

### Question 34

The 1623 Folio includes poems in praise of Shakespeare by other writers. Do these support Shakespeare's authorship of the works?

Ewan Fernie

The poems in praise of Shakespeare from the 1623 Folio couldn't do more to point at the man behind and indeed in the work.

Ben Jonson first meditates on the engraving of Shakespeare on the facing page, insisting a better likeness —the lively figure of his wit—is revealed not in 'his picture, but his book'.

In their 'Epistle to the Great Variety of Readers', Shakespeare's fellow actors Heminge and Condell speak of the care and pain they have taken to present Shakespeare's writings to the world 'as he conceived them'. And they, too, imagine Shakespeare's works as a triumph over death.

The consolation and joy in Jonson's chattier poem to the memory of his 'beloved, the Author' also derives from the continued life his friend enjoys in print, shaking a lance 'as brandish't at the eyes of ignorance'.

'Shake a lance' is a pun on Shakespeare of course. The 'eyes of ignorance' unsuspected by Jonson are those who dare to doubt he wrote the plays.