

*How were the anonymous Castle Ashby play manuscripts
created, and why?*

Submitted by Luke Timothy Beattie, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Drama, August 2011.

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

(signature).....

Abstract

In 1977, a long-lost collection of manuscripts of plays, poems, and non-fiction texts from the 17th century was re-discovered in the library of Castle Ashby, Northamptonshire. Most of the items are not signed by an author, and have no known record of publication or performance.

These technically anonymous items have received minimal scholarly attention in the three-plus decades since their recovery, and what comment there has been has not entirely agreed upon the collection's authorship, purpose, or even era of composition. This thesis takes a confident position on those debates by investigating the unsigned manuscripts and their contents through a variety of techniques.

This study reviews the collection's known history, past commentators' findings and conclusions, and the physical and textual properties, and comes to an authorial conclusion based on a fresh palaeographic investigation; it then offers a biography of the proposed writer. It statistically analyses the collection's material, palaeographic, and metrical traits, in search of trends that might show a development over time. It applies modern electronic resources to investigate the collection's textual interrelationships and plausible literary sources, and uses contemporary history and the proposed author's biography to suggest conjectural allusions in the writing. Together, those avenues of analysis allow for a best-guess ordering and dating to be proposed for the collection's contents. Turning specifically to the dramatic texts, the thesis then considers the proposed author's potential theatrical resources, searches the manuscripts for evidence of possible professional theatrical use, and gathers dramaturgical information from the texts themselves to form an opinion about how plausible contemporary performances would have been; this is supplemented with the findings from the first modern stagings of all of the dramatic texts, which establish what minimum physical needs the plays would demand in performance, and identify where there are dramaturgical issues that could limit the plays' theatrical practicality. The study's findings up to that point then allow for the collection to be positioned within their period's larger context of authorial and theatrical activity, conclude whether the writer achieved anything unique, and, identifying the collection's major recurring thematic elements, propose a rationale for the writer's authorial activity.

In summary, this thesis sets out to determine the conditions that brought the unsigned Castle Ashby texts into existence, and to suggest why they were written at all.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to many individuals and organisations for their assistance in making this study possible.

The University of Exeter and its Drama Department helped to fund my research first through the Exeter Research Scholarship and then through a PhD Studentship, and I owe thanks to Dr. Jane Milling and Dr. Sarah Goldingay for advice on matters financial and otherwise. My supervisor Professor Mick Mangan was a supportive and knowledgeable guide through this process, and Professors Peter Thomson, Christopher McCullough, and Graham Ley were sources of further encouragement and advice.

The Drama Department also provided space for several of my practical staging experiments; other stagings would not have been possible without the help of Dr. Terri Power and Bath Spa University, Simon Bartlett and the Richmond Shakespeare Society, Gregory Berry and Seattle's Outsider's Inn Collective, Professor Stephen Heatley and the University of British Columbia, and The Old Vic Theatre. Those who participated in the projects (and those who offered a weary traveller accommodation) are too numerous to name, but their good work, enthusiasm, and insights were of enormous help and are not forgotten.

My sincere thanks go to the Marquess of Northampton for kindly allowing me to explore the Castle Ashby document archives, to his son Lord Compton for patiently showing me around the property, and to their archivist Peter McKay for assisting me in locating and examining various items there.

Likewise, the staff of the British Library, particularly in the Manuscripts Reading Room, has my gratitude for their constant assistance in my research.

Many scholars have been generous with their time and insight, with special acknowledgement going to Jaspreet Singh Boparai of Cambridge, Dr. Robin Eagles and others at the History of Parliament Trust, and especially Professor William Proctor Williams of the University of Akron.

Finally, the moral support offered by friends and family was indispensable. In particular, boundless gratitude goes to my parents for emotional and financial support, my fiancée and favourite collaborator Sophie Hickman for her patience and help in good times and bad, and our beautiful pets for never judging me for my cursing or anguished howls when things got frustrating. The cuddles helped immensely.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	3
Table of Contents	4
Introduction	6
Chapter 1: Review of Previous Commentary	15
Early References	15
Rediscovery	16
Recent Debate	19
Chapter 2: Item Descriptions	22
Physical Descriptions	22
Essential Synopses	23
Chapter 3: Authorship	37
Previous Authorial Theories	37
Handwriting Comparison	39
Chapter 4: The Writer's Biography	47
Family Background	47
The Early Years	48
The Prelude to Civil War	49
The War Years	51
The Aftermath of War	61
Life in the Commonwealth	65
The Protectorate Era	68
Life in the Restoration	73
Chapter 5: Grouping by Statistical Analysis	78
Analysis of Physical Evidence	78
Analysis of Layout Evidence	82
Analysis of Writing Elements	84
Analysis of Metrical Evidence	86
Chapter 6: Textual Analysis - Sources and Resonances	88
Language Interrelationship	88
Literary Sources	93

Plausible Historical and Biographical Allusions	107
Chapter 7: A Proposed Order for the Unsigned Castle Ashby Texts	128
Chapter 8: Dramaturgical Findings from Textual Examination and Theatrical Experimentation	139
Potential Theatrical Resources	140
Theatrical Notation	144
Methodology for Textual Dramaturgical Analysis	146
Working Scripts	148
Material Needs for Staging	177
Performance Findings	154
Chapter 9: Conjectural Rationale for the Writing Activity	175
Was the Activity Precedented?	175
Proposing a Rationale.....	183
Recurring Themes	188
Conclusion	196
Appendix 1: Detailed Plot Synopses	200
Appendix 2: Handwriting Comparison Chart	228
Appendix 3: Statistical Tables	236
Appendix 4: Source Analysis	260
Table 1: Textual Parallels	260
Seafaring References	260
<i>Agamemnon</i> Comparison	262
<i>Hercules Furens</i> Comparison	265
<i>The Mandrake</i> Comparison	268
<i>Don Sancho</i> Comparison	272
Plausible Sources for <i>Mariamne</i> Material	274
Plausible Sources for <i>Bassianus</i> Material	281
<i>The Captives</i> Comparison	298
Additional Potential Cultural Resonances	300
Appendix 5: Dramaturgical Issues	319
Table 1: Dramaturgical Suggestions per Line	319
Table 2: Dramaturgical Necessities per Line	319
Bibliography	320