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Summarising

The title is from Sonnet 50.

This paper is not written to support the de Vere-Oxford cause. It is written to finally show that William Shakespeare should be ranked with Robin Hood and King Arthur as nothing more than a myth, the name – a hoax on the English literati. Removing *Shakespeare* once and for all from the literary equation permits recognition of the actual authors of the thirty-six plays brought together in the 1623 folio-sized collection (*First Folio)*, of whom Oxford is a strong, if not the strongest candidate – but one amongst many.[1]

This is not written to convince academics; they have too vested an interest in the traditional views to unpick their minds – unless they are remarkably, remarkably open-minded to accept what are some very simple but conflicting truths. If they want to argue, the first question I will ask is where is the evidence that Will Shaxper of Henley Street was ever connected to the London theatre? They will say his will, and I will show and prove that the will has been subject to mischievous forgery.

The best book on the Shakespeare authorship question is Diana Price's *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*. She looks for any tangible evidence of the existence of a William Shakespeare, poet and playwright, and gives well-reasoned answers to questions that have puzzled the minds of many who have realised that, as for the so-called author of *Hamlet*, there's *something rotten in the state of Denmark.* Her research is truly exceptional; no buts. Shakespeare is clearly a *will o' the wisp*.

The conclusions of my own research, independently covering the same ground, pushing the envelope even wider, will resolve the unanswered question, who or really what was Shake-Speare?

[1] For example I would advocate Michael Drayton, known as Roland, to be author or co-author of *As You Like It*.

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Time is increasingly precious when knocking on being an octogenarian. I really cannot be mithered to produce a wordy paper that goes over centuries of diatribe just to demonstrate that I have done the work or give information for it to be attacked by nay-sayers; my experience of social media is that there are some pretty nasty people out there, vultures hovering in digital ether, waiting to swoop to protect their own preconceptions. Diana Price *has* done the work. I have done the work, read the books, built up an extensive library, trawled the Internet, downloaded the wills, et cetera, but I have my own life-balance and – well, I cannot write as well as others! [2]

Once one realises that the will of Will Shaxper of Warwickshire's has been subjected to forgery, one ultimately discovers there is no firm evidence at all that that man existed as an actor, poet or playwright. In fact, there is an elephant in the room, *Will Shake-Speare* is a salaciously spoof name, its meaning – onanism; add to which there is another Stratford alongside the banks of another river Avon which is indisputably associated with the two brother-dedicatees of the *First Folio* – and, by-the-by, with their poet-mother, Mary Sidney, Countess Pembroke, sister of the poet Sir Philip Sidney – and yet again – with Susan, the thespian daughter of the Edmund de Vere, our playwright, seventeenth Earl of Oxford.

With Will Shaxper out of contention, who did author the Shake-Speare works? It opens the field to virtually every playwright of the period, either as individuals or as in concert, as the *Henslowe Accounts* demonstrate.

The key to unlock to unlock the authorship question is the recognition that the Shake-Speare Sonnets were written under a pseudonym, however, there's a back-history; the Dudley-Sidney-Pembroke families, a political dynasty that in recreation actively fostered poetry and theatre. In retrospect, it is barely a coincidence that the establishment of the *Pembroke Players* who performed the first *Shake-Speare* works was contemporaneous with the return to active

[2] A S SCHOENBAUM's *Shakespeare's Lives*; a wonderful four-hundred year survey of the histories, legends, theories and players concerning *Shakespeare* is worth borrowing.

London society from Wiltshire of Mary Sidney, Countess Pembroke, after mourning five family deaths during 1587-8.[3]

Mary Sidney, 1561-1621, a consummate poet and translator of French plays, was a formidable patroness of poets and playwrights, many in her immediate entourage. There are several indicators which, to mark and celebrate her sixtieth birthday, her son, William Herbert, Earl Pembroke, then Lord Chamberlain, conceived the idea of publishing in folio, a collection of thirty-six plays with which his mother (and he) had been involved or perhaps simply enjoyed. In 1619 Pembroke used his might as Lord Chamberlain to take effective control of the twenty registered plays printed in quarto under the Shake-Speare banner, and, just ahead of publication of the folio, publisher Edward Blount registered another sixteen unauthored and unpublished plays – any one of which could have been written by one or more playwrights. Few would dispute that Ben Jonson, a friend of the Sidney-Herberts, acted as editor, and the ubiquitous lexicographer, John Florio, appears to have been a shadowy contributor to the *Shakespeare* canon.

Printing of the Collection was almost half-complete when Mary Sidney unfortunately died in September 1621 just five weeks before her sixtieth birthday. Production immediately stopped for a hiatus of exactly one year of respectful mourning before printing recommenced. The title pages of the *First Folio* contain scoffing canards at the hoax being perpetrated under the *Shakespeare* name.

Will Shaxper was buried in Warwickshire. The townspeople of Stratford-upon-Avon had the commercial savvy to quickly recognise the value of curious tourists – and pandered to them, inflating anecdotes and mushrooming a myth; it became a valuable industry. And yet the 1740 monument to William Shakespeare in Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner bears the face of William Herbert, the same Earl Pembroke, whom I strongly suspect used a stage name

[3] Her father, Henry Sidney, mother, Mary Dudley, a three-year-old daughter Katherine, her brother, Sir Philip Sidney, and her uncle, Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester.

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William Shakespeare when performing as a teenager alongside Richard Burbadge and the other Chamberlain's players.

In 1609 the *Shake-Speare* Sonnets was published. Here Shake-Speare is clearly a pseudonym. The eighty-page booklet should be considered in four sections.

- Amazingly, nobody has realised that the narrative poem, *A Lovers Complaint*, which is printed after the one-hundred-and-fifty-four *Sonnets*, should, in fact precede them. It is the prequel and tells of the seduction of a maid by a young lord who offers her marriage, makes her pregnant and then jilts her.
- The first seventeen sonnets are written to a young lord by a pregnant woman pressing him to marry and have progeny.
- Having lost the child, Sonnets 18 to 126 are written by the same woman over a period of years to the young lord expressing the spectrum of her emotions as she goes through the various stages of grief. Sonnets 50, 66 and 110 are definitely written by a woman. The wight (a living being) in me – I'm fairly sure Shaxper never conceived. In Sonnets 122-123-124 she leaves cryptic clues that generate their names.
- The final block of Sonnets, 127 onwards, the so-called *Dark Lady* sonnets, were composed by the young lord as part of a correspondence between these two lovers, spread over the same period of six or seven years.
- Sonnets 72 and 76 imply that the *Sonnets* were written anonymously yet Shake-Speare is in the title and logically is, therefore, a pseudonym
- Shake-speare was the lovers' pseudonym. The Sonnets were written between 1601 and 1607 but not by Shaxper.
- The *Dark Lady* was Mary Fitton, the maid of honour to the Queen. The cryptically gives her name in the first two lines of Sonnet 123, (she signed her name *Phytton*).
- The young lord was William Herbert, the third Earl of Pembroke, who offered Mary marriage, made her pregnant and then jilted her. He called her May – as in the *Darling buds of Maie*.

- The *Sonnets* were printed for T T. The Dedication, which contains a cypher, is also signed T T. T T was *not* Thomas Thorpe. T T is a phonetic monogram for Mary Fitton, Marry Fit-T-on.
- *Master W H* is William Herbert.
- The *Rival Poet* in the *Sonnets* is William's cousin, Mary Wroth, and *Captain Ill* is either a later lover of Mary Fitton, Admiral Sir Richard Leveson, or her first husband William Polewhele.
- William Herbert was considered a bounder for jilting the pregnant Mary Fitton. However, evidence suggests he may actually have been a victim. The real villain may have been Sir William Knollys, Comptroller of the Queen's household and guardian to Mary, portrayed as Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*.
- Ofelia in *Hamlet* Is based on Mary Fitton who could substitute for Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well*, as could William Herbert for *Bertram* and his mother, Mary Sidney, as the Countess.

My presentation is in sections, each dealing with a particular aspect. Each contains something novel or improves understanding and could be expanded significantly but I will leave it to the reader to fact-check to their own satisfaction. I welcome the challenge from the open-minded. I am neither guilty of omission, exaggeration or wild supposition, and I have also avoided presenting the reader with fistfuls of comparative quotes (*Shakespeare said this, Marlowe said that…)* to try to prove a point. I don't need to. I provide a framework;

- There is other Stratford beside another river Avon.
- Will-Shake-Speare is a euphonism.
- Shaxsper's will has been forged.
- the reason the *First Folio* was published, and why in 1623.
- the story of the two authors of the Shake-Speare Sonnets.
- whom was T T for whom the Sonnets were printed.
- William Shaxper was never pregnant.

So much garbage has been written over the last four-hundred years that if that man from Stratford had been Greek or Roman he would be considered a God;

so much for *little Latin and less Greek*. I have learnt in life not to argue with fools, so I am not going to provide fodder to feed the gullible who have been taken in by schooling and will ever remain so. Indeed, when I self-published *The Darling Buds of Maie*[4] identifying who wrote the Sonnets, I myself still believed that the Bard of Henly Street had written the plays. How wrong was I?

Twenty years later I provide the truth, or as near as one can get to the truth after the passage of four centuries. In my research I have repeatedly come across the regurgitation of the regurgitation of previous inaccurate writings on the subject. Hopefully you will find I have provided only information that is fresh and accurate. I am touching on subjects you would never imagine.

When in 2004 I thought I had stumbled over who wrote the Sonnets, I knew it was of such importance to the understanding of "Shakespeare" that I conducted my research to try to prove myself *wrong.* In this I have failed but I am still trying.

"Truth is truth, to the end of the reckoning." [M4M]

The truth answers all questions and as shamed and strumpeted maid announces in Sonnet 123

I'm Mary Phytton!

[4] ALEXANDER B *The Darling Buds of Maie*, 2004

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Introduction

My Shakespeare, rise! I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little further, to make thee a room:
Thou art *a monument without a tomb,*
And art alive still while thy book doth live
And we have wits to read and praise to give.

BEN JONSON To the Memory of My Beloved the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare

When in 2004, by chance – I wasn't looking, I solved the greatest mystery in English literature of who were the authors of, and also the characters in the one-hundred-and-fifty-four *Shake-Speare Sonnets*, I still believed that Shaxper, the Bard of Henley Street, wrote the thirty-six plays published in collection in the *First Folio* of 1623.

Curiosity, however, drew me into more research; I seem to have spotted that the love-interests of *Hamlet*, *All's Well that Ends Well, Measure for Measure*, *Troilus & Cressida*, *A Winter's Tale, Pericles* and even *Much Ado about* Nothing, echoed the same love-affair embodied in the *Sonnets*. I was yet to discover that some of these were known as *The Problem Comedies* due to their uneasy endings.[5]

From Don Paterson's *Reading Shakespeare Sonnets,* a brilliant book, entertaining and instructive, I quote; *they are alternately beautiful, maddening brutal, repetitive, enigmatic, sweet, prophetic, pathetic, bathetic, triumphant, trite, wildly original, contorted screamed, mumbled, plain-speaking, bewildering, offensive, disarming and utterly heartbreaking.* Isn't life just so?

There is a perfectly simple explanation – and feminists will love this; the first one-hundred-and-twenty-six sonnets, they are in chronological order, were

[5] LAWRENCE W W; *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies*, 1931; cites AWEW, M4M, T&C
TILLYARD E M W: Shakespeare's Problem Plays, 1951 includes Hamlet

written by a woman, the strumpeted, sacked and disgraced maid-of-honour, Mary Fitton, addressed to her lover, William Herbert, the third Earl Pembroke, who had jilted her when pregnant. They evolved into an emotional diary reflecting a very real history.

The so-called *Dark Lady Sonnets* are sonnets (amongst other poetry) written to her by Pembroke during the six or seven years (1600 to 1606/7) of their relationship; these are not in chronological order. By following the very real history of Mary Fitton one can understand her many conflicting emotions expressed in verse, predominantly dealing with grief.[6] The unheralded narrative poem, *A Lover's Complaint*, printed after the Sonnets, need now to be heralded.

In my search to identify Shakespeare, I've concluded that we've all been looking at things the wrong way round; ultimately it is fatuous to try to prove the existence of someone who that did not exist. So two simple questions?

Why was the *First Folio* collection of thirty-six plays created, and why in 1623, seven years after Will Shaxper was buried in Warwickshire?

We were brought up to believe that it was to celebrate this Shaxper, a genius without comparison in the history of mankind, a persona with no life-history or substance as a poet or playwright. But why in 1623? Has history missed something? Simple questions deserve simple answers.

If one redacts from Shaxper's will the interlined[7] bequest to three London actors there is nothing to connect Shaxper to the London stage. It effectively

[6] While a student in the 1960's I had a long-distance correspondence with a girl I loved and I'm sure loved me. We wrote several times each week. Money was short and international telephone calls prohibitively expensive. The very earliest we could get a reaction, answer or response to any letter was six days – if one could catch the post right, but it was invariably well over a week and by then life had moved on. The Shake-Speare sonnets are a like correspondence – with the same inconvenience and dysfunctionality of time-delays.

[7] Diane Price picked up that the bequest of the second best bed was an interlineation, however, the bequests to the actors was also an interlineation.

leaves a brand name, pseudonym or stage-name which enables, as well-explained by J Thomas Looney,[8] the authorship of poetry and plays by aristocrats (and/or women) to be concealed. It likewise enabled, with impunity, some unscrupulous publishers to use the brand-name to hype sales.[9] A perfect example was Thomas Pavier who in 1619 published *Sir John Oldcastle* as a play by Shakespeare (fraudulently dated 1600), subsequently accepted as part of the Shakespeare canon, and introduced into the second edition of the *Third Folio* but discovered in 1780 to be – not by Shaxper but by a team of four playwrights.[10]

In the *First Folio* we are told of ***A Stratford Monument*** and of **a *Sweet Swan of Avon***; reasonable intelligence to justify a rail-ticket from London's Euston station to travel north-west to Warwickshire. However, there is another Stratford on another River Avon which is far more pertinent; the train leaving from Waterloo by Great Western Railways for the south-west and Wiltshire; do mind the gap!

Thomas Looney – Oxford; *Robin P Williams* – Mary Sidney (Countess Pembroke); *Lamberto Tassinari* – John Florio, all claim, suggest, or advocate their own *Shakespeare*, and there are others, of course. One gleans from the multitude of books and articles the names of Marlowe,[11] Bacon, Barnfield,

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[8] LOONEY J J T: *Shakespeare Identified*, 1919

[9] Locrine (1595 WS); The Lord Cromwell (1602, WS); London Prodigal (1605, William Shakespeare); The Puritan (1607, WS); A Yorkshire Tragedy (1608, Wylliam Shakespere).

[10] Only discovered in 1780; at the Rose Playhouse; Southwark, on 17th October 1599 impresario Philip Henslowe paid playwrights, Michael Drayton, Richard Hathway, Anthony Munday and Robert Wilson, £14 for the first part of *Sir John Oldcastle*, a play for the Admiral's Men. The money included a £4 earnest for a second part to. *[Henslowe's Accounts for the Rose Theatre]*. The play reads like a Shakespeare play, fits with the events of *Henry V* and has overlapping characters.

[11] Much has been written about Marlowe's "death" and the theory that it was faked. I agree with the theory for three reasons other than those given by Marlovians. **1,** there was a missing body, that of his friend and university colleague, John Penry, who was killed two days earlier, three miles away. **2,** that the wound in the eye with a short dagger would not necessary have caused death, and if had it would have been taken days. **3**. That Frizer, who

Chapman, Chettle, Dekker, Drayton, John Fletcher (*Henry VIII*), Greene, Jonson, Lyly,[12] Thomas Middleton (*Timon of Athens)*, Munday, George Wilkins (Pericles), Heywood, Stanley, Rutland, Mary Sidney, Mary Fitton, George Peele[13] (Titus Andronicus), Samuel Rowley, and Pembroke. The debate will always be circular and endless until there is a solution that answers *all* the questions. [14]

1 – The Solution

This is my swan-song. This is my answer; the framework on which the truth will hang for posterity – and truth cannot be faulted. As with Occam's Razor, the solution is deceptively simple.



- William Herbert (Earl Pembroke) commissioned the *First Folio* to honour his literary mother's, Mary Sidney's, sixtieth birthday. The plays in the *First Folio*, marketed under the brand-name Shakespeare,

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administered the blow, was within weeks given an absolute pardon – (my view) not because he was cleared of guilt, but because, in extremis, he had a perfect defence if he knew Marlowe was alive. He could not be tried for a death that had not happened.

[12] Lyly was a more than competent playwright and there was a symbiosis with Oxford which could be explored. He and Oxford had adjacent offices in the Blackfriars building.

[13] Peele's sister, Isabel, was married to a Matthew Shakespeare in London on 5th Feb 1569. They had eight children. There is pertinent entry in the Stratford-on-Avon registers.

[14] VICKERS B: *Shakespeare Co-Author,* 2002 for the asterisked titles. Samuel Rowley is cited as the author of *The Famous Victory* and of *A Shrew* by H Dugdale Sykes, 1920.

had authors, or teams of authors, which his mother – an exceptional poet herself – had been involved in commissioning, co-authoring, editing, or had simply enjoyed.

- The young man of the *Shake-Speare Sonnets was* the same William Herbert. He wrote the so-called *Dark Lady* sonnets in response to the woman he loved, lusted for, and strumpeted, Mary Fitton, the Queen's maid-of-honour.
- Mistress Fitton composed the first one-hundred-and twenty-six sonnets addressed to William Herbert.[15]
- (Here a well-educated guess) – In 1597, when William Herbert, aged seventeen, came to live in London he involved himself in his great passion, theatre and performance, using a stage name, William Shakespeare, to hide his aristocratic self (and buy a stake in the Globe & Blackfriars theatres?); echoes of the film, *Shakespeare in Love*.
- The *Shakespeare* myth of *genius* is perpetuated by vested interest, snobbery and elitism; some of the plays are not that good! It is delusional to believe that an uneducated mind could ever become encyclopaedic; just a conceit of the Stratfordians.
- There is another Stratford on another river Avon.
- The Shakespeare authorship question is akin to Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. Who *did* write the Shakespeare plays? They all did.

2 – The Shake-Speare Sonnets

I'm Mary Phytton. *In June 1600, aged twenty-two and a maid-of-honour to the Queen, I accepted the offer of marriage from twenty-year-old William Herbert, Lord Cardiff, heir to the Pembroke Earldom. I became pregnant. I was still*

[15] *The Darling Buds of Maie* which I self-published in 2004 was based on research striving to prove myself *wrong*. Twenty years later I have failed to trip myself up but am still trying. A revised edition of my book exists in draft which has been refined and answers the question, (discovered in 2021 during lockdown) why William Herbert would not marry the pregnant Mary Fitton.

unmarried when seven months into my pregnancy, on 19th Jan 1601, the second Earl died at his home in Wiltshire and William became the third Earl Pembroke. He inherited the title but, three months short of coming-of-age, not the estate.

William immediately returned to London where the Queen ordered him to marry me. After the tragic death of my friend Margaret Radcliffe in 1599, I think I became the Queen's favourite and her Majesty was keen for us to be married. Wilkins steadfastly refused. His defiance angered her Majesty. He was sent to the Fleet prison to think again. I was escorted from Court to house-arrest about a mile away, under the charge of Lady Hawkins.[16] At the end of March my son was born, he was only one hour mine, then taken away. The rumour allowed to circulate Court was that a boy was still-born.[17] Two weeks later, on 8th April, William came of age, was soon released from prison but barred from Court. He still refused to marry me.

On 18th May, my father, Sir Edward Fitton, obtained my release. I was troubled and distressed (traumatised) *I left London and travelled North with my parents back to our family home at Gawsworth, near Macclesfield in Cheshire.[18]*

William Herbert wrote poetry; his collected poems were printed in 1660, thirty years after his death.[19] The second verse of the first poem is of special interest.

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[16] Widow of Admiral Hawkins, a former maid of the chamber, then in her eighties.

[17] Three bits of evidence would suggest the child was removed to be fostered. Sonnet 33: *Even so my sunne one early morn did shine, / With all triumphant splendour on my brow, / But out alack, he was but one hour mine, / The region cloud hath masked him from me now.* In *Urania, Antissia* gave birth to a child who would later appear as an adult. The child William Fitton who was buried at Tettenhall on 9th January 1607.

[18] They stopped overnight in Stanmore Middlesex from where I believe Mary Fitton wrote Sonnet 27. HISTORIC MANUSCRIPTS COMMISSION; Marquis of Salisbury, V11 p201-2. . It would make sense that Mary sent her letters to Benjamin Rudyard, William's friend and secretary. Her father and sister called her Mal.

[19] AUGUSTAN REPRINT SOCIETY 79; 1959; The Reprint Society did not include all the poems edited by John Donne the younger and received by him from Christina the dowager Duchess of Devonshire. Leeds University's Brotherton Library holds *Poems, written by the Right*

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He is writing to a former love lamenting that he has married (Mary Talbot in November 1604).

> **W**hile we dispute our liberty, I have lost mine:
> **A**nd which is worse, incline
> **T**o love that knavery.
> **N**ot the great Charter, nor King's-Bench can free
> **M**e from the Chain, wherein my thoughts she tied:
> **F**or our dull Earth what care is had we see,
> **Y**et easily let our mind
> **I**nto more thraldom slide
> **O** that she were but kind!
> **T**o give for that a pledge;
> **T**here were my Law, and there my Privilege.

The initial letters of the lines yield the following. The first and last lines give a **W** and a **T** which are the first and last letters of **W**illiam Herber**T**. They envelope and embrace the remaining nine letters which rearranged spell MAY FITTON,[20] the evidence that (nearly four years after the scandal) Pembroke called his mistress *May*, as in the famous *Sonnet 18.*

> *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?*
> *Thou art more lovely and more temperate:*
> *Rough winds do shake the darling* ***buds of Maie****,*[21]
> *And summer's lease hath all too short a date:*

Honorable William Earl of Pembroke,.. many of which are answered by way of Repartee, by Sr Benjamin Ruddier, Knight: With several distinct Poems, written by them occasionally, and apart. Ruddier was Pembroke's secretary and one can imagine his being a conduit for the correspondence between Pembroke and Mary Fitton.

[20] This device of enveloping a loved-one's name in the first and last letters of the lover's names is seen in an exceptionally rare poem, *Emaricdulfe* by E. C., 1595, dedicated to Mary Fitton's brother, Edward Fitton. It appears that the object of the poem was a maid called Mary Flude and the initials of the author, E C, envelope her name.

[21] Rhetorically; why should the buds of the hawthorn tree be *darling*?

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Thomas Nashe writes in *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*; *Their breasts they embuske up on a hie and their round roseate **buds** unmodestly lay forth.* The third line of Sonnet 18 is playful – May's buds, (actually, having just given birth, Mary's breasts would have been engorged); the fourth line laments that the euphoria they had enjoyed in June 1600, *Summer's Lease*, was exhausted by February 1601 with her pregnancy and his many problems.

The various possible candidates for the Sonnet's young *Master W H* and the *Dark Lady* have more or less settled on William Herbert and Mary Fitton.[22] It happens to be a truth that cannot be faulted, but the given, conventional explanation is that our Brad was first infatuated with a young man and when that relationship was exhausted he lusted for an older woman – nobody pointing out that these the very two most likely objects of his lust had a well-documented, adult relationship with each other.

No commentator has ever associated the poem, *A Lover's Complaint*, printed after the Sonnets, with the Sonnets. So why is it there? *Complaint* is a narrative poem *by William Shake-Speare* except one realises it is told by a woman. It tells of the wooing of a virgin maid by a young lord, anxious to turn her head. Frustrated, with tears in his eyes, he ultimately offers marriage, she doffs her *white stole of chastity*, becomes pregnant, and then he jilts her; exactly as happened between William Herbert and Mary Fitton. Very simply – ***A Lover's Complaint* is the prequel to the Sonnets and should have been printed first.**

In verse 40 of *Complaint* the man offers to marry the maid. In verse 43 she gives him her virginity and becomes pregnant (poisoned).

> 40 ''Now all these hearts that do on mine depend,
> Feeling it break, with bleeding groans they pine;

[22] SAINTSBURY *A History of Elizabethan Literature,* 1887, p162, *"For my part I am unable to find the slightest interest or the most rudimentary importance in the questions whether the Mr WH of the dedication was the Earl of Pembroke, and if so, whether he was also the object of the majority of the sonnets; whether the Dark Lady, the woman coloured ill, was Miss Mary Fitton; whether the rival poet was Chapman."* He correctly identifies the protagonists even then but is blinded by "Shakespeare" being a pseudonym. How wrong he was!

And supplicant their sighs to you extend,
To leave the battery that you make 'gainst mine,
Lending soft audience to my sweet design,
And credent soul to that strong-bonded oath
That shall prefer and undertake my troth.'

41 'This said, his watery eyes he did dismount,
Whose sights till then were levell'd on my face;
Each cheek a river running from a fount
With brinish current downward flow'd apace:
O, how the channel to the stream gave grace!
Who glazed with crystal gate the glowing roses
That flame through water which their hue encloses.

42 'O father, what a hell of witchcraft lies
In the small orb of one particular tear!
But with the inundation of the eyes
What rocky heart to water will not wear?
What breast so cold that is not warmed here?
O cleft effect! cold modesty, hot wrath,
Both fire from hence and chill extincture hath.

43 'For, lo, his passion, but an art of craft,
Even there resolved my reason into tears;
There my white stole of chastity I daff'd,
Shook off my sober guards and civil fears;
Appear to him, as he to me appears,
All melting; though our drops this difference bore,
His poisoned [23] me, and mine did him restore.

The seduction came first; then, in the first seventeen Shake-Speare sonnets, the pregnant Mary appeals to William to marry (her) and have progeny. This continuum makes complete sense and knowing the true history, one can pick from those early sonnets clues that put together identify the young man – William Herbert. The clincher is the first quatrain of Sonnet 11:

As fast as thou shalt wane so fast thou grow'st,
In one of thine, from that which thou departest,
And that fresh blood which youngly thou bestow'st,
Thou mayst call thine, when thou from youth convertest,

[23] Poisoned - a euphemism for making pregnant.

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As fast as thou shalt wane	– **while you fade away (in prison)**
so fast thou grow'st,	– **your baby is flourishing**
In one of thine,	– **inside me who is yours but**
from that which thou departest,	– **whom you turned away from,**
And that fresh blood	– **and this new child**
which youngly thou bestow'st,	– **which recently you gave to me**
Thou mayst call thine,	– **you will be able to call your own,**
when thou from youth convertest,	– **when you come of age.**

Mary Fitton conceived around 16th June 1600 and the baby was born at the end of March 1601. A few days later, on 8th April, William Herbert came of age.

Other clues in these first sonnets; he was born in April, famous mother, noble father recently died, liveried family, bright (blue) eyes. One clue occurs later, Sonnet 99: *And buds of marjoram had stol'n thy hair* – marjoram produces a reddish-brown dye, the hair-colour that dominated the Sidneys. There are other clues left for you to find.

To really appreciate the first seventeen sonnets imagine any one of them being spoken by Ofelia to Hamlet; try Sonnet 4, (chosen at random), inserted at III.1.120, could readily anticipate the great monologue;

Unthrifty loveliness why dost thou spend,
Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?
Nature's bequest gives nothing but doth lend,
And being frank she lends to those are free:
Then beauteous niggard why dost thou abuse,
The bounteous largess given thee to give?
Profitless usurer why dost thou use
So great a sum of sums yet canst not live?
For having traffic with thy self alone,
Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive,
Then how when nature calls thee to be gone,
What acceptable audit canst thou leave?
Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee,
Which used lives th' executor to be.

3 – The Name, *Will Shake-Spear; aye, there's the rub.*

There *is* a hyphen.[24]

In Warwickshire the man was known as Shaxper.

The name itself is the *elephant in the room*. *Will* was then a euphemism for genitalia, of either sex. It persists to this day – a man's willy. S*haking* was what lovers did together or individually (onanism) and every man carries a *weapon*. Please, excuse a lack of candour; in modern parlance we have an Elizabethan Willy W*nker. The lewd name would not be lost on Elizabethans and must have caused many a wry smile. Such a name, Will-Shake-Spear, was not one to comfortably carry through life. In *Sonnets* 135 & 136 is the indisputable evidence of the word's salacious use.

On 9th January 1607, at Tettenhall in Staffordshire, William Fitton, the bastard son of Queen Elizabeth's former maid-of-honour, Mary Fitton, was buried. The father *may* have been her married lover and second cousin, Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Leveson,[25] however the child was not named for him as was the custom; instead, and more likely, the father was William Herbert, Pembroke, and this was their five-year-old child, born at the end of March 1601.[26]

One learns from a letter of her great-uncle Francis Fitton of 4th February 1607,[27] Mary Fitton (again pregnant) had married a naval captain, William Polewhele, and by marriage regained a modicum social respectability.

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[24] There is a fallacious argument that the hyphen was inserted by typesetters for printers who had problems placing an s next to a k. This does not hold when one examines all the instances of words in the Concordance with an "sk" in them. Even in 1640 when John Benson published *Poems Written by Wil. Shake-Speare* the hyphen was present.

[25] Son-in-law of the Lord High Admiral Sir Charles Howard, Earl Nottingham – who lent his name to the Admiral's Players.

[26] The scandal is described on the Internet. In Mary Wroth's allegory *Urania* (1621) *Antissia* (Mary Fitton) gives birth to a male child by *Amphilanthus* (William Herbert) who is taken away at birth and reappears years later as a knight – the story-line is not developed.

[27] *Gossip from a Muniment Room* by Lady Newdigate Newdigate

The Wight in Me

The death of young William Fitton, who may have been his own blood, so soon after the birth of yet another William (to Mary and her husband Polewhele), probably enraged the short-tempered William Herbert provoking him to compose Sonnet 135.[28]

*Who ever hath her wish, thou hast thy **Will**,*
*And **Will** too boot, and **Will** in overplus,*
More then enough am I that vex thee still,
*To thy sweet **will** making addition thus.*
*Wilt thou whose **will** is large and spacious,*
*Not once vouchsafe to hide my **will** in thine,*
*Shall **will** in others seem right gracious,*
*And in my **will** no fair acceptance shine:*
The sea all water, yet receives rain still,
And in abundance addeth to his store,
*So thou being rich in **Will** add to thy **Will**,*
*One **will** of mine to make thy large **Will** more.*
Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill,
*Think all but one, and me in that one **Will**.*

One can have no doubt about the euphonism of *will* for genitalia.[29] Sonnet 136 continues in the same vein, ending *my name is Will*.

Will, *Will* and again *Will*; William Herbert (lover), William Polewhele (husband) and a third was William Knollys, (pronounces Knowls), Comptroller of the Queen's household (the stalker). Knollys, Mary's guardian at Court, forty years her senior, fell in love with his ward,[30] made a fool of himself over her, and was nicknamed *The Clown.*

[28] In William Herbert's poetry, published 1660, one of his poems indicates that Mary Fitton had promised to keep herself for him.

[29] Don Paterson's *Reading Shakespeare Sonnets* gives a line-by-line explanation.

[30] His letters to Anne Newdigate expressing his love for her sister are printed in *Gossip from a Muniment Room.*

The Wight in Me

The Reindeer was embossed,
The White Doe [31] she was lost,
Pembroke struck her down
And took her from the Clown.[32]

Knollys, son of the Queen's cousin (more probably the Queen's half-sister, daughter of Mary Boleyn), fervently intended to marry his charge and made it unambiguous that he was waiting for his aged wife to die. He is lampooned in *Twelfth Night* as *Malvolio*. Whoever wrote the play knew some quite obtuse detail of Court life. The (well-founded) rumour and scandal of Mal Fitton's pregnancy would have been circulating Court prior to Twelfth Night, 1601, there were probably whispers that the father *was* the Comptroller – his bedchamber was next to the maids-of-honour's. The character, *Sir Toby Belch* playing in *Twelfth Night* on Twelfth Night, January 1601 asks:

Wherefore are these things hid? wherefore have
these gifts a curtain before 'em? are they like to
take dust, like Mistress Mall's picture?

There was only one Mistress Mall at Court, Mary Fitton.[33] It was cruel humour; dust was slang for *semen; picture* would sound like *pitcher,* a vessel. Mistress Mall had drawn open the curtain of her skirt to present her gift.

Eight years later, when the Sonnets were published in 1609, the two lovers, authors of the Sonnets, were married – but not to each other; so naturally a nom-de-plume.

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[31] Or *White Hind*. In *Lucrece* we have mention of the elusive *"White Hind".* In *All's Well that Ends Well* Helena says *the hind that would be mated by a lion must die for love*; the Pembroke shield held three lions. In AWEW one can substitute William Herbert for Bertram, Mary Fitton for Helena and Mary Sidney for the Countess. The Rein-deer was the Queen.

[32] The white hind was crossed / Brave Pembroke struck her down / And took her from the clown / like a good woodman. [C C STOPES; The Third Earl of Southampton].

[33] Her father and sister called her Mall.

4 – Mawarden Court, Stratford, Wiltshire

In 1543 when Henry VIII married Catherine Parr the marriage settlement included provision for her sister, Anne, married to his friend, Sir William Herbert, (elevated to Earl in October 1551 by Edward VI). The deal included a former seat of Royalty, Baynard's Castle (Baynard's) on the Thames by Blackfriars, together with a disestablished abbey estate at Wilton near Salisbury in Wiltshire, ninety miles west of London.

In 1549 Sir William took out a 99-year lease on an over-large manor house, Mawarden Court, four miles from Wilton. This would have been used by the family while the first Wilton House was being constructed over the foundations of the abbey between 1544 and 1563. It would appear that Mawarden was used from time to time as a family home for the Herberts; a carved stone escutcheon, reset in an external wall, records that between 1603 and 1618 the house, (the lease held by the third Earl Pembroke), was occupied by Pembroke's brother, Philip Herbert, Earl Montgomery.[34] And the significance?

- This painting by John Constable depicts the village, hidden by trees, in which Mawarden Court lies, it is named **Stratford**-sub-castle.

[34] From: 'Stratford-sub-Castle', A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 6 (1962), pp. 199-213. Philip succeeded his brother who died without an heir in 1630.

- It is in the shadow of Stratford's **monumental hill,** Old Sarum, owned by the **Pembrokes**, on which stood the ruins of a castle, giving the village its name.
- Philip Herbert, Earl Montgomery, married to the vivacious thespian, Susan de Vere, **Oxford's daughter,** lived there, at Mawarden Court. [35]
- At the bottom of their long garden is a river – the Wiltshire **Avon.** It can be seen in the painting

As Michael Cane didn't say, "Not many people know that."

We have a perfect set of credentials that comfortably switches the axis of understanding away from Warwickshire to Wiltshire and to the Sidney-Herberts and Oxford (de Vere) – *excepting* for those pesky bequests to the three London actors in Shaxper's will – which I will come to later.

5 – Flights upon the Bank of the Thames

To clarify a minor mistaken belief – in his introduction to the *First Folio*, Ben Jonson wrote;

> *Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were*
> *To see thee in our water yet appear,*
> *And make those flights upon the banks of Thames*
> *That so did take Eliza, and our James!*

Here it is simplistic to identify the *Globe Playhouse* as the theatre of choice *upon the banks of Thames* – but a total misconception – Elizabeth and James's courtiers were not rowed across the Thames en mass in winter to watch plays;[36] the actors came to them (as in Shrew, Hamlet & MSND). For the aristocracy plays were performed in private houses and in the palaces;

[35] Their wedding was six months after her Oxford's death. Some years earlier a proposed marriage between his elder brother, William, and her sister, Brigit, had floundered.

[36] The Jacobean Globe was not on the bank of the river but some fifty metres away.

Greenwich, Westminster,[37] Kew, Hampton Court, Nonesuch, Richmond and Windsor were *all* on the banks of the Thames[38] as was Baynard's, London home of Mary Sidney, Countess Pembroke, headquarters of the House of York during the Wars of the Roses, built on land reclaimed from the river. The site is diagonally opposite the modern *Globe* theatre across the Millenium Bridge.

I don't know how to interpret the word *flights*, perhaps the Swan's presence whose plays so impressed Queen Elizabeth and King James. I can well-imagine a competitive edge in providing the plays to be performed on gala nights, Mary Sidney's entourage creating a play which was polished up by the Countess herself. In competition were (the wives of) the Lord Chamberlain and Earl Nottingham (the Admiral).

6 – Plays at court

The *First Folio contains* a spectrum of plays, some are really not that good, the irregularity in texture alone should be enough to confirm there was no one individual author; there have been many studies which show "co-authorship". The majority, however, through the mouths of professional actors, brilliantly

[37] In *The First Night of Twelfth Night* (1954) Leslie Hotson nicely describes the Great Hall at Whitehall set up for the play in January 1601.

[38] I believe the *Wooden-O* in the prologue to *Henry V* is the *Cockpit* built for Henry VIII on the Westminster Palace estate.

reflect life's torments, humours, tragedies and achievements; its universality is what makes plays great. Almost all are set in or around a sovereign court, two thirds contain trials, over half have extensive Italian connections (a higher proportion if one excludes the ten History plays) and exile is a recurrent theme. All but four plays were derived from established stories in the literature and histories of Italy, Greece, France, Denmark, Spain, England, Scotland and Wales; but excluding the Histories, mainly Italian.

As on modern cruise ships, evening entertainment had to be provided for the Court, especially for the great gala events on *St. Stephen's Night*, New Year's Day, *Twelfth Night* and *Shrove Tuesday.* The country's best players were paid to perform the latest plays, with proven, well-crafted story-lines, for Queen and Courtiers in the great hall of one or other of the Palaces.[39] This was the formula which produced great plays – performed by acting groups sponsored by mighty Earls, Pembroke, Chamberlain, Admiral's, Oxford, Leicester, Sussex.

The plays *had* to appeal to a critically demanding audience headed by a very knowledgeable queen. At court were many extremely well-educated aristocrats, most legally trained, almost all political savvy. The following massive sixty-one-line speech by the Archbishop of Canterbury from *Henry V* (1.2) would have bored the hose off the groundlings at the *Rose* or *Globe* but performed at Court, taking the rise out of the legal profession, would have greatly amused the many lawyers present, the non-lawyers and their spouses.

> Then hear me, gracious sovereign, and you peers,
> That owe yourselves, your lives and services
> To this imperial throne. There is no bar
> To make against your highness' claim to France
> But this, which they produce from Pharamond,
> 'In terram Salicam mulieres ne succedant:'
> 'No woman shall succeed in Salique land:'
> Which Salique land the French unjustly gloze
> To be the realm of France, and Pharamond

[39] HOTSON L; *The First Night of Twelfth Night,* Chapter III, Shakespeare's Arena Stage, paints a picture in words.

The Wight in Me

The founder of this law and female bar.
Yet their own authors faithfully affirm
That the land Salique is in Germany,
Between the floods of Sala and of Elbe;
Where Charles the Great, having subdued the Saxons,
There left behind and settled certain French;
Who, holding in disdain the German women
For some dishonest manners of their life,
Establish'd then this law; to wit, no female
Should be inheritrix in Salique land:
Which Salique, as I said, 'twixt Elbe and Sala,
Is at this day in Germany call'd Meisen.
Then doth it well appear that Salique law
Was not devised for the realm of France:
Nor did the French possess the Salique land
Until four hundred one and twenty years
After defunction of King Pharamond,
Idly supposed the founder of this law;
Who died within the year of our redemption
Four hundred twenty-six; and Charles the Great
Subdued the Saxons, and did seat the French
Beyond the river Sala, in the year
Eight hundred five. Besides, their writers say,
King Pepin, which deposed Childeric,
Did, as heir general, being descended
Of Blithild, which was daughter to King Clothair,
Make claim and title to the crown of France.
Hugh Capet also, who usurped the crown
Of Charles the duke of Lorraine, sole heir male
Of the true line and stock of Charles the Great,
To find his title with some shows of truth,
'Through, in pure truth, it was corrupt and naught,
Convey'd himself as heir to the Lady Lingare,
Daughter to Charlemain, who was the son
To Lewis the emperor, and Lewis the son
Of Charles the Great. Also King Lewis the Tenth,
Who was sole heir to the usurper Capet,
Could not keep quiet in his conscience,
Wearing the crown of France, till satisfied
That fair Queen Isabel, his grandmother,

Was lineal of the Lady Ermengare,
Daughter to Charles the foresaid duke of Lorraine:
By the which marriage the line of Charles the Great
Was re-united to the crown of France.
So that, as clear as is the summer's sun.
King Pepin's title and Hugh Capet's claim,
King Lewis his satisfaction, all appear
To hold in right and title of the female:
So do the kings of France unto this day;
Howbeit they would hold up this Salique law
To bar your highness claiming from the female,
And rather choose to hide them in a net
Than amply to imbar their crooked titles
Usurp'd from you and your progenitors.

I've included this speech, not to gratuitously increase word-count, but to illustrate how, what otherwise was dry and tedious to *groundlings*, would have, out of the mouth of a great actor such as Will Kempe, created merriment for the Queen and her courtiers. The elevated quality of the plays was to wow the most discerning of audiences, courtiers who understood and practised social and sexual politics, the laws delay, and the struggle to maintain power.

7 – The Dudleys

Henry VIII literally shortened the life of one of his father's, Henry VII's, nasty Privy Councillors, Edmund Dudley (1462-1510).[40] Edmund was the founder of the Dudley dynasty which proved to have panache and resilience – despite a number of decapitations. Edmund's son, John, was also beheaded, however, John's son,[41] Robert Dudley, became the Queen's favourite and died a natural

[40] Dudley amassed considerable wealth for Henry VII and for himself in the most insidious, odious regime of graft, terrorising the rich and the not-so-rich. His life was shortened in 1509 when seventeen-year-old Henry VIII came to the throne and ordered his execution.

[41] This statement has a lot of history behind it. Another son Guilford married to Lady Jane Grey was also executed. Lady Jane Grey's sister was tutored by Michaelangelo Florio, father of John, who figures in this paper. The sister was the first wife of Henry Herbert whose third wife was Mary Sidney. His second wife died without issue.

death. She had created him Earl of Leicester, made him powerful, influential and rich. Away from matters of state, Leicester and his Queen enjoyed theatre. As a young man he had been Master of the Revels at the Inner Temple Court and he later patronised his own acting group, the *Leicester Players* who travelled with him when abroad in the 1580's.

Robert Dudley's sister, Mary Dudley, married Henry Sidney, a school-friend of the late King Edward. The Sidneys, today the Lords de L'Isle, have retained their seat at the enchanting, castellated *Penshurst Place* near Tunbridge Wells in Kent, south-east of London, a gift from Edward. Streams of Sidneyan poetry have gushed forth from Penshurst; it ought to be a place of pilgrimage.

The Dudley-Sidney marriage produced three remarkably gifted children, Philip, Mary and Robert Sidney. Philip married, Frances, the daughter of Francis Walsingham the Queen's Private Secretary. Robert married a Welsh heiress[42] and Mary became Countess Pembroke when, aged fifteen, she married Henry Herbert, the future second Earl Pembroke. There was another sibling, Thomas.

[42] The wedding to Barbara Gamage was arranged at short notice and conducted in haste as the Queen's messenger rode to forbid the marriage in the chapel of St. Donat's Castle in the wilds of South Glamorgan under the auspices of Robert's uncle the Earl of Pembroke.



We drift back to 1561; Sir Henry Sidney is President of the Council of Wales. He and his wife, Mary, Sir Robert Dudley's sister, are living at Tickenhill Palace in Worcestershire where the Council meets. On 27th October Mary goes into labour. Their baby is baptised Mary. Her godfather is the first Earl Pembroke, a powerful man in the Privy Council. Her precocious brother, Philip (the poet, Sir Philip Sidney to be), is seven-years-old.

The baby survives and on 21st April 1577, at the age of fifteen and a half, Mary Sidney married Henry Herbert, the future second Earl Pembroke. She was his third wife. He was almost three times her age. The marriage worked.

8 – The Sidney-Herberts

For the next decade the symbiotic Sidney and Herbert families, Protestant and loyal to the Queen, held high offices in Wales and Ireland.[43] They successfully navigated the complex politics of the mid-century before tragedy struck. On 5th May 1586 Mary Sidney, now Countess Pembroke and a mother of two boys, was mourning the loss of her three-year-old daughter, Katherine, when news came that her fifty-nine years old father had caught a chill and died unexpectedly at Worcester.

[43] Mary Fitton's father and grandfather had held offices reporting to Henry Herbert in Ireland. The Queen was fond of Mary's father, Sir Edward.

The Wight in Me

Henry Sidney's body was buried in June at Penshurst. On 9th August her mother, Mary Dudley, after a long illness, followed her husband to the grave. The Countess was left to be chief mourner, her brothers, Sir Philip and Robert were on military duty in the Low Countries with Uncle Leicester. Profound pain and heartache became a tragedy. Grieving and desperately ill at Wilton, late in September the Countess received news that her brothers had been injured in a skirmish at the village of Zutphen. Four weeks dragged by before news arrived of the death on 17th October of Sir Philip, the poet-brother whom she had looked up to and deeply loved. In five months she had lost a daughter, both parents and her favourite brother. I suspect Ofelia' speech in Hamet 3.1, had Sir Philip in mind;

> *O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!*
> *The courtier's, scholar's, soldier's, eye, tongue, sword,*
> *Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state,*
> *The glass of fashion and the mould of form,*
> *Th' observ'd of all observers – quite, quite down!*

The young student, Hamlet, certainly did not warrant such epithets.

Devastated by four family deaths, the twenty-six-year-old Countess remained reclusive at Wilton House, at times in summer at her houses on the banks of the meandering Wiltshire Avon.[44] Here she found comfort in translating French plays and completing her brother Philip's unfinished poetic works. She was to embrace his persona, complete his unfinished works and, through her, Sir Philip Sidney's spirit and poetry lived again. Her literary friends alluded to her as the Phoenix.

There was a fifth death, in September 1588; her Uncle, Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester. Her young children and the birth of a daughter, Anne, may also have detained her at Wilton, however, at last, early one November morning, in 1589, exactly a year after Leicester's death, Mary Sidney, Countess Pembroke, emerged from nearly three years of mourning to rejoin London Society. She left Wilton in a great procession of carriages, with nearly a hundred servants in the

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blue and gold livery emblazoned with pheons (spear-heads), to return to her husband's Baynard's Castle, London society and Court where she could count the Queen amongst her friends.

A year later, 26th Nov 1590, at Ramsbury, her country-retreat a few miles from Wilton, the Countess completed *Antonius* a translation from the French of Garnier's five-act *Mark Antoine.* In London William Ponsonby published *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia written by Sir Philip Sidney*. Both books were to have a profound influence on theatre and narrative poetry. *Mark Antoine* became a blueprint for a new five-act play-structure, and *Arcadia* encouraged the passions of pastoral love.[45]

On 23rd Aug 1592 the will of the actor Simon Jewell was administered by his colleague members of the *Queen's Players*. It had been written four days earlier.[46] That month the players had been in the vicinities of Bristol, Bath, Southampton and Winchester so one can assume that they performed at Wilton House as, in Jewell's will, he asked that his share of money *given by my Ladie Pembrooke or by her means* should go towards the cost of his funeral; it appears it was the Countess who organised and paid for the entertainment, rather than her husband. The same year William Ponsonby published *Discourse of Life and Death. Written in French by Ph. Mornay* and *Antonius a Tragedie*

[45] PHILIP'S PHOENIX; Hannay M P, Chapter 5 explains Mary Sidney's contribution as a patroness of literature.

[46] HONIGMAN & BROCK: *Playhouse Wills 1558-1642* – 1993/2015

Written also in french by Ro. Garnier. Both done in English by the Countess of Pembroke.

The first record of *Earl Pembroke's Men* (players) is at the market town of Leicester sometime during the last three months of 1592. They performed at Court on St. Stephen's Night, 26th Dec 1592, and provided Twelfth Night entertainment there on 6th Jan 1593. Their repertoire included *Titus Andronicus, The Taming of A Shrew, Henry VI* (Parts II & III) and Marlowe's *Edward II*. Closure of playhouses due to plague in 1593 rendered the Pembroke Players unviable but this same period, 1590 to 1593 heralded the arrival of the *Shakespeare* plays under what appears to be the aegis of Countess Pembroke's players. In 1593 and 1594 someone using the name William Shakespeare dedicated two narrative poems to the young (aged 20-21) Earl Southampton.

A resurrected *Pembroke's Players* was established four years later in 1597, coinciding with William Herbert, Lord Cardiff, coming to live in London. There may have been a correlation with the building of the *Swan* theatre at that time. [Appendix A]

9 – Mary Sidney; Sweet Swan of Avon (1561-1621)

Margaret P Hanney in her *Philip's Phoenix* (1990) has provided an excellent biography of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess Pembroke. A poet, a translator of French plays, a patroness of poets and playwrights, she assiduously sought out the company of professional men of intellect with whom there developed mutual, unconditional respect and whose literary works she patronised. Men such as Thomas Muffet (her physician),[47] Abraham Fraunce, Samuel Daniell

[47] Thomas Muffet (1553-1604) was an English naturalist and physician. He is best known his study of insects.

> Little Miss Muffet sat on her tuffet,
> eating her curds eating and whey
> Along came a spider who sat down beside her
> And frightened miss Muffet away.

(her sons' tutor),[48] Edmund Spenser, Thomas Howell, Nicholas Bretton and the aging Thomas Churchyard were in the Pembroke's employ and there were others, such as Michael Drayton, Richard Barnfield and John Florio who circulated within her entourage, be it at Wilton House or Penshurst Place, the Sidney home in Kent, or Baynard's.

She was a woman of great literary ability, an active and true patron of the written and performed arts and was tacitly-supported by her husband whose secretaries, Hugh Sanford and Arthur Massinger,[49] were not only tutors and mentors to her children but also wordsmiths by dint of their occupation. She signed off with the letters MP, Mary Pembroke, a flourished M at the foot of a letter was enough to identify her; Ian Flemming's M was not the first.

The emblem of the Sidney's, was a pheon, an inverted spearhead, referred to as a *dart* on Mary Sidney's epitaph in Salisbury Cathedral:

Underneath this sable herse
Lies the subject of all verse,
SIDNEY's sister, PEMBROKE's mother;
Death! ere thou hast slain another
Learn'd and fair, and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

After her brother, Philip's, untimely death in 1586, Mary Sidney strove to complete his unfinished works, fostering the pastoral idyll of his poetry. Hanney

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Muffet wrote *The silkewormes, and their flies: liuely described in verse, by T.M. a countrie farmar, and an apprentice in physicke. For the great benefit and enriching of England. Printed at London By V[alentine] S[immes] for Nicholas Ling, and are to be sold at his shop at the west ende of Paules, 1599;* dedicated to the Sidnean Lady of the Plane, Mary Sidney.

[48] JOAN REES; Samuel Daniel, LUP 1964

[49] Father of the playwright Philip Massinger. Philip and William Herbert grew up together at Wilton and later, when Earl Pembroke, Herbert sponsored the budding playwright for four years at university.

and Robin P Williams were convinced that she was an author well beyond what little appears in the public domain, but like Earls Oxford and Derby – nothing was published to demonstrate their own dramatic art except that Oxford was reportedly *good for comedy*.

When her brother, Philip Sidney, was posted to the French court he was known warmly as *Le Cigne* (the Swan), a French voicing of *Sidney*. She may have adopted her brother's epithet; a portrait of Mary Sidney shows a circle of swans in her ruff. Geographically, the Pembroke home at Wilton (photo), near Salisbury, was on a tributary of the Wiltshire Avon and Mary Sidney had two summer homes on the banks of the same Avon. The first embryonic Shake-Speare plays were performed by the Pembroke players, the Countess clearly loved theatre and invited touring groups to perform at Wilton House. No wonder, with all these credentials, Robin P Williams asked in her *Sweet Swan of Avon*, "*Did a Woman Write Shakespeare."* And why not? A woman wrote most of the Sonnets. What more fitting tribute could her son, William Herbert, Earl Pembroke, created Lord Chamberlain in 1616, responsible inter alia for the probity of the London theatres, a lover of theatre himself, make to celebrate his mother's sixtieth birthday (27th Oct 1621), than to dedicate a folio-sized book of thirty-six plays in her honour?

10 – Disdain

The thirty-seven *Shakespeare* plays (including *Pericles*) alone contain more than one-and-a-half million words. The word *disdain*, in one form or another, occurs seventy-seven times in all the works, an average of about twice in each. It is absent from eleven of the plays and, as a comparator, not used at all in Ben Jonson's collected *Works*.

The Wight in Me

Disdain – as a noun – is *the feeling that someone or something is unworthy of one's consideration or respect;* as a verb – is to *reflect to be unworthy of one's consideration*. It is not an uncommon word, easily understood but rarely used, not is this woke age; one does not look down on people!

Examining the use of *disdain* in the literature of the Sidney family; in Sir Philip Sidney's *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* the word occurs an almost absurd 148 times; in his *Astrophil & Stella* nine times; in his niece, Mary Wroth's play, *Love's Victory,* fourteen times; nine times in the *Psalms of Sir Philip Sidney and the Countess Pembroke*[50] and William Herbert's own poetry, printed 1660, uses *disdain* seven times. *Disdain* seems to be a generational word frequently used by the Sidney family.

Eight of the *Shakespeare* works have four or more occurrences of *disdain*; *Venus & Adonis* (8), *Rape of Lucrece* (7), *Much Ado About Nothing* (7), *Cymbeline* (5). *Shake-Speare Sonnets, All's Well That Ends Well,* and *Coriolanus* have four each; a total of thirty-nine – more than half the total, from just one fifth of the works.

Disdain, it appears, is a "Sidney" idiosyncrasy and gives an indication that the two narrative poems dedicated to Southampton in 1593 and 1594 were composed or edited by a Sidney, at the time there was only one candidate – Mary Sidney – perhaps with assistance from within her Circle. [51]

[50] Five times in Philips's, and four times in Mary's renderings.

[51] This is one conclusion I have reached, but I also have another, that the poems were composed by Richard Barnfield, who was part of Mary Sidney's entourage, and presented to Southampton by Barnfield's friend, Mary Fitton. The dates coincide with Southampton's coming of age in 1594, and perhaps for a Valentine, the previous year, offered from a fawning Mary Fitton who was attracted to the thought of becoming a countess.

11 – Benjamin Jonson, 1572-1637 – His Works

There is little doubt that poet and playwright Ben Jonson was commissioned to edit the *First Folio*; who better? [Lamberto Tassinari suggests he might have had help from John Florio – which makes sense.][52]

Our Ben had a robust and ubiquitous history – from brick-laying and soldiering to manslaughter, epigrams of the rich & famous, a playwright and a player with the first *Pembroke Men*. Nobody could ever doubt he existed or that he acted and wrote plays. In 1616 Lord Chamberlain Pembroke awarded him, as *poet laureate*, a royal pension of one-hundred marks. Jonson and Pembroke were more than nodding acquaintance and probably went back to the early days of the first *Pembroke Players*. Pembroke, Jonson and Inigo Jones, corroborated in the production of court masques for over a decade, Pembroke performing in some of them.

The collected *Works of Benjamin Jonson,* the first such collection of plays and poetry, was printed in 1616 and dedicated to the Earl of Pembroke, as was his collection of epigrams. With each play was printed the names of the performing group *and* principal actors – only two plays named Shake-Spear, each time placed in prime position, usurping the top billing of Richard Burbadge who *was* the principal actor. The cast of *Everyman In His Humour* as listed was;

Will Shake-Spear	Ric Burbage
Aug Philips	Joh Hemings
Hen Condell	Tho Pope
Will Slye	Chr Beeston
Will Kempe	Joh Duke.[53]

[52] JOHN FLORIO, the *Man who was Shakespeare*, 2009

[53] Chambers' *Elizabethan Stage* (Vol II, p198) identifies Kemp, Pope, Heminges, Philips, Bryan, Burbadge, Duke and Slye as the core of what became the *Chamberlain's Players*; but not Shakespeare.

The Wight in Me

Other than in the *First* Folio of 1623, here are the only instances of Shake-Spear being named as an actor or even hinted at in any script. Indeed, the original, quarto printings of these two plays in 1599 & 1603, many years earlier, had listings of characters – but did *not* name any actor against them.

This appearance of the Shake-Spear name in 1616, remarkably printed in prime position, is one reason I suggest that *Will Shakespeare* could have been the stage-name of young William Herbert to whom, years later, as Pembroke, Jonson's *Works* was dedicated.[54] A second reason is Pembroke's reaction after the death of the actor Richard Burbadge, buried on 16th March 1619.[55] Two months later, on 20th May, had he known the after-dinner entertainment was to be the play *Pericles,* Pembroke would probably have excused himself from dining at his friend the Duke of Lennox's home. Finding himself distressed at the interval, unable to return to the performance he wrote to a friend . . *and even now the company are at the play, which I being tender harted could not endure to see so soone after the loss of my old acquaintance Burbadg.*[56] Burbadge was one of the original *Pembroke Men* around 1592 when William was aged twelve.

One of the commendatory poems to Jonson's *Works*, in sonnet form, was signed *Cygnus*. *Le cigne,* French for *swan*, was, I've mentioned, ascribed to Sir Philip Sidney who was William Herbert's and Mary Wroth's [57] uncle, and Countess Pembroke's brother. Herbert, Wroth and the Countess all wrote sonnets and Jonson could justly claim them as his friends. In the sonnet, below, I favour the precision of Mary Sidney, Countess Pembroke, who demonstrated

[54] In the 1605 will of Augustine Phillips, Wilm Shakespeare is named first among the bequests to the fellow actors.

[55] Burbadge's death may in some way have triggered the idea of the First Folio.

[56] His discomfort may have been more to do with the plot, seeing himself as Prince Pericles coping with a lost love and their lost child. I wonder who wrote the play which was printed the same year as the Sonnets.

[57] Mary Wroth, born Mary Sidney, was William Herbert's first cousin, a poet and playwright and in her widowhood his mistress. More later.

in the *Psalms* [58] her ability to rhyme. Here *Cygnus* benevolently looks-down on Jonson, rather than looking-across at him.

To the Deserving Author

When I respect thy argument, I see
An image of those times: but when I view
The wit, the workmanship, so rich, so true,
The times themselves do seem retrieved to me.
And as Sejanus, in thy tragedy,
Falleth from Caesar's grace; even so the crew
Of common playwrights, whom opinion blew
Big with false greatness, are disgraced by thee.
Thus, in one Tragedy, thou makest twain:
And, since fair works of Justice fit the part
Of tragic writers, Muses do ordain
That all Tragedians, Masters of their Art,
Who shall hereafter follow on this tract,
In writing well, thy tragedy shall act. CYGNUS

Again, *Sejanus* published in1605 was dedicated to the Earl of Pembroke.

12 – Mary Wroth, the *Rival Poet,* and *Captain Ill*

Mary Sidney's brother's daughter, Mary (Sidney) Wroth, a poet, author and playwright, was in 1604 at the age of seventeen, married off to Sir Robert Wroth. She was part of the inner-Court circle and enjoyed performing in masques as did her cousin Philip's wife, Oxford's daughter, Susan.

She was seven years younger than her first cousin, William Herbert, whom she unquestionably loved. Her passion is reflected in her extensive poetry, much influenced by her uncle, Sir Philip Sidney's works. In her monumental,

[58] The PSALMS of Sir Philip Sidney and the Countess of Pembroke; Anchor Books, 1963. Psalm 113 is found at Appendix B.

allegorical works, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania (Urania)*, 1621, in which she is *Pamphilia*, William is *Amphilanthus* and Mary Fitton, her rival for William's love, *Antissia's* storylines confirm what I had independently discovered in researching the Sonnets.

When widowed in 1614 Wroth became *partner* to the married William Herbert and gave him a son and a daughter who survived to have families of their own.[59]

Sonnets (41, 78 and 83) allude to a *Rival Poet*. Around this period/phase of the *Sonnets* the word *worth*, an anagram of Wroth, and its derivatives suddenly becomes frequent, an indication of Mary Fitton's mounting natural jealousy – then dies away. Mary Fitton writes to William in Sonnet 83; note the less-respectful or more familiar *you*:

> *I found (or thought I found) you did exceed,*
> *The barren tender of a Poet's debt:*
> *And therefore have I slept in your report,*
> *That you your self being extant well might show,*
> *How far a modern quill doth come too short,*
> ***Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth grow,***

[59] CAVENAGH S T: Cherished Torment; PRITCHARD R E, *Lady Mary Wroth's Poems*

Mary Wroth *was* the *Rival Poet*. She also wrote *Love's Victory*, a pastoral play in the style of her Uncle Philip's works.[60] The five-act play is good entertainment and a remarkable *tour de force* in that it is totally in rhyming verse. The play can be watched on line. One senses the replay of real-life.

Sonnet 86 introduces the ignored *Captain Ill.* He is either Mary Fitton's married lover, Admiral Sir Richard Leveson, or after Leveson died in August 1605, her husband, Captain William Polewhele, whom she married (when pregnant) around 1606. Polewhele had served under Leveson, captaining the *Lion's Whelp.* [61] Of the two I favour Leveson. [62]

13 – 1619 – Pavier & Jaggard – Pirates

On 3rd May 1619 the Court of the Stationers' Company met to discuss a letter from the Lord Chamberlain, Earl Pembroke. They record their decision:

> *Hen. Hemmings: Upon a letter from the right honourable the Lord Chamberlain. It is thought fit and so ordered that no plays that his Majesty's Players do play shall be printed without the consent of some of them.*

A publisher, Thomas Pavier, and printer, Isaac Jaggard, seem to have pushed their luck a bit too far. They had printed and published from earlier quartos, ten plays, all purporting to be by *William Shakespeare*, half of which Pavier had the absolute rights to print. About forty bound sets, containing all ten plays, had been sold. The plays were the two parts of *the Whole Contention, Pericles, A Yorkshire Tragedy, The Merchant of Venice, Sir John Falstaff and the Merry Wives of Windsor, King Lear, Henry V, The First Part of Sir John Oldcastle,* and *A*

[60] FINDLAY, SIDNEY & BRENNAN; *Love's Victory* by Lady Mary Wroth Manchester UP, 2021.

[61] The *Lion's Whelp* is a feature of *Cymbeline.* Two years after Polewhele died she married John Lougher and had children with him. Overall I can count nine children from four men, although I more than sense that Pembroke's seed may have usurped Leveson's and Polewhele's on occasions.

[62] There was a baby, Katherine, born in 1608 who died after a few days. I have a suspicion, with reason, the father was Pembroke.

Midsummer Night's Dream. Pavier and Jaggard had to desist, and publishing stopped.[63] No hard feelings – Jaggard would go on to print the *First Folio*.

Pavier would not have been so much annoyed at his misfortune but neither the Lord Chamberlain nor the Players had any right to prevent plays being printed for which he had title, or for which he had permission by the title-holder, especially on the spurious pretext that the King's players needed to be protected. Despite that, one did not take issue with the Lord Chamberlain, a powerful Earl and close friend of the King. Nevertheless, it was intriguing that the Lord Chamberlain had used his might to prevent Pavier doing something that was not illegal or unethical. Privately Pavier would have questioned motive – the Lord Chamberlain had not needed to get involved and the Players had *not* been injured.[64] However, in retrospect it appears there *was* motive; in essence

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[63] HODGSON; The Remarkable Story of the Shakespearean Quartos of 1619. (1846)

POLLARD A W; Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates. 1920. I have a personal view about the plays printed in quarto; I suspect that they were published to support performances rather than printed speculatively to sell in publishers' shops – in the same way that at concerts one is faced with an element of merchandising. Any remainders would be available from the proscribed shop.

[64] The context of Pavier's 1619 editions is analysed in the excellent *Shakespeare and the Stationers* by LEO KIRSCHBAUM (1955). We do not have Earl Pembroke's answer to the actors' request, but a similar request was made to his brother who responded on 10th June 1637; reiterating a letter sent to them in 1619 by the then Lord Chamberlain, his brother, William Herbert:

> *Whereas complaint was heretofore presented by my dear brother & predecessor by his Majesty's servants the Players, that some of the company of printers and Stationers had procured, published & printed diverse of their books of Comedies, Tragedies, Chronicle Histories, and the like, which they had (for the special service of his Majesty and for their own use) bought and provided at very dear and high rates, by means whereof not only they themselves had much prejudice, but the books much corruption to the injury and disgrace of the authors; and thereupon the Masters and Wardens of the company of printers & stationers were advised by my brother to take notice thereof & to take order for the stay of any further impression of any of the plays or interludes of his Majesty's servants without their consents. Etc..*

the Lord Chamberlain had ensured the *First Folio*, ultimately dedicated to him and his brother, was not pre-empted or undermined. Why?

Two months earlier, on 8th March 1619, Richard Burbadge of St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, probably the greatest actor of the era and a householder and shareholder in the Blackfriars and Globe playhouses, died aged fifty. He was the son of James Burbadge who had purchased the building within the Blackfriars complex which became the Blackfriars playhouse. Burbadge's will, proved on 22nd April, left all his possessions to his wife. One can hypothesise that there may have been some import regarding the *First Folio* and Pembroke's involvement. The Globe playhouse, on leased land, was half-owned (a moiety) by the brothers Richard (actor) and (businessman) Cuthbert Burbadge. The other moiety was shared between the principal actors one of whom used the name William Shakespeare. The Burbadges were impresarios, and like Henslowe at the *Rose*, Richard could have owned rights to unpublished plays, and, on his death, vesting ownership in his widow.

14 – 1621 Mary Sidney's Passing

Mary Sidney Herbert, Dowager Countess of Pembroke, died of smallpox at her home in Adlersgate Street, London, on 25th Sep 1621, thirty-two days short of celebrating her sixtieth birthday on 27th October. Almost immediately printing of the *folio* collection of *Shakespeare* plays stopped, about one-third the way through; fourteen comedies and one history had been completed and a start made on *Richard II*. Printing only restarted in November 1622, *exactly* a year after her burial; it was no coincidence.[65]

A concocted explanation for the one-year hiatus runs as follows; Jaggard, the printer, had agreed to reprint Ralph Brooke's *Catalogue and Succession of the Kings, Princes, Marquesses, Earls and Viscounts of the Realm.*[66] However, as Jaggard's was a large printworks, the Brooke's book less than one-third the size of the *Shakespeare* works and a fraction of the quantity, this explanation is not tenable.

[65] GREG – *The Shakespeare First Folio 1969*

[66] GREG – *The Shakespeare First Folio 1969*

My explanation is that the cessation of printing reflects a formal year-long period of mourning for the Countess. This was not the first such interlude in the Sidney-Herbert family history. Following the deaths in 1586-7 of five members of Mary Sidney's immediate family – she only returned to London in 1589 after a long period grieving in the seclusion of Wilton – after which "*Shakespeare*", the *Pembroke Players* and the first Shake-Speare plays and poems made their entrance.

A second occasion was after the death on 19th January 1601 of her husband, the second Earl Pembroke. During the following twelve months no *Shakespeare* play was registered or printed but, on either side of that year there were twenty-seven occurrences (seventeen before/ten after). The first play *after* the hiatus, again of exactly one year, was registered on 18th January 1602 [67] to John Busby in the Stationers' Hall – *for his copy under the hand of Master Seton, a book called an excellent and pleasant conceited commedie of Sir John Faulstof and the merry wyves of Windsor.* On the same day in a different hand: *Arthur Johnson; entered for his copy by assignement from John Busby, a booke Called an excellent and pleasant concyted Comedie of Sir John Faulstafe and the merye wyves of Windsor*, a shortened and garbled version, printed by T.C. (Thomas Creed) as *By William Shakespeare as it hath bene diuers times Acted by the right Honourable my Lord Chamberlaines seruants, both before her Maiestie, and else-where.*

William Herbert, Earl Pembroke, was appointed Lord Chamberlain in 1615 with responsibility (inter alia) for the probity of the London theatre, and from 1616 was Chancellor of Oxford University. Ben Jonson's collected *Works* of 1616 were dedicated to Pembroke, who that same year had conferred a master's degree on Ben. I see no particular reason why the *First Folio* should not likewise have been dedicated to Pembroke *alone*, but he was joined as a dedicatee by his younger brother, Montgomery, whose interests were elsewhere (hunting and chemistry) other than theatre. It supports a view that this was all about *family*, especially as their mother had just died – and then

[67] GREG - *Biography of English Printed Drama to the Restoration Vol I;* 1962

there is the de Vere connection in the person of Oxford's daughter, Susan, Countess Montgomery, whom one could well-imagine may have provided scripts her father had authored.[68]

15 – Edward Blount

Entries to the Register of the Stationers' Company recorded the right to publish a literary work; the fee was 6d (vid). The institution was, in fact, an agency of government to prevent subversion through literature. The printer or publisher had to exhibit any document to the Wardens in advance of publication and gain their assent. After the first Pembroke Players disbanded in 1593 three plays from their repertoire were registered at Stationers' Hall; *Titus Andronicus, The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster* (Henry VI Part Two), and *The Taming of A Shrew* (the basis for the future *Taming of The Shrew*).

Between 1595 and 28th October 1600, eleven further *Shakespeare* titles (*Plays)* were registered and five from 18th January 1602 to October 1609. Then a gap to 8th Nov 1623, when in conjunction with the publication of the *First Folio,* printer Edward Blount registered seventeen unauthored plays which had never been published: *The Tempest ; Two Gentlemen Of Verona; Measure For Measure; Comedy Of Errors; As You Like It; All's Well That Ends Well; Twelfth Night; A Winter's Tale; The Third Part Of Henry The Sixth; Henry The Eighth; Coriolanus; Timon Of Athens; Julius Caesar; Macbeth; Anthony & Cleopatra;* and *Cymbeline* – almost half the collection of thirty-six.[69]

Apart from the seventeen plays Blount registered, of the twenty that *had* been published over sixteen years (1593-1609), eight were anonymous, five

[68] Had Oxford been alive he, as an aristocrat, he could not have provided the scripts. It would appear quite natural that Condell and Hemmings were named as having provided them.

[69] Blount probably scoured the Stationers' Register to find which had been registered, and registered those that hadn't. He must have thought that *The Taming of The Shrew* had been registered, overlooking it was a slightly different play, *The Taming of A Shrew*.

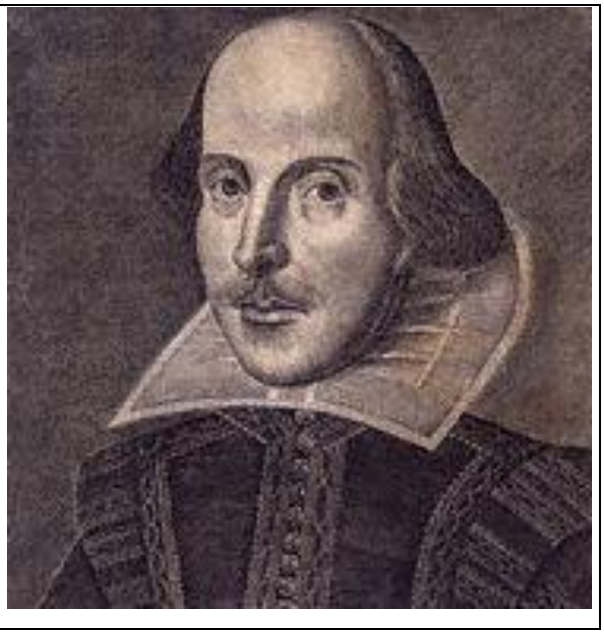
contained the hyphened Shake-Speare and twelve carried the name *Shakespeare*. One should note that the seventeen *Blount* plays became *Shakespeare* plays only on the say-so that they had been supplied by Hemmings and Condell, Burbadge's colleagues at the *Globe*. This block-registration by Blount is interesting as most of the plays had *already* been printed by Jaggard, yet to be bound; it was as if their registration went through *on the nod* – without scrutiny, an inference that the Lord Chamberlain was the prime-mover. The rights to the other twenty plays belonged to twelve different people from whom permissions to print had to be obtained. How better than the offices of the Lord Chamberlain (Pembroke) to use his might to ensure there were no objections or ransoms to printing from the copy-holders?

16 – The First Follicle of 1623

The *First Folio* was printed by Isaac Jaggard *at the charges of W. Iaggard, Ed. Blount, I Smethweeke and W. Aspley*. Based on the ratio of the copies that still exist, Jaggard & Blount underwrote eighty percent of the copies, Smethwick and Aspley ten-percent each.[70]

[70] Lawe & Aspley held rights to five *Shakespeare* plays. Pavier and Smethwick each held four. In the twenty years before the publication of the First Folio, Aspley, Pavier and Smethwick barely exercised their rights, producing only four quartos from ten titles. Lawe published nine quartos from his, RII, RIII & 1HIV. Once Blount had registered sixteen plays, these four publishers held rights to twenty-nine of the thirty-six plays in the First Folio.

The Wight in Me



Mary Sidney, Countess Pembroke; note the swans in the lace ruff. Is the strong likeness alone sufficient to prove a hoax?

On the title page is the iconic portrait, purportedly engraved by *Martin Dro es hout*, showing a lightly-moustached, balding man with a woman's face whom the reader is to assume is a likeness of Mr William Shakespeare. One sees an oversized head stuck on to a tailor's dummy with two left arms and a strangely-fitting ruff. For such an important and expensive volume the engraving is a travesty. On the facing page, is a poem by Ben Jonson: it holds one most unusual feature.

To the Reader:
This figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut:
Wherein the Graver had a strife
With Nature, to outdo the life:
O, could he but have drawn his wit
As well in brass, as he hath hit
His face, the Print would then surpass
All, that ever was writ in brass.
But, since he cannot, Reader look

Not on his Picture, but his Book.

Jonson's poem of 352 characters is devoid of the letter "M". Statistically there should be about nine, once every forty letters, or once in every eight words (68 words). Jonson had engineered the poem to be devoid of M; M was no longer present. MP was how the Countess signed her name.

As for Martin Dro es hout; it is an anagram of ***the dor is't our man*****?** To Dor was to jest or prank; *Martin* was slang for a monkey or ape.

So as one opens up the *First Folio* one sees on the title page a very curious torso supporting what could be the oversize face of a hirsute woman, an author's name which is a pseudonym, a fragmented artist's name that smacks of some sort of jest and opposite a poem devoid of the letter M. There is also a view that if one cuts out the portrait, which Jonson seems to be alluding to, (*Reader look not on his Picture, but his Book)* one reads …. *Comedies, histories & tragedies of brethren William Earle of Pembroke …. and ….Philip Earle of Montgomery*….. as if William and Philip had provided the plays; at which point a reminder – Philip was married to Oxford's daughter.

As Henry James said, "I am sort of haunted by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practised on a patient world."

He was not wrong.

17 – Who was T T?

17.1 1609 and 1640 editions of the Sonnets.

The *Shake-Speare Sonnets* were printed in 1609 by G(eorge) Eld for "T T". It is assumed the publisher was Thomas Thorpe as he and Eld collaborated on a number of publications – but, from an analysis of the *British Library, Short Title Catalogue*, Thorpe never used the initials T T in any of his many publications. The Dedication of the *Sonnets* to *Master W H* was also signed T T.

I'll explain: T.T. was *not* Thomas Thorpe although the Stationers' Register for 1609 does show:

> *20 May; Tho. Thorpe. Entered for his copie under the handes of master Wilson and master Lownes Wardenes a booke called Shakespeares sonnetts vjd.*

It is curious that here the clerk did not write down what he saw, which would have been *Shake-Speares Sonnets,* and *book* usually meant a play. One senses a forgery. There is no record of the "book" ever having been transferred between 1609 and 1640, or beyond, when John Benson published *Poems Written by Wil. Shake-Speare* which included most of the Sonnets. In Thorpe's dedication to John Florio from John Healey's *Epictetus His Manuall* of 1610 (just one year after the Sonnets were published) Thorpe signed himself *Th. Th.*[71]

The 1640 title is misleading; many of the poems are not attributable to Shake-Speare. Benson's publication reads rather as an anthology amassed by someone (Mary Fitton) professing to be Shake-Speare and includes the poems in *The Passionate Pilgrim*. The Sonnets had been edited in being re-grouped thematically, eight were not included and in several places "he" changed to "she" – all indicating intimate knowledge of the contents. I would strongly advocate that Mary Fitton was the editor – who else would be interested or have the knowledge to make such changes?

That same year was the tenth anniversary of William Herbert's passing, two of her daughters died and sensing mortality, she made her will. She died a year later aged sixty-three and was buried at Tettenhall on 19th July 1641. Was the 1640 edition a monument to her great love?

17.2 Richard Barnfield

Returning to the twenty-first century; in the Arden Series: *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (2003) the editor wrote, *"Indeed, there seems to be some as yet unexplained connection between Shakespeare and* (Richard) *Barnfield. …..*

[71] ESTC

The Wight in Me

Barnfield's Cynthia is prefaced by a floridly over-written commendatory poem by one 'T.T.', ..." [72]

But there *was* a connection: Richard Barnfield of Edgmond, Shropshire, was the son of Richard Barnfield and his wife, Mary Skrymsher, baptised at Norbury in Staffordshire on 13th June 1574.[73] His mother died giving birth to his sister and from a poem dedicated to his aunt it appears that the siblings were brought up by their mother's sister, Elizabeth Skrymsher, at Johnson's Hall in nearby Eccleshall. An undergraduate at Brasenose College, Oxford (1589-1592), at the age of twenty-one he appears to have had the ability, finance, and influence to produce and have published the first of four books of poetry. Saintsbury describes his poetry as good to excellent. He was four years older than Mary Phitton, when his *Cynthia* (1595) was published. The *Commendation* to it, by TT reads:

> *T. T. in commendation of the Authour his work.*
>
> *Whylom that in a shepheards gray coate masked,*
> *(Where masked love the nonage of his skill)*
> *Reares now his Eagle-winged pen, new tasked,*
> *To seale the by-clift Muse sole-pleasing hill:*
> *Dropping sweete Nectar poesie from his quill,*
> *Admires faire CYNTHIA with his iuory pen*
> *Faire CYNTHIA lov'd, fear'd, of Gods and men.*
> *Downe sliding from that cloudes ore-pearing mounteine:*
> *Decking with double grace the neighbour plaines,*
> *Draws christall dew, from PEGASE foot-sprung fountain,*

[72] Only two poets of the Elizabethan era authored homoerotic verse. One was Barnfield in the 1590s. The other *apparently* was Shake-speare in the sonnets of love addressed to a young man. Coming across this for the first time I wondered if Shake-speare was a Barnfield pseudonym and there was, in fact, only one poet who dared put his head above a taboo parapet? Was there a chain of connections –Barnfield knew or indeed was William Shakespeare – who knew William Herbert – who knew Mary Fitton? It was a tenuous thread that needed to be explored. Fully expecting one more research cul-de-sac, this path had a totally unexpected outcome.

[73] GROSART REV A B: *Richard Barnfield*, 1876.

Whose flower set banks, delights, sweet choice contains:
Nere yet discoverd to the country swains:
Heere bud those branches, which adorn his turtle,
With love made garlands, of heart-bleeding Mirtle.
Rays'd from the cynders, of the thrice-sact town:
ILLIONS sooth-telling SYBILLIST appears,
Eclipsing PHOEBUS love, with scornefull frown,
Whose tragicke end, affords warm-water tears,
(For pitty-wanting PACOE, none forbears,
Such period haps, to beauties price ore-priz'd:
Where JANUS-faced love, doth lurk disguiz'd.
Nere waining CYNTHIA yeelds thee triple thanks,
Whose beams unborrowed dark the worlds fair eie,
And as full streams that ever fill their banks,
So those rare Sonnets, where wits tipe doth lie,
With ***Troian Nimph,*** *doe soare thy fame to skie.*
And those, and these, contend thy Muse to raise
(Lark mounting Muse) with more then common praise.

Not inspiring! In the following poem Barnfield thanks his *Mistress … of peerless chastity* (so TT is a woman) who bore a *sacred name* (Mary).

T T had called herself a Troian Nimph: can it be a coincidence that Troian Nimph is an anagram of Mari Phitonn? Could two such apparently disparate people be connected? *Of All The Gin Joints In All The Towns In All The World, She Walks Into Mine.*[74]

From lean biographical gleanings we find that Barnfield appeared to know more about Shakespeare than anyone else.[75] In 1598 he was the first to name Shakespeare in verse. In the fourth verse of one of his *Diverse Poems* [76] he praises Shakespeare's poetry alongside that of Edmund Spenser, Samuel Daniell

[74] Casablanca, film, 1942.

[75] Discussed again in Section 25.

[76] The Encomium of Lady Pecunia

and Michael Drayton, all three in the entourage/circle of Mary Sidney and known as Penshurst Poets.

Live Spenser ever, in thy Fairy Queen:
Whose like (for deepe Conceit) was never seen.
Crownd mayst thou bee, unto thy more renown,
As King of Poets with a Lawrell Crown.
And Daniell, praised for thy sweet-chast Verse:
Whose fame is grav'd on Rosamonds black Herse.
Still mayst thou live: and still be honored,
For that rare Work, The White Rose and the Red.
And Drayton,[77] *whose well-written Tragedies,*
And Sweet Epistles, soare thy fame to skies.
Thy learned Name, is aequall with the rest;
Whose stately Numbers are so well addrest.
And Shakespeare thou, whose hony-flowing Vaine,
Pleasing the World thy praises doth obtaine.
Whose Venus, and whose Lucrece (sweet, and chaste)
Thy name in fames immortall Book have plac't.
Live ever you, at least in Fame live ever:
Well may the Body dye, but Fame dies never.

It begs the question whether Mary Sidney was the fourth poet, composing poetry at Penshurst under the name *Shakespeare*.[78] Was *Venus and Adonis* "*the first heir of her invention.*"

And these are the connections:

[77] Barnfield especially prided himself on his friendship with Michael Drayton, a poet and playwright whom he and his colleagues affectionately called Roland. I suspect that it is not a coincidence that Orlando, the son of the late Roland du Bois, is a character in *As You Like It.* Drayton was born in the remains of the old forest of Arden in Warwickshire.

[78] Harry Morris in his *Amyntas and the Sidney Circle* (PMLA 1959) identified Richard Barnfield alongside Abraham Fraunce and Thomas Watson as three more Penshurst poets.

- Mary Fitton's nephew and Richard Barnfield's cousin's son married two sisters.
- Both their fathers were deputy-lieutenants in adjacent counties.
- As adults they were neighbours in Staffordshire.
- Barnfield addressed a poem to *Master R L*; this could well be another neighbour, then ship's master, Richard Leveson, Mary Fitton's second cousin and future lover. Leveson lived three miles away.
- Mary Wroth's *Urania* relates that *Antissia* (Mary Fitton) had a tutor who thought himself a better poet than Ovid, the source of the Shakespeare narrative poems.
- Barnfield's poetry actually suggests that he and T T were collaborating.
- Most significantly – T T was the phonetic monogram for Mary Fitton.

17.3 Conundrums

This phonetic monogram is a word-play on *Mary* and *marry*, marry to join two things together – here two T's. [79] Secondly – to take one **T** and **fit-on** the other, Mar(r)y Fit-t-on. [80] One sees an F and a T that marry.

It is no coincidence that Sonnet 122 starts with a unique TT: and the double-comma is not a typo but held significance;

TThy guift,, thy tables,[81] are within my brain
Full charactered with lasting memory,

[79] See Section 21 on Hamlet for an instance of Mary/marry.

[80] There is a 1570 escutcheon on the wall of Gawsworth Hall the ancestral home of the Fittons. The motto was FIT ONUS LEVE (Make Work Light) and apart from FIT-ON, one can also see in reverse LEVE-SUN. Richard Leveson and Mary Fitton's father were cousins.

[81] Portraits were painted on tables/tablets of wood.

The unique double-comma is an instruction to take the initial TWO letters of the following words (T H T A A R W I M Y B R) and rearranging them gives WI HARBRTT YAM, from the left William Harbrt and from the right May TT (Fitton).

TT is the strongest indication that it was Mary Fitton who signed the *Dedication* to the Sonnets with her phonetic monogram, and it was Mary Fitton for whom the *Sonnets* and *Complaint* were published. She owned them.

That was Sonnet 122; I'll skip 123 for the moment and move to Sonnet 124 which has another snatch of words which seems to echo their names;

YF my dear love were but …

M(a)y FY(ton) love(d) w. 'erbut

Taken collectively, the opening words/lines of three successive sonnets as the 108 sonnet-sequence ended (122/123(later)/124), yielding their names cannot be a coincidence. The sonnets were not quite anonymous; posterity was left clues to solve the mystery.

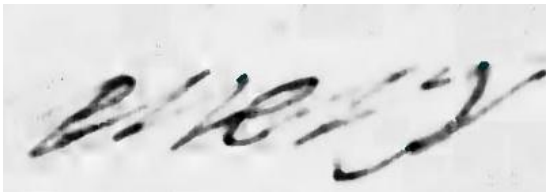
[Mary Fitton had a son, William Polewhele who had a daughter, Ellen, baptised 21st Sep 1643. In 1671 a play *The Frolicks* by E Polwhele was written in manuscript; E was dubbed Elizabeth by academics. I believe this was Ellen, aged twenty-eight. In the manuscript edited by Judith Millhouse and Robert D Hulme (Cornell University Press, 1974) the author describes herself as *an unfortunate young woman haunted with poetic devils*. I believe those *devils* are the legacy of her grandmother, Mary Fitton.]

18 – Anonymity

Anyone setting out to make sense of the *Shake-Speare Sonnets* quickly realises there are too many indeterminates and inconsistencies and so much more to the Sonnets than simple explanations can render. For instance academics conveniently neglect that on several occasions the author proclaims anonymity, *my name will be buried where my body is,* (Sonnet 72) and yet Shake-Speare is blazoned across the title page, and also as the author of *Complaint*.

The *Sonnets* being written anonymously; *ipso* Shake-Speare was a pseudonym. In Sonnet 76 Mary Fitton almost gave away her name when she wrote that

every word doth almost tell my name. Here, In her italic (Roman) handwriting, the word *every* looked like *Mary*.[82]



The authors indeed needed to obscure their identities (would not any married man or woman who had enjoyed a scandalous affair?) and they succeeded – for nearly 400 years.

It is patently obvious that Shake-Speare was a pseudonym yet what academic would dare admit it, like denying God; and so generations of historians, academics and commentators failed to uncover the quite sensational, real-life, heart-breaking story behind the *Sonnets*, asking us instead to swallow ingeniously concocted, under-researched though well-articulated theories.[83] The discovery may have come earlier if someone had noted that Mary Fitton spelt her name Phytton; which is the cryptic clue at the start of Sonnet 123 – which tells us everything; everything! For cryptic-crossword lovers, see if you can work it out.

No! Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change,

Thy pyramyds built up …….

19 – Vive la Difference!

In researching the Sonnets there are various attributes that emphasise the differences between Mary's sonnets and her experiences and perspectves,

[82] Warwickshire Records Office, Newdigate letters. In Twelfth Night [III, 4] Malvolio (William Knollys, besotted with Mary Fitton) says*, I think we do know the sweet Roman hand.*

[83] HUBLER E, The Sense of the Shakespeare Sonnets, 1952; ROBERTSON J M, The Problems of the Shakespeare Sonnets; Hotson L, Mr W H 1964; ALFRED LORD DOUGLAS, The History of Shakespeare's Sonnets, 1933; SHAW B, The Dark Lady of the Sonnets, are a few samples.

with those of Pembroke. One thing we can be sure of is – Shaxper was never pregnant.

19.1 Time

Two sharply defined characteristics underpin the differences between the first 126 sonnets to the *Young Man*, and the twenty-six sonnets to the *Dark Lady*. In the first group *time*, *the passing of time*, *waiting* and *longing* seem forever-present while in the second group *time* is never a consideration; the mistress is both enthralled to her lover's diary and is distanced from him.

19.2 Familiarity

In the first group the author oscillates her address to him in phases – between periods of the informal, chummy *you* with periods using the formal *thee*; (the French familiar tu, versus the formal *vous*). [Appendix C]

At times they were emotionally close and familiar, allowing her to address him, tongue-in-cheek, as *Master W H*.[84] In the second group, Earl Pembroke's, it is always the respectful *thee*, *thou* and *thine*. Two differing relationships, at two different social statuses, two authors, and one is a woman, (Hamlet/Ofelia; Bertram/Helena).[85]

[84] Addressing him as an Earl would have given the game away! First-love is a joy and enhances the sensibilities with humour embedded at times. I like this line in Sonnet 20;

A maiden in hue all Hues in his controlling,

When William Herbert came of age he inherited most of the county of Glamorgan, superintending the lives of many Welsh, a good number of whom were named Hughes.

[85] The NEW PENGUIN SERIES *The Sonnets and a Lover's Complaint, 1995* page 430 has some interesting statistics of the use of commas withing the text but not at the end of a line. In blocks of twenty-five sonnets the numbers increase 2.8; 4.7; 4.9; 5.5; 5.4 with the last twenty-eight sonnets averaging 3.6.

19.3 Gender

In Sonnet 50 Mary is pregnant, *the wight in me*. A wight is a living being. [86] In Sonnet 66 she is *a maiden rudely strumpeted*. In Sonnet 110 she is a woman who has gone astray.,

Sonnet 50.

How heavy do I journey on the way,
When what I seek (my weary travel's end)
Doth teach that ease and that repose to say
Thus far the miles are measured from thy friend.
The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
Plods duly on, to bear *that* waight *in me,*
As if by some instinct the wretch did know
His rider loved not speed being made from thee:

Sonnet 66

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
As to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,

Sonnet 110

Alas 'tis true, I have gone here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offences of affections new.

[86] Waight/Wigt/wight meant "a living being". I have found no evidence that Shaxper was ever pregnant. On 4th April 1625, at Tettenhall, Staffordshire, Mary Fitton's daughter, Anne Fitton, alias Leveson, married Sir Robert Charnock of Chorley in Lancashire. The marriage portion was £4,000 an enormous figure worthy of an earldom. I think *the wight* was the same daughter – placing the date, assuming marriage at aged twenty-one, as 1604 and the conception in 1603. The Sonnet gives rise to a suspicion that Pembroke was the father. Mary Fitton lost an infant, Kathrine, when married to Polewhele, I have more than a gut feel that this was also Pembroke's, he lost a sister, Katherine when she was aged three.

19.4 Trauma and Grief

The story contained within the Sonnets starts with the seduction and the jilting, narrated in *A Lover's Complaint*. Next, under house-arrest and seven-months pregnant, Mary writes seventeen sonnets to William pressing him to marry. The baby is born and taken away to be fostered; William still refuses to marry; the mood changes.

At this point Mary has been jilted by the Earl, had lost the chance to become a Countess. She had lost her baby. She had been thrown out of Court and lost the goodwill of the Queen. Her mother would not tolerate her, her having brought shame on the family. Mary Fitton was suffering with trauma. Her once-exalted reputation had been destroyed.

Sonnet 18 is the start of the five classic stages of grieving, Denial; Anger; Bargaining; Depression and Acceptance which may have lasted six years. During these years, as time steadily passes, she articulates through sonnets her many different emotions reflecting her vicissitudes. Until he dies suddenly in 1605, her second cousin, Admiral Sir Richard Leveson, "looked after her". When she commits to marrying Captain Polewhele around 1606/7 the relationship with Pembroke slows to an end; she lets him go. During their long relationship Pembroke writes back to her; his *Dark Lady* sonnets are printed separately, they are not in chronological order and there were probably more sonnets which were not printed.

19.5 Inventiveness

In the Shakespeare canon there is a small manifestation of unique words ending with "ure", namely Acture, Circummured, Extincture, Prompture, Razure, Refigured/Refiguring, Rondure, Stricture, Tinctures, Ungenitured, between them appearing seventeen times. Of the seventeen, seven are in those *Sonnets* and *A Lover's Complaint* which Mary Fitton composed, and five are in *Measure for Measure*. Is this an indication that Mary Fitton wrote *Measure for Measure*? (More in Section 22).

19.6 Irony

Sonnet 125 starts – *Were't aught to me I bore the canopy*. It helps place this sonnet after the death of Queen Elizabeth in March 1603. What is piquant is that Pembroke was one of the Knights of the Garter who carried the canopy that covered King James at the Coronation in the summer of 1604. However, Admiral Sir Richard Leveson was one of six Knights of the Canopy at the funeral of Queen Elizabeth; ironically, both Canopy Bearers were Mary Fitton's lovers. [At the Queen's funeral Pembroke with Effingham carried the royal Banner.]

20 – T T's Dedication in the Sonnets

There is a simple cypher in the *Dedication* to the Sonnets which unlocks hidden names.

One counts 30 words on 13 lines, subtract the two figures and one gets 17. For some reason the number 17 had meaning. William was 17 when they would have first met at Court; William rejected the daughter of the 17th Earl of Oxford, and there were 17 sonnets begging him to marry.

The unusual if not unique full-stops after each word are there for a purpose. One must count the number of characters in each line, including each full stop (why else were they there?) and then apply A=17, B=18 et cetera to give letters that can form meaningful words.

TO.THE.ONLIE.BEGETTER.OF. (25-I)
THESE.INSVING.SONNETS. (22-F)
Mr.W.H. ALL.HAPPINESSE. (22-F)
AND.THAT.ETERNITIE. (19-C)
PROMISED. (9-S)
BY. (3-M)
OVR.EVER-LIVING.POET. (21-E)
WISHETH. (8-R)
THE.WELL-WISHING. (17-A)
ADVENTVRER.IN. (14-X)
SETTING. (8-R)
FORTH. (6-P)
T. T. (4-N)

The letters (if the X in error should be a Y) give

MARY FFS PRINCE.

21 – Hamlet

The play, *Hamlet Prince of Denmark,* had been around for a decade before the (short) *First Quarto, Q1,* was registered on 26th July 1602, and published during 1603 (after James acceded). The "unpublished" play has been allocated the phantom name *Ur-Hamlet.*

The story originated from Saxo Grammaticus's *Historiae Danicae*, written 1206-1218. Prince Amleth behaved as if mad when he feared for his life after his uncle had killed his father to obtain the throne. To test if Amleth was shamming the uncle attempted to trick him into having sex with an attractive woman but the plot was revealed to them by a friend. In secret the two enjoyed a single act of sex and then lied to the King. There was no love affair, the woman did not appear elsewhere in the story and she certainly did not go mad.

The *immediate* source for Ur-Hamlet, was from François de Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* published *in French* in 1570, Belleforest's first English translation was published anonymously in 1608 – *after* the first quarto and second quartos of the play had been printed. The French edition had a slight embellishment on *Historiae Danicae*, simply stating that the woman loved Hamlet more than she loved herself. Ur-Hamlet was not a commercial success, probably because it lacked a feminine interest, if so, Ofelia in Q1 provided a love interest and an extra thread to the play.[87]

Q1 was registered in July 1602 as having been acted by the Lord Chamberlain's servants and published in 1603 claiming to have been acted by his Majesty's servants, in the City of London and also at the two universities of Cambridge and Oxford. The printer appears to be Valentine Simmes whose print-house was literally yards from Pembroke's Baynard's Castle.

[87] JACK A A; Young Hamlet. Removing Ofelia from the play barely affects the story but makes it much duller.

The Wight in Me

In *Darling Buds of Maie* I identified references indicating that Ofelia is based on Mary Fitton – introduced into a reconstruction of the play by someone who appears to have played the part of Marcellus (correctly reproducing Marcellus' lines); and the someone was probably Mary's lover, William Herbert. It sometimes needs a catalyst to effect change, and to change perception my catalyst is that Ofelia had, or thought she had, conceived Hamlet's child – imagine how with a surreptitious single rub of her belly and an aside look she may have shared her predicament with the audience and heightened the play at no cost to the script; explaining her madness and having no will to fight against drowning.

It is the end of January 1601. One must try to understand the mind of the precocious, vain, highly intelligent volatile but depressive, young Earl Pembroke. He had been dismissed from Court, the centre of power, and been incarcerated in the Fleet prison for having defied his angry godmother, his monarch, the Queen. Great pressure was being put on him to tie the knot. His girlfriend whom he loved but refused to marry, for reasons he would not explain, was heavily pregnant and her influential father was creating problems – wanting a wedding or at least financial compensation (later that year he asked for the coal-mines of the New Forest). Add to this, William's own father had so recently passed away and if he remained in prison he would not be able to pay his final respects at the graveside and have closure.[88] On top of all this, although now nominally the Third Earl of Pembroke, he was still three months from coming of age and obtaining his inheritance. There was a real threat that he would be made a ward of court and his estate heavily fined.[89] Would it not be surprising that the young, sensitive, poetic and melancholy William Herbert's mind was in turmoil with its cocktail of love, sex, marriage, birth,

[88] Six weeks elapsed between the death of the second Earl and his burial in Salisbury Cathedral. William was released from prison on 19th April.

[89] Hannay op. Cit. P163. His mother wrote to the Queen to try to prevent this happening. Southampton had been fined £5,000, worth about £1.5m in today's purchasing power.

death, health, freedom, reputation, shame, honour, family, estate and wealth.[90] Darn it! He was only twenty-years-old.

[If indeed William Herbert was actually rewriting *Ur-Hamlet* in the Fleet prison I suspect it was his mother, Countess Pembroke, and/or perhaps with her brother, his uncle, Philip Sidney, who in the late 1580's had commissioned the play from Thomas Kyd who, like Countess Pembroke, was also a French translator.]

My explanation; William Herbert, imprisoned in the Fleet, used the time in an attempt to a reconstruction of *Hamlet* in which he had performed as Marcellus and in other small parts, when at New College, Oxford. In it his catharsis was to express his feelings and thoughts for his pregnant girlfriend. With all these factors troubling his mind, suicide would have been a consideration, giving rise to the most famous;

> To be, or not to be, I there's the point,
> To Die, to sleep, is that all? I all:
> No, to sleep, to dream, **I mary there it goes,**
> For in that dream of death, when we awake,
> And borne before an everlasting judge,
> From whence no passenger ever retur'nd,
> The undiscovered country, at whose sight
> The happy smile, and the accursed damn'd.
> But for this, the joyful hope of this,
> Who'd bear the scorns and flattery of the world,
> Scorned by the right rich, the rich cursed of the poor?
> The widow being oppressed, the orphan wrong'd,
> The taste of hunger, or a tirants raigne,
> And thousand more calamities besides,
> To grunt and sweat under this weary life,
> When that he may his full Quietus make,
> With a bare bodkin, who would this indure,
> But for a hope of something after death?
> Which pusles the brain and doth confound the sense,
> Which makes us rather beare those evilles we have,

[90] HAYNES, *Sex in Elizabethan England* noted that Uncle Robert Sidney reported that William Herbert spent his time in prison writing verses. I have not been able to find his source.

Than fly to others that we know not of.
I that, O this conscience makes cowards of us all,
Lady in thy orizons, be all my sins remembred.[91]

Aye, Mary, there it goes!

20 – Measure for Measure

As the three-day action of *Measure For Measure begins, Vincentio has been Duke of Vienna for fourteen years and his lax governance has begun to bear ugly fruit. With moral and social corruption rife, Vincentio has lost the credibility needed to enforce laws himself. He deputises Lord Angelo to govern in his place. Then disguised as a friar Vincentio not only observes the extent of corruption and the poverty in his dukedom, but also intervenes in the troubled lives of his subjects. He cunningly orchestrates two schemes designed to correct rampant moral and judicial imbalances. One, the bed-trick, exposes Angelo's monstrousness and forces him to take responsibility for his lack of moral rectitude. Another, which could be called the head-trick, involved passing off the head of another prisoner for that of Claudio, whom Angelo ordered decapitated. But despite these drastic solutions to sex-and-death dilemmas, the morality of everyone in Vienna is not only called into question as the action unfolds, but it also remains in question even as the play comes to an end*.[92]

This unresolved conclusion is a reason *Measure For Measure* is designated a problem-play, as is *All's Well That Ends Well* where one could switch William Herbert for Bertram, his mother Countess Pembroke for Countess Roussillon, and Mary Fitton for Helena.

Coercive control is described as patterns of behaviour intended to exert power or control over another. Such behaviours deprive survivors of their independence and can make them feel vulnerable, isolated or scared. *Hamlet*

[91] First Quarto edition.

[92] DUNTON-DOWNER L & RIDING A; 2004 The *Essential Shakespeare Handbook*

screams at Ofelia, *Get thee to a nunnery!* and Lo! In *Measure for Measure* Isabella emerges as a novice from a nunnery to be is subjected to Angelo's attempt at coercive control – offering to spare her brother from death in exchange for her virginity.

In Section 19.5 I put forward an indication that Mary Fitton wrote *Measure for Measure.* Was she subject to coercive control? For the first time in this paper I shall hypothesise.

Elizabeth's inner Court was saturated with family from the Boleyn side. Mary Fitton's guardian at Court was Sir William Knollys, grandson of Mary Boleyn Carey (and probably Henry VIII) whose mother was the Queen's first cousin and bears such a striking likeness that one could think they were sisters.

The Wight in Me

Although Knollys made a fool of himself regarding his love/infatuation for Mary Fitton, he was still one of the most trusted, powerful and influential of the Queen's privy councillors. If the ever-watchful Knollys found that Mary and William Herbert had consummated their relationship, not only would he have been jealous and angry, he also had the power to have Mary Fitton dismissed. So, did he abuse it?

Sixteen years after I published *The Darling Buds of Maie* I finally discovered why William Herbert refused to marry Mary Fitton. It was quite a surprise, actually almost a shock – something I could never have imagined.

History has always judged William Herbert a rogue for having jilted his pregnant fiancée. In pulling together this paper I found that I had missed the significance of a line in a letter of 2nd Sep 1601 from Pembroke to Sir Robert Cecil, the Queen's first minister. Pembroke wanted to compensate Mary's father with a gift of the New Forest; the Queen said no, she would not cover his misdemeanours. It was probably more complex than at first sight, however, what I had missed was that Pembroke considered *himself* the victim. Was that at all possible? Was he saying that he had wanted to marry Mary Fitton but then received a terrible setback? He writes:

> *There may be some things yet in her majesty's hands to dispose of which if it would please her to grace me with, might happily in some measure patch up my disgrace in the opinion of the world. But I have vowed never again to be a suitor, since in my first suit I have received such a blow.*[93]

One can read into this that Pembroke felt *he* had been the victim, whereas all the world thought him the scoundrel and Mary Fitton the victim – and yet he chose not to clarify why he felt *such a blow*. I deal with the subject again in Section 28.

[93] The full letter is at Appendix D.

23 – Shaxper's Will

There has been an inordinate analysis of Shaxper's holographic Will and its anomalies; most recently (2016) the National Archives' multispectral analysis showed extensive rewriting, two pages out of three.[94] (Actually, there's nothing to say all three may have been rewritten.)

For clarity, there is a) the three-page **Will** lodged originally in the *Doctors' Commons'* repository of wills, and there is b) a **Probate Register copy of the Will** with their grants of Probate recorded in a ledger.

I want to focus on just a few words: the bequests *to each of his fellows, Richard Burbage, John Hemminges and Henry Condell, 26s 8d to buy memorial rings*. [In passing I note the missing "d" from Burbadge who signed his name Burbadge, and was Burbadge to Ben Jonson, Pembroke and most people but apparently not to Shaxper, his so-called fellow of many years.]

The Shaxper bequests are in keeping with almost all other actors' wills leaving money, clothing or articles to their colleagues, some of whom being signatories or executors.[95] When I started to study the *actual* document I could see that the bequest was an interlineation in a different hand. In my extensive reading no commentator had ever drawn *critical* attention to this, understandably, since should it be a forgery it meant there was nothing whatsoever to connect this Shaxper with the London stage. Indeed I thought for quite some time that it was a forgery but for me there was a problem – the *evidence* in the Probate copy.

In the June 1616 Probate copy of the Shaxper Will, the bequest to the three fellow-actors was firmly embedded within the text, proving ill-founded my suspicion that the interlineation was a forgery. However, by then I had made a number of significant discoveries which seriously undermine the *orthodox*

[94] I made a facsimile of the three pages of the will and scored along the visible crease lines, two horizontal, one vertical. The third page would not fold comfortably with the other two.

[95] HONNINGHAM E A J: *Playhouse Wills,* 1993/2005. Shaxper was never a signatory or executor to any will.

biography and perceived history and was convinced that *Shakespeare* was effectively a brand-name. My research was telling me one thing, the Probate copy was telling me I was wrong – I am dogged but not irrational and had to accept I was wrong. Until...!

Some years after publishing *The Darling Buds of Maie* I decided to better organise my massive accumulation of papers. I chose as first task to make a single file for the many wills purchased from the Public Records Office. One afternoon I was literally shuffling papers when, on the desk in front of me, to the left was the 1609 will of William Polewhele (Mary Fitton's husband), in the middle Shaxper's (1616), and to the right that of the poet Samuel Daniell (1619). It was a coincidence but intriguing to see they were in the hand of the same scrivener despite spanning ten years. However there was something puzzling to the eye – then I noticed that the inclined arm of the letter "d"; in Shaxper's seemed to rise to a higher angle from the horizontal than on the two wills on either side. [Appendix F]

The Probate record of the Shaxper will fills two pages exactly[96] from top of recto to bottom of verso, with a few lines at the top of the third page giving the Statement granting probate. In the Statement the angle of the arm of the "d" is again lower. I obtained more wills by the same scrivener, including the one preceding Shaxper's and measured all the angles of the arms of the letter d. This data was given, blind, to a university statistician (the most cynical person I've ever met) who did a range of statistical tests and concluded that the angle of the arm in the two pages of Shaxper's will rose an average of thirty-eight degrees above the horizontal while in all the other wills it averaged a regular thirty-four degrees; the multiple statistical tests proved Shaxper's was significantly different.

One can identify each scrivener by their calligraphic letter I, four to eight lines high, of many strokes of the pen, which starts each will with "*In the name of God, amen*." Here again with Shaxper's there are significant differences.

[96] Statistically unlikely; I believe the long, meaningless and curious entail is a space-filler.

Especially in the upper part of the letter "I" there is a most unusual, strange and probably unique cartouche which makes no sense unless one digitally extracts it and turns it upside down. It reads L 28th B – for which I have no explanation. [Appendix F]. In all other examples the second letter, "n" of *In*, aligns with the top of the "I", in Shaxper's it is three lines down.

The leaf bearing the probate copy of Shaxper's will is not original. It is a forgery.

Why create a forgery? Why rewrite parts of Shaxper's will? Why the interlineations of a bequest to London actors and of the *second best bed* to a wife? The answer is the whole essence of the authorship question. My contention is that whoever found the will (in the Doctor's Commons before 1747) would have seen it was devoid of any connection with the London theatre, as would the probate copy. With so much invested in Shakespeare, if Shaxper did not exist as a playwright, something had to be done about it and by someone who needed a sharp legal mind, access to state records, forgers and chutzpah.[97] If one accepts that Shakespeare was a pseudonym, a gross lie was committed in interlineating that bequest to the London actors and in rewriting the wills.

Shakespeare being a pseudonym, any researcher trawling through holographic documents pertaining to the "Shakespeare" era could not have found anything. Frustrating, frustrated, there has been a propensity to forge, from a few words to a whole play, in order to validate lost labours, assuage annoyance and bask in the limelight of kudos. The Shakespeare history is littered with forgeries, holographic documents or well-crafted additions, some exposed, others tacitly accepted, some suspected and others yet unknown. Famous miscreants are

[97] I strongly suspect the Solicitor Albany Wallis (1714-1800), a friend of the great Shakespearean actor, David Garrick and his wife, a trustee of the Drury Lane Theatre, involved in the William Henry Ireland Shakespeare-forgeries scandal, and the man who found all the title deeds relating to Shaxper's Blackfriars property.

The Wight in Me

John Payne Collier[98] and young William Henry Ireland who explained in his *Confessions*:

> *I cannot recollect upon what particular occasion, but I rather think I had been occupied in the perusal of the mortgage-deed formerly in the possession of David Garrick Esq which is to be found printed in Johnson and Steeven's Shakespeare, when the idea first struck me of imitating the signature of the bard .... In consequence of this, I made a tracing of the facsimiles of Shakespeare's signature, both to his Will in the Commons [99] and the deed before mentioned which are to be found in the aforesaid edition of Shakespeare's Works. I had hastily noted down the heads of this deed and thus fortified I repaired to chambers ..... Having cut off a piece of parchment from the end of an old rent-roll, I placed a deed before me of the period of James the First, and then proceeded to imitate the style of the penmanship ..... making a lease between William Shakespeare & John Heminge with one Michael Fraser & Elizabeth his wife. [100]*
>
> William Henry Ireland's Confessions 1805

Here is one forgery I uncovered: in 1765 J & R Tonson published *William Shakespeare's Works* edited by Dr Samuel Johnson in eight volumes. It included the first printing from the Registry of the Archbishop of Canterbury of the *Shaxper* will.[101] The will itself was given no provenance – it just appeared! In the massive preamble to the plays, Johnson had printed the prefaces to previous sets edited by Pope, Theobold, Hanmer, Warburton, and Rowe's 1709

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[98] FREEMAN A & FREEMAN J I; *John Payne Collier*, 2004

GANZEL Z; *Fortune in Men's Eyes*, 1982

[99] The Doctors Commons in Castle Baynard Ward was where probate records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) were kept. The building, originally a Commons and hostel for Doctors-of-Law, was destroyed by the Great Fire of 1666 and subsequently rebuilt. Baynard's Castle was also destroyed by the conflagration, and with it one assumes its library.

[100] MAIR J; *The Fourth Forger*, 1938

GREBANIER B, *The Great Shakespeare Forgery*, 1966

IRELAND W-H; *Confessions*, 1805 reprinted 1875/1969

KAHEN J; *Reforging Shakespeare*, 1998

[101] The Probate Copy. Halliwell-Phillipps later gave the world to understand that Rev. Joseph Greene, master of the Grammar School in Stratford, had *discovered* the will at the Doctors' Commons in London. In fact Greene copied a *copy* of the Prerogative Court *copy*, not the will..

account of the life of Shaxper. Rowe had also included two pages giving the *Baptisms, Marriages and Burials of the Shaxper Family* abstracted from the Stratford registers.[102] It provided the same information that is current today – *except* that the male twin born on 2nd Feb 1585 who died on 11th Aug 1596 was *not* named Hamnet but Samuell, which harmonises with the biblical names of his twin sister, Judith, and elder sister, Susanna.

Stratford's church registers were out of the town for three decades late in the 18th century. They were in the hands of Edmund Malone (1741-1812), a retired Irish barrister living in London, then considered the foremost authority on Shakespeare, in retrospect known not to be above the art of skullduggery. Malone had to be pressed to return the Registers. It is quite easy to modify *Samuell* to *Hamnett*, thus adding a touch of literary colour to the Shakespeare myth and spawning a multitude of psychologically essays profiling Prince Hamlet with the loss of Shaksper's son; balderdash!

Shaxper's will has been forged and its content can not be trusted.

24 – The Passionate Pilgrim

The Passionate Pilgrim by W Shakespeare[103] is a collection of twenty or twenty-one poems printed in 1599 by Valentine Simmes; most are not attributable to Shakespeare. It is more an anthology of poetry with a penchant for stuff by "Shakespeare". Simmes was the most productive printer of *Shake-Speare* works and the proximity of his printing house to Baynard's Castle, William Herbert's and his mother's London home, just yards away, should be noted. What is overlooked is his printing of *Hamlet (Q1)* and his successor, George Eld's printing of the Sonnets.

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[102] Dr Johnson's footnote states these were provided by George Steevens via James West the friend of Joseph Greene, the Stratford schoolmaster.

[103] ADAMS J Q; The Passionate Pilgrim (Folger) 1939.

The Wight in Me

A revised collection of the *Passionate Pilgrim* was printed in 1612 and the poems were included in John Benson's 1640 anthology, *Poems Written by Wil. Shake-Speare gent.*

I believe the twenty-one poems were assembled by William Herbert (aka W. Shakespeare) to mark the coming of age of his girlfriend, Mary Fitton, celebrating her twenty-first birthday (born June 1578). One senses that the poetry was meaningful to them both and William may have used his own initiative to visit Simmes' printworks on Addle Hill just yards from his home. One scenario is that he was not satisfied with the first printing and the booklet was unstitched and replacement pages inserted. It explains why some pages had poems on both sides and others on just one and there is thought to be a second quarto.

Two poems, PP1/PP2, slightly modified, later appear in the Sonnets, precursors to Shake-Speare Sonnet 138 & 144.

Poems PP3/5/17 were from *Love's Labours Lost*, a play it was highly likely that William & Mary had watched together at Court during the Christmas period 1598/99. It has a leitmotiv of darkness which may be reflected in the *Dark Lady Sonnets*.

Three poems based on *Venus & Adonis* but not in V&A, PP4/6/9. *Venus & Adonis* and *Lucrece* derive from Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* Wroth writes of *Antissia* (her rival in love); "*and so she fell to study and got a tutor (O her fill for such a scholar, one who had been mad in studying how to make a piece of poetry to excel Ovid, and to be more admired than he is."* [104]

Two poems by Mary Fitton's friend, Richard Barnfield, PP8/21.

Five by different poets. PP11 is interesting; it suggests they had been reading Bartholomew Griffin's sonnet sequence, *Fidessa* (1596). One of Griffin's poems, *My Lady's hair is threads of beaten gold*, is a template for Sonnet 130 – except

[104] URANIA, Vol II, page 40, lines 34-36

all the attributes are inversed; (*If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head*). [Appendix E]

PP12 Thomas Deloney (1543- 1600); PP19 Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623); PP20 Christopher Marlowe; PP21 Walter Raleigh.

Seven poems are unattributed; they could easily have been composed by William Herbert. (PP7/10/13/14/15/16/17).

Mary Fitton's association with Richard Barnfield, the presence of these (rejected?) verses from *Venus &* Adonis, with Barnfield's own poems here in the *Passionate Pilgrim* gives weight to an argument that Barnfield helped compose the Shakespeare narrative poems – perhaps with help from Mary Fitton and under the aegis of Mary Sidney. Yet, I believe that before Mary set her sights on the Earldom of Pembroke, when aged about fifteen, her target had been the Earl of Southampton, whether puppy-love or predatory or both. [Appendix G] What fits in the narrative is that *Lucrece* was registered, 9th May 1594, in the year Southampton came of age, 6th October 1594, and that *Adonis*, registered for publication on 18th April 1593, might have been a Valentine.

25 – Richard Barnfield & Francis Meres

No book on *Shakespeare* can avoid referring to Francis Meres' few pages about the then modern writers within the seven-hundred pages of *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury,* (1598). Here is no exception but my commentary is in the form of an imaginary extract from an unwritten novel.

> *1598; St. Paul's Churchyard, London; poet Richard Barnfield is delighted in opening this new book printed by Peter Short, Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury; its thickness, seven-hundred pages, and the inimitable smell rising to his nostrils of a book opening for the first time. Registered to publisher Cuthbert Burby on 7th September 1598, it had been assembled by his friend, Francis Meres, a potted encyclopaedia of religious and philosophical matters in the form of a compilation of essays drawn from the sages of antiquity. Meres had commissioned him to write a section on modern poets and playwrights and he had chosen to compare them with the classics.*

He had plagiarised reviews written a decade earlier in William Webbe's *Discourse of English Poetry* (1586) and George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) and had produced *A Comparative Discourse of our English Poets with the Greek, Latin, and Italian Poets* – all he had done was a rewrite, pasting in the modern authors.

He turned the stiff leaves to *page 282* to read what he had said about *Shakespeare*; *As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for comedy, witness his Gentlemen of Verona, his Errors, his Love Labours Lost, his Love Labours Won,*[105] *his Midsummer's Night Dream, & his Merchant of Venice; for tragedy, his Richard the 2, Richard the 3, Henry the 4, King John, Titus Andronicus, and his Romeo and Juliet.*

[Of Edward, Earl of Oxford]: *The best poets for comedy among the Greeks are .... the best for comedy amongst us be Edward Earl of Oxford, Doctor Gager of Oxford, Master Rowley, once a rare scholar of learned Pembroke Hall in Cambridge, Master Edwards, one of her Majesty's Chapel, eloquent and witty John Lyly, Lodge, Gascoigne, Greene, Shakespeare, Thomas Nash, Thomas Heywood, Anthony Munday, our best plotter, Chapman, Porter, Wilson, Hathway, and Henry Chettle;* and of his friend Michael Drayton – *"Michael Drayton ... is held of a man of virtuous disposition, honest conversation, and well governed carriage, which is almost miraculous among good wits in these declining and corrupt times..."* [106]

He smiled to himself; it had been easy work.

---

[105] Possibly *Taming of the Shrew*.

[106] Heywood, Munday, Chapman, Porter, Wilson, Hathway, and Chettle were commissioned by Henslowe to produce plays for the Admiral's (Nottingham's) men at his *Rose* playhouse. If one team was working for the *Rose*, was not another writing for the Burbadges' *Globe*?

Barnfield's *signature* to this article (of just 2,860) words is an obscure reference to his own works only he himself is likely to have known: *As noble Mecaenas, that sprung from the Etruscan kings, not only graced poets by his bounty, but also by being a poet himself, and as James the 6, now king of Scotland, is not only a favourer of poets, but a poet, as my friend Master Richard Barnfield hath in this distich* [couplet] *passing well recorded: "The King of Scots now living is a poet, As his Lepanto and his furies show it,..."*

From where had Barnfield got this list of twelve Shakespeare plays? It was not from the Stationers' Register as two of the plays had not been registered. Why were the two earliest plays missing? Was he a theatre-goer himself, in which case how had he gained such knowledge that he would appear to be sitting amongst playwrights. Barnfield, however, was part of the Mary Sidney entourage and he also had a friend at Court, Mary Fitton, where these big productions were performed. Mary could well have provided a list of plays. She and her family enjoyed theatre. One imagines she attended rehearsals; the leading comic actor, Will Kemp, dedicated a book jointly to her and the Queen.

26 – John Florio

Frances A Yates produced an excellent biography of the ubiquitous John Florio, *The life of an Italian in Shakespeare's England,* CUP 1934.

Florio is recognised as the most important Renaissance humanist in England. A lexicographer, he compiled three dictionaries contributing an estimated 1,149 words to the English language, (third behind those found in the Chaucer & Shakespeare works). He was a translator of European literature, conversant in

French, Italian and Spanish and probably German. He translated Boccaccio's stories (the source of a *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Cymbeline* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona)* and many other European books into English. Many new words found in *Hamlet* are to be found in Florio's translation of philosopher Michel de Montaigne's essays. He was a brother-in-arms to historian, poet and playwright, Samuel Daniell; had a literary quarrel with Mary Sidney's secretary, and was a language tutor to Queen Anne. He is thought to be represented as the pedant, Holofernes, in *Love's Labour's Lost.*

In Yates' index is a listing of people with whom he had a relationship; The Queen (Anne of Denmark), Countess of Bedford, Lord Brooke, Hugh Broughton, Giordano Bruno, Lord Burleigh, Robert Burton, Sir Robert Cecil, Sir Robert Cotton, Samuel Daniell, John Dunne, Sir Edward Dyer, John Elliot, Elizabeth Queen of Bohemia, the Earl of Essex, Alberico Gentili, Stephen Gosson, Matthew Gwyn, Richard Hakluyt, Joseph Hall, Gabriel Harvey, John Healy, James I, Ben Jonson, Earl of Leicester, Ottaviano Lotti, John Lyly, Mauvissiere and Chateauneuf, (French ambassadors), Thomas Nash, Earl of Pembroke, Sir Walter Raleigh, Lady Rich, Hugh Stanford, William Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney, the Earl of Southampton, Edmund Spencer, Thomas Thorpe, Giovanni Torriano, William Vaughan, and Sir Francis Walsingham. When one examines the index entries against *Shakespeare* there is no substance other than references to various works.

Yates, says it was unlikely that Florio ever visited Italy, and Roe's[107] analysis, especially *All's Well that Ends Well*, is that the author of the twelve *Italian* plays had been on the ground, absorbing local knowledge (Oxford?).

In 2009 Lamberto Tassinari[108] provided an updated biography which gives a real feel for Florio, his history, networks, ability and contribution. Abstracts from his dictionaries appeared in *Shakespeare* plays. Tassinari glosses over the *Sonnets*

[107] ROE RP: *The Shakespeare guide to Italy, 2011*. As I started my career in management consultancy an old hand confided that the art of consultancy is a good book and a half-hour start on the client. Perhaps the Elizabethan author had a good book?

[108] *John Florio, the Man who was Shakespeare,* 2009

as simply written in exile – yet understanding the Sonnets is key to the whole authorship question. The new vocabulary in *Hamlet* points to his involvement, but to what extent – in authorship, or in helping edit the *First Folio*? Tassinari's own contention that Florio wrote *The Tempest* is convincing.

Florio died in 1625 and bequeathed his extensive library of books, mainly Italian, French and Spanish,[109] and his papers to Pembroke. They demonstrate his wide knowledge of European literature and, through his Italian-English dictionaries, it is evident that he was more than familiar with most if not all of the Italian sources of *Shakespeare* plays. [110]

27 – The Tomb

> My Shakespeare, rise! I will not lodge thee by
> Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
> A little further, to make thee a room:
> Thou art a monument without a tomb,
> And art alive still while thy book doth live
> And we have wits to read and praise to give.

When Ben Jonson wrote these lines for the *First Folio* of 1623 only the poets Chaucer (1400), Spenser (1598) and Beaumont (1616) had been buried at Westminster Abbey; (Chaucer only because he was a resident in the Abbey's Close). Jonson would also rest there. Shaxper remains in Stratford-upon-Avon.

One-hundred-and-seventeen years later, In 1740, a life-size monument to *William Shakespeare,* designed by William Kent and executed by Peter Scheemaker, was erected in the Abbey's Poets' Corner. The sponsors were Earl Burlington, (a colleague of the 9th Earl Pembroke, both architects), Alexander

[109] A source for *The Tempest* is Spanish – Eslava's *Primera Parte de las Noches de Invierno*.

[110] It is thought that Pembroke declined the gift, possibly because of a condition for his bestowing a pension on Florio's family did not appeal to him. There is no trace of the 340 books – which is unusual. Did he receive them only for them to be destroyed when Baynard's was razed after the Great Fire of 1666.

Pope, a Dr Mead and a Mr. Martin. The statue's index figure points at a scroll which misquotes from *The Tempest* (IV.1.152).

> *The Cloud Cap't Tow'rs, The Gorgeous Palaces,*
> *The Solemn Temples, The Great Globe itself,*
> *Yea all which inherit shall dissolve*
> *And like baseless Fabrick of a vision*
> *Leave not a wreck behind.*

The fourth line should read *And like this insubstantial pageant fading* and in the next line *wreck* has been substituted for *rack*, a rack being a small, isolated cloud. The following lines (which I would have preferred) are

> *We are the stuff that dreams are made on*
> *And our little life is rounded with a sleep.*

And here's the rub; in 1743 an almost identical copy of the Westminster statue, again executed by Scheemaker, paid for by the Pembroke family, [111] was eventually placed in the entrance hall of the Pembroke's Wilton House; it is the first thing one sees on entering the reception area. Here the quotation on the scroll is from *Macbeth* and the statue points to the capitalised word SHADOW. There are four capitalised words; LIFE, SHADOW, PLAYER and STAGE – *a life, a shadow, a player on a stage* – the word PLAYER being directly above the word STAGE. [112]

According to the Wilton tradition, *Shakespeare* and his fellows first performed *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* at Wilton House.[113] A rumour has also trickled down through the centuries that Mary Sidney sheltered Christopher Marlowe

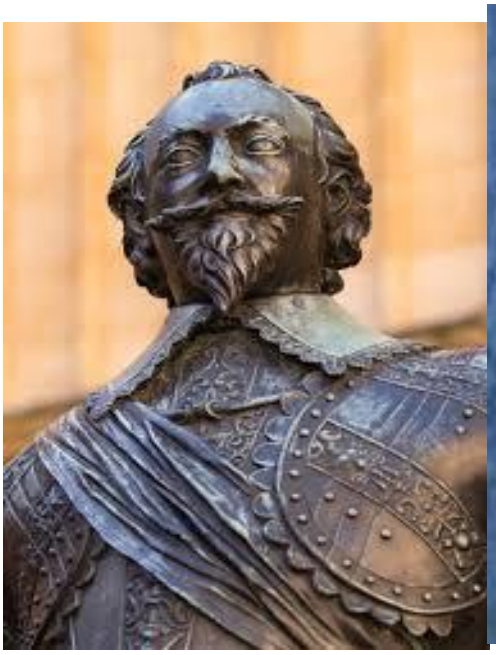
[111] In doing so the Pembrokes indirectly sponsored the Westminster Abbey statue (BOGOF!). Original it was set in a purpose built stone arbour facing the house at the end of a path. The cost was £100.

[112] An 18th Century Dingbat!

[113] I can well imagine William Herbert playing William. The episode with Audrey has no consequence in the play, and it reads as if he is sending himself up, denying he is either educated or rich.

there after a faked death at Deptford. A more outlandish story suggests William Herbert was Christopher Marlowe's son, a historian having noted Marlowe and Mary Sidney having been in Canterbury in the Summer of 1579 when she conceived William. These nebulous facts, none of which is verifiable, seem insufficient reason to commission such an important statue – unless the Pembroke connection was much more significant to the family. What is certain is that the *First Folio was* dedicated to two Earls of Pembroke[114] – but still not enough, in my opinion, to justify such demonstrative expenditure.

Our Earl Pembroke was from 1616 until his death in 1630, Chancellor of Oxford University and in 1629 he donated many manuscripts to the Bodleian Library. Today a bronze statue of the earl "guards" its main entrance. Until 1723 this statue stood in the Earl's family seat at Wilton. It was sculpted by Hubert Le Sueur who died in 1658. If one compares it to the 1743 statues of Shakespeare at Wilton and Westminster Abbey I believe the joke is exposed. It is the same face. The Pembrokes are stating for posterity that William Herbert was the actor Shakespeare; not Shaxper – *a life, a shadow, a player on a stage*.



[114] Philip succeeded Wiliam who died without a legitimate heir.

THE 1740 MONUMENT TO WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE BEARS THE FACE OF WILLIAM HERBERT, THE THIRD EARL OF PEMBROKE.

"A monument without a tomb" – one cannot bury a pseudonym!

28 – Dénouement

I have held back until now William Herbert's poem, below, which validates, as in *A Lover's Complaint,* Mary Fitton having yielded her virginity to him.[115] The poem ends confirming he came before all her other lovers, that before him, there was no-one.

The poem tells us much about Pembroke's regard for Mary Fitton; in essence his conceit that she would forever be true to him, having vowed to keep herself for him until the day he could return to her.[116] It is as if, until just now, Pembroke had no idea of Mary Fitton's relationship with either Leveson or Polewhele. However, the lines I've highlighted provide the dénouement; **why** William Herbert would not marry his pregnant girlfriend. It had puzzled me for sixteen years and the answer shook me when I read what he wrote to Mary Fitton. The poem is long and explicit.

> (May), "Why with unkindest swiftness dost you turn
> From me, whose absence thou didst truly mourn;
> Of which thou mad'st me such a seeming view,
> As Unbelievers would have thought it true.
>
> We have been private, and thou knowest of mine,
> (Which is ev'n all) as much as I of thine:
> Dost thou remember? Let me call t'account
> The pleasant Garden, and that leavy Mount,
> Whose top is with an open Arbour crowned.
>
> Dost thou remember (O securest beauty)

[115] This is poem XVIII published in 1660. In Wroth's *Urania* Antissia believes the understanding that she and Amphilanthus would be married or were in some eyes sworn to each other; when things went wrong she became mad and it took time for her to recover.

[116] The same theme is found in Wroth's *Urania*.

The Wight in Me

Where of thy own free motion (more that duty)
And unrequired, thou solemnly didst swear,
(Of which avenging heav'n can witness bear)
That from the time thou gav'st thy spoils to me,
Thou wouldst maintain a spotless chastity,
And unprofaned by any second hand,
From sport and Love's delight removed stand,
Till I (whose absence seemingly was mourned)
Should from a foreign Kingdom be returned:
Of this thou mad'st Religion, and an oath.

But see the frailty of a woman's troth;
Scarce had the sun (to many rooms assigned)
Been thrice within the changeful waves confined,
And I scarce three days' journey from thine eyes,
When thou new love in thy heart didst devise,
And gav'st the Reliques of thy Virgin-head,
***Upon the easiest prayer that could be said*.**

Tis true, I left thee to a dangerous age,
Where vice of Angel's shape does title wage
With ancient virtue, both disguising so,
That hardly weaker eyes can either know:
Besides, I left thee in the hour of fears,
And in the covetous spring of all thy years,
What time a beauty that hath well begun,
Asks other than the solace of a Nun.

But since thy wanton soul so dear did prize
The game, that thou for it didst underprize
The faith, and all that to good fame belongs;
Couldst thou not cover it with common tongues;
But cheapest eyes must see thee do amiss?

My Rhymes that won thee, never taught thee this:
Thou might'st have wandered in the pathos of love,
And neither leafless hill, nor shady grove
Have been unpressed by thy wanton weight,
Yet though thought honest, hadst thou used slight.

Much care and business hath the chastest Dame

To guard herself from undeserved blame;
What artifice and cunning then must serve
To colour them that just reproof deserve?'
Tis not a work for every woman's wit,
And the less marvel thou neglected it.

That which amazes me the most, is this,
That having never trodden but amiss,
And done me wrongs, that do so much deny
To suffer measure, as infinity:
When I approach, thou turn'st thy head awry,
As if sore eyes and scorn could satisfy,
Can second wrongs the former expiate,
And work them out of memory and date;
Or teach me ill in humane Precepts durst,
That second wrongs can expiate the first?

Thou art malicious, as incontinent,
And mightst have met with such a Patient,
Whose wronged virtue to just rage invited,
Would have revenged, and in thy duty delighted.

But I that have no gall, when once I love,
And whom no great thing under heav'n can move,
Am well secured from Fortune's weak alarms,
And free from apprehension, as from harms.
Thus do I leave thee to the multitude,
That on my leaving hastily intrude.
Enjoy thou many, or rejoice in one,
I was before them, and before me none."

Mary Fitton, having guarded her virginity for so long, having in her grasp everything she could ever have hoped for with a man she loved, who loved her and who would make her a countess; after consummating her love for William – what or who made her f**k with another man only three days later?

Pembroke must have found out; a whisper was sufficient, but it never surfaced in history as an issue in correspondence or gossip.[117] Pembroke would have had serious doubts; was the child Mary Fitton carrying his? He could not, would not marry her and legitimise an heir from another man's genes, especially while the baby was still alive. Nor could he lose face by admitting he had been cuckolded. So who was the second man?

I suggest it was the powerful William Knollys who had lusted after Mary for years, coercively abusing his position, perhaps blackmailing her with the threat of exposing her dalliance with William Herbert with expulsion from Court. But there may have been a nice subtlety; faced with what would become Isabella's dilemma in *Measure for Measure*; under duress, Mary Fitton, backed in a corner, may have cutely helped herself to better ensure she became pregnant, knowing that, fail-safe, she may even be carrying the genes of a king, Henry VIII.[118] How could she tell her story? I think she put pen to paper and wrote *Measure for Measure.*[119]

Tartly and perversely, in Sonnet 110, Mary admits to there having been others, swears she will stray no more but admits to her relationship with Richard Leveson, the older (long-standing) friend and protector. This sonnet is one where gender clearly manifests itself; the author is a promiscuous woman

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[117] The whisper in the ear – from Knollys, – Hi kid, I've just f**ked your girlfriend, what the f**k are you going to do about it? Faced with the Comptroller of the Queen's household, a second cousin of the Queen – nothing. Malvolio exits with "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you." Was this his revenge?

[118] Anne Boleyn's sister Mary was also the King's mistress. Mary's progeny held important positions at Court.

[119] In 1605, Dorothy, Lady Knollys, died. Sir William Knollys lost interest in Mary Fitton and two months later married Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of Thomas, Earl of Suffolk, she nineteen, he sixty-one. He was appointed Master of the Wards in 1614 and soon after installed Knight of the Garter. In 1616 he was created Viscount Wallingford and advanced in 1626 to the Earldom of Banbury. He died in 1632, at the age of eighty-eight. If Queen Elizabeth suspected that Knollys had forced himself on Mary Fitton it may explain why she did not make William Herbert a Ward of Court.

writing to the one man she adores above all others. After this sonnet she reverts to the *you* form of address for ten successive Sonnets.

Alas 'tis true, I have gone here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offences of affections new.
Most true it is, that I have looked on truth
Askance and strangely: but by all above,
These blenches [120] gave my heart another youth,
And worse essays proved thee my best of love.
Now all is done, have what shall have no end;
Mine appetite I never more will grind [121]
On newer proof, to try an older friend,
A god in love, to whom I am confined.
Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,
Even to thy pure and most most loving breast.

For more than fifty years[122] I had known about the Fitton-Herbert scandal, empathising with the young maid who had been exploited by a wicked lord. It was a shock to discover that William Herbert was the victim and that just a few words in a letter written over four-hundred years ago could change my perception of that salami-slice of history.

Was Mary Fitton the *Dark Lady* for another reason? There had been a prognostication that William Herbert would die before the age of fifty. The night of his birthday he dined with Christine Cavendish, Countess Devonshire, and friends. The following morning he was found dead following an apoplectic fit. I ask myself whether Mary Fitton was at the party?

---

[120] Turnings aside; straying

[121] Whet; physically love. She lives at Perton on a lease from her late cousin, Richard Leveson, (died in 1605) and by now committed to Captain William Polewhele.

[122] Mary Fitton was a colleague maid-of-honour of Margaret Radcliffe, a twin to Alexander Radcliffe baptised in Manchester and domiciled in nearby Ordsall Hall in Salford. I believe they are the templates for Viola and Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*. I came across this as part of my research into the demography of Manchester in the 17th Century.

William Polewhele, her first husband, died relatively young. Richard Leveson died from what looked like a nasty virus or dare I say poison? And then Pembroke…. Was Mary Fitton, who had nine children from four men, a really dark lady? I'll leave posterity to judge.

Conclusion

William Herbert, Earl Pembroke's involvement in 1619 effectively to control the publishing of *Shakespeare* plays; the suspension of printing the *First Folio*, when already well underway to respect a full-year mourning his mother; the publication's ultimate dedication to himself and his brother – when it would have been better dedicated to their mother; and the involvement of her *Pembroke Men* in the embryonic *Shakespeare* plays, fits with the assertion that the first folio collection was assembled to honour Mary Sidney Countess Pembroke's on her sixtieth birthday. It answers the questions *why* and *when* the *First Folio* was created.

The forging of the Probate copy of Shaxper's Will and the manipulation of the holographic Will were gross deceits on posterity which allowed the Warwickshire story to perpetuate and proliferate by fictional narratives and outright forgeries. Whereas the presence of Earl Montgomery and his wife (Oxford's daughter) living in a manor house owned by his brother, Earl Pembroke (these, the two dedicatees of the *First Folio*) and formerly used by other members of the Herbert family, in a village called Stratford, on the bank of the river Avon, in the shadow of the monumental Old Sarum hill-fortification, positively switches the axis of understanding away from Warwickshire and to Wiltshire.

Mary Sidney, her Sidney family infused in poetry and theatre, was herself an outstanding poet, understood the structure of play-writing and had the proven capability to provide the overarching "Shakespearean" touch to the drama. Having all these qualifications she had support from her entourage/circle, poets and playwrights, to provide the polish that made plays shine brilliantly. It was well within her compass to have composed the *Shakespeare* narrative poems, *first heir of her invention*, but I have a suspicion they came from the

joint pens of the poet Richard Barnfield and his young friend at Court, Mary Fitton.

It is William Herbert's face on the Shakespeare's near-identical memorials in Westminster Abbey and at Wilton House.

The love affair between William Herbert (Pembroke) and Mary Fitton spawned the *Sonnets* published in 1609 under the pseudonym Shake-Speare. I identified the story in 2004. Their love-affair trips over into some of the problem plays. Mary Wroth, William's cousin, rival poet and later lover, substantiates my findings in her *Countess of Montgomery's Urania.*

Diane Price's research showed there is no evidence of William Shaxper as a poet or playwright but it is the Sonnets which prove that Shake-Speare was a pseudonym. Will-Shake-spear was a lewd, spoof name. The solution to the four-hundred year mystery was published way back in 1609. It is found in the cryptic clue in the first two lines of Sonnet 123;

No! Time, *thou shalt not boast that I do change,*

Thy pyramyds *built up …….*

PYRAMyds *built up(wards)* = **MARYP**;

change THY=**HYT**;

NO! TIME=+ **TON +** <u>IME</u>

I'm Mary Phytton.

The Wight in Me



Aka Shake-Speare

END

APPENDIX A

Francis Langley and the Swan

In Nov 1594, the Lord Mayor of London complained in vain to Lord Burghley about goldsmith Francis Langley's (1548-1602) plans to build another theatre on the Bankside in Southwark, Surrey; the Rose and the Bear-garden already being located there. Langley had speculated in buying an estate known as the Paris (Parry's) Gardens hoping to make it into a centre of entertainment. The theatre was built and named the *Swan*. It was across the river to Baynard's.

In Nov 1596 Langley obtained restraining orders from the Sheriff of Surrey against William Gardiner and his stepson, William Wayte. Wayte then took out a writ; *Be it known that William Wayte seeks sureties of the peace against William Shakspere, Francis Langley, Dorothy wife of John Soer and Anna Lee for fear of death or do forth; attachment to the Sheriff of Surrey.* [Court of King's Bench Controlment Roll KB29/234] This dispute had escalated after Gardiner had accused Langley of slander for having accused him of perjury. Faced with Langley's robust defence, Gardiner dropped the charges. Shakspere's role in this dispute is not known. John Soer appears to have run a brothel or flophouse in the Paris Gardens close to the *Swan*.

A year later a reconstituted group of players under Pembroke patronage was formed. It coincided with the theatre-loving, seventeen-year-old William Herbert, Lord Cardiff – the future Earl Pembroke, becoming domiciled in London. The Pembroke players signed a contract with Langley and were the first actors to play at his *Swan*.

It would appear that the following were Pembroke players in 1597; Ben Jonson, Robert Shaa, Gabriel Spencer, Thomas Downton, Richard Jones and William Bourne (alias Bird); also Martin Slater.

On 28th July 1597 the Privy Council, angered by what it termed very seditious and scandalous matter in Thomas Nashe & Ben Jonson's play, T*he Isle of Dogs* being performed at the *Swan*, ordered all London theatres be shut down for the remainder of the summer. Nashe fled London and Jonson, along with Gabriel Spencer and Robert Shaa were hauled in front of the Privy Council,

spent time in prison, but released on 2nd October. The following year Jonson killed Gabriel Spencer in a duel, perhaps some bad blood had been stirred over the *Isle of Dogs* affair. When the prohibition on theatres was lifted it was kept on Langley's *Swan*, dealing his theatre business a serious blow. The players at the Swan disbanded and all, excepting anyone called Shakspere, signed two-year contracts with Henslowe/The Admirals at the Rose.

Pembroke Players were reconstituted in 1625 when Earl Pembroke, was Lord Chamberlain.

William's mother, Countess Pembroke, the *Sweet Swan of Avon*, may have inspired the theatre's name; the juxtaposition of the future Lord Pembroke should be noted. One can easily imagine young William Herbert being rowed across the river to watch plays or even perform under an alias, [*Shakespeare in Love*] alongside other Pembroke players, including Ben Jonson, then twenty-four-years old.

There is nothing further about the William Shakspere who was in the vicinity in Nov 1596, or of a William Shakspere who was listed as a defaulter in Bishopsgate Ward in Nov 1596, and again in 1600 listed as a defaulter now in Surrey, possibly a debtor in the Clink prison.

APPENDIX B

Mary Sidney's Psalm 113

O you who served the Lord,
To praise his name accord;
Jehovah now and ever
Commending, ending never,
Whom all this earth resounds,
From East to Western bounds.

He Monarch reins on high;
His glory treads the sky.
Like him who can be counted,
That dwells so highly mounted?
Yet stooping low beholds
What heav'n and earth unfolds.

From dust and needy soul,
The wretch from mirey hole
He lifts: yea kings he makes them,
Yea kings his people takes them.
He gives the barran wife
A fruitful mother's life.

APPENDIX C

Thou-Thine-Thee-Thy vs You-Your Yours

An analysis of the interpersonal relationships indicated by these personal pronouns is to be found in CRYSTAL D & B; *Shakespeare's Words*; 2002, pages 450-1. The variations (on how Mary address William/Pembroke) "always conveys a contrast in meaning – a change in attitude or an altered relationship."

None of Pembroke's sonnets 127-152 contain *You*; only the *Thee* form is used.

It is a little akin to using *vous* out of respect when one first meets a French person and *tu* only when one becomes mutually familiar.

Mary Fitton address William Herbert as *Thee* in the first 12 sonnets. In Sonnet 13 she uses *You* extensively, *Thee* in Sonnet 14, the *You* in Sonnets 15-16-17 before she reverts back to *Thee*.

Sonnets 18-51 almost exclusively Thee (Except for S24). Sonnets 52-59 (except S56) are back to *You*; then *Thee* for S60-62.

There is no *Thee* or *You* in Sonnets 63-68.

Sonnets 69-86 oscillate with seven *Thee* and ten *You*.

Sonnets 87-110 are mainly *Thee*, with five *You*, S98-102-103-104-110.

Sonnets 111-121 are *You*, before *Thee* for 122-126.

APPENDIX D

Earl of Pembroke to Sir Robert Cecil; 2nd of September 1601

What love and thankfulness you could have expected from me if I had prevailed, the same to the best of my power you shall find me ready to perform on all occasions ***now I am disgraced****. Her Majesty, as I heard when she promised Mr Mumpersons a park, after my Lord your father's death, when she knew how nearly it concerns my Lord Burghley in honour, recalled her promise, preserved my Lords honour, ungraciously satisfied her servant another way.* ***If it had pleased her Majesty's graciously to have conceived in this matter of the Forest of Dean, of that poor reputation I was desirous to preserve, the maintenance whereof might have enabled to do Her Majesty more honour and service that now I am able to perform, I should have been happy, and Sir Edward Fitton might another way as well have been satisfied.*** *But since Her Majesty has in her wisdom thought fit* ***to lay this disgrace upon me,*** *I accuse nothing but my unworthiness which since I so plainly lead in my own fortunes, I will alter my hopes, and teach them to propose unto themselves no other ends than such as they shall be sure to receive no disgrace in. The hawk that is once canvassed will the next time take heed of the net; and shall I that was born a man incapable of reason, commit greater folly than birds that have nought but sense to direct them full? If Her Majesty make this the remaining way for her favourite, though it be like the way of salvation, narrow and crooked, yet my hopes dare not travel through the ruggedness of it, for they stumble so often that before they come halfway they despair of passing such difficulties. There be some things yet in her Majesty's hands to dispose of, which if it would please her to grace me with, might happily in some measure patch up my disgrace in the opinion of the world.* ***But I have vowed never again to be a suitor, since in my first suit, I have received such a blow*** *I should be infinitely bound unto you if you could get a promise that I should have leave to travel after the Parliament: it would make me more able to do Her Majesty and my country service and lessen if not wipe out the memory of my disgraces. But whatsoever shall become of me, I will ever wish you all happiness. Ramsbury 2nd Sept 1601.*

He writes: *If Her Majesty make this the remaining way for her favourite*; who was this favourite? It certainly was not Sir Edward Fitton, he got nothing out of the situation, although the Queen was fond of him. Not only was the man a favourite but Pembroke could find no way politically to tackle the situation and win. It reinforces my thinking that the man was Sir William Knollys and the Queen was protecting her cousin's son, and what had happened was coercion amounting to rape. It may explain why William Herbert was not made a ward of court.

I had always thought Mary Fitton was the victim and William Herbert the villain, but I have concluded that they were both victims of the Establishment.

Again, he writes; *"But I have vowed never again to be a suitor, since in my first suit, I have received such a blow,"* could possibly reflect a previous appeal to the Queen regarding *The Forest of Dean* that was rejected but more likely his offer of marriage to Mary Fitton that had gone wrong.

The interest of the *Forest of Dean* was its coal mines, a business his son-in-law, John Newdigate, was involved in. The allusion to the hawk is interesting.

APPENDIX E

My mistress' eyes

Fidessa

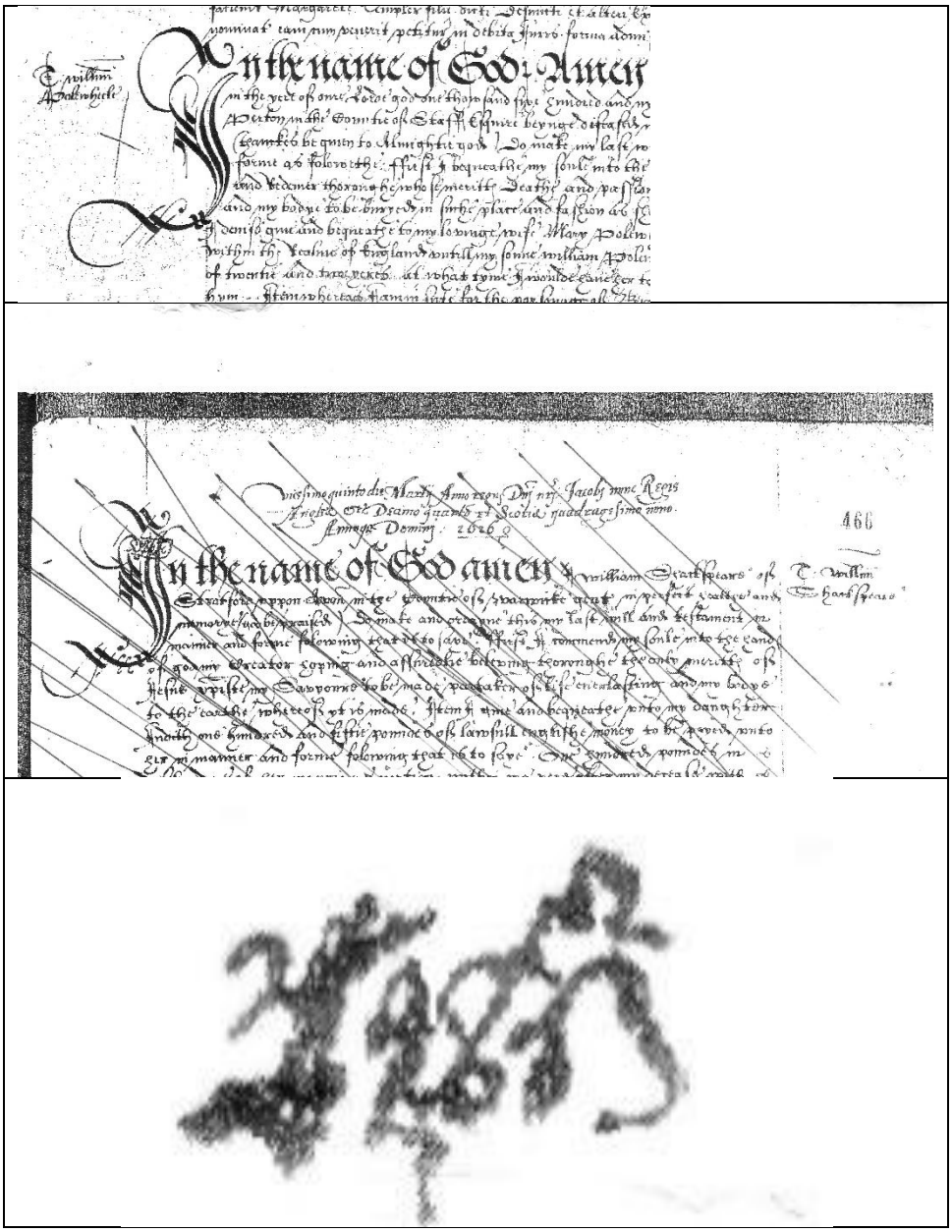
My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun,
Coral is far more red, than her lips red,
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun,
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head:
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks,
And in some perfumes is there more delight,
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know,
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.
And yet by heaven I think my love as rare,
As any she belied with false compare.

Sonnet 130

My Lady's hair is threads of beaten gold.
Her front, the purest, crystal eye hath seen.
Her eyes, the brightest stars the heavens hold.
Her cheeks, red roses, such as seld have been.
Her pretty lips, of red vermillion die.
Her hand, of ivory the purest white.
Her blush, AURORA or the morning sky.
Her breast displays two silver fountains bright.
The spheres, her voice; her grace, the Graces three.
Her body is the saint that I adore.
Her smiles and favours, sweet as honey be.
Her feet, fair THETIS praiseth evermore.
But ah, the worst and last is yet behind:
For of a griffon she doth bear the mind!

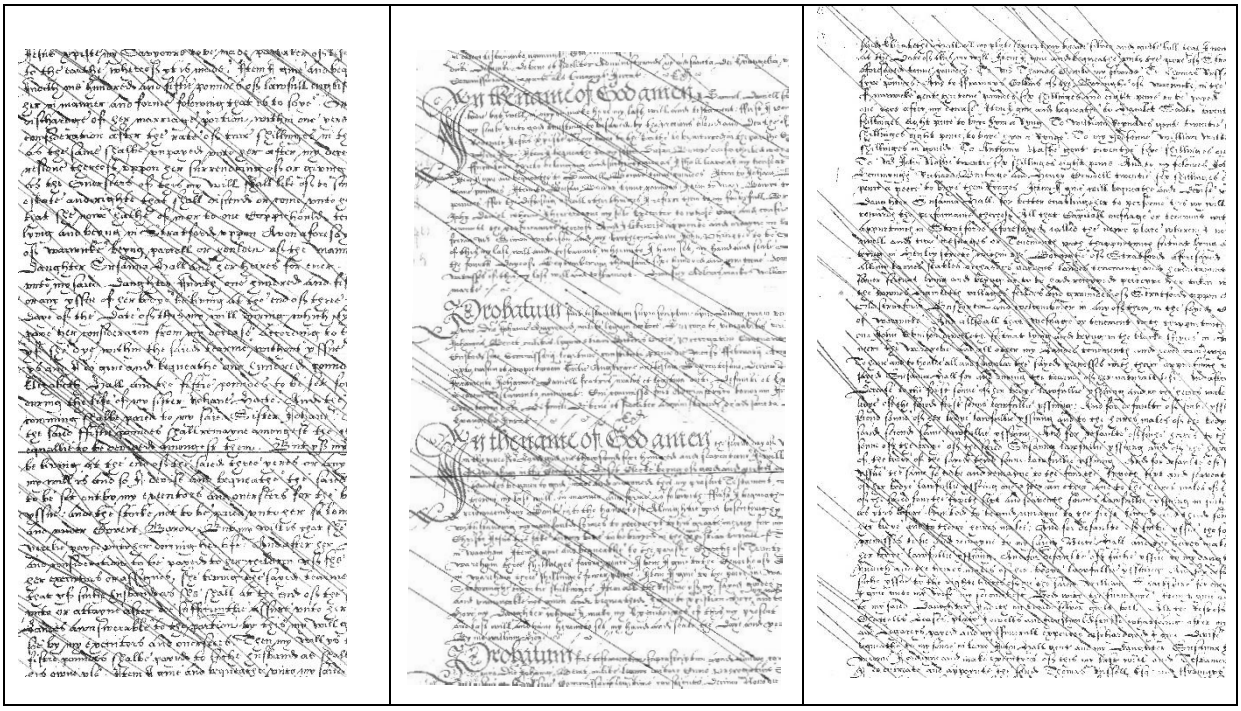
APPENDIX F

Wills



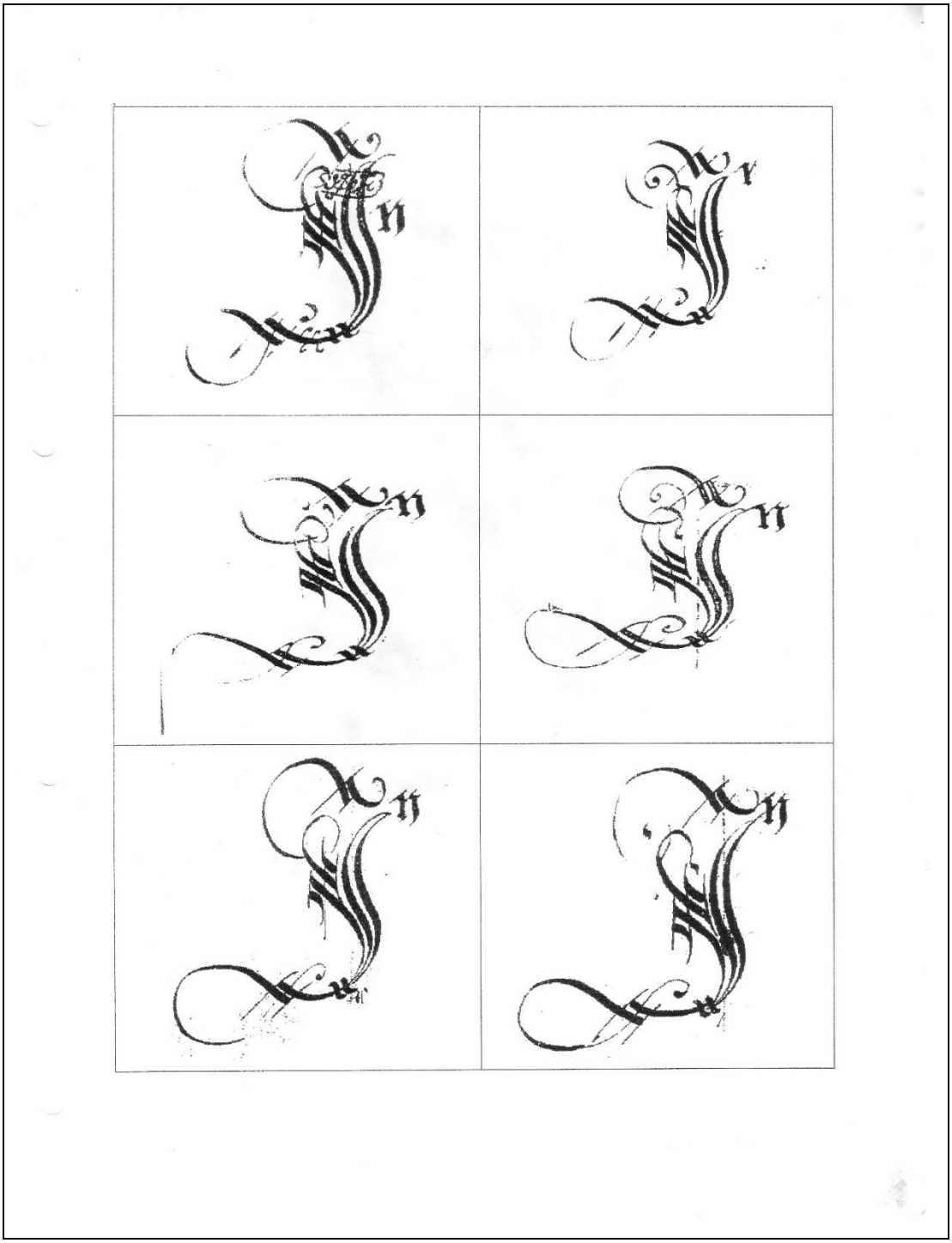
The Wight in Me

The panels on the left and right are from Shaxper's will and the lines are the extensions of the arm of the letter "d". They point more to the north than in the centre panel which is from the will of Samuel Daniell.



This is just a sample of an extensive study/investigation. In the two pages of Shaxper's will the angle rises an average of 38 degrees; in all the other samples of this scrivener's work the angle rises 34 degrees. On the page following Shaxper's again 34 degrees, but this also contains the statement granting probate. Coupled with the disparity of the capital "I" below, it shows conclusively that the Probate copy of Shaxper's will is a forgery.

The Wight in Me



In the correct calligraphy the right-hand curves point to and almost joins the letter “n”; the capital “I” is about eight lines tall, there is no cartouche and the forger went astray with the small strokes that cross the bottom horizontal curve.

APPENDIX G

The Scornful Lady; Beaumont & Fletcher

Mary Fitton's sister was married to John Newdigate of Arbury near Nuneaton in Warwickshire. Soon after Newdigate's death in 1611, Francis Beaumont (Senior), staying at his brother's house, Saunders Hall near Bedworth, wrote in a letter to the widowed Anne Newdigate; *Your fair & worthily beloved Sinkefoy I most kindly salute, which like being unto a heartsease hath three leaves of one sort and two of another. I pray God from my very heart, that they may for ever bring ease of heart to that thrice-worthy Root that bear them.*

Anne recognised an imminent situation about to cause her embarrassment with this elderly man, the second son of Nicholas Beaumont of Cole Orton and Anne Saunders of Welford. Beaumont, in naming the five-leaved cinquefoil, was alluding to the pansy, the Fitton emblem, and to Anne's five children. Mary, became an intermediary, advising Beaumont who was also being advised by a cousin, Mathew Saunders, also a friend of Mary. After Beaumont was cooly rejected, Saunders decided it was his turn to try his luck with the widow – but with the same cold outcome. Anne Newdigate may not have found the situation amusing but a team of playwrights, Francis Beaumont (son of the aged suitor) & John Fletcher, certainly did, and in 1616 used the story and the characters in the comedy *The Scornful Lady* acted *(with great applause) by the children of Her Majesty's Revels in the Blackfriars.* Beaumont was sixteen at the time of the Fitton-Pembroke scandal in 1601.

The characters in the *Scornful Lady* greatly resemble Anne Newdigate, Beaumont (senior), Saunders (who lived at Welford) and Mary Fitton, although the actual relationships in the comedy are different.

Elder-Loveless and *Welford* are competing suitors of the recently widowed *Lady*. Ultimately, *Young-Loveless* marries the *Rich Widow; Elder-Loveless* marries the *Lady; Welford* marries *Martha* and *Sir Roger* marries *Abigal,* the Lady's waiting-gentlewoman*. Young-Loveless* describes *Abigal*;

> ELDER-LOVELESS Why, she knows not you.
>
> YOUNG-LOVELESS No, but she offered me once to know her: to this day she loves a youth of eighteen; she heard a tale how Cupid struck her in love with a great Lord in the Tilt-yard,[123] but he never saw her; yet she in kindness would needs wear a willow-garland at his wedding.[124] She loved all the players in the last Queen's time once over: She was struck when they acted Lovers and forsook some when they played Murthers. She has nine Spur-royals, and the servants say she hoards old gold; and she herself pronounces angrily, that the farmer's eldest son, or her mistress husband's clerk shall be, that marries her, shall make her a jointure of fourscore pounds a year.

Is Abigal not Mary Fitton? William Herbert was a youth of eighteen when they first became acquainted. The Great Lord in the Tilt-yard was Southampton who married a colleague/friend to her chagrin. Mary's passion was theatre and the inference was that she sought a meal-ticket. The nine spur-royals (ryals) were gold coins of fifteen-shillings often given as a gift, worth in today's purchasing power about £400; I think the implication is salacious.

[123] Yard = penis.

[124] Willow denotes mourning.

The Wight in Me

Wight – a living being

By Ben Alexander

The Wight in Me

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