

Melanie Branton

**BRINGING HOME THE BACON:
A REASSESSMENT OF ANTI-STRATFORDIANISM
IN THE CONTEXT OF ITS ROMANTIC ROOTS**

INTRODUCTION

Anti-Stratfordianism, the belief that William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon did not write the plays traditionally ascribed to him, has been a thorn in the flesh of orthodox literary scholarship since the first books and articles attributing the works to Francis Bacon appeared in the mid-nineteenth century. Although never supported by anything resembling scientifically valid evidence, the assortment of theories attributing the plays to Bacon, Marlowe, the earl of Oxford or Anne Hathaway, among others, have received much media attention, wide public credence and an array of distinguished champions, including Mark Twain, Orson Welles, Sigmund Freud and Malcolm X. The reaction of Shakespearean academics to the anti-Stratfordian phenomenon is, however, best exemplified by Samuel Schoenbaum's section on the theories in his monumental 1970 survey of Shakespearean biography, *Shakespeare's Lives*: although he devoted one hundred pages (out of a total of 768) to "the heretics", as he calls them, he broke his otherwise chronological sequencing of material to quarantine them in a chapter of their own, sandwiched between "Victorians" and "The Twentieth Century", entitled "Deviations". For mainstream scholarship has rarely acknowledged anti-Stratfordianism as part of the fabric of Shakespearean critical discourse. Where it hasn't ignored the movement completely as being beneath its contempt, it has tended to analyse it in isolation from other trends in literary criticism, as a specimen of misguided populist thought, utterly unrelated to its own activity.

My purpose in this paper is not to argue that the anti-Stratfordians are right in denying the traditional attribution of the Shakespearean canon: they are almost certainly wrong, and there is little, if any, empirical rigour

in their subjective analyses and manifestos. But as no criticism – even marginal criticism, even criticism which all recognised experts denounce as absolutely ridiculous – is written in a vacuum, it is worthwhile ceasing the practice of examining anti-Stratfordian discourse as an aberrant practice with no relationship to orthodox literary theory. When Baconian and Oxfordian tracts are taken out of quarantine and scrutinised alongside mainstream critical texts contemporary to them, and particularly when placed beside the scholarly works which attack them, some interesting comparisons come to light. Often the critical apparatus of conventional scholarship transpires to be as unsound as the “heretics’” methods; often one can read in the amateur scholarship of the anti-Stratfordians a justified critique of the flawed reasoning of professional academia; the relationship between the established orthodoxy and the crackpot fringe theories suddenly starts to seem more symbiotic than hitherto. My central contention is that it is time to bring home the Baconians, the Oxfordians, the Marlovians and all their “deviant” friends from their unjust banishment on the fringes of Shakespeare scholarship, and to establish them in their rightful place as an integral part of the intertextual mesh of nineteenth and twentieth century critical discourse. When this is done, one of the first things which emerges is that early anti-Stratfordians share with their mainstream opponents a flawed Romantic reasoning.

THE ANTI-STRATFORDIANS: A BRIEF HISTORY AND OUTLINE

The American Delia Bacon was not the first person to express doubts about the Stratfordian authorship in private writings, but she was the first to publish an assertive challenge to the traditional attribution and to posit an alternative candidate: her namesake, Francis Bacon. Her article in the American journal *Putnam's Monthly* in January 1856 inspired much ridicule but also initiated a wave of Baconian publication in Britain, the US and Germany which still continues today.¹ In 1896 the first Polish Baconian article, *U Szekspira* by Nekanda Trepka, appeared in print in the Warsaw publication *Ateneum*². The theory that Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford, wrote the plays was first posited in 1920 by the British schoolmaster J. Thomas Looney, and appears to have gained more adherents than any other “heretical” group other than the Baconians. The Marlovians

¹ S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 534; Adolf Strzelecki, *Szekspir i Bakon: wiele hałasów o nic* (Kraków: “Czas” F. Kłuczyckiego i Spółki, 1898), pp. 18–19.

² Strzelecki, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–20.

took a while to establish themselves – no major advocate until Calvin Hoffman in the 1950s – but they do hold the distinction of being the only anti-Stratfordian group to successfully exhume a relevant Renaissance figure. Delia Bacon had broken into Holy Trinity Church in Stratford with tools to attempt to illegally exhume Shakespeare, but had lost her nerve. In 1956, however, Hoffman persuaded council officials to allow him to legally open the tomb of Sir Francis Walsingham, after expounding his hypothesis that Walsingham and Marlowe were long-term lovers, and that secret documents confirming Marlowe's authorship of the Shakespearean corpus would be found in the vault. Nothing was discovered.³ Various other claimants have been put forward by various other groups. None of those proposing the claimants has been a member of a university English department or had a specialised knowledge of English literary or historical research.

ANTI-STRATFORDIAN CRITICAL STRATEGIES

Anti-Stratfordian thought tends to progress through a number of stages. This is a very generalised overview – some of the „heretic“ critics do not follow all these stages or in this order.

Stage One

In most cases, anti-Stratfordians base their initial rejection of the Stratford Shakespeare as the author of the plays on the grounds that the personality who emerges from the genius exhibited in the plays is incompatible with the known facts of Shakespeare's biography. Sometimes this argument takes the form of an equation of artistic genius with supreme moral probity, combined with a selective interpretation of the legal documents and anecdotes associated with Shakespeare, which indicates that the Stratford actor was an immoral degenerate. Durning-Lawrence, for instance, describes Shakespeare as “the sordid money-lender of Stratford,”⁴ pointing out that, “There is only a single letter extant addressed to Shakespeare, and this asks for a loan of £30!”⁵ and that there are “in existence three, and three only, contemporary letters referring in any way to him, and these are not about literature with which the Stratford man had nothing whatever to do – but about mean and sordid small business transactions.”⁶ There is

³ Schoenbaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 622–625.

⁴ Edwin Durning-Lawrence, *Bacon Is Shakespeare* (London: Gay and Hancock, 1910), p. 82.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

a curious circular logic in Durning-Lawrence's reasoning: he argues that because Shakespeare was involved in usury, he must have lacked the moral probity necessary to be a great artist; and then goes on to argue that since Shakespeare did not write the plays, it is an injustice to ascribe the plays to a man of moral calibre so much lower than that of the real author. The apocryphal stories, dating from the late seventeenth century, that Shakespeare was a deer-poacher in his youth and that he died of the effects of a drinking spree with Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton, have also been cited by anti-Stratfordians as evidence of the Stratford man's depravity, incompatible with true artistry, as has the fact that he applied for and gained the grant of a coat of arms to which he was not technically entitled. For most anti-Stratfordians, though, it is not the actor's lack of a noble spirit which causes the biggest problems with the traditional attribution of the works, but his lack of noble blood. McManaway, surveying the anti-Stratfordian tradition, notes that one of the most recurrent objections to the Shakespearean authorship "is that he could have had no opportunity to hear the conversation of royalty and nobility and, consequently, could not have written the dialogue of the plays."⁷ Jonathan Bate has pointed out, "It does not seem to occur to them that insight about royal courts may be derived from books."⁸ Another reason the anti-Stratfordians give for the impossibility of the Stratfordian authorship is Shakespeare's lack of schooling. They see specialised legal, medical and philosophical knowledge in the plays which they assume could only have been acquired by a university educated man or a privately educated noble with extensive leisure and an eclectic personal library, and a fluency and elaboration of literary style which they imagine was unattainable by a man who never progressed beyond secondary education. Additionally, some posit the lack of extant manuscript material attributable to Shakespeare and the apparent differences between his signature on legal documents to which he was a party as evidence that he was not merely ill-educated but actually illiterate. Professional Shakespeareans have been quick to point out that these basic assumptions of anti-Stratfordian thought constitute an anachronistic application of post-Industrial Revolution, Victorian values to the Elizabethan age. The assumption that a provincial glover's son could not have gained a sophisticated level of literacy reflects nineteenth, not sixteenth, century educational practice. More importantly, although the desire for a teetotal, cleanliving Shakespeare who fitted in with bourgeois social norms may have been anti-Romantic (one suspects that Durning-Lawrence and some of his colleagues

⁷ James G. McManaway, *The Authorship of Shakespeare* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 33.

⁸ Jonathan Bate, "Snobbish about Shakespeare, Book review," in: *The Sunday Telegraph*, April 9, 1995.

would have liked a "Shakespeare" who covered his piano legs and didn't put books by male and female authors next to each other unless they were married), the expectation that the artist should be an individual of exalted sensibility is obviously pure Romanticism.

Stage Two

Having established in their own minds that Shakespeare could not have written the plays, the "heretics" next move is obviously to identify who did. Some already have a candidate in mind, others comb anthologies of Renaissance writing for echoes of style and biographies of key Elizabethan figures for thematic similarities and coincidence of events with the plots of the plays. The founder of the Oxfordian movement, J. Thomas Looney, attempted to systematise this search by compiling a checklist of eighteen characteristics which he thought the true author would possess. This list consists largely of abstract characteristics, such as "genius" and "eccentricity", which cannot be empirically measured, and which are, in any case, based on Looney's subjective impression, derived from reading the Shakespearean works, of what the true author must be like. For instance, merely on the grounds that there are many sporting and hunting images in the plays, Looney assumes that the real "Shakespeare" must have been a noted sportsman; however, this very selective approach ignores the wealth of other imagery in the works – maternity is another recurrent theme, but Looney does not conclude that "Shakespeare" must have been a mother.

Stage Three

Having established who the "true" author is, they then engage in exegesis, often involving a fuller comparative study of the writer's biography and the plays and poems. There is a dual purpose in this: it is both an interpretive strategy and a further attempt to prove their theory of authorship.

For example, Durning-Lawrence identifies Yorick, the jester referred to in *Hamlet*, with John Heywood, a Tudor court jester who was allegedly a friend of the Bacon family and thus may have played with Francis when the latter was a child. On these grounds he argues that Hamlet's statement that Yorick carried him on his back proves that Hamlet – "Shakespeare" (the two are apparently indistinguishable in Durning-Lawrence's mind) must be Bacon, for the Stratford actor could never have met Heywood.⁹ The Oxfordians too scour the plays for what they take to be biographical references. Looney discovered that the earl experienced many of the same misfortunes as "Shakespeare's" characters: like Hamlet, he had been disturbed by his mother's remarriage less than a year after the death of

⁹ Durning-Lawrence, *op. cit.*, s. 67–68.

his father; like Othello, he had been persuaded by a dishonest servant to accuse an innocent wife of adultery; and (believe it or not) like Bertram in *All's Well That Ends Well* and Angelo in *Measure for Measure*, he was reported to have been tricked into sleeping with his estranged wife under cover of darkness in the belief that she was someone else. The problems with this approach are obvious. Firstly, by arbitrarily identifying the author with selected characters from the plays and reading them as biography, anti-Stratfordian writers ignore the dramatic character of the works. Secondly, even if we accept that these references in the plays truly are allusions to Heywood and Oxford, these men were so famous in the sixteenth century that facts of their biographies were common knowledge, and playwrights may well have alluded to them to add topical interest to their work in much the same way that dramatists and TV scriptwriters today sometimes make jokes about well known public figures. The device of the bed-trick is fairly common in Renaissance writers other than Shakespeare: it is used in *The Changeling*, for instance, when Beatrice-Joanna bribes Diaphanta to stand in for her on her wedding night to conceal the fact that the bride is not a virgin. In the same play, Diaphanta on learning that her mistress intends to test whether she really is a virgin quips to the audience: "She will not search me? . . . Like the forewoman of a female jury,"¹⁰ and this is generally accepted to be a gratuitous topical allusion to the notorious vaginal inspection of Penelope Rich at her divorce hearing. Resonances of the lives of real-life figures in Elizabethan plays are not uncommon, then, and biographical allusion does not have to be autobiographical allusion.

Stage Four

Having read their candidate's life-story into the plays and interpreted the plays according to that life-story, they generally conclude that the biographical references are not just incidental, nor even a spontaneous overflow of feeling on behalf of the poet in the interests of his own catharsis, but a deliberate hint to the reader of who the author is. A more thorough search for further hints and clues brings dividends to diligent anti-Stratfordian readers. It is a commonplace of anti-Stratfordian thought to read Act Five Scene One of *As You Like It*, in which Touchstone the clown orders the rustic William to abandon all claim to the woman Audrey, now Touchstone's prospective bride, as a covert message that the true author is ordering the rustic William Shakespeare to relinquish all pretension to the authorship of the plays.¹¹ That this complicated exegesis

¹⁰ Thomas Middleton, *The Changeling. Jacobean Tragedies*, ed. A. H. Gomme (London. Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 283.

¹¹ Durning-Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

entails identifying their idol with a clown, and a potentially bigamous clown at that, does not seem to bother the Baconians and Oxfordians.

It is but a short step from here to seeing literal secret messages embedded in the text. All Oxfordians believe that the earl "signed" the works of "Shakespeare" by using words containing the "ver" letter combination (e.g. ever, very, discover) in key places. Indeed, on this point the Ogburns indulge in a quasi-religious veneration of their idol, indignantly accusing those who do not share their belief of something resembling blasphemy:

Oxford used all the variants and combinations of Ver . . . not only consciously but purposefully throughout the plays, as a signature. In its different forms it threads and branches within the body of his work like an arterial system which centred in the poet's heart. His "good name" was dearer to him than his life's blood, and the sonnets attest that he made almost a fetish of a great name's immortality. Those who scorn to read his signature or care nothing for his name's immortality are scorning the poet himself.¹²

I can't read the Ogburns' book without constantly being eerily reminded of Barthes's "Death of the Author." What springs to mind here is that:

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the author-god) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writing, none of them original, blend and clash.¹³

Barthes was being figurative when he talks of "theological" and "god", but the Ogburns weren't. At this stage in anti-Stratfordian thought the candidate often takes on the stature of a deity who, like Christ, reveals himself cryptically in parables so that only the chosen may know him. The "Ver" signature pales into insignificance beside the anagrams, secret codes and numerology other anti-Stratfordians have read into the plays. Durning-Lawrence's chief contribution to anti-Stratfordian thought is his work "On the revealing page 136 in *Love's Labour's Lost*." He calculates that in the 1623 folio the strange Elizabethan buzzword "honororificabilitudinitatibus" appeared on page 136 as the 151st word, and fell on the 27th line. Those three numbers become his key numerological figures. He points out that the long word has 27 letters, and that if we assign to each of the letters a numerical value based on its placing in the alphabet (A = 1, B = 2 etc.) and add the values together, the value of the entire word is 287 – the sum of 136 and 151. He goes on to form a Latin anagram of the word: "Hi

¹² Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn, *The Star of England* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1952), pp. 175–176.

¹³ Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, trans. Stephen Heath; *Twentieth Century Literary Theory: A Reader*, ed. K. M. Newton (London Macmillan, 1988), p. 156.

ludi Baconis nati tuiti orbi," or, "These plays F. Bacon's offspring are preserved for the world." He then adds the numerical values of the initial and terminal letters of each word in the anagram and finds they come to 136, the values of the remaining letters to 151. He next calculates the numerical value of Bacon's name, by the same system, to be 33. Turning to line 33 of page 136, he finds the line: "What is Ab speld backward with the horn on his head?" Durning-Lawrence comments: "The reply should of course have been in Latin. The Latin for a horn is *cornu*. The real answer therefore is '*Ba corn-u fool*.'"¹⁴

Stage Five

As mentioned before, once they get to the stage of cryptograms and numerology, anti-Stratfordians are also likely to search for secret documents, which they usually expect to find hidden in graves.

Anti-Stratfordians are usually prone to conspiracy theories – suspicious that dastardly enemies suppressed their hero's true identity in his/her own lifetime, suspicious that the critical establishment is working to suppress the truth they long to reveal now.

Peter Sammartino's claim that the establishment recognises the truth of their claims but will not openly reveal it for fear of losing face:

Can you imagine what would happen to the reputation of thousands of professors if it were established that the true Shakespeare was not the Stratford man? It just wouldn't do to have this happen.¹⁵

is patently paranoid, and displays typical anti-Stratfordian ignorance of the fact that from the emergence of the New Criticism in the 1930s onwards literary critical strategies have moved further and further away from overtly biographical readings and the identity of the author is irrelevant to interpretation of the texts. Therefore, even if a different author were proved, the work and status of conventional scholarship would not be substantially undermined. However, the anti-Stratfordians are right to feel aggrieved, in that the critical establishment has been suppressing them in one sense, by denying them the dignity accorded to mainstream theories of their day, and considering them out of context. As stated in the introduction, just as New Critics read texts in isolation from the culture that produced them, so Schoenbaum and other scholars of his generation read the anti-Stratfordian movement in isolation and explain the phenomenon not as a product of nineteenth century cultural forces, but as an organic failing in the proponents of the theory themselves. For those of the

¹⁴ Durning-Lawrence, *op. cit.*, pp. 84–104.

¹⁵ Peter Sammartino, *The Man Who Was William Shakespeare* (New York: Cornwall Books, 1990), p. 14.

anti-Stratfordians for whom he has a residual respect, such as Delia Bacon or Sigmund Freud, psychopathology allows him to claim that they were intelligent, sensitive beings who merely lost control of their senses. With those for whom he has no sympathy, the fault is in their personality – they are just stupid, small-minded snobs.

Snobbery is invoked by Bate, too, to explain the anti-Stratfordian phenomenon. These establishmentarian accusations of snobbery against their opponents are somewhat surprising, however, given their own snobbery towards non-professional Shakespeare enthusiasts. Schoenbaum equates amateurs with “eccentrics, the cranks with theories,”¹⁶ sneers at the low-brow reading of the “heretics”,¹⁷ and condescendingly explains why one juror at a Boston media “trial” of the Baconian cause in 1892 had the critical naïveté to find in favour of Bacon: “Mr Kruell was a wood engraver.”¹⁸ One can understand the frustration of mainstream Shakespearean scholars who feel their life’s work is being eclipsed in the popular media by badly researched, unsystematic folklore. Schoenbaum bitterly remarks in more than one place in his discussion of the anti-Stratfordians that if the amount of money and press attention lavished on them had been diverted to serious scholarship, the boundaries of real Shakespearean knowledge would have been greatly expanded. But there seems to be a paradoxical similarity between the snobbery of the anti-Stratfordians, who cannot accept that a country tradesman’s son with no university education could have written the plays and the snobbery of academics like Schoenbaum and Bate who assume that tradespeople with no university education have no right to a voice in the interpretation of Shakespeare.

Moreover, the identification of simple snobbery as the cause of “heretic” views camouflages their roots in standard nineteenth century beliefs. As has already been pointed out, anti-Stratfordianism is essentially Romantic in its two basic tenets: a) that the plays are expressive – that their primary purpose is to record for posterity the emotions and subjective experience of the author, and b) that authors are beings of exalted sensitivity. While critics of the anti-Stratfordians may be right in levelling accusations of anachronism at them, when considering the early “heretics” there is a curiously hypocritical anachronism in expecting them to be otherwise, for if we look at pre-1930s critiques of Baconianism we see that mainstream critics were themselves using arguments which now seem to us dated, naïve and anachronistically rooted in Romantic thought to overturn the theory of the heretics.

¹⁶ Schoenbaum, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 566, 598, 626.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 573.

Adolf Strzelecki makes some very acute observations about the anachronism of Baconian thought, dryly commenting on the appropriacy of the choice of Bacon and Raleigh's coterie as authorship candidates in the mid-nineteenth century: "Było to grono, dążące do swobody, wolności, postępu, coś w guście demokratów i liberałów 1848 r."¹⁹ and characterising the dismissal of Stratfordian authorship on moral grounds as the misapplication of "wszelkich reguł i zasad angielsko-amerykańskiego purytanizmu"²⁰ to the Renaissance. But the picture of Shakespearean England which Strzelecki posits in its stead is an equally unhistorical fantasy: "Anglia w okresie młodości Szekspira, to w całym tego słowa znaczeniu *Merry Old England*, pełna wesołości, humoru, zadowolenia, świeżości. Purytańska surowość obyczajów nie zmroziła jeszcze ludności."²¹ In his depiction of Shakespeare the uniquely gifted Bohemian, defiantly battling the encroaching forces of drearily literal-minded bourgeois Puritan censorship, one cannot help feeling that Strzelecki is describing the tensions of fin de siècle Poland, not of Elizabethan England. He sets the blame for the rise of the anti-Stratfordian fallacy firmly at the feet of Romantic Anglo-German bardolatry: "Kult szekspirowski w Anglii, a szczególnie w Niemczech, przybrał rozmiary olbrzymie i przesadne. Entuzjazm, zachwyt, przeszedł wszelkie granice, niejednokrotnie stał się manią, bezkrytycznym bałwochwalstwem, bezsensownym zaślepieniem"²² but patently shares in this tradition himself. There is no more revealing phrase in the whole book than the one in which he announces that Shakespeare saw "okiem poety, okiem dziecka, okiem człowieka pierwotnego" and ascribes this ability to see the world as a child to four writers: Shakespeare, Goethe, Mickiewicz and Byron.²³ He also asks, quite sensibly, but again with an alarmingly pan-Romantic array of examples, why Shakespeare's apparent interest in commerce and his own financial advancement should be taken as evidence against his authorship, when Goethe, Byron and Sir Walter Scott all did quite well for themselves and were never known to turn their noses up at a royalty payment.²⁴

All the anti-Stratfordian arguments crop up in reverse: where the Baconians had argued that Shakespeare could not have written the plays because he had never experienced life at court, Strzelecki argues that, as there is imagery in the *Henry VI* plays concerning the work of a butcher, Bacon could not have written the plays because his father was not

¹⁹ Strzelecki, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

a butcher.²⁵ Where some anti-Stratfordians take the story that Shakespeare fled Warwickshire for London because he had been caught poaching deer as proof of his churlish degeneracy, where most mainstream scholars deny the authenticity of the anecdote, Strzelecki desperately *wants* Shakespeare to have been a deer poacher, to confirm his theory that Shakespeare was a wild, spontaneous, rebellious youth, unconstrained by bourgeois social conventions and closely in touch with nature.²⁶

Strzelecki's critical exegesis rivals that of the anti-Stratfordians in its naiveté, literal-mindedness and the circularity of its reasoning. In his coverage of Shakespeare's marriage with Anne Hathaway he uses the known facts about the union to selectively read the plays for references, and then uses those references to back up his claim that the true author can only be the Stratford man. Remarking, "Nie miałyby sensu przypisywać zbyt wiele wagi do porozrzuconych w najrozmaitszych dziełach Szekspira uwag i refleksyj, przyznawać im wartość autobiograficznych wyznań," he then plucks references to unhappy marriages from the plays, commenting on Prospero's curse on Ferdinand if he breaks Miranda's virgin knot before the wedding rites: "Czyż nie przebija się wspomnienie własnego stosunku z Anną w słowach Prospero".²⁷

Strzelecki is, of course, a straw target, as much as the anti-Stratfordians are, but this kind of criticism is symptomatic of the times. Sisson's satirical attack on Romantic excesses in Shakespeare criticism in "The Mythical Sorrows of Shakespeare"²⁸ makes clear that the practice of making simplistic equations between Shakespeare's life and art was still prevalent in orthodox literary analysis. Caroline Spurgeon's work on *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*, published in 1935, fifteen years after Looney, in which by a complex system of cross-referenced index cards she attempted to analyse Shakespearean use of metaphor in a "scientific", empirically-quantifiable way, attracted some derision even in her own day. This is largely because as well as using her analysis of imagery as an interpretive tool for analysis of the plays she also used the patterns of imagery to draw conclusions about William Shakespeare's personal interests and preferences. This leads her to such prosaic yet detailed speculation as: "By 1599, when he was five and thirty, Shakespeare had probably experienced heartburn as the result of acidity"²⁹ . . . "He was, one would judge,

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁸ C. H. Sisson, *The Mythical Sorrows of Shakespeare. Studies In Shakespeare: British Academy Lectures*, ed. Peter Alexander (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 9–32.

²⁹ Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), p. 119.

B.U.L.

a competent rider, and loved horses, as indeed he did most animals, except spaniels and house dogs' and 'Of all games, bowls would seem to be the one he knew most intimately and played with keenest zest.'"³⁰ Many of her methods are open to the same criticisms as Looney's: like him, she tries to build up a picture of the Bard's personality based on the imagery of the plays, and while her categorisation is more extensive than Looney's, it still relies on a great deal of selective interpretation. Like Looney, she mingles pride in the scientific nature of her card-index system with the amateur's defiant complacency in the fact that her key terms are too intuitive to be empirically defined: she triumphantly refuses to define "image", even though the scientific value of her work depends upon it.³¹ She deserves credit for firmly laying her creed of expressionism in her introduction – "I believe it to be profoundly true that the real revelation of the writer's personality, temperament and quality of mind is to be found in his works."³² – but it is patently the same naive equation of personality and works so derided in the "heretics". When the New Critics launched their attack on intentionalist readings of literature, they cautioned against "message hunting" it was precisely this kind of reading they must have had in mind.

Anti-Stratfordian criticism, then, far from being a freak phenomenon, unconnected to mainstream criticism, is actually embedded in the same Romantic values as much orthodox literary interpretation. It is, in essence, expressive realism run mad, taken to its logical – or illogical – conclusion. For if one holds, as Spurgeon and many critics of her day did, that texts encapsulate the spirit and personality of the author, and that diligent reading can yield "secret messages" about the text's creator, it is but one short step from here to seeing literal secret messages. If one holds, as Spurgeon did, that the man emerging from the plays is "in many ways in character what one can only describe as Christ-like; that is, gentle, kindly, honest, brave and true, with deep understanding and quick sympathy for all living things"³³ the temptation must be there to search out a candidate whose biography squares more fittingly with these facts, or to see the author as a literally divine figure. The anti-Stratfordianism of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, then, does not seem particularly ridiculous, in the context of contemporary mainstream criticism. Indeed, if mainstream scholars of the time had heeded the lessons that the flaws of anti-Stratfordianism could have taught them about the inconsistency of their own scholarship, the bastions of expressive realism may have fallen earlier than they did.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

*Melanie Branton***BACON A SZEKSPIR: SPOJRZENIE NA POGLĄDY ANTY-STRATFORDCZYKÓW
W ŚWIELE PRZEMIAN W DWUDZIESTOWIECZNEJ KRYTYCE LITERACKIEJ**

Poglądy anty-stratfordczyków, twierdzących, że William Szekspir nie napisał utworów tradycyjnie mu przypisywanych budziły protesty ortodoksyjnych literaturoznawców od samego początku, tj. od momentu, kiedy w połowie XIX w. ukazały się pierwsze publikacje utrzymujące, że prawdziwym autorem jest Francis Bacon. Podobne poglądy były z reguły odrzucane i całkowicie pomijane, przy czym wysuwane kontrargumenty często były równie wątpliwe jak dowody „heretyków”.

Nie zajmując stanowiska wobec prawdziwości twierdzeń anty-stratfordczyków, autorka artykułu postuluje, by spokojnie przyrzeć się pismom zwolenników tych teorii i przywrócić im należne miejsce w intertekstualnej sieci powiązań krytyki literackiej XIX i XX w.