The Life of Shakespeare: a Critical Evaluation.

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], 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] 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 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] 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] much of it based on Edmund Malone's work on Shakespeare. Malone wrote: 'It is somewhat remarkable, that in Rowe's Life of our author, there are not more than *eleven* facts mentioned.

1. He was the son of John Shakespeare, and born at Stratford, in April 1564.
2. He dies there in 1616. These are both true, and were furnished by the parish register.
3. His father had ten children

[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.
[4] Ibid, p. 441.
[5] C. Nicholl (ed), *Nicholas Rowe the Life of Shakespeare*, 2009, pp. 26, 28.
[6] C. Nicholl (ed.), *Nicholas Rowe the Life of Shakespeare*, 2009.
[7] K. Duncan Jones, *Shakespeare an Ungentle Life*, 2010, p. 97; Nicholl, *Nicholas Rowe*, p. 7.

4. His father was a woolman.
5. When the poet came to London "he was received into the company of actors there in being," as if there was then but one company.
6. He was but an indifferent actor.
7. *Falstaff* was originally called *Oldcastle*, and that the poet was *obliged* to change the name of that character.
8. Lord Southampton gave him 1000l. to *complete* a purchase.
9. He left *three* daughters.
10. He was driven to take shelter in London in consequence of stealing deer from Sir Thomas Lucy's park.

The preceding eight facts will all be shown to be false.'[8]

As Schoenbaum has written, 'it is largely through Malone's achievement the inadequacies of Rowe's essay were now recognized.'[9] 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'[10] – 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.

Points 5, 6, 7 and 9 of Malone's critique are not major issues, and will not be covered in this essay, and only the problems mentioned by Malone which are possible to check factually will be addressed. This paper 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.

I will cover Malone's criticisms in the order that he made them.

His first two points imply 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.[11] It therefore appears that Betterton managed to obtain information from local sources beyond the information in the Stratford parish register. Also, Rowe stated that John Shakespeare was 'a considerable Dealer in Wool',[12] and it is only in the last few years that this statement has been documented in research into legal documents.[13]

Point three in Malone's criticism requires more extended treatment. Malone assumed that parish registers were a reliable source of information on births and deaths, yet new research

[8] E. Malone, *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare … Comprehending a Life of the Poet*, Volume 2, 1821, p. 69.
[9] S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives,* 2006, p. 169.
[10] Nicholl, *Nicholas Rowe*, p.7.
[11] Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, p. 192.
[12] Nicholl, *Nicholas Rowe,* p.26,
[13] See page 3 of the present article. 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.

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.[14] 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. According to Schoenbaum: 'In April 1569 the Shakespeares gained another daughter. She was christened Joan on the 15th, so apparently the first Joan had died, probably while still an infant, in 1559 or 1560, when burial entries are sparse in the register.'[15]

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.'[16]

The quality of birth registration is revealed in the pattern of baptisms of John Shakespeare's children[17]:

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,[18] 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.[19] However, four legal cases involving John Shakespeare 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.[20] An informer revealed that in 1572 John "Shaxspere" of "Stretford super Haven" and John Lockesley of the same place had illegally

[14] 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.*
[15] S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*, 1978, p. 27.
[16] Ibid, p. 87.
[17] Malone, *The Plays*, pp. 610, 611.
[18] E.A. Wrigley, R.S. Davies, J.E. Oeppen and R.S. Schofield, *English Population History from Family Reconstitution, 1580-1837*, 1997, pp. 365, 554.
[19] F.E. Halliday, *Shakespeare Companion,* pp. 441.
[20] 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, pp.17-18.

bought 200 tods (i.e. 5,600 pounds) of wool, and later that year John Shakespeare was accused of buying 100 tods of wool.[21]

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.[22] 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. As a result 'glovers in the central and east midlands … were great wool dealers.' [23] Remnants of wool were found in John Shakespeare's Henley Street house traditionally referred to in Stratford as "the woolshop", and Bowden informs us that after the wool was bought, it was most frequently 'carried to the dealer's house or warehouse'.[24]

Wool dealing also contained the seeds of money lending. 'When a seller gave credit for wool he received a higher price for it than he would have done had he accepted payment in ready money. The price of wool sold on credit thus contained an element of interest …'[25] John Shakespeare was prosecuted for illegal money lending, and this probably occurred on other occasions. He 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.'[26] He had dealings with people living in London, Worcestershire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Coventry, Nottingham and Stoke in Staffordshire.[27]

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.'[28] The monument may have been commissioned by Shakespeare's grand-daughter Elizabeth Barnard or even possibly by Shakespeare himself during his own lifetime.[29] 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.'[30]

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

[21] Thomas and Evans, 'John Shakespeare'; Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 17, 18.
[22] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 19.
[23] P. J. Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England*, 1962, p. 82.
[24] Ibid, p. 91.
[25] Ibid, p. 101.
[26] S. Lee, *Life of Shakespeare*, 1898, C.U.P. Edition 2012, p. 4.
[27] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 20.
[28] Nicholl, *The Life*, 71.
[29] See the Wikipedia entry on Shakespeare's monument.
[30] B. Rowland Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents,* Volume 1, 1940, p. 139.

bargaining which was mostly "free", or emancipated from official control: to dealing between individual traders and manufacturers in private.'[31] However, Everitt writing of 'the conflicting aspirations of the market town and private trader, notes that 'many traders engaged in both spheres of activity, and it would be misleading to draw too sharp a distinction between them.'[32] Most of the leading townsmen of Stratford were private traders and were engaged in the illegal trading of corn,[33] and private trading was ubiquitous in Stratford in the late sixteenth century.[34] An example of this is to be found in a letter in 1598 from Adrian Quyney to Richard Sturley:

'Yff yow bargen with Wm Sha …or receve money therfor, brynge youre money homme that yow maye; and see howe knite stockynges be sold; ther ys gret byinge of them at Aysshome. Edward Wheat and Harrye, youre brother man, were both at Evyshome thys daye senet, and, as I harde, bewtow £20 ther in knyt hosse; wherefore I thynke yow maye doo good, yff yow can have money.'[35]

The activities of leading townsmen in private trading can be further illustrated by the example of Thomas Rogers, Bailiff of the Borough, who in 1595 was a butcher by trade, but was also engaged in extensive illegal buying and selling of corn, malt and cattle.[36] His attitude towards such trading is illustrated by his behaviour. He bought a cartload of barley in order to forestall the market, and when reproached for this, 'doth say that he will justify it, and he careth not a turd for them all.' [37]

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.[38] Using an index of wool prices, it had increased as follows: 1450-99 = 100; 1550-59 = 206; 1590-99 = 315.[39] The price of arable produce trebled between 1530-59 and 1590-1619, whereas cattle and oxen more than doubled during the same period.[40] 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.'[41] The wet seasons of 1594, 1595 and 1596 exacerbated these price rises,[42] leading to great distress amongst the poor.[43] According to Phelps Brown and Hopkins in their study of builders' real wages during the period 1264-1954, 'the lowest point we record in seven centuries was in 1597, the year of *Midsummer Night's Dream.*'[44]

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[31] J. Chartres (ed), *Agricultural Markets and Trade, 1500-1750: Chapters from the Agrarian History of England and Wales,*1990, p. 92.
[32] Ibid, p. 563.
[33] Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents*, p. 284.
[34] For example, 120 of the leading townsmen in Stratford – including Shakespeare – illegally hoarded grain in 1598. Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents*. p. 284.
[35] Ibid, p. 230.
[36] E. Fripp, *Master Richard Quyney*, 1924, p.104.
[37] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 141.
[38] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, pp. 11, 12.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents*, p. 282.
[42] Ibid.
[43] 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.
[44] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 140.

This distress resulted in a threat of violence. In a letter from Abraham Sturley to Richard Quiney of the 24 January 1598 he wrote:

U shall understande, brother, that our neighbours are growne with the wantes they feele throughe the dearnes of corne … malecontent. Thei have assembled together in a great nomber, and travelld to Sir Tho. Luci on Fridai last to complaine of our malsters; on Sundai to Sir Foulke Gre. and Sir Joh. Conwai. I should have said on Wendsdai to Sir Ed. Grevll first … Tho. West, returning from the ij knights of the woodland, came home so full that he said to Mr. Baili that night, he hoped within a weeke to leade some of them in a halter, meaninge the malsters … to se them hanged on gibbettes att their owne dores.[45]

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.[46] 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.

This places John Shakespeare in the economic and cultural context of Stratford at this time. There is no inconsistency between regular participation in corporation affairs, and life as an individual trader, including visits to London and elsewhere. In fact, John Shakespeare was prosecuted for usury and wool-dealing at the very time he had achieved highest office in Stratford – 1568-71 – when he was bailiff and chief alderman and had visited London with Adrian Quiney on council business.[47]

Everitt has shown that this type of trading grew rapidly in the sixteenth century, particularly after about 1570. He studied it through the records of disputes between traders in the Court of Chancery and Requests, which provide a detailed picture of John Shakespeare's economic and cultural world. Only about a third of country-wide private transactions took place in the same county in the Midland region, [48] 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.[49] 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.'[50]

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 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.[51]

[45] Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents*, p. 227.
[46] Ibid, p. 284.
[47] Ibid, p. 26.
[48] Chartres, *Agricultural Markets*, p. 99.
[49] Ibid, p. 93.
[50] Ibid, p. 106.
[51] Ibid, pp. 107, 108.

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 …[52]

The problem arose because of the poor educational system. 'Many marketing disputes arose through the illiteracy of one or other of the parties concerned.'[53]Many of the traders were helped by assistants, who 'undertook the writings of his order books, notes, and letters …'[54] 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.'[55] 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.'[56]

According to Rowe, William Shakespeare worked for his father after he left school at an early age. There is some independent evidence to support Rowe's statement, 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.[57] 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 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 …'[58]

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

[52] Ibid, p. 110.
[53] Ibid, p. 115.
[54] Ibid, p. 104.
[55] Ibid, p. 116.
[56] L. Orlin, *The Private Life*, p. 46.
[57] See 'The Shakespeare/Lambert Dispute' in Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, pp.35-45.
[58] Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents*, pp. 138, 139.

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.[59]

There is little evidence that the negotiation was oral[60], 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.[61] 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.[62]

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.'[63]

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.'[64] 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.[65] 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 "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.'[66] 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[67] and he

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[59] E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, Volume 2 (1930), p. 37.
[60] 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.
[61] Ibid.
[62] See pp. 16, 17.
[63] Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives,* 2006, p. 292.
[64] E. Fripp, *Shakespeare: Man and Artist*, Volume 1, page 138.
[65] Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, p. 332.
[66] Chartes, *Agricultural Markets*, p. 111.
[67] See Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare*, p. 131; Michael. Wood, *In Search of Shakespeare*, 2005, p. 134. See the picture of Green Dragon Inn.

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.'[68]

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. As Keenan has written

Inns were important as staging places 'for the multitude of carriers'; growing numbers of merchants and traders held meetings and made bargains at inns … To play at inns was to perform in one of the spaces at 'the heart of the social world' of most early modern English communities … At the same time, local and visiting inn customers provided a ready and potentially generous audience, most inn customers being drawn 'from the landed, mercantile and professional classes.'[69]

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.' [70]

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 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.[71]

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[68] Michael Wood, *In Search of Shakespeare*, 2005, p. 112. See also p. 143 for a picture of such a provincial inn.
[69] Siobhan Keenan, *Provincial Playing Places and Performances in Early Modern England, D.Phil.,* University of Warwick, 1999, p. 434.
[70] Pauline Montagna, 'William Shakespeare and the Queen's Men', *Shakespeare and His World/The Elizabethan Theatre*, 2002 Online.
[71] Nicholl, *The Life*, pp. 37, 38.

It was this claim that Malone objected to: 'that Lord Southampton gave him a thousand pounds … in order that he might complete a purchase, is totally unworthy of credit, since no such extensive purchase ever appears to have been made by him [Shakespeare], as will be seen when we come to make an estimate of the property which he possessed.'[72] There is however an independent source for this story: R.B. Wheeler in his *History and Antiquities of Stratford-Upon-Avon*, published in 1806, informs us that 'the unanimous tradition of this neighbourhood is that by the uncommon bounty of the Earl of Southampton, he [Shakespeare] was enabled to purchase houses and land in Stratford.'[73]

Shakespeare makes a number of references to a thousand pounds relating to Falstaff in *Henry IV*: 'He said this other day, You [the Prince] ought him a thousand pound', and when challenged about his cowardice, Falstaff tells the prince that 'I would give a thousand pound I could run as fast as thou canst … here be four of us, have taken a thousand pound this morning.' Falstaff asks the Lord Chief Justice: 'Will your Lordship lend me a thousand pound, to furnish me forth; and eventually he persuades the gullible Shallow to lend him a thousand pounds in anticipation of the fruits of Prince Hal's succession to the throne.[74]

A more objective source of evidence is provided by the financial expert David Fallow, who has examined in his doctoral thesis Shakespeare's financial activities. He has listed all the financial investments that Shakespeare made as follows:

Major Shakespeare Investment 1597-1610.[75]

Year	**£**	**Investment**
1597	50	Sharer
1599	60	New Place
	40	Title
1602	60	Housekeeper
1605	320	Land
1605	440	Tithes
1610	300	Land
1613	140	Gatehouse
	60	Globe Rebuild
Total	**1470**	

Fallow also examined the source of Shakespeare's income from his theatrical work and other sources:

Shakespeare almost uniquely had multiple strands of theatrical income: playwriting, membership of The King's Men, and as a part-shareholder in the Globe theatre itself. However, careful financial analysis reveals that his total possible earnings from even these investments fall far short of his known wealth …Moreover, timing is also crucial as several key investments in land and property were made *before* theatrical income could have supplied the cash. Between 1597 and 1605 he purchased almost £1000 of investment in and around Stratford-upon-Avon … 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.'[76] 'A net £60 per annum would have supported a comfortable, but not

[72] Malone, *The Plays,* pp. 69, 480.
[73] R.B. Wheeler, *History and Antiquities of Stratford-Upon-Avon*, 1806, p. 73.
[74] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 50.
[75] D. Fallow, *John and William Shakespeare: The Sources and Acquisition of their Wealth,* D.Phil. Thesis, 2011, Volume 1, p. 96.
[76] D. Fallow, 'Where Did Shakespeare's Money Come From', Online.

extravagant, lifestyle but it would not, by any stretch of the imagination, paid for the stream of investment he made between 1597 and 1613.[77]

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. Also, Wheeler refers to 'uncommon bounty of the Earl of Southampton', without mentioning any specific sum.

Both Shakespeare's verse poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* were dedicated to the Earl of Southampton. As Schoenbaum has claimed, 'many commentators, perhaps a majority, believe that the Earl is the Fair Youth urged to marry and propagate in the *Sonnets*.[78] According to one account, 'the young Earl was reckless with his money and he had no head for the business of managing his land. But Southampton didn't care. With an income of £11,000 a year, he had more money than he would ever need, and the disapproval of the relatives, whom he hardly knew, and his guardian, meant nothing to him.'[79]

He 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.[80] Southampton 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*.'[81]

Given the evidence of the intimate 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:

> Upon his leaving School, he seems to have given intirely that way of Living which his Father propos'd to him … In this kind of Settlement he continu'd for some time, till an Extravagance that he was guilty of, forc'd him both out of his Country and that way of Living which he had taken up … He had, by a Misfortunate common enough to young Fellows, fallen into ill Company; and amongst them, some that made a frequent practice of Deer-stealing, engag'd him with them more than once in robbing a Park that belong'd to Sir Thomas Lucy of Cherlecot, near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that Gentleman, as he thought, somewhat too severely; and in order to revenge that ill Usage, he made a Ballad upon him … it is said to have been so very bitter, that it redoubled the Prosecution against him to that degree, that he was oblig'd to leave his Business and Family in Warwickshire, for some time, and shelter himself in London.[82]

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[77] Fallow, *John and William* Shakespeare, p. 96.
[78] Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare,* p. 179.
[79] *William Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* [Online].
[80] Ibid.
[81] Malone, *The Plays*, p. 477.
[82] Nicholl, *The Life,* pp. 28, 29.

The essential story of poaching, capture, prosecution, and flight has survived in at least three separate versions – those of Davies, Rowe, and Jones.[83] They were independent of each other and unaware of alternative accounts. According to Davies, Shakespeare 'was much given to all unluckiness, in stealing *venison* and *rabbits*; particularly from Sir Lucy … who had him *oft whipt,* and sometimes *imprisoned*, and at last made him fly his native country, to his great advancement.'[84]

Another account was by Thomas Jones, who lived in Tarbick, a village a few miles from Stratford. He died in 1703 aged upwards of ninety and remembered 'to have heard from several old people at Stratford the story of Shakespeare's robbing sir Thomas Lucy's park; and their account of it agreed with Mr. Rowe's, with this addition – that the ballad stuck upon his park gate, which exasperated the knight to apply to a lawyer at Warwick to proceed against him.'[85]

The ballad reputedly included the following:

A parliement member, a justice of peace,
At home a poore scarecrowe, in London an asse …
He thinks himself greate, yet an asse in hys state
We allowe bye his eares but with asses to mate …
He's a haughty proud insolent knighte of the shire
At home nobodye loves, yet theres many hym feare …
To the sessions he went and dyd sorely complain
His parke had been rob'd and his deer they were slain …
He sayd twas a ryot his men had been beat,
His venson was stole and clandestinely eat …
Soe haughty was he when the fact was confess'd
He sayd twas a crime that could not be redress'd …
Though Lucies a dozen he paints in his coat …
If a juvenile frolick he cannot forgive
We'll synge Lowsie Lucy as long as we live.[86]

This version of the poaching incident adds details of the beating of the park keepers and the "Lucies" on Sir Thomas Lucy's coat of arms. 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.[87] 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.[88]

The multiplicity of separate sources for the poaching story would in itself suggest that it was genuine. Sir Thomas Lucy was a Member of Parliament and in March 1585 had charge of a bill 'for the preservation for grain and game'. The association between Justice Shallow and Lucy is suggested by their similar coat of arms. Shallow had 'a dozen white Luces', whereas Sir Thomas had three white luces – although on at least one occasion his coat is known to have been "quartered", reminiscent of Slender's remark on Shallow's coat: 'I may quarter (Coz)', producing a dozen white luces.' Most scholars have been prepared to accept that the traditional testimony for the poaching story is strong, but the major difficulty in its acceptance has been

[83] Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare*, p. 103.
[84] Malone, *The Plays*, p. 123.
[85] Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare*, p. 102.
[86] Malone, *The Plays,* p. 565.
[87] Ibid, p. 87; Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare*, pp. 104, 105; Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, pp. 86, 87.
[88] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 89, pp. 98, 99.

until now the absence of any firm evidence for a deer park at Charlecote or Fulbrook at the relevant period.[89]

Malone was very sceptical about the authenticity of the poaching incident:

> Sir Thomas Lucy could not lose that of which he never was possessed; that from him who is not master of any deer, no deer could be stolen. It is agreed, that there never was a park at Charlecote; and, if the knight never eat any venison but what came out of the park of Fulbroke, he certainly never partook of that delicacy; for he never was possessed of Fulbroke, nor was it enclosed in his time; having been disparked before he arrived at the age of manhood, in which state it continued during the whole of his life.[90]

In fact Malone was wrong about both Charlecote and Fulbrook parks.[91] 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.[92] As Croom has observed of such a habitat: 'Where the local topography allowed, natural boundaries such as a river or marshy ground might circumscribe the park.'[93] Bracebridge in his book about Shakespeare and his deer-stealing activities, written in 1862, tells us that 'Sir Thomas Lucy, who in 1558 rebuilt the manor house of Charlecote as it now stands, imparked a considerable tract around it, on the left bank of the Avon in 1563 … [which] ran along the bank of the Avon for nearly a mile.' This description fits perfectly with the Sheldon map – the Charlecote paling is shown ending just opposite Wasperton.[94]

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.[95] 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.'[96]

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[89] Ibid, p. 89.
[90] Malone, *The Plays*, pp. 145, 146.
[91] For a full discussion of the poaching incident see Razzell, *William Shakespeare,* pp. 85-120.
[92] In the Victoria and Albert Museum.
[93] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 114.
[94] Ibid, p. 112.
[95] Ibid, p. 93.
[96] Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, p. 71.

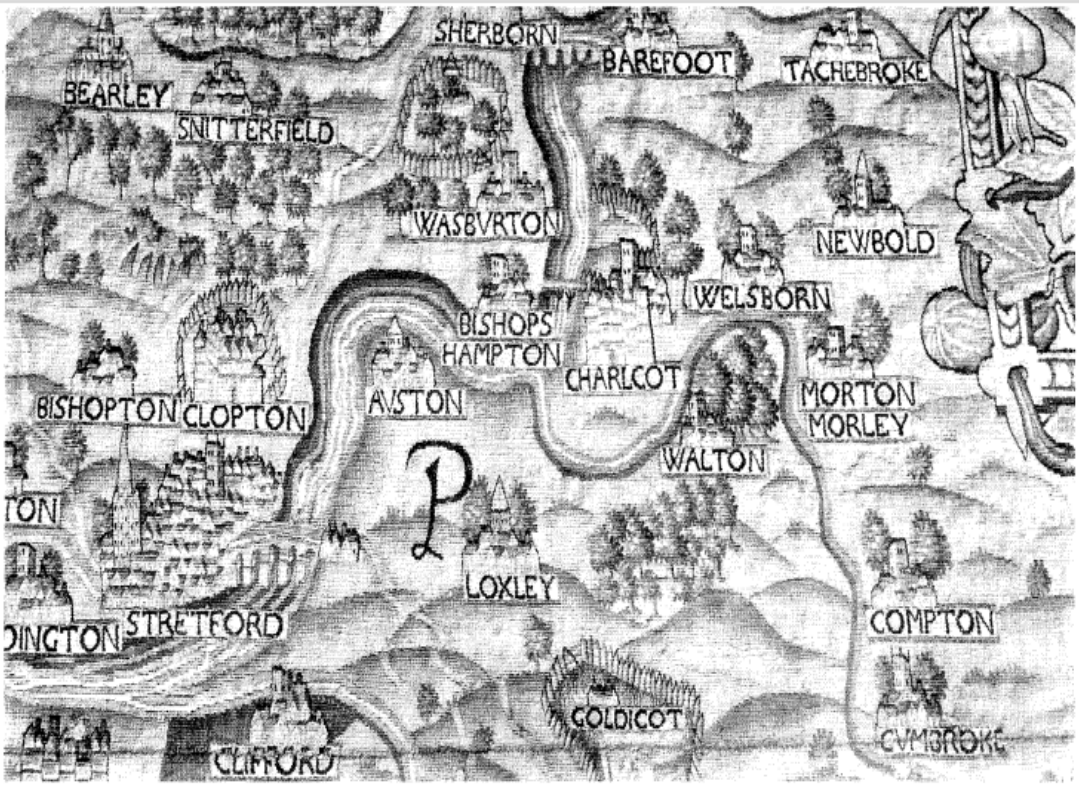

Plate 3: Charlecote and Surrounding Area (From Sheldon Tapestry Map of Worcestershire in The Victoria and Albert Museum)

There appears to be a park at "Wasburton" just east of Snitterfield, which is completely surrounded by palings. There is no sign of Fulbrook, but in fact what has happened is that the tapestry weavers took the location of Wasperton [Wasburton] from Saxton's 1576 map of Warwickshire. Saxton's map had such authority with contemporaries that the Sheldon mapmakers preferred to believe Saxton rather than the evidence of their own eyes. If Wasperton is relocated in its correct position on the right side of the river, a park emerges exactly where Fulbrook was located. The Warwick to Stratford road runs alongside its paling, as described by Rous,[97] and it is precisely where it should be located according to various descriptions. In particular Leland's account: 'I roade from Warwicke to Bareford 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.'[98]

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 …' [99] 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 …'[100]

[97] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 97.
[98] Ibid, p. 106, 112.
[99] Ibid, p. 100.
[100] Ibid.

Henry Rogers was a lawyer and not only was he Sir Thomas Lucy's steward but he was listed in Lucy's account book for the year 1580 as 'ffyrst retayner'; he was also town clerk and steward to the Stratford Corporation for the period 1570-86, covering John Shakespeare's time in high office.[101]

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.[102] 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.[103] 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.'[104] 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.'[105]

Additionally, justices of the peace often used their authority to go beyond the formalities of the law: Lambard complained in 1582 'that justices of the peace … arrogate unto themselves authority to use their discretion, and to play, as it were, the Chancellor in every cause that cometh before them.'[106] Sir Robert Cecil was even more specific in a letter he wrote in 1600: 'for my deare that are killed, what I can do by law I will prove, but otherwise I will reveng myself by no other meanes under color of authority being in myne owne case.'[107]

That whipping was seen by contemporaries as a minor form of punishment, is indicated by one author's observation of the effects of free-school education: 'I must needs come short of their experience that are bred up in free-schools, who, by plotting to rob an orchard, etc, run … under no higher penalty than a whipping.'[108]

All the ingredients of the poaching tradition are to be found in the historical record: two areas of enclosed parkland, a deer park (Fulbrook) and cony warren (Charlecote), a gatehouse, estate gamekeepers, the presence of both deer and rabbit in at least one of Sir Thomas Lucy's parks.

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.[109] He was undergoing 'years of adversity'[110], culminating in 1592 when he avoided church because of a 'feare of process for debte'.[111] 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.

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[101] Ibid, pp. 101, 102.
[102] Ibid, p. 103.
[103] Malone, *The Plays*, pp.119-147.
[104] Nicholl, *The Life*, p. 29.
[105] Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare*, p. 102.
[106] Razzell, *William Shakespeare*, p. 120.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents,* pp. 65-67.
[110] F.E. Halliday *A Shakespeare Companion,*1964, pp. 441- 42.
[111] 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. In all, there are mentions of deer hunting and cony catching in eighteen of Shakespeare's plays and two in his narrative poems.[112] And there is an expression in Sonnet 29 of his bitterness at being exiled from his home and family.[113]

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',[114] 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.

[112] Ibid, p. 121.
[113] William Shakespeare, *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, 2002.
[114] Nicholl, *William Shakespeare*, p. 72.