

Shakespeare Suppressed: The Uncensored Truth about Shakespeare and His Work by Katherine Chiljan. San Francisco: Faire Editions, 2011. 448 pp. \$35.00 (paperback). ISBN 9780982940549.

In 2011, the film *Anonymous* directed by Roland Emmerich focused worldwide attention upon what has long been suspected to be a literary and historical conspiracy—the Shakespeare authorship question. Particularly during the last century, scholars from diverse parts of Europe and America have emerged in increasing numbers to voice their doubt that William Shakespeare was ever more than a front for the true author. Mainstream scholarship has largely responded with silence to these protests, but this has only served to sharpen interest, and to reveal the absence of any probative evidence that is sufficient to establish Shakespeare’s authorship. As Hugh Trevor-Roper pointed out,

he has been subjected to the greatest battery of organized research that has ever been directed upon a single person. Armies of scholars formidably equipped, have examined all the documents which could possibly contain at least a mention of Shakespeare’s name. . . . And yet the greatest of all Englishmen, after this tremendous inquisition, still remains so close to a mystery that even his identity can still be doubted. (Trevor-Roper 1962)

The author, Katherine Chiljan, is a historian who graduated from UCLA, and who can lay claim to more than twenty-five years experience associated with the problem of Shakespeare’s authorship. During that time, she has debated the problem at the Smithsonian Institution, read papers at conferences in both the US and the UK, and served as editor of the quarterly *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*. It is against this background that her book seeks to piece together a jigsaw puzzle depicting the man she calls “the great author”: a man whom she believes to be responsible for writing the works of Shakespeare. It is a daunting task, mainly because there are so many important pieces missing from the puzzle. Whereas the mainstream academic can write from the high ground, and give good accounts of Shakespeare’s life and business transactions, into which he or she inserts at regular intervals of convenience the author’s works, according to their supposed dates of composition, this approach is not open to the unconventional scholar. Chiljan’s first task is therefore to undermine the evidence supporting Shakespeare, in order to create an opening for the true author to appear.

This task occupies two of the five sections, which complete the book. As the relevant chapters unfold, probing questions are repeatedly raised

concerning the viability of evidence which conventional scholarship never addresses, and which are likely to unsettle long-standing beliefs about Shakespeare. Chief among these concern the several references to a play called *Hamlet*, which includes a performance staged by Henslowe. Yet, the earliest reference to the play occurred at a time coinciding with the recent arrival of Shakespeare in London. To add to this oddity, we are reminded of the absence of a single letter or manuscript in the hand of the author; even though he wrote at least 36 major plays, 154 sonnets, 2 narrative poems, and several smaller pieces. Questions are also raised concerning the origin of the author's exemplary education, which allowed him to write so knowledgeably, and which stands out in contrast to that of a non-specialist, writing without previous theatrical experience.

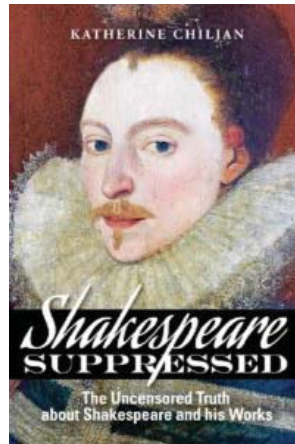
After commenting upon several statements in the Sonnets that contain autobiographical sentiments unconnected with Shakespeare, and then indicating an array of quotations that mirror those written by the great author, but which are too early for acceptance by orthodoxy, Chiljan begins to piece together a picture, from which parts are either missing or unclear. Robert Greene's *Groats-Worth of Wit* (1592) presents a challenge to all who undertake the task of explaining the letter it contains. The epistle was addressed by Greene to the three writers with whom he had dined, shortly before his death. Who were these three? What reason drew the four writers together for a banquet that Greene, for one, could not afford? He died soon afterward, begging the wife he abandoned to pay his two carers, for "had they not succoured me, I had died on the streets." Chiljan does not seek an answer to these questions. Her focus is upon the identity of the man referred to by Greene as *Shake-scene*, the "upstart crow." Chiljan is certain this referred to Edward Alleyn, an actor considered to be second only to Richard Burbage. In 1583, at the age of sixteen, Alleyn was already listed among the Earl of Worcester's Players. He probably first trod the boards at an earlier age, learning his art by playing female roles. Chiljan therefore seeks evidence for Alleyn as Greene's "upstart crow." Such evidence could seem appropriate were it not for the doubt it carries with it. In 1592, Alleyn was a respected actor: not an "upstart crow." He had begun his acting career long before Burbage, even though he was the elder man by only sixteen months. Another difficulty occurs from Chettle's subsequent apology, which he was forced to give for having published defamatory remarks against two persons. One of those offended was Kit Marlowe, who recognized certain atheistic comments that were directed at him, and he made his displeasure known to Chettle. The other offended party ought to be Alleyn, the upstart crow. But this does not fit Chettle's apology, in which he recognized the offended party's "facetious grace in writing." Since Alleyn was not a writer, Chiljan

is compelled to suggest this was intended for George Peele who, she alleges, had taken some minor offence. This places Peele as the third man at the table, while Alleyn, who had been greatly maligned, receives no apology.

But Tom Nashe admitted he too was present at the banquet, and when he later wrote to Gabriel Harvey, he made a coded reference to the third man as “Will Monox” (an anagram of M. Will Oxon.—Oxon. being the conventional Latin abbreviation for Oxford, hence the need for not naming him in a letter). This would explain why Chettle spoke of many titled people having written to protest his publication of Greene’s letter. It is therefore curious that Chiljan did not pursue this lead; especially, when Nashe provocatively suggested to Harvey that Will Monox is known by “his great dagger”—a satirical hint to Harvey, to help him unscramble the anagram, and ensure he recognized the Sword of State carried by the Earl of Oxford (Edward de Vere) on ceremonial occasions.

In Part III, the book concentrates upon two cornerstones that continue to support Shakespeare’s authorship, the First Folio and the Stratford monument. Much has been said before concerning the ambiguities, untruths, and unlikely circumstances that brought the First Folio into being, and these bear repeating. In addition, Chiljan offers new light upon these doubts, including a deeper look at the involvement of the Herbert family (de Vere’s son-in-law Philip and Philip’s brother William) in bringing this project to a conclusion.

The Stratford monument is an essential part of the Shakespeare mystery. Its enigmatic inscription, issuing a challenge to passersby, has been carved below a bust which, today, bears no resemblance to the etchings made after visits to Stratford by Dugdale, Betterton, and Thomas: visits that spanned more than a century. Chiljan therefore suggests the original bust was actually that of John Shakespeare; and that after his son’s death, Pembroke and Jonson appended the present inscription beneath the existing bust.



IVDICIO PYLIVM GENIO SOCRATEM ARTE MARONEM,
 TERRA TEGIT, POPVLVS MÆRET, OLYMPVS HABET
 STAY PASSENGER WHY GOEST THOV BY SO FAST;
 READ IF THOV CANST, WHOM ENVIOVS DEATH HATH PLAST,
 WITH IN THIS MONVMENT SHAKSPEARE: WITH WHOME,
 QVICK NATVRE DIDE: WHOSE NAME DOTH DECK Ys TOMBE,
 FAR MORE THEN COST: SIEH ALL, Yt HE HATH WRITT,
 LEAVES LIVING ART, BVT PAGE, TO SERVE HIS WITT.

But for what reason? If it was to satisfy visitors who wished to pay their respects to the grave of the man believed to have been the great author, the plan would have quickly dissolved into farce, when visitors learned from local residents that the bust was actually Shakespeare's illiterate father, and had no connection to the inscription beneath it. Pembroke and Jonson were surely too intelligent to have failed to see the impracticality of this plan. Could one envisage a suitable epitaph to Beethoven set beneath a statue of his abusive, alcoholic father? The only reason for pursuing it is that it could explain why the original figure was nursing a bag of wool, instead of the present pen and paper. One imagines a more introspective approach would have served the author better, especially since this was touched upon when Chiljan queried why Mount Olympus was named instead of Mount Parnassus, the home of poets. It is now known this exchange of mounts allows the letter count of the only inset line on the inscription, together with *mÆRET* instead of *MAERET*, to total 34; thus providing the missing key to solving the monument's challenge, which identifies Edward de Vere as Shakespeare. When the sixaine is copied onto a 34-column grille, known as a Cardano grille, which had been in use since its invention in 1550 for concealing secrets in an otherwise innocent-looking text, it reveals a perfectly grammatical sentence, arranged in three clusters, which reads: "So Test Him, I Vow He Is E. De Vere As He Shakspeare: Me I. B." These initials in reverse are the same as those used by Ben Jonson in the First Folio.

There is also the damage to the monument incurred in 1645, during the English Civil War, when the church billeted troops. Chiljan suggests the bust was altered in 1691, when the damage to the chancel was repaired. But Charlotte Stopes recorded that repairs to the monuments were carried out at this time by descendants of the deceased, and among the names recorded, there is no mention of repairs paid for by Shakespeare's friends or relatives. Moreover, Stopes also reported that as late as 1730, Dr. Thomas reprinted Dugdale's book of *Antiquities of Warwickshire* [1656], which included the original copy of the bust and woolsack. In the Preface, Thomas stated he had made personal visits to the locations mentioned in the book, to check for accuracy before republishing it.

Part IV commences by examining the plays written by Ben Jonson for characters that appear to coincide with Shakespeare, according to the low opinion the author held of this man. It is an interesting and thoughtful exposition, which includes a similar search for equivalent characteristics in the Parnassus plays (written about 1598–1601 and mentioning many writers of the day, including Shakespeare). Chiljan then turns to the Shakespeare plays to add further evidence to her findings. This task is dealt with by

blending her interpretations with a unique view of how the great author used his genius to leave a lasting mark of his authorship in significant parts of what he wrote. *Hamlet*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Henry IV* (Part 2), and *As You Like It* figure prominently in supplying the required evidence.

Following on from this is an excellent analysis of the satirical booklet published in 1594, *Willobie His Avis*. Chiljan has a good grasp of the interplay between the anonymous author and his subjects, and one can see why the unknown author's first open recognition of Shake-speare [sic] by his full name; viz, "And Shake-speare, paints poor Lucrece rape" is an embarrassment to conventional biographers. It suspiciously hyphenates the unhyphenated name used by the author of *Lucrece* (1594), when he addressed Henry Wriothesley in the preface to his poem. Also embarrassing to orthodoxy, the *Willobie* poem introduces two characters by their initials, W. S. and H. W. in a "loving comedy." The former is described as "the old player"; Oxford was then 44 years of age, with a theatrical reputation at Court. The latter is referred to as the "new actor." Wriothesley was 21 when this was written. W. S. then tutors H. W. in the art of courtship; addressing him with a familiarity impossible for the real William Shakespeare, but not for Oxford. "Well met, friend Harry, what's the cause / You look so pale with Lented cheeks?"

Chiljan then builds upon this with a thoughtful display of the innuendo and allusions revealed in the writings left by the great author's contemporaries: writers who shared his secret. One of these was Nashe. It is only now that Chiljan makes known Nashe's reference to "Will Monox" and "his great dagger." The lure of combining these two references with Nashe's further mention of "Gentle Master William" and his "dudgeon dagger" was too obvious to miss, and Chiljan correctly identifies their joint meaning to be a covert reference to the Earl of Oxford aka Master William Shakespeare. But Nashe told Harvey that both he and Will Monox were at the banquet held shortly before Greene died. This places Oxford as one of the diners and no doubt the host who paid for the meal.

Chiljan, however, has already identified the diners as Greene, Nashe, Marlowe, and Peele. It is an unfortunate faux pas, but this should not be allowed to outweigh the book's positive aspects.

No book advocating an alternative author to Shakespeare can fail to offer a reason for the author's secrecy. Part V is devoted to the provision of evidence in support of the proposal that the Sonnets are a dialogue between father and son; that is between Oxford and Southampton, whose birth mother is said to be Queen Elizabeth.

After the Sonnets were published for the third time in the 18th century, the gender of Shakespeare's love had reverted back to a male. Thus began

more than a century of debate concerning the homoerotic content of the verse. The proposition that the relationship between poet and youth was paternal would therefore disperse any inference of sodomy, and offer a possible explanation for concealing Oxford's identity. But the paternity of Southampton is a well-trodden path, and Chiljan can only repeat what others have said before. By the careful selection of phrases from the Sonnets to support her theory, a positive picture can evolve. It is only when one realizes that the negative side has been purposely omitted that a more balanced outlook unfolds. Would a father speak to his son as the poet does in Sonnet 20, as "The Master Mistress of my passion;"? Passion then meant, "a mental state opposed to reason; a powerful and controlling emotion, such as lust." Also, when speaking of the youth's mother, Chiljan repeats the poet's words—"Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee / Call back the lovely April of her prime:" but neglects to quote the poet when he wrote:—"Dear my love, you know / You had a father: let your son say so." If Oxford had been the youth's father, he would have said—"You *have* a father." Also omitted is the Countess of Southampton's will, in which her choicest items were bequeathed to her son, rather than to her husband, who received the bulk of what remained. Chiljan also uses the Phoenix and Turtle by Robert Chester in the 1601 poem *Love's Martyr*, as metaphors for the love between Elizabeth and Oxford. But Chester was a Catholic, using the separated lives of Anne and Roger Line as an allegory for the phoenix, the Catholic faith rising from the ashes of the Reformation, and the biblical metaphor of a turtle dove, for the Holy Spirit returning from exile. Then again, if Oxford and Elizabeth had begotten Southampton, the politically, sensible solution would have been for them both to marry after the death of Oxford's first wife. This would have legitimized Southampton, and the absence of a natural heir to the throne would have been resolved. Alas, this straightforward resolution is left unexplored.

The book is an excellent source for factual material, but some theories chosen to weave them together into a consistent whole inevitably contribute toward unintended consequences.

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Reference

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