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From his funerary monument in Stratford-upon-Avon to the engraving by Droeshout in the First Folio, the depictions of William Shakespeare (1564–1616) have long been the subject of scrutiny. Equally, the mystery surrounding the identity of ‘W.H.’, the dedicatee of Shakespeare’s sonnets, continues to capture the imagination. This volume brings together three works that were originally published separately: two pieces on the portraits and one on the sonnets. A playwright turned theatrical biographer, James Boaden (1762–1839) cultivated a lifelong interest in Shakespeare. His illustrated 1824 analysis of the portraits examines the evidence concerning their authenticity. This is followed by an 1827 investigation by the portrait painter Abraham Wivell (1786–1849), who engages critically with Boaden’s findings and those of others. Finally, Boaden’s 1837 essay on the sonnets presents the case for naming William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, as their dedicatee – a claim taken up by many later scholars.

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978-1-108-06488-0 - Portraits of Shakespeare, and on the Sonnets of Shakespeare
James Boaden Abraham Wivell
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JAMES BOADEN
ABRAHAM WIVELL



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AN
I N Q U I R Y
INTO THE
AUTHENTICITY
OF THE VARIOUS
PICTURES AND PRINTS
OF
SHAKSPEARE.

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UT MAGUS



Engraved by Chas Turner Mezzotinto Engraver in ordinary to His Majesty.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEAR

From the original Picture by Cornelius Jansen.

in the Collection of His Grace the Duke of Somerset

Rob^t. Triphook Bookseller Old Bond Street.

AN
I N Q U I R Y
INTO THE
AUTHENTICITY
OF VARIOUS
PICTURES AND PRINTS,
WHICH, FROM THE DECEASE OF THE POET TO OUR OWN TIMES,
HAVE BEEN OFFERED TO THE PUBLIC
AS
PORTRAITS
OF
SHAKSPEARE :
CONTAINING
A CAREFUL EXAMINATION OF THE EVIDENCE ON WHICH THEY CLAIM TO BE
RECEIVED ;
BY WHICH THE PRETENDED PORTRAITS HAVE BEEN REJECTED, THE GENUINE
CONFIRMED AND ESTABLISHED.
ILLUSTRATED BY
ACCURATE AND FINISHED ENGRAVINGS,
BY THE ABLEST ARTISTS,
FROM SUCH ORIGINALS AS WERE OF INDISPUTABLE AUTHORITY.

By JAMES BOADEN, Esq.

“ We will draw the curtain, and shew you the PICTURE.”
TWELFTH NIGHT.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR ROBERT TRIPHOOK, 23, OLD BOND-STREET.
1824.

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PREFACE.

THE object of the following Inquiry having been clearly announced in the Title-page, and fully explained in the Introduction which is to follow the present Address, nothing remains for me to state here, but why I have undertaken the work, and what facilities I possessed towards its proper execution.—To each of these points in their order.

To profess a love for the writings of such a genius as Shakspeare, may be received as a declaration, which acquits a man of the charge of vanity, inasmuch as it claims no other credit than that of not being totally insensible to the highest literary excellence. A period of my life of something more than forty years has been devoted to the study of Shakspeare's works; and on some outrageous liberties which in the year 1796 were taken with his name, I had the honour to address a Letter to the late George Steevens, Esq. which brought before the Public the first detection of an impudent and very unskilful forgery. Upon that occasion, the great Commentator expressed a very agreeable opinion of my little work, by saying with his accustomed point, "Sir, you have very fairly gibbeted the culprit, and Mr. Malone will take him down and dissect him"—a task performed by him with an anatomical minuteness, which left not the smallest nerve of that body of fraud unexposed to the public eye.

Slight as the work was, published by myself upon that occasion, I received many compliments from men distinguished in literary criticism; and I was encouraged to persevere in the peculiar studies to which the illustration of Shakspeare had given birth among us. But I confess, in spite of the recommendation of Jonson, that I sometimes allowed myself to be drawn from his works to their writer; the plays sent me back to the portrait before them, and the portrait seldom failed to return me to a more ardent perusal of the plays. And as my love for his productions induced me to collect the most authentic copies of his Works, my fondness for the Writer led me to obtain the most accurate resemblances of his countenance. In a series of years I have seen every thing conducive to both these objects, and been so fortunate as to obtain all that I myself desired to possess.

But as I thought I saw something partial, and therefore deficient, in the account which had been given by others of the PORTRAITS of our Poet, I some years ago commenced a very particular examination of the Pictures themselves, and of the evidence on which they have claimed to be received as genuine. The result of this inquiry I now presume to lay before the Public. It seemed unnecessary to give longer existence to fading impositions, when they were once detected the spurious Portraits have therefore not been engraved on the present occasion; they have been allowed to

“ Come like shadows—so depart.”

The genuine, by being recalled to a more punctilious examination, have increased their claims to public favour, and have consequently

PREFACE.

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now been engraved with perfect accuracy, and brought together, that in one work may be preserved every thing conducive to reasonable gratification.

As to the manner of this Inquiry, I shall I hope be pardoned for not confining myself to a dry and barren statement. Though the object be rather antiquarian than critical, I yet trust that some occasional remarks, illustrative of the life and poetical character of Shakspeare, will not be thought out of place; and that if I state some interesting facts with accuracy, I may be excused for occasionally deviating into what I can only hope to be sportive, and at most entertaining.

I have in truth been most ably seconded by the zeal and the talent of the Artists who have adorned the present work. My son, Mr. John Boaden, very kindly drew the Stratford Bust for me; and, in the opinion of able judges, he has perfectly expressed the effect of that venerable sculpture. During the progress of all the Engravings, he occasionally inspected the proofs; and such is the modesty of true genius, that I found the different Artists solicitous, nay pleased, that their labours should have the advantage of what they termed a fresh eye, to alter or confirm their view of the subject.

I detain the Reader, therefore, no longer from a work on which I have bestowed considerable pains, and which I would hope may not be quite the feeblest, among the tributes of admiration which are continually gathering about the shrine of our immortal Bard.

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