

speare: Portraiture, biography and the material world', at which Ms Ioppolo gave an excellent paper. This conference was supported by various scholarly institutions including the Folger Shakespeare Library and the Shakespeare Birthday Trust. During the conference it was stated by a leading academic and author that the death in 1596 of William Shakespeare's son Hamnet would have influenced the title the author Shakespeare later chose for his play *Hamlet*, first registered on July 26th 1602.

These scholars fail to mention that the first reference to any performance of a play called 'Hamlet' appears in Thomas Nashe's introduction to Robert Greene's *Menaphon* in 1589, Nashe says '... and if you entreate him faire on a frosty morning hee will afford you whole Hamlets, I should say hand fuls, of Tragicall speeches.' The second reference to a performance of *Hamlet* occurs in June 1594 at Newington Butts, for which Philip Henslowe's *Diary* records a receipt for a single performance of *Hamlet* (not referred to as new) and taken to be a performance in repertory of the above - by Henslowe anyway. The third contemporary allusion to 'Hamlet' was made by Thomas Lodge 'in or before 1596' (Arden series) to the 'ghost which cried so miserably at The Theatre like an oyster-wife, "Hamlet, revenge"'. There was also reputedly a performance of *Hamlet* in October at the Golden Cross Inn, Oxford.

William Shakspeare's son Hamnet was born in 1585, and named after Shakspeare's friend and neighbour Hamnet Sadler. This son Hamnet died on August 11th 1596, aged eleven, well after the performances referred to above; the son's death cannot therefore have influenced a play by this title, let alone a play already on tour. Most importantly, no scholar has succeeded in locating William Shakspeare of Stratford in repertory by June 1594.

Shakspeare's will dated march 25th 1616 is also

on display at the exhibition. Two transcription sheets rest on either side of the will to guide the viewer. They state that Shakspeare lent money to his friends, one of whom is described as 'HAMLET Sadler' on the crib sheet. Closer inspection of the will however reveals that Sadler's signature is 'HAMNET' Sadler (whether written by the clerk or himself), not HAMLET. A distinction needs to be made here, as the word 'hamlettes' also appears in the same will, in this case referring to part of Shakspeare's estate.

It is important not to get our Hamnets, Hamlets and hamlettes confused!

DORNA BEWLEY

Dorna writes to us:

It might be useful for readers of the *DVS Newsletter* to know that the deadline for the Letters Page of the *TLS* (published Fridays) is the Tuesday midday prior. So if readers feel inclined to deliver their 'counterblast' in time for the next *TLS* issue, it helps to send replies by Tuesday midday prior. It also helps to send your letter by email without attachments. [letters@the-tls.co.uk].

Shakespeare & Co., Stanley Wells Allen Lane 2006 Review by Richard Malim

Professor Wells sets off with the avowed intent of showing that Jonson was wrong when he wrote that 'Shakespeare' was "not of an age, but for all time", and that the writer was of a particular age. In other words, writing nearly 400 years later Wells knows better than Jonson, who knew almost all the people concerned and probably read many manuscripts now lost. Of course the Professor has to adopt this strange position because he has to fit the towering genius of the writer into the little narrow bed of the man from Stratford. To do this he has to make several questionable assumptions such as that the teaching at King's Canterbury where Marlowe was educated was equalled by that of King's New School, Stratford upon Avon, and that Marlowe was a better classicist than the writer of Shakespeare.

Professor Wells tells us that Shakespeare began by "responding to the work of his immediate predecessors". First Lyly the protagonist of Euphuism, the courtly style of conversation which was dead by 1585, but nevertheless is made use of in *I Henry IV* II 5 403-14, *Two Gentlemen* III 1 276-end and *Twelfth Night* I 5 62-7, as well as *Love's Labours Lost*. By 1590 (the 'orthodox' date of the earliest of these plays) there would have been no point in using Euphuism: to be relevant to the current fad of 1580 the plays must originate ten years earlier than the 'orthodox' date.

After a ritual obeisance to the absurd 'orthodox' version of 'Groatsworth', we are told that Greene's *Pandosto* and Lodge's *Rosalind* provide the bases of *Winter's Tale* and *As You Like It*. This may be so, but the possibility that Greene with his reputation as a plagiariser may have borrowed from *Winter's*

Tale for *Pandosto* is not examined. Peele may have collaborated in the writing of *Titus Andronicus*; Nashe likewise for *I Henry VI* Act I. At least for Kyd we are spared the mention of 'Ur-Hamlet'. Finally, the usual stock-in-trade of 'orthodoxy', these speculations become fact: 'As we have seen, Shakespeare learnt from the plays of Lyly and Greene, Kyd, Nashe and Peele, and adapted prose fictions by Greene and Lodge' (p.75).

The one occasion when Shakespeare does quote, he makes it perfectly clear:

Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,
'Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?' -*As You Like It* III 5 82-3

Wells correctly and trenchantly points out that this (and the 'great reckoning in a little room' reference) kills off the Marlovians: the Baconians do not merit a mention. He contents himself by telling us that *The Jew of Malta* and *Edward II* are influential fore-runners of *The Merchant Of Venice* and *Richard II*.

At an open meeting some years ago, in answer to my question he did tell me (*continued on p.36*)

Review of Shakespeare & Co. (continued from p.23)

that *Love's Labours Lost* and its euphuism and humour were directly influenced by Marlowe (in whom neither euphuism nor humour is found), but this contention is not repeated in the book.

Professor Wells then claims Dekker as part-author of *Sir Thomas More* but says, 'It cannot however be claimed that Shakespeare genuinely collaborated with Dekker or any of the other contributors' (p.117).

For twelve years 1594-1606 according to Wells, Shakespeare wrote a succession of solo masterpieces, and after that collaborated with Wilkins over *Pericles*, Middleton over *Timon Of Athens* and *Macbeth* and Fletcher over *Henry VIII* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*. For Wells, 'It is natural to ask why ... after a period of a dozen or more years during which he produced a string of solo authored masterpieces Shakespeare turned to write plays jointly with Wilkins, Middleton and finally Fletcher' (p.223).

The question goes to the heart of the sustainability of his own thesis, as his suggested answers show: Could the author have been ill? No evidence.

Was he acting as tutor? The 'collaborators' were all younger.

Was he required by the acting company to be more in touch with the taste of the new Century? Again no evidence but Wells questionably suggests that this idea reflects that the sole-authored *Coriolanus*, *Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest* never enjoyed the popular success of *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*.

At p.194 Wells avers that 'the only dramatist with whom, on the basis of evidence likely to be accepted in a Court of Law, it can confidently be said that Shakespeare collaborated is ... John Fletcher (1579 - 1625).' Yet he can point out that *The Tamer Tamed* (1611), Fletcher's reversal of *The Taming Of The Shrew* (whereby Petruchio is tamed by his second wife) 'is an interesting intervention in the sexual politics of the age. Indeed it is fascinating that, only some twenty years after Shakespeare had given expression in *The Taming of The Shrew* to the orthodox patriar-

chal view of the place of women in marriage, Fletcher should produce so powerful and independently plotted a counterblast to it, and especially he should do it for Shakespeare's company, and, it would seem, with his approval.' This must clearly be nonsense (to a Court of Law or anyone else), on a par with being sent up for his social climbing even in his own plays, let alone by Jonson in *Every Man Out Of His Humour*.

Wells quotes the phrase 'Not without mustard' and, like Professor Jonathan Bate, erroneously ascribes the arms and crest send-up scene in this play to *Every Man IN His Humour* (p.136).

Wells's argument becomes an argument for a playwright who was no longer around to give approval to the manifest insult *The Tamer Tamed* presents to his own art. The collaboration point is not collaboration in the narrow sense of co-operation between two living authors, but merely exemplifies the tacking onto the defective scraps which survive the playwright's death of the parts which Wells and others consider to be by Wilkins, Middleton and Fletcher. Of course, we now have the obvious (and far superior to his suggestions) answer to Wells's 'natural' question above

The 'orthodox' establishment are keen on suggesting that the anti-Stratfordians are conspiracy theorists. It is time to suggest that it is they who are the conspiracy-mongers as they seek without evidence to show that 'Shakespeare' was just another product of the age so they can carry on fitting him into their ideas. It is not bardology to agree with Jonson: it is sober fact that Shakespeare 'was not of AN age but for all time'

There is no other candidate for the writer who had left the scene before Wells's period of collaboration besides Edward de Vere 17th Earl of Oxford (d.1604) - 'absurdly touted as a candidate for the authorship', says Wells. Equally it is important to point out that there is no reason, let alone logic, for Oxford 'to leave his throne' (in the words of one commentator) and step down to collaborate with younger men however talented, especially as none of them is as all-round a genius as himself.

Richard Malim



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