

CHILLIN' WITH THE BARD

My Interview With William Shakespeare

By Bryon Cahill



it will come. I have been wont to fret yet do not fear, for fear be coward's final friend.

RD: What was your life like as a child?

WS: I grew up in Warwickshire, England, in the late 16th century. There was little to life outside of school, I daresay. We were bound to attend six days a week and all months of the year.

RD: Did you take creative-writing classes?

WS: No! Heaven forbid. We studied Latin! Our gracious queen, Elizabeth, spoke Latin, and it was considered to be the very embodiment of culture. Nay, school was not for art but for speech.

RD: Well, surely that was where you first found a fondness for words.

WS: You speak truly, wise interviewer, and your appliance of alliteration amuses me, amateur though it be. Yes, language has always been my great intriguer. I consistently try to meld words into phrases into actions so that the actor lives them out for all to see (and one hopes, to applaud).

RD: Everyone calls you the "Bard of Avon." What's a bard, anyway?

WS: Ah, what's in a name? It means "poet" or "master storyteller." Am I not that? I am, of course, not a bard. I am *the* Bard.

RD: What would you say to the student who has trouble reading your plays?

WS: My plays were never intended to be read. In my time, all my works were written strictly for the stage. Though I can see how a student in your modern world might have considerable difficulty with the language. A simple solution would be to rush the student to the theater to see one of my plays performed. To see or not to see, that is the question. If youth's eyes see my words come alive before them, then there lies a deeper meaning in the "thou" and "thy" and "hence." It is fantastic how soon one falls into the fantasy of the live drama! The play's the thing! All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts.

RD: Tell us about your beloved Globe Theatre.

WS: Ah, the Globe. ... My playing company built the Globe in 1598. We played to many happy audiences on many pleasant afternoons. In 1613, we were performing *Henry VIII*. In a most dramatic scene, we fired a cannon, and the theater shook! Alas, the blast also caught the roof afire. The blaze burned bright, and the theater turned to ash. Mine own tears did scald like molten lead. We rebuilt the Globe in under a year. I hear there now exists in its place a modern and faithful reconstruction.*

RD: Countless books have been written about you. In a new one, called *Will in the World*—

WS: Oh, that's quite clever.

RD: The author, Stephen Greenblatt, says the work you produced was "so astonishing, so luminous, that it seems to have come from a god and not a mortal." How do you respond to such a statement?

WS: Heaven hath a hand in these events, for sure. Some men are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.

RD: And which are you?

WS: I beg thee, do not ask. It is not for one to know. But to thine own self be true.

RD: One of our readers, Natasha Kumar, of Hershey, Pa., submitted a question. People throughout history have questioned your identity. How can you prove that you really wrote the works attributed to William Shakespeare?

WS: How now, wool-sack, what mutter you?

RD: It's true, Will. Since your death, there has been quite a sincere debate over your true identity. Some people wonder how one man could have written so many profound and wonderful words.

WS: O teach me how I should forget to think! Thou hast no more brain than I have in mine elbows. I am William Shakespeare! Hath not I Shakespeare's eyes? Hath not I Shakespeare's hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?

RD: Well, I certainly can't argue with that! Will, thank you for this interview. I hope you will stick around to read the readers' theater adaptation we have conjured of your very own *Hamlet*.

WS: Thou hast tampered with my work? You, minion, are too saucy.

RD: It's been a pleasure, Mr. Shakespeare. Thank you.

WS: Quite. ■

WRITE ABOUT IT

What question would you like to ask Shakespeare? Think of a question; then pretend to be the Bard himself and write his answer. To make Shakespeare's answer as authentic as possible, you will need to do some research. We've found you some online help!

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