

QUESTION 10

Do writers of Shakespeare's time identify him as an author of specific works?

Charles Whitworth

There are many references to Shakespeare as the author of specific works. For example, in 1598 Francis Meres lists a dozen plays by name, attributing them to Shakespeare, and praising the 'mellifluous and honey-tongued' poet for his *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and sonnets. In the same year the poet Richard Barnfield praises Shakespeare for those same narrative poems. At around the same time, John Weever, in a sonnet addressed to Shakespeare, mentions the poems and both '*Romeo*' and '*Richard*'; and the scholar Gabriel Harvey cites 'Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* ... *Lucrece*, and his tragedy of *Hamlet Prince of Denmark*'. But the earliest specific allusion occurs in a 1592 pamphlet by the writer Robert Greene, who warns fellow dramatists about the 'upstart crow' who 'with his *tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide*' imagines himself 'the only Shake-scene in a country'. The parody of a line from Act I of *Henry VI*, Part 3, and the pun on Shakespeare's name, linking him to the theatre, make the attribution unmistakable.

