

AN APPEAL: PLEASE HELP OUR EX-PRIME MINISTER, BORIS JOHNSON.

It has been reported that in 2015 Mr Johnson agreed to write a book on the genius of Shakespeare in return for a 6 figure sum. Sadly he has been far too busy, especially of late, to do so. He is said to have approached a Shakespeare specialist for help, but without success. (Guardian, 3 July, 2021.)

Rather than have Mr Johnson face any possible embarrassment we earnestly invite readers with an interest in the subject to contribute pieces that might help him to meet this commitment.

A guideline may prove useful here. Mr Johnson's previous biographical work, "The Churchill Factor", was unkindly described as riddled with inaccuracies by an expert in the subject. Be that as it may, since very little is reliably known about Shakespeare's life strict adherence to fact is less important than élan and sweep in conjuring up the great man himself.

We attach a few samples below:

Portraits of Shakespeare.

Most of the surviving images of Shakespeare depict him as Bald. But common sense tells us geniuses are never bald, with very few exceptions. Think of Einstein. Think of Beethoven. Think of Shaggy, Freddie Mercury, and Prince. Like many who live by the pen Shakespeare was a celebrity and probably owed money to many people and found a disguise useful in avoiding fans and bailiffs when navigating the crowded streets of Victorian London. To a Genius like our Hero what could be easier than to borrow a bald wig from the theatre props basket, have your picture taken wearing it, then circulate it via the tabloids of the day? I'd wager a thousand golden groatimes that the Bard's real emma barnet was a virile thick blond thatch. And a thousand more that the Ladies couldn't keep their fingers off it.

Another thing the portraits tell us is that Shakespeare enjoyed excellent health. Unlike many celebrities of that time [when exactly?] he is not shown wearing a ruff – a large stiff collar that goes round the neck. These are still used today by vets who attach them to dogs, hence the name, to prevent self-biting. Health services were so poor in Shakespeare's time that even Queen Elizabeth and many dignitaries wore huge ruffs to stop them licking their sores, or worrying their rotten teeth. They also served as an oral chastity belt and wearers had to be served by servants with very long spoons and razors, which led to many accidents. Since Shakespeare is only shown wearing a soft collar it stands to reason that he must have been as fit as a fiddle due to a rigorous exercise regime based upon the velocipede. As well as being a devil of a snogger.

London

Shakespeare lived all his life in London. There is far too much to be said about this so let us focus instead on one key moment in his life that summarises above all others the Man, his City and his Genius. Not his hanging on a zip wire between two of the Towers of London to promote Romeo and Juliet. Nor his doomed attempt to grow a toll bridge made of flowers across the Thames which collapsed when the first dray horse set hoof on the plaited mesh of hustlers hedge that was his advisors' low cost solution to using stone and mortar.

Let us instead imagine him standing in the dead centre of Tower Bridge itself. He gazes to the East. Past the forests of proud-masted ships. Past the bloated hump of the Millennium Dome, so pregnant with possibility and prosperity for the People of our Proud Nation. But does he see something more? Something that ordinary, non-Genius mortals could never see? Something that only a transcendent visionary Genius can?

Does he see, with his keen eye and fecund imagination, an even brighter, richer, more resplendent future for the Capital? A future where commerce is not cabined, cribbed and confined [I like that!] by the narrow channel of the Thames but liberated by flying machines that can fill the skies above the Estuary itself? Mighty machines bringing countless cargoes of trophy and treasure from the five corners of the Earth? Does he see a rippling carpet of steel and concrete floating on the waves waiting to receive these wondrous flying machines in their eagerness to lay their eggy cargoes of

the fruits of the world at the City's feet?

As Our Genius wrote later, “a shadow of the dome of pleasure floats midway on the waves, a miracle of rare device: Bard Island! Buy shares now! Take my advice!”

And does Our Genius feel the Earth move at that moment? Does he notice how he himself is levitating with the joy of the Visionary? How his heart swells in his doublet? How his thighs strain in his hose? How his buskins are stretching further and further apart as...

The two rising bascules of the Bridge are lifting and separating the Genius' legs - one foot rested on the North side of the widening gap, the other firmly planted on the South. He too stubborn to obey the paltry laws of nature that constrain lesser mortals until...

What were Shakespeare's feelings as he plunged down into those crystal clear Thames waters behind the passing tramp steamer bringing coal and excrement from Newcastle?

Was he re-born, re-energised, re-assured, re-solute, and even faintly aroused by that glorious moment before splashdown?

We can never be sure... With characteristic modesty William Pppfeffel Mmerkin Shakespeare left no record of that transcendental appyfanny for us to treasure. Did He really feel all that? I for one am sure he did.

Feel all that. And more...

To be continued