as a wool dealer, but does not allow for the diversity of the business activities that he was engaged in. Rowe's illustration of Shakespeare's monument in Stratford church was based on Dugdale's *Antiquities* and depicts Shakespeare resting on a woolsack without the quill introduced at a later date. As Nicholl has written, this makes Shakespeare 'more a wool merchant than a poet.'[22] The monument may have been commissioned by Shakespeare's grand-daughter Elizabeth Barnard or even possibly by Shakespeare himself during his own lifetime.[23] People living in Stratford at that time appear to have seen Shakespeare as more of a businessman than a dramatist, consistent with the fact that only about a half of the plays were published in his lifetime. This suggests that his literary reputation was not a priority for Shakespeare.

John Shakespeare's Economic and Cultural World

In the court case against the Lambert family in 1588, John Shakespeare claimed for a missing twenty pounds he had 'totally lost and failed to acquire the whole gain, advantage and profit which he by buying and bargaining with the aforesaid twenty pounds have had and acquired, to the loss of thirty pounds'[24] [13].

This is the credo – 'buying and bargaining' – of the middleman, a group whose activities Everitt has designated as, 'the free trading between individuals', defined as the 'type of bargaining which was mostly "free", or emancipated from official control: to dealing between

[17] D.L. Thomas and N.E. Evans, 'John Shakespeare in the Exchequer', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 35 (1984), pp. 315-18; P.E. Razzell, *William Shakespeare: The Anatomy of an Enigma*, 1990 [Available on *Academia Online*], pp.17-18.
[18] Thomas and Evans, 'John Shakespeare'; Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 17, 18.
[19] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 19.
[20] S. Lee, *Life of Shakespeare*, 1898, C.U.P. Edition 2012, p. 4.
[21] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 20.
[22] Nicholl, *The Life*, 71.
[23] See the Wikipedia entry on Shakespeare's monument.
[24] B. Rowland Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents,* Volume 1, 1940, p. 139.

individual traders and manufacturers in private.'[25] [14] Most of the leading townsmen of Stratford were private traders and were engaged in the illegal trading of corn,[26] and private trading was ubiquitous in Stratford in the late sixteenth century.[27]

In order to understand the rise of private and illegal trading, it is necessary to understand the economic conditions of the time. Population had grown very rapidly in the late sixteenth century, and largely as a result, prices of all commodities had risen very sharply, including wool, barley and other foodstuffs.[28] Using an index of wool prices, it had increased as follows: 1450-99 = 100; 1550-59 = 206; 1590-99 = 315.[29] The price of arable produce trebled between 1530-59 and 1590-1619, whereas cattle and oxen more than doubled during the same period.[30] This had allowed those with capital to exploit these price rises, resulting in the forestalling of grain and speculation in other commodities. As Lewis observed 'those who had ready funds "engrossed and forestalled" … and by holding in bulk … the engrosses and forestallers forced the price rapidly upwards.'[31] The wet seasons of 1594, 1595 and 1596 exacerbated these price rises,[32] leading to great distress and riots amongst the poor.[33][15]

As a result of a general agitation, the Privy Council required local authorities to make a note of corn and malt in their towns. On February 4, 1598 a return of illegal trading in malt was made in Stratford, and more than one hundred and twenty names appear, including that of Shakespeare, his friends Adrian Quiney and Richard Sturley, as well as the four local landed magistrates.[34] What the rioters did not realise was that the local magistrates that they appealed to were some of the leading engrosses of grain, and that all the leading townsmen were private traders engaged in the illegal trade.

Everitt has shown that this type of trading grew rapidly in the sixteenth century, particularly after about 1570. Only about a third of country-wide private transactions took place in the same county in the Midland region, [35] consistent with the pattern of John Shakespeare's trading disputes.

All transactions were conducted on a credit basis, for which legal bonds were drawn up by a lawyer or scrivener.[36] According to Everitt, because of the absence of banks, traders necessarily had to rely on their credit in the local community, and this often 'operated through a network of neighbours, friends, and relatives. Sons, fathers, brothers, cousins, wives, uncles, mothers, brother-in-law: all were drawn into the circle.'[37]

He has described the culture which grew up amongst individual traders:

In consequence of this network of kinship and acquaintance, the packmen, carriers, woolmen, and factors who engaged in the private agricultural market were not simply unconnected individuals … Much of the dealing in which travelling merchants engaged took place in

[25] J. Chartres (ed), *Agricultural Markets and Trade, 1500-1750: Chapters from the Agrarian History of England and Wales,*1990, p. 92.
[26] Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents*, p. 284.
[27] For example, 120 of the leading townsmen in Stratford – including Shakespeare – illegally hoarded grain in 1598. Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents*. p. 284.
[28] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, pp. 11, 12.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents*, p. 282.
[32] Ibid.
[33] The increase in population also resulted in a surplus of labour, which led to poverty and unemployment. In a corporation petition in 1601 it was stated that in Stratford 'our poor are in number seven hundred and odd, young and old.', about forty per cent of Stratford's population. See E. Fripp, *Master Richard Quiney*, 1924, p. 177.
[34] Ibid, p. 284.
[35] Chartres, *Agricultural Markets*, p. 99.
[36] Ibid, p. 93.
[37] Ibid, p. 106.

farmhouses. Some took place in barns, and some in warehouses and corn-chambers. Perhaps the most characteristic meeting place of the wayfaring community, however, was the provincial inn. The Elizabethan inn has no exact counterpart in the modern world. It was the hotel, the bank, the warehouse, the exchange, the scrivener's office, and the marketplace of many of a trader.[38]

Everitt has elaborated on the role of the innkeeper in trading activities:

The Tudor and Stuart innkeeper was thus in a powerful position to influence the course of private trading. Many a publican provided cellars or outbuildings for the storage of his client's goods. Some converted their halls or parlours into private auction rooms ... Agreement between prospective dealers was rarely reached without a lengthy series of "speeches" and "communications", and the company often sat far into the night before the transaction was concluded. Sometimes an unscrupulous innkeeper would allow some hapless yeoman (well plied with ale) to be "cozened of his money" by the "glozing terms ... smooth words, and fair speeches" of the other party concerned ... When the bargain was agreed, the local scrivener (sometimes himself one of the guests) was called upon to draw up one of the bonds, and the deed was read out to the assembled company ... not infrequently one of the signatories later confessed himself unable to read it ...[39]

The problem arose because of the poor educational system. 'Many marketing disputes arose through the illiteracy of one or other of the parties concerned.'[40]Many of the traders were helped by assistants, who 'undertook the writings of his order books, notes, and letters …'[41] Because of the writing involved in trading transactions, the aid of his son William would have been invaluable to the semi-literate John Shakespeare. As Everitt has concluded, 'with the growth of private dealing some grounding in writing and accounting was imperative.'[42] Lena Orlin has argued

For property transactions, wholesale operations, and other aspirational ventures, records and documents were vital. At Stratford's grammar school, William Shakespeare developed skills that were useful to an upwardly mobile family. By the time he was 10, he may have thought of himself as his father's partner.'[43]

There is some independent evidence to support Rowe's statement that Shakespeare worked with his father, and it involves the dispute about the purchase of land in Wilmcote that John Shakespeare had with his bother-in-law Edmund Lambert and his son John. The dispute is highly complex, and it is discussed in detail in my book on Shakespeare.[44] The following is an extract from the court proceedings relevant to the evidence of William Shakespeare's part and status in the dispute.

On the first day of March [1587] ... he [Edmund Lambert] died ... after whose death ... [the land] descended to the aforesaid John Lambert, as son and heir of the said Edmund ... the said John Shakespeare his wife Mary together with William Shakespeare their son, when claim had

[38] Ibid, pp. 107, 108.
[39] Ibid, p. 110.
[40] Ibid, p. 115.
[41] Ibid, p. 104.
[42] Ibid, p. 116.
[43] L. Orlin, *The Private Life*, p. 46.
[44] See 'The Shakespeare/Lambert Dispute' in Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, pp.35-45.

been made upon them, covenanted the said [land] … to said John Lambert and … delivered all writings and proofs concerning the said premises … besides that, he, the same John Shakespeare, and Mary his wife, at the same time with William Shakespeare their son, have always been ready hitherto not only for covenanting the aforesaid premises but also for delivering to the same John Lambert all writings and proofs concerning the same …'[45]

This is evidence that Shakespeare was still working with his father in 1587 and 1588, providing assistance to his father who was only semi-literate. His role appears to have been mainly helping with the delivery and working on written records, invaluable assistance to his father at this time. However, this interpretation has been disputed by E.K. Chambers:

This is the only reference to Shakespeare in the litigation conducted by his parent about the property concerned … William, probably in respect of some right of inheritance, was a party to this, but the negotiation was apparently oral and would not necessarily entail his presence at Stratford.[46][16]

There is little evidence that the negotiation was oral[47], and in any event, William Shakespeare's involvement appears to be concerned with references to writing. Also importantly, both parties to the dispute referred to "heirs and assigns" when the inheritance of property was at issue, whereas William Shakespeare is mainly linked to the submission of written documents. Also I believe Chambers has misread the nature of the dispute: John Shakespeare was not attempting to reclaim the land but was trying to extract extra money from John Lambert who had only recently inherited the property.[48] In effect, he was trying to cheat John Lambert out of £20, at a time when John Shakespeare appears to have been poverty stricken and looking for extra sources of income.[49]

Having his son helping with writing would have been invaluable to John Shakespeare. As Schoenbaum has written: 'From all the documentary evidence, John Shakespeare was not fully literate. Invariably the documents … [he] signed either with his mark or with a pictogram … The fully literate – even those who had become infirm or senile – tended to make a simple scrawl for their signatures rather than crosses.'[50]

There is evidence that William Shakespeare was very familiar with legal terminology. Fripp argued that he showed 'extraordinary knowledge, and large accurate usage, in his writings from the beginning, of legal terminology and procedure.'[51][17] The suggestion made by Malone – who was a barrister – that the dramatist spent some years as a lawyer's clerk, was also supported by other lawyers.[52] It is probable that Shakespeare acquired his legal knowledge working for his father in drafting legal documents in trading transactions.

Also, it makes it much more comprehensible as to how Shakespeare acquired the linguistic and cultural knowledge to write plays of such universal and general appeal. It has always puzzled historians how he acquired the knowledge to write such plays, but by participating in meetings in inns in London and elsewhere on trading expeditions, with a 'lengthy series of

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[45] Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents*, pp. 138, 139.
[46] E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, Volume 2 (1930), p. 37.
[47] John Shakespeare claimed that John Lambert had promised at Stratford to pay £20 for additional evidence for security of title to the Wilmcote property, to be paid in instalments at the manor house of Anthony Ingram in Little Walford. There is evidence that these meetings never took place, as the legal documents reveal that John Lambert already had security of title. See 'The Shakespeare/Lambert Dispute' in Razzell, *William Shakespeare* pp.35-45.
[48] Ibid.
[49] See p. 11.
[50] Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives,* 2006, p. 292.
[51] E. Fripp, *Shakespeare: Man and Artist*, Volume 1, page 138.
[52] Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, p. 332.

"speeches" and "communications" far into the night, and "smooth words, and fair speeches" ', helps to resolve this conundrum. Everitt makes it clear that these traders were highly cosmopolitan: 'the wayfaring community developed an ethos of its own dissimilar to that of the settled society of town and village. Its spirit of speculation and adventure ran counter to the stable traditions of the English peasantry.'[53] This culture provided Shakespeare with both the knowledge and background necessary for his theatrical and business career.

He would also have been exposed to theatres in London and elsewhere as he travelled around the country with his father. Inns were often centres of theatrical productions[54] and he probably encountered them throughout the so-called 'lost years', preparing him for both his future work as a playwright and his career as an astute businessman. There is also evidence that Shakespeare may have encountered theatre companies directly during his working life with his father. Michael Wood has documented a case where wool-dealing and a theatrical production coincided in 1587:

In mid-June 1587 ... the Queen's Men were on tour in Oxfordshire, rolling their wagon of props and costumes into the wool town of Thame ... at the time of the sheep clip in June the place was full of wool buyers and others; it was a good time to play, and it was visited by many travelling companies ... There were inns for travellers at the east end ... Here the Queen's Men played on 13 June ... in the yard of an inn called the White Hand.[55]

It is likely that Shakespeare encountered the Queen's Men in different inns as he and his father travelled the country on wool buying expeditions. Inns were widely used for theatrical productions during this period, and it was during sheep shearing in June and other times that travelling players gravitated to these locations to maximise revenue. This explains why theatrical companies were so keen to locate their travelling productions during sheep fairs and times of wool shearing, such as that at Thame. Shakespeare probably encountered The Queen's Men in inns and other venues, which might explain why four of the company's plays were forerunners to Shakespeare's later writing. According to Pauline Montague, these plays were '*The Troublesome Regn of King John*, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, *The Famous Victories of Henery V*, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan and Cordelia*.' She concluded that 'these plays … are actually among the repertoire of the Queen's Men and Shakespeare's own plays show such an intimate knowledge of these and other of their repertoire, in some cases even before they were published, that several biographers believe that Shakespeare may have been a member of the Queen's Men early in his career.' [56][20]

The Earl of Southampton and the Gift of £1000.

Rowe wrote:

He [Shakespeare] had the Honour to meet with many great and uncommon Marks of Favour and Friendship from the Earl of Southampton ... There is one Instance so singular in the Magnificence of this Patron of Shakespear's, that if I had not been assur'd that the Story was handed down by Sir William D'Avenant, who was probably very well acquainted with his

[53] Chartes, *Agricultural Markets*, p. 111.
[54] See Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare*, p. 131; Michael Wood, *In Search of Shakespeare*, 2005, p. 134. See the picture of Green Dragon Inn.
[55] Wood, *In Search of Shakespeare*, p. 112. See also p. 143 for a picture of such a provincial inn.
[56] Pauline Montagna, 'William Shakespeare and the Queen's Men', *Shakespeare and His World/The Elizabethan Theatre*, 2002 Online.

Affairs, I should not have ventur'd to have inserted, that my Lord Southampton, at one time, gave him a thousand Pounds, to enable him to go through with a Purchase, which he heard he had a mind to.[57]

Malone challenged this account, but clarification of Shakespeare's financial activities is provided by the financial expert David Fallow, who examined them in his doctoral thesis. He analysed the source of Shakespeare's income from his theatrical work and other sources:

... Playing companies such as The King's Men bought plays outright, paying around £6 for each work ... Shakespeare's averages two plays per year adding another £20 to his income.'[58] *'A net £60 per annum would have supported a comfortable, but not extravagant, lifestyle but it would not, by any stretch of the imagination, paid for the stream of investment he made between 1597 and 1613.*[59][22]

Given that he did not earn the money for his investments from his theatrical work, this suggests that he must have had alternative sources of income, including gifts from the Earl of Southampton. As we have seen in addition to the thousand pounds, Rowe wrote that Shakespeare met 'with many great and uncommon Marks of Favour and Friendship from the Earl of Southampton', which could have included much more modest sums of money.

Southampton fell out with his guardian Lord Burghley, who had wanted him to marry Burghley's grand-daughter, but Southampton refused and Burghley used his power as Master of the Wards to fine him £5,000, which indicates the scale of Southampton's wealth.[60] He was highly attracted to the theatre and in a letter dated at the end of 1599, it was stated that he failed to go to court but passed 'away the time in London merely in going to plays every day.'[61]

With the evidence of the relationship between Shakespeare and Southampton, and the latter's wealth and spendthrift nature, it is feasible that he did give Shakespeare a thousand pounds and other gifts. It explains how Shakespeare managed to purchase investments between 1597 and 1605, totalling a thousand pounds, and contradicting Malone's claim that there was no evidence that Shakespeare purchased property on this scale.

The Poaching of Deer and Exile

Included in Rowe's biography was an account of how Shakespeare was forced to leave the work with his father, as a result of the poaching of deer from Sir Thomas Lucy's park:

The essential story of poaching, capture, prosecution, and flight has survived in at least three separate versions – those of Davies, Rowe, and Jones.[62] They were independent of each other and unaware of alternative accounts.

The assumption of Rowe's version of the poaching incident is that it occurred at Charlecote, the manor house of Sir Thomas Lucy. But in the later eighteenth century claims were made that it took place at Fulbrook Park, two miles distant from Charlecote.[63] The poaching incident was used by Shakespeare in the autobiographical play *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* He made Falstaff among other things a deer stealer, and satirized Sir Thomas Lucy as Justice Shallow.[64]

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[57] Nicholl, *The Life*, pp. 37, 38.
[58] D. Fallow, 'Where Did Shakespeare's Money Come From', *Online.*
[59] Fallow, *John and William Shakespeare*, p. 96.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Malone, *The Plays*, p. 477.
[62] Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare*, p. 103.
[63] Ibid, p. 87; Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare*, pp. 104, 105; Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, pp. 86, 87.
[64] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 89, pp. 98, 99.

The major difficulty in its acceptance has been until now the absence of any firm evidence for a deer park at Charlecote or Fulbrook at the relevant period.[65] Malone claimed that there was no evidence for the existence of parks at Charlecote and Fulbrook.[66] However, the Sheldon Tapestry Map bearing the date 1588 – the approximate date of the poaching incident – shows a paling attached to Charlecote, bounded on one side by the river Avon.[67]

There was a cony warren licenced at Charlecote owned by Sir Thomas Lucy. In the final quarter of 1584, a second 'cony keeper' was added to the list in the Charlecote Household Accounts Book. The pattern of two keepers was maintained right through to the end of the record in 1587.[68] Schoenbaum has clarified the position of deer at Charlecote: 'If fallow deer would not come under the heading of beasts of warren, roe deer would. So the episode could have taken place at Charlecote after all.'[69]

The relevant section of the Sheldon tapestry map is as follows:

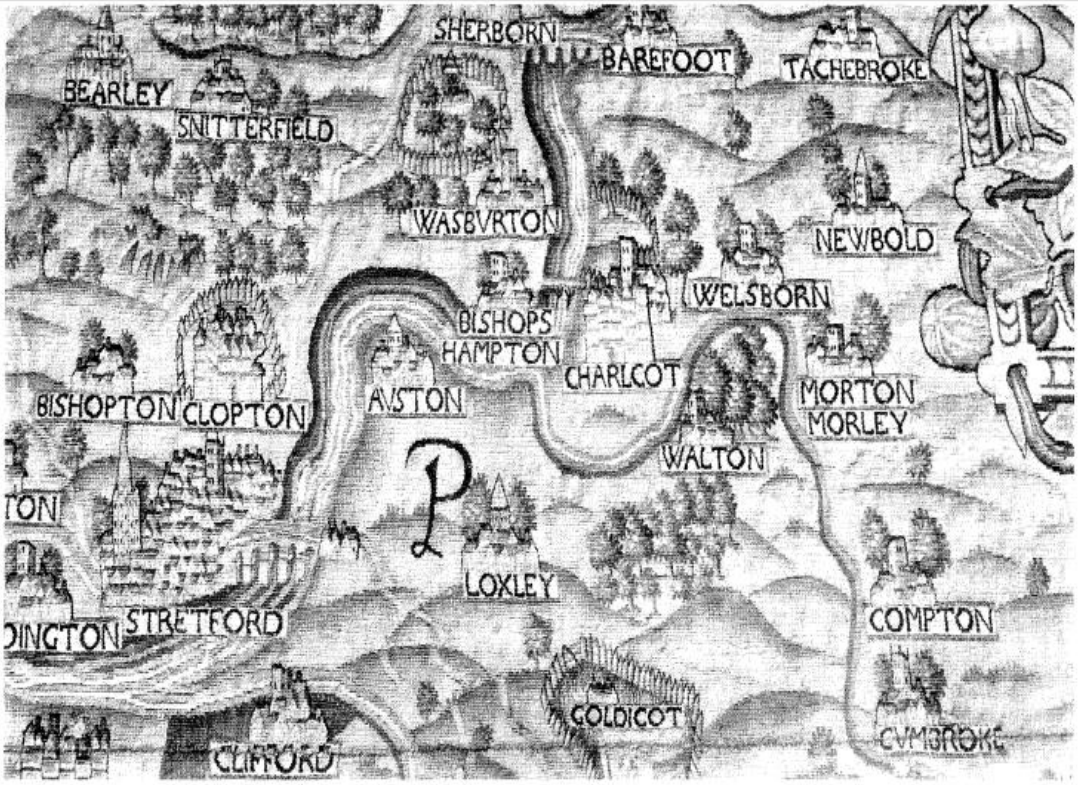

Plate 3: Charlecote and Surrounding Area (From Sheldon Tapestry Map of Worcestershire in The Victoria and Albert Museum)

There appears to be a park at "Wasburton" just east of Snitterfield, which is completely surrounded by palings. and it is precisely where Fulbrook park should be located according to various descriptions. In particular Leland's account: 'I roade from Warwicke to Bareford

[65] Ibid, p. 89.
[66] For a full discussion of the poaching incident see Razzell, *William Shakespeare,* pp. 85-120.
[67] In the Victoria and Albert Museum.
[68] Ibid, p. 93.
[69] Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, p. 71.

Bridge … 2 miles [from Warwick]. Here I sawe halfe a mile lower upon Avon on the right ripe by northe a fayr parke caulled Fulbroke.'[70]

Land at Fulbrook was licenced to Sir Thomas in 1573. The following entry was entered in the Calendar of Patent Rolls for 27 April 1573: 'Licence for Edward Graunt to alienate lands in Fulbroke, co. Warwick, to Thomas Lucy, Knight, John Somervyle and Henry Rogers …' [71] This licence reads:

The Queen ... granted and gave licence ... to our beloved Edward Grant ... [of] one message, twenty acres of land, forty acres of meadow, three hundred acres of pasture and ten acres of woodland, with appurtenances in Fulbrook ... so that he can give and grant, alienate ... to beloved and faithful Thomas Lucy Knight and our beloved John Somerville, Esquire and Henry Rogers, Gentleman ...'[72]

Fulbrook had expanded from one acre of woodland in June 1573 to 100 acres of woods in October 1573, and the area in question was designated as Fulbrook Park.[73] It is possible that this when it was again created as a hunting park, with protective paling. Fulbrook was only a mile or so away from Snitterfield, depicted in the Sheldon Tapestry Map. Snitterfield was the residence of Shakespeare's uncle Henry Shakespeare and the birthplace of his father, and an obvious location for poaching activities.

Malone wrote extensively about the legislation covering the punishment for poaching activities, and he claimed that nowhere did it list that the poaching deer carried out by Shakespeare should be punished severely.[74] This does not account for the effect of the ballad Shakespeare wrote satirizing Sir Thomas. According to Rowe the ballad 'is said to have been so very bitter, that it redoubled the Prosecution against him.'[75] This is confirmed by Jones: 'the ballad … stuck upon his park gate, which exasperated the knight to apply to a lawyer at Warwick to proceed against him.'[76]

The poaching incident may be linked to a period of poverty that John Shakespeare was experiencing during this time. In 1578 he was allowed by Stratford Corporation to pay a reduced contribution for the maintenance of the local militia. Additionally in the same year, he was exempted from contributing towards the weekly maintenance of the poor.[77] He was undergoing 'years of adversity'[78], culminating in 1592 when he avoided church because of a 'feare of process for debte'.[79] The poaching incident probably occurred in about 1588 and may have been responsible for Shakespeare leaving Stratford. Poaching was not then just a youthful frolic but was linked to a period of poverty and economic hardship.

[70] Ibid, p. 106, 112.
[71] Ibid, p. 100.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid, p. 103.
[74] Malone, *The Plays*, pp.119-147.
[75] Nicholl, *The Life*, p. 29.
[76] Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare*, p. 102.
[77] Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents,* pp. 65-67.
[78] F.E. Halliday *A Shakespeare Companion,*1964, pp. 441- 42.
[79] Ibid.

Conclusion: Banishment and Resolution of Exile

It appears that the Shakespeare's banishment as a result of the poaching incident had a profound effect on him. There is an expression in Sonnet 29 of his bitterness at being exiled from his home and family.[80]

When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes
I all alone beweep my outcaste state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate.

However, he appears to have come to terms with his exile through his writing as a playwright, for as Rowe tells us: 'The latter Part of his Life was spent, as all Men of good Sense will wish theirs may be, in Ease, Retirement, and Conversation of his Friends',[81] reflected perhaps in the following passage from *As You Like It*:

Sweet are the uses of adversity, which like a toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in his head. And this our life, exempt from public haunt, finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.

[80] William Shakespeare, *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, 2002.
[81] Nicholl, *William Shakespeare*, p. 72.