

For the real biography of William Shakspere, see his life story by Richard Malim on the website deveresociety.co.uk

The Case against William of Stratford

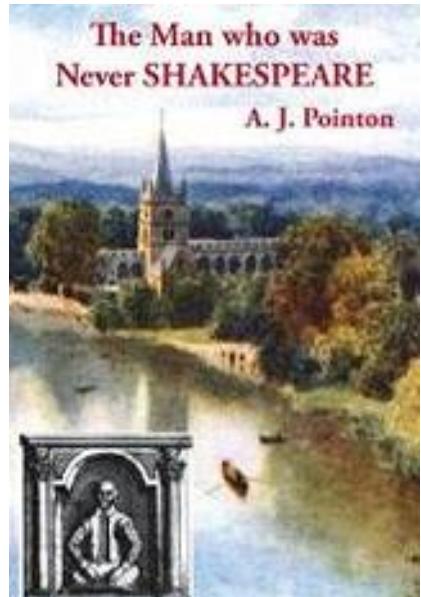
By Tony Pointon

There are many reasons to doubt that a man from Stratford wrote the works of Shakespeare. Here are twenty such arguments, prepared by Tony Pointon. Further details can be found in Professor Pointon's book *The Man Who Was Never SHAKESPEARE* (Parapress 2011).

Firstly, an important distinction:

William **Shakspere** was a business man from Stratford

William **Shakespeare** (or **Shake-speare**) was the name used by the author of the plays & poems



1. **The Stratford man who is said to have written the plays poems was baptised as Shakspere in 1564 and buried as Shakspere in 1616, and never used the name 'Shake-speare' or 'Shakespeare' in his life.**

It is known that an actor-businessman of Stratford upon Avon was baptised in 1564 as William son of John Shakspere. He married as William Shaxpere, was buried as William Shakspere and had three children who were named as Susanna, Judith and Hamnet – all Shakspere. His family name was Shakspere and he never used the name 'Shakespeare'. Similarly, the Elizabethan writer called 'Shakespeare' never used Shakspere. Legally, that's good evidence they were two different men.

2. **This man had two daughters, both baptised Shakspere, both illiterate. A writer's children?**

Shakspeare's family through four generations were illiterate, except that his daughter Susanna learnt to write her first name – very poorly – when she wed the Stratford doctor, John Hall in 1607.

3. When Shakspeare's name appeared on legal documents in place of his mark, it was never 'Shakespeare'; it had to be written in for him by different people. Shakspeare literate?

There are six samples of Shakspeare's name written on legal documents where he would have signed his name, if he could write. None read Shakespeare. More important, they have been shown to have been written for Shakspeare by different people. So Shakspeare was illiterate.

4. Nobody mentioned him as a writer during his lifetime, not even his son-in-law, Dr John Hall.

Nobody in Stratford ever referred to this Shakspeare as a writer, not even his son-in-law Dr John Hall when he was writing about his other patients who wrote things or supported writers like the poet Michael Drayton or the Countess of Northampton. Though he spent much time in London, nobody kept letters written by him. Yet, if he were Shakespeare, they were precious.

5. Shakspeare tried to get a Coat of Arms: though refused at first, he never said he was the writer.

If Shakspeare were the poet and playwright, his Coat of Arms would present two puzzles. Father John Shakspeare first applied for it in 1576 and William re-applied in 1596. The first puzzle would be his trouble in getting it, when the poet Drayton got his with none. Shakspeare had "*Non, sanz droict*" written on his Arms – Norman-French for "No, without right". It was not approved till 1602, so father John was buried in 1601 without the title "Gent" the Arms would have given him.

Yet, even when he had trouble, Shakspeare never claimed he was a writer like Drayton. Another puzzle is that, when Shakespeare's plays came out in 1623, the Shakspeare Coat of Arms was not put on the title page to identify them as his.

6. Shakespeare's top characters were all aristocrats; like emperors, etc. The lowest was a knight. But ordinary people and crowds had rough treatment. Was that a glover's son writing?

Shakespeare knew and understood law so well he used it as part of his ordinary language. He referred to abstruse cases only available in the Inns of Court, one only

available in Norman-French. He made legal jokes which some interpret as errors. He used legalities where no one would expect – as when Romeo sees Juliet, seemingly dead, and says “Seal with a righteous kiss, a dateless bargain with engrossing death”, using three legal terms and the audience in tears. Shakespeare had to have been at the Inns of Court, Shakspere certainly was not

7. Shakespeare wrote expertly about aristocratic things - the Court, politics, falconry, etc. Was that an actor-businessman writing? Knowledge has to be learnt, not imagined.

A typical example of Shakespeare’s peculiar knowledge is falconry, of which great familiarity is shown in Shakespeare’s works, more than any other field sport. Yet falconry was limited to the aristocracy by law, and Shakspere could not have taken part in it, and its language was private.

8. Shakespeare used over 500 books for his plays in seven languages, so he had to have access to them and to tutors. Yet it is unlikely Shakspere even went to a Grammar School – his brothers didn’t.

Though Shakespeare used books in English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Latin and Spanish, no one has shown how Shakspere could have done that. If he had gone to Grammar School, he could have done Latin, but he had no one to teach him to read and write to even get to a Dame School, and none of his three brothers went to school.

Shakespeare had much specialist knowledge, like a complete range of English usage and the largest vocabulary of any writer – though it would not be taught in Grammar School in the Elizabethan period and the first English dictionary was 1604. He had to have had tutors. But no tutor, teacher, schoolmate or school fellow ever claimed fame from their association with him.

9. Shakespeare’s nine comedies based on Italy show detailed knowledge of that country, from Sicily to Milan. No one has explained how Shakspere got such knowledge.

It has not been explained how Shakspere could have got the knowledge of tradition and geography used in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Yet more serious is how he might have got the knowledge and love of Italy shown in the 9 comedies which dealt with Venice, Verona, Palermo, Messina, Syracuse, Mantua, Milan, Florence, Pisa, Padua, etc. which has taken years for scholars to identify. And then there is his knowledge of the closed Court of Henry of Navarre.

Even if Shakspere was a genius, he could not have created his knowledge out of thin air. But no one has shown how he got Shakespeare's knowledge – like his early awareness, shown in *Coriolanus*, of Harvey's unpublished theory of the circulation of the blood, or the four Jewish names in *The Merchant of Venice*, including Shylock and Jessica, which only occur together in the then un-translated Hebrew Bible.

10. Stratford is missing from Shakespeare's plays. No dialect, no accent, no places, no people, no events.

If Shakespeare had been born and brought up in Stratford until he was over 21, like Shakspere, he would have used a Warwickshire accent and dialect. Yet, although Shakespeare used accents and dialects in his works, Warwickshire is one of those totally absent. Some writers have claimed Shakespeare wrote about Stratford, but not so. He used neither its language, history nor geography. Some say, e. g. , that the word "Cotsall" in the plays refers to the Cotswolds, but not so, even though the OED used to say so: it is a village north of Wolverhampton on Watling Street, which, it has been shown Shakspeare, whoever he was, knew well.

11. When Shakspere died in 1616, nobody mourned the death of a great poet.

If this Shakspere had been the writer William Shakespeare, his death in 1616 would have been a national event, but nobody noted it. When other great writers died - Chaucer, Spencer and Jonson – many tributes were written, and they were buried in Westminster Abbey: not Shakspere. It should be no surprise that people who knew of both Shakspere and Shakespeare never connected the two.

12. When Shakspere died, he left no books, diaries, journals or letters.

We know Shakespeare used over 500 books for writing his plays, many valuable and in languages other than English. When Shakspere died, if he had had books, he would have left them to his main heir, John Hall; yet John Hall mentioned no books from his father-in-law, and left no special books to his descendants. Shakspere mentioned no valuable collection in his will. Nobody has been traced in Stratford who got a book belonging to Shakspere or Shakespeare.

13. In 1623, Shakespeare's plays were collected, with an introduction by Ben Jonson, but Shakspere's Coat of Arms was not put on them.

Shakspere was first hinted at as a writer, seven years after his death, when 36 Shakespeare plays were published in 1623 in the First Folio. Then, in order to cover up the real author, hints were printed over the printed names of two of Shakspere's

friends that he may have been ‘Shakespeare’ the author. The form of that introduction shows it was written by the unreliable Ben Jonson.

14. Nobody named Shakspere or Shakespeare ever received any money for the plays and poems.

There are many records showing how other playwrights such as Jonson received payment for writing plays, but there is no record for any payment to William Shakspere or for any play of ‘Shakespeare’. According to entries in the 1590s in Henslowe’s diary, the usual payment for a play was about £6. Yet Shakespeare of Stratford became much wealthier, buying land at £320 and a share in the tithes at £440. He certainly became rich – but not from writing plays.

15. In 1623, a bust of Shakspere as a trader was put in Stratford Church. No pen, no paper.

When that First Folio appeared in 1623, with hints of Shakespeare being from Stratford, a monument also appeared in the Stratford Church, with a scam epitaph indicating Shakspere might have been a writer: yet, the figure on that monument was a trader with a sack of goods, and the present monument of a man with a pen was a propagandist replacement made in 1749.

16. During Shakspere’s lifetime, people suggested the name ‘Shakespeare’ was a pseudonym.

Nothing has ever been found to show Shakespeare wrote under his own name – no letters, no manuscripts, no school records, no praise by him for a writer, no books he owned, no payments for writing, etc. We have enough for all his top 24 rivals to show they were writers, but nothing for Shakespeare (or Shakspere): the name Shakespeare was clearly a pseudonym for someone whose identity was well hidden. Many other writers were punished for their writings, but not Shakespeare, and Shakspere was not even questioned in 1601, when the Privy Council sought the perpetrators of the performance of *Richard II* which had been staged to help raise a rebellion against the Queen in February 1601.

17. The writer Shakespeare was never punished like other writers for things he had written.

The above indicates the name Shakespeare was a pseudonym for someone not wishing to be identified, not Shakspere. Equally indicative is that Shakespeare never wrote any commendatory poems or elegies or eulogies for anyone – which was

normal for ordinary poet-playwrights. Also, when the name Shakespeare first appeared on the poem *Venus and Adonis*, the writers Thomas Nashe and Thomas Heywood both parodied it and indicated the author was hiding himself.

The Lord Chamberlain's Men were contracted to stage *Richard II* on the eve of the Essex Rebellion in February 1601. The players' agent, Augustine Phillips, was questioned about the performance before the Privy Council. However, the author of a play which depicted the deposition of an anointed king, was not – despite the decree of Elizabeth who had stated “I am Richard; Know ye not that?”

18. No one in Shakspere's family ever owned anything of 'Shakespeare' the author.

The name most used to put on other people's works to help sell them was Shakespeare's, and his works were the most pirated for publication. Yet, if Shakespeare was Shakspere, a man who sued over the smallest debt, it is unbelievable he never sued over the abuse of his name, or the theft of his works, and actually never complained, though somebody else did on his behalf.

19. Shakspere's will has no sign of being by a literary person in content or style.

We know Shakespeare used over 500 books for writing his plays, many valuable and in languages other than English. When Shakspere died, if he had had books, he would have left them to his main heir, John Hall; yet John Hall mentioned no books from his father-in-law, and left no special books to his descendants. Shakspere mentioned no valuable collection in his will. Nobody has been traced in Stratford who got a book belonging to Shakspere or Shakespeare.

20. Many people claim that Shakspere the Stratford businessman was Shakespeare the playwright because that was his name. The names are different!

It is often said nobody ever doubted Shakspere was Shakespeare until some people began making mischief around 1850, but not so. Nobody suggested he was Shakespeare until seven years after his death, by when several people had already suggested 'Shakespeare' was a pseudonym. Two people suggested it was a pseudonym in 1593. In 1598, two people suggested it was hiding Francis Bacon. In 1769, a friend of actor David Garrick said Shakspere was a theatre horse-holder who tried passing himself off as a writer, and there were hints from others, perhaps less overt because it was not proper to mention it, as it sadly remains for English scholars to this day.