

THE ANATOMY MAN

(The Life and Times of John Caius, 1510 - 1573)

By Peter Hains

Dramatis Personae

Jo	A Caius student, present day
Con	An American tourist, present day
CREW	A cocky stage-hand, present day
John Caius	From birth to death
Alice, his mother	Originally from Yorkshire
Robert, his father	Originally from Yorkshire
Priest	Father Jackson, 40s
Alice Parker	40s Mother of Matthew Parker.
Four monks	30s
Doctor Buckenham	Master of Gonville Hall
Taxi Driver	Horse and cart taxi-man
Sophia	Accommodation Officer, Padua Uni
Andreas Vesalius	John's room-mate in Padua.
Four butchers	Padua
Four builders	Padua
Konrad Gesner	Swiss naturalist
Dog Breeder 1	Present day
Dog Breeder 2	Present day
Serving Girl, Mary	15 or so. John's niece from Norwich.
Patient	Adult, has had the Sweating Sickness

Scribes	'Reporters', collecting the news of the day	
Lady Frances Brandon	40s	
Lady Penelope Devereux	30s	
William Paulet, Marquess of Winchester	60s	
Sir Henry Courtenay	40s	
Lord Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke	40s	
Dr Warner, Teacher at Gonville Hall, early 20s		
Dr Spencer, Teacher at Gonville Hall, early 20s		
Dr Dorington, Teacher at Gonville Hall, early 20s		
Dr Bacon, Master of Gonville Hall, 50s		
Dr Bill, Master of Trinity	40s	
Dr Baker, Provost of Kings	40s	
Bursar	40s	
Lawyer	40s	
Head Porter	50s	
Librarian	30s	
Tobias Whyte, a student of the college	20s	
Builder1	30s	
Builder 2	30s	
Boy	Teens	
Dr Whitgift, a later Master of Trinity	40s	
Dr Goade, a later Provost of Kings	40s	
Chancellor of the University, Sir William Cecil	50s.	
Vice Chancellor of the University, Dr Brassie	50s.	

Directors may choose to use a small number of actors who rotate the parts and 'double' many roles. Even the role of John Caius could be performed by several different actors, especially if the character has elements of a distinctive costume which could be passed from actor to actor.

ACT ONE

MUSIC

Act 1 Scene 1 Cambridge Present day.

(Lights up on an empty stage)

(A student (Jo) cycles on wearing an academic gown and reading as s/he cycles...s/he stops, centre stage to turn over the page and to reflect on a particularly fascinating passage. The book is enormous and clearly marked 'Schopenhauer' on the front.)

Jo Wo... Man...Schopenhauer is like.... sick. So cool... 'Talent hits a target no one else can hit; genius hits a target no one else can see...' This is it. This is the real deal

(An american tourist (Con) enters, guide-book in hand. S/he sees the student, deep in thought...)

Con Excuse me...

Jo Yes...

Con Are you a student, here at Cambridge ?

Jo *(With false modesty)* I am.

Con Wow !

Jo Philosophy

Con Wow Could I get a picture with you ?

Jo Well

Con Please.... for my family back in Bugtussle, Kentucky.

Jo Well, I suppose so.

(A 'selfie' is taken).

Con Thank you so much ... Say, which college are you at ?

Jo I'm at Caius

Con Pardon me

(Stage-hand brings on a Gonville and Caius sign; they watch as s/he cleans it with spray polish and a cloth, looks at them and walks off. Stage hand has a t-shirt with 'CREW' on the back. Turns back to the audience, showing off. Indicates the word 'Crew' as a footballer might, to the crowd).

Jo I'm at Caius... Gonville and Caius *(indicating the sign)* ... this one.

Con I'll never get how you guys pronounce things over here ... That's Caius, like keys huh *(miming the operation of a key)* ?

Jo Exactly. Now, I

Con So what's with the two names ?

Jo It was founded twice: once by Gonville in the 14th century, and then by John Caius in the 16th century.....

Con Man, this country is so old

Jo It certainly is well, enjoy the rest of your stay. *(Rides off)*

Con Thanks ... bye *(s/he lingers by the sign, strokes it)*. John Caius huh, I'm going to look that guy up... *(exits)*

CREW *(Removes the Gonville and Caius sign)*

Act 1 Scene 2 Norfolk 1510

(As Con exits, s/he crosses with a woman in 16th century night-gown and night-cap, heavily pregnant, moving gingerly across the stage. The woman is Alice Keys, nee Woda, mother of John Caius).

Alice Ooooooh ! *(A contraction. She catches sight of the audience)* Oh, hello. What manner of crowd is this ? You look strange to me in your attire and your demeanour, like nothing I ever saw. You there *(she indicates a member of the audience)*. What is your name ? *(Receives the reply)*. And what year be this one that you live in ? *(Receives the reply, e.g. 2020)*. Then you be more than 500 years ahead of me and I am pitched into a nightmare vision perhaps brought to me by my condition. Oooh ... *(Contraction)*.

*(CREW, a bit too fond of him/her self, flirting with the audience, brings on a chair. Alice sits. CREW also hangs a framed portrait of the King and Queen somewhere prominent on stage. It could be stylised, or realistic, but it must be very clearly labelled: **Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon**, so that members of the audience can clearly read the caption. This picture will be changed throughout the action of the play, so that the audience will always know who is on the throne at any particular time. It will be part of the comedy, because, at times, it will change very quickly, but it will also be*

informative, giving the audience a clear idea of the turbulent times through which John Caus lived. The name of the King and Queen could be written on wooden 'sliders' which can be inserted into a slot at the side of the frame, emphasising that the Queens changed at high speed sometimes. Alternatively, a flip-chart might be used.)

I am with child, as you see. My name is Alice Keys and I live here, near Norwich, with my husband Robert. By birth we are Yorkshire folk but living here for the work..... My confinement is imminent. I feel it coming upon me. All the women of our village will come here to be with me in the house.... that is our way. Before I grew large, I made a pilgrimage to Walsingham and received a blessing for a safe labour.

(She burps)

Pardon me.... Ooh the heartburn is terrible..... and it's a worry, for if a mother has heartburn during the pregnancy, then it is said that she will have a baby covered all over in thick, coarse hair. I pray that my baby will be spared that affliction.

(The birth: The Director and cast may decide how to stage this. It will probably involve entry of a village crowd to 'help', observe, react etc and will end with the arrival of a 'baby' who is John Caius and able to speak to the audience as soon as he is born. Probably a male actor in baby clothes).

Baby John *(Brushing himself down)*. Well, I am here. Not such a bad birth... you hear such stories....

Alice Are you hairy ?

Baby John No, not too bad.

Alice My prayers were answered *(burps)* Ooh sorry.

Woman You should get some rest Mrs Keys

Others Yes, get some rest etc

Alice I'm going to have a little sleep John. Be a good boy. *(The villagers depart)*

Baby John So, I am John *(he has just heard his name for the first time)*, John Keys, and I certainly will be a good boy, and a very fine man, known all over Europe for my accomplishments and my discoveries, and, 500 years from now, people will still speak of me ... I had better make a start. *(Begins to exit with a determined stride, then stops himself in his tracks. Speaks directly out to the audience)* I can see the road stretching out ahead of me so clearly. It is almost as though I am able to look into the future ... *(Exit)*.

Alice *(Still recovering from giving birth)* Husband.....*(No reply)*.....Robert !

Robert *(Off)* Yes, my love.

Alice Get down to the church please and register the birth of our son.

Robert *(Off)* Yes, my sweet..... How are you feeling ?

Alice I am well.

Robert *(Entering)* Is the boy hairy ?

Alice No, and he is strong, with great ambition and considerable potential.

Robert ExcellentI will go to register the birth.

Alice And I shall return to my other wifely duties... *(One of the community women passes her a mixing bowl and spoon and she springs into action. Alice and the others exit).*

Robert *(Enters)* Father Jackson, are you there ?

Priest *(Off)* Coming my son.

Priest *(Enters hurriedly, clutching a large Parish Record ledger)* I take it that the child has arrived ?

Robert Yes father, a boy.

Priest Was he ?

Robert Hairy ? No, all fine. Mother and child thriving.

Priest Excellent. I look forward to seeing you all in church as soon as Alice is able. Now, the formalities. *(Opens his ledger and takes out a quill pen)*

 Full name of the child

Robert John Keys

Priest K-E-Y-S

Robert At the moment, yes.

Priest *(Gives him a quizzical look)* Parents' full names...

Robert Robert Keys and Alice Keys

Priest Mother's maiden name ?

Robert Woda W-O-D-A

Priest Birth took place in the Parish of St Etheldreda, Norwich.

 Date of birth ... today the 6th day of October in the year of our Lord, 15 hundred and 10.....

6th October is the feast day of St Faith, Robert. She was tortured to death on a red-hot brazier for her belief in christianity.

Robert Oh (Not quite sure what to make of that).

Priest Please pass on my best wishes to Alice, and this small flower *(He produces a tiny plant pot, with a single red flower in it; see the famous portrait of John Caius holding a flower-pot and red flower)*. It is a symbol of Saint Faith, and a small gift from the parish to Alice...

Robert *(Bemused)* Thank you, Father.... You are very kind

Priest *(Exits)*

Alice *(Enters)*

Robert Ah, wife, this flower is a gift for you from Father Jackson.

Alice *(Looks at it from every angle)* Marvellous. *(She puts the plant somewhere prominent on stage)*

Robert I have registered the birth of our son.

Alice Thank you husband. Not before time I think, for he is growing and growing every day.

John *(Enters, a full grown man, playing the part of a 5 year old, possibly in silly shorts)*. Good morning father, good morning mother.

Robert and Alice Good morning John

Robert You are certainly growing into a fine, well-made boy.

John Thank you father.

Robert Alice, we must send this boy to school.

Alice Indeed.

John That is good news father, for I have a passion for learning which I intend to pursue all my life. Which school shall I go to ?

Alice Nobody knows John.

John Pardon

Robert As your mother says: many academics will write accounts of your life in the future, but none of them will be sure where you went to school.

John *(Confused)* Right, thanks..... Well, I'm sure wherever I go I shall excel, because I have a passion for learning which I intend to pursue all my life.

Alice Yes...

Robert You said *(As in, 'no need to keep going on about it')*.

John Ah well.... Off I go then..... I'm off to school..... *(He exits, first one way, then stops himself, turns round and exits the other way).*

Robert Well Alice, I am glad that matter is resolved. I shall return now to my working life...

Alice Indeed John.

Alice P *(Enters and lingers at the side of the stage, getting her bearings)*

Robert *(Stage whisper)* Alice !

Alice *(Stage whisper)* Yes dear.

Robert *(Stage whisper)* I can see that Parker woman at the boundary of our property...

Alice *(Stage whisper)* Alice Parker, who left the village with her husband and young son, Matthew, 10 years ago ?

Robert *(Stage whisper)* The same... I will slip away over the wall and through the marsh to avoid casual chit-chat. Remember we heard that her husband had died 4 years ago Don't put your foot in it.

Alice *(Stage whisper)* Thank you husband.

Robert *(Exits. We hear the sound of his footsteps walking through the squelchy marsh).*

Alice P *(Moves centre stage)* Alice Keys, is that you ?

Alice *(Pretending to be surprised)* Alice Parker ... It is good to see you after your absence of ten years from the Norfolk village where we both used to live, well... I still do of course.

Alice P *(A bit confused)* Yes.

Alice How have you been, apart from the fact that your husband, Thomas, father of your son Matthew Parker, died four years ago? ... That was a low point obviously ... *(She forces a sad look).*

Alice P I have been well Alice. I have re-married, and my son, Matthew, has achieved great things in school. He so loves his books; he collects them wherever we go.... we call it his 'Little Parker Library...'

Alice How wonderful...

Alice P Yes, and next year he will move up to Corpus Christi College in Cambridge (*Uncomfortable pause*) and how has the world moved on while we have been away ?

Alice (*Rather nervous*) Well, in the last 10 years so much has happened...

Alice P For example ...

Alice Well ... Pineapples, coffee and chocolate have all arrived in Europe for the first time... the chocolate came from Mexico you know...; our king, Henry the Eighth has a healthy child at last, though a girl, Mary In Wittenberg, Germany, Martin Luther has been rejecting many of the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church ...; spectacles for the short-sighted have been invented and forks have been used for the first time.
That happened at a banquet in Venice.... (*She pauses, very proud of herself, expecting Alice P to be impressed*).

Alice P (*Looks amazed*) No dear, I actually meant what has been happening in the village while I have been away.

Alice (*Embarrassed*) Oh, sorry Alice, yes, of course... Well, nothing really.... Robert and I have a little boy, John, born back in 1510.

Alice P Ah, that is wonderful Alice, congratulations. Is he a good boy ?

Alice Yes, he is very mature. He has a passion for learning which he intends to pursue all his life.

Alice P Oh ...

(*Whistling heard off stage, approaching*).

Alice That could be John now.

John (*Enters*). Good morning mother.

Alice John, this is Mrs Parker, an old friend of mine who is revisiting the village. Her son Matthew is to be a student at Cambridge.

John That is also my ambition Mrs Parker. I know I am just a young boy at the moment, but I have been advised that, one day, I should go to study at Gonville Hall in Cambridge because it was established by a local man: Edmund Gonville, the Rector of Terrington St Clements Church.

Alice P (*Slightly disgusted*) He sounds a bit French...

Alice I believe they are of French stock.

John We must embrace our friends in Europe now Mrs Parker, after all, our king has married Catherine of Aragon, a Spaniard, and that seems to be going well.

Alice P Well, I must leave you now Alice. It has been so interesting to see you again, and to meet John. *(To John)* I am sure we will hear more of you young man.

John *(Bows)*

Alice Goodbye Alice.

Alice P *(Exits)*

John Well mother, this is an important day ... *(becomes emotional.... Picking up the red flower, in its pot)*... This plant has flowered continuously for the last 19 years, but now it is my turn to blossom ... I can delay no longer. I shall make my way to Cambridge, in order to begin my studies there without delay. I am almost 19 years old now, and already a good deal older than the average young man entering the university.

Alice *(Making a joke)* And what of the young women ?

John *(For a moment he thinks she's serious, then realizes she's joking).... The women..... going to university ... Oh mother (They both laugh uproariously; they exit, arm in arm, with John holding the flower-pot so that the audience can see he has taken it).*

(Lights fade to blackout).