

He had his will redrafted on 25 March 1616. Word must have reached him that his new son-in-law, Thomas Quiney (he had married Judith in February), was due to confess to 'carnal copulation' in the parish church the next day, 26 March. Shakespeare inserted new clauses to protect his daughter against her feckless husband. For example, he bequeathed a sum of £150 to Judith, provided that 'such husband as she shall at the end of . . . three years be married unto . . . do sufficiently assure unto her and the issue of her body lands answerable to [i.e. as valuable as] the portion by this my will given'—an unlikely eventuality. And if Judith lived for three years, the sum of £150 was to be spent for her benefit by the executors, but 'not to be paid unto her so long as she shall be married'. Clearly Shakespeare had no confidence in Thomas Quiney. A tiger's heart wrapped in a father's hide!

He also left bequests to many others, including his only surviving sibling, his sister Joan. She, married to a hatter, was to retain tenancy of the house in which she lived for the yearly peppercorn rent of 12d., and she was to have £50, which the executors were to pay to her or to her sons (i.e. not to her husband). Shakespeare, evidently a very sick man who could only just sign his name, also deleted a bequest to Richard Tyler, who was still alive, and there are other signs of his displeasure. It is in this context that we have to place the single reference to Anne Hathaway—'Item, I give unto my wife my second-best bed with the furniture' (hangings, coverlets, bed-linen). Had he provided for Anne before he made his will, as some have supposed? Wills of the period often made this explicit. We do not know. There are various signs, however, that he was not a happy husband: the possibility of a shot-gun wedding in 1582; the fact that Anne had no more children after 1585; Aubrey's report that 'he was wont to go into Warwickshire once a year'; stories that link Shakespeare with other women, including the dark lady of the Sonnets; the fact that in purchasing the Gatehouse he brought in three trustees, which had the effect of barring his widow from any right to the property; the curt reference to 'my wife' in the will (testators generally said 'my loving wife'), and the fact that she was not asked to be an executor. He named his daughter Susanna and her husband, Dr John Hall, as his executors, and Susanna as his principal heir (his son, Hamnet, had died in 1596).

Greene (1592) and *Ratsey's Ghost* (1605) reveal Shakespeare as seen by his enemies; his will (1616) confirms that he had a stern, unyielding side. Our only rounded picture of Shakespeare the man is found in his Sonnets—one so extraordinary that many biographers prefer not to take it seriously (see also chapter 5, *Shakespeare's Poems*, by John Kerrigan). Here he depicts himself as abnormally vulnerable and emotional, often almost unable to control his emotions, whether high or low, and inclined to withdraw from difficult confrontations. He seems to have written many of the Sonnets to explain feelings that he could not express face to face. He adores a 'lovely boy' or young man, probably a nobleman's son, he dotes on a dark lady, and both betray him. He is too forgiving to the young man and knows it (Sonnets 35, 40–2, 70), and, some will say, spiteful to the dark lady (137). Nevertheless he also addresses sharp words to the young man ('thou dost common grow', 'Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds', 69, 94), and can write tenderly to the dark lady (128). Being Shakespeare, he sees the ridiculousness of his own position (143). The Sonnets, of course, must not be read as 'straight' autobiography—yet why dismiss them as too extraordinary to be credible? Shakespeare was not an 'ordinary' or 'normal' man.

The publisher dedicated the Sonnets 'To the only begetter [inspirer?] of these ensuing sonnets, Mr W. H.', I assume without Shakespeare's permission. Whether or not the poet's love for the young man was homosexual (this is much debated), it might certainly be thought so, which—in view of the penalties against homosexual acts—would be dangerous. Mentioned by Francis Meres



in 1598 as Shakespeare's 'sugared sonnets among his private friends', these superb poems remained unpublished for at least eleven years, with the exception of two that appeared in the pirated *Passionate Pilgrim* (1599), and, just as surprisingly, were not reissued between 1609 and 1640. This suggests, I think, that they were thought to be 'compromising'.

Several identifications of the young man have been proposed, including Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton (W. H. transposed?). Recent biographers have favoured William Herbert, later the Earl of Pembroke and dedicatee of the First Folio, in my view correctly. This W. H., born in 1580, was for many years a generous patron of Ben Jonson, and there are grounds for thinking Jonson the 'rival poet' of the Sonnets, who caused Shakespeare much grief (e.g. Sonnets 78–86). The rival competed for the young man's patronage: he paraded his learning, putting Shakespeare in the shade, he was proud, a polished poet, a flatterer, so overbearing that Shakespeare preferred not to engage with him (and felt that this needed an explanation):

My tongue-tied muse in manners holds her still  
While comments of your praise, richly compiled,  
Reserve thy character with golden quill  
And precious phrase by all the muses filed.  
I think good thoughts whilst other[s] write good words,  
And like unlettered clerk still cry 'Amen'  
To every hymn that able spirit affords  
In polished form of well-refined pen.  
Hearing you praised I say "'Tis so, 'tis true,'  
And to the most of praise add something more;  
But that is in my thought . . . (85.1–11)

A 'tongue-tied' Shakespeare? Other sonnets present the same evasive, introverted personality (e.g. 23, 80, 83, 86, 128, 140) and yet early allusions refer to his unabashed quickness in repartee. So, too, early allusions depict him as a boon companion, whereas Aubrey recorded that 'he was not a company keeper, lived in Shoreditch, wouldn't be debauched, and if invited to [be debauched?], wrote he was in pain'. Contradictions? Why, though, expect a rigidly consistent Shakespeare? Do we not feel close to him in both Hamlet and Falstaff?

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