

Note: The following article is excerpted from the Those Who Knew section of *Oxford's Voices*. Part 1 of the section explores Oxford's personal character. Part 2 quotes testimonies of love and admiration for the Earl of Oxford. Part 3 lists all the Voices' dedicatees, from which we may identify his closest friends. Some of Part 4 has been trimmed for this article, most heavily in the Ben Jonson, Thomas Dekker and Parnassus Plays chapters. The entire section provides a fuller experience and is accessible at [www.oxfordvoices.com](http://www.oxfordvoices.com). Voices' names are in **bold**. You may page from one topic to the next by searching on the carat symbol: ^ . To access a reference, just click on the associated asterisk (\*). You can return to your text page by clicking on the "Back" button.

#### ^PART 4: THOSE WHO KNEW ABOUT OXFORD'S VOICES

Many people who addressed or described Oxford in print seem to have hinted at a great but unsung man's literary achievements. It seems clear after many such passages that *something* mysterious was going on. Putting them all together produces a consistent picture, over many years, of a great writer whose product was not to be openly acknowledged. The Opening Argument offers numerous reasons for secrecy and why no one (aside from George Puttenham) dared plainly utter it.

The following 64 people (two of whom are the same person; see discussion of the Parnassus Plays in the Independent Writers section) appear to be among those who said enough, or omitted enough, in print to imply that they knew, to varying degrees, about Oxford's Voices. All these people are independent writers. If a discussion below constitutes a writer's only chapter, the name is rendered in CAPS. The names of writers who have chapters elsewhere are rendered in underlined Title Case, to alert you to that fact.

^PIERRE RONSARD (1524-1585) (refs. 1565, 1585)

On August 23, 1563, the thirteen-year-old Earl of Oxford wrote a letter in French to his warder, Sir William Cecil. In 1565, verses by the French poet Pierre Ronsard predicted that a slew of poets and playwrights would emerge from England. Bird\* postulated that Oxford accompanied Sir Thomas Smith on one of his early visits to Paris in his role as English ambassador. If so, he may have written his letter from there, and he may have met Ronsard. Here is a translation of Ronsard's forecast:

*Soon the proud Thames shall see  
A flock of white swans nesting on his grass...  
Uttering song which is the certain sign  
That many a Poet, and the heavenly troop  
Of sister Muses quitting Parnassus  
Shal take it for their gracious dwelling place,  
And tell the famous praise of England's Kings  
Unto the crowded nations of the world.*

Ronsard could have made his prediction if — and arguably only if — Oxford told him of his plan to issue poetry and history plays under numerous allonyms and offered examples of his work. At the time, the state of English poetry was woeful. By age fifteen, however, Oxford had already produced many songs and poems with Shakespearean aspects, and he had written at least six plays (see lists in the Summation), including at least one **Shakespeare**-precursor play, *The True Tragedie of Richard the third*, and perhaps *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* as well. These titles explain Ronsard's anticipation of future poets who would "tell the famous praise of England's Kings," a line that even borrows the word *famous* from Oxford's

*Henry the Fifth* title. If so, it proves that Oxford was fully conscious of his life's endeavor at age fifteen. The evidence in this book suggests that he may have conceived the idea as early as age nine or ten, when his first narrative came out under the name **T.H (Thomas Hackett)**.

Anderson suspected that during his visit to Paris in 1575, "De Vere probably also met the fifty-one-year-old poet Pierre de Ronsard — still considered to be one of the finest sonneteers in any language..."\* That hypothesis fits Oxford's intimacy with Ronsard's poetry, as described in the **Thomas Lodge** chapter, and the revelation from *Love's Labor's Lost* that "...**Shakespeare** thus knew about the introduction of academies into the French court, initiated by Ronsard...by 1574."\* At least two writers linked Oxford to Ronsard. Thomas Watson translated Ronsard for the book of poems he dedicated to Oxford in 1582, and Oxford's servant Morris Denys, writing as John Soowthern (see John Soowthern chapter) plundered Ronsard and Desportes for a tribute to Oxford as "Dever" in 1584.

When Ronsard edited the above-quoted poem just before his death in December 1585, he added the strikingly laudatory comment that Apollo and the Muses would settle on the Thames, "Displacing Greece." Ronsard must have believed that over the intervening two decades Oxford had achieved superiority over the finest Greek playwrights. According to some Oxfordians' estimates (see Gilvary\*), the last line of **Shakespeare's** first version of *Hamlet* had dried on the page sometime between 1583 and 1585.

^Gabriel Harvey (1552/3-1631) (refs. 1578, 1592-1597)

In his speech at Audley End in 1578, Gabriel Harvey referred to Oxford's many English and Latin verses (see quote in the Opening Argument) and seemed to say to his addressee, "your *will shakes spears*" (see **Shakespeare** chapter). From 1592 to 1597, Harvey dropped a hundred hints within his pamphlets that **Thomas Nashe**, **Robert Greene**, **Shakespeare** and the **Earl of Oxford** were linked. They are quoted over many pages in the **Thomas Nashe** chapter. An example is this passage from *A New Letter of Notable Contents* (1593), which refers to **Nashe** as Machiavelli and links him to works by three other Voices: **Shakespeare** (who wrote *Hamlet*), **Arthur Golding** (who wrote *Ovids Metamorphoses*) and **Robert Greene** (who issued four pamphlets about cony-catchers, or con men):

May they not surcease to wonder...how Machiavell can teach a *Prince to be, and not to be* religious?  
...what *Metamorphosis* should I terme it? ...whom shall he *cunnycatch*, or crossbite[?]

^Edmund Spenser (c.1552-1599) (refs. 1579, 1590, 1591, 1594)

Edmund Spenser refers to the Earl of Oxford as **Cuddie** in the August and October portions of *The Shepheardes Calender*. See the **Cuddie** chapter for a discussion of Oxford's lone contribution to that publication. Spenser's treatment of **Cuddie** shows that he knew the Earl of Oxford was a prolific poet and playwright. Texts within the October Eglogue, *The Faerie Queene* (1590), *Tears of the Muses* (1591) and *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* (1594) seem to refer to Oxford as well.

*The October Eglogue in The Shepheardes Calender* (completed 1579, pub. 1590)

In the October Eglogue, Spenser dramatizes an argument between Gabriel Harvey and Oxford under the names Piers and Cuddie. In stark contrast to **Cuddie's** "heavy lay" in the August Eglogue, the text here sports none of the Voices' usual terms and phrases. It contains non-Voice word spellings, such as *soote* for *sweet*.

The Argument preceding the exchange announces, "In Cuddie is set out the perfect patern of a Poet." Cuddie complains, "I have pyped erst so long," indicating that he has been writing poetry for some time. He receives no notice for his pains, complaining, "They han the pleasure, I a sclender prise." Numerous Voices use that balanced structure, as quoted in the **Earl of Oxford** chapter.

Just as Gabriel Harvey did at the outset in his address to the Earl of Oxford at Audley End in July 1578, Piers begins by being complimentary, comparing Cuddie to Orpheus, whose music was so excellent that it charmed Pluto and Proserpina to release his deceased wife from Hell. Piers laments, “thou in sleepe art deade,” presaging “pleasant Willy...dead of late” from *Tears of the Muses* (see quote below). Then comes the payoff, which Ward noticed, and about which Clark wrote in 1933:

In the next two stanzas of the eclogue, Pierce admonishes Cuddie in language so akin to Harvey’s Latin address to the Earl of Oxford at Audley End (contemporaneous with the writing of the “Shepherd’s Calendar”), that I am constrained to believe that it is intended for the same person, a parallel which has been called to my attention by Captain B.M. Ward, author of *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* (1928):

*Piers.* Abandon then the base and viler clowne,  
Lyft up thy selfe out of the lowly dust:  
And sing of bloody Mars, of wars, of giusts [jousts],  
Turne thee to those that weld the awful crowne,  
To doubted knights, whose woundlesse armour rusts,  
And helmes unbruzed wexen dayly browne.

There may thy Muse display her fluttering wing,  
And stretch her selfe at large from East to West:  
Whither thou list in faire Elisa rest,  
Or if thee please in bigger notes to sing,  
Advance the worthie whom she loveth best, [i.e. Leicester]  
That first the white beare to the stake did bring.

And when the stubborne stroke of stronger stounds,  
Has somewhat slackt the tenor of thy string:  
Of love and lustihead tho maist thou sing,  
And carroll lowed, and leade the Millers rounde,  
All were Elisa one of thilke same ring,  
So mought our Cuddies name to heaven sownde.

When Spenser, through Pierce, says to Cuddie, “Abandon then the base and viler clowne,” together with the two succeeding lines, we have the interpretation of Harvey’s request to Oxford to give up the “writings that serve no useful purpose.” The word “clowne” clearly suggests stage plays, and the adjectives associated with it indicate the lowly place held by the stage and drama in Elizabethan society. As Spenser begs Cuddie to “sing of Mars, of wars, of giusts,” so Harvey assures Oxford, “now is the time for thee to sharpen the spear and handle great engines of war.” The similarity of thought between Spenser’s poem and Harvey’s Latin address to the Earl of Oxford, contemporaneous as they were, is so striking that it is obvious both were addressed to the same person.\*

Spenser, as noted in the Edmund Spenser chapter, was one of Harvey’s closest friends. He knew of Harvey’s entreaty to the Earl of Oxford, and he echoes it in the mouth of Piers.

Is Spenser seriously seconding Harvey’s call to action, or is he providing a forum for Oxford to reply to Harvey? Cuddie responds that he could well write of martial matters, but he cares not to:

How I could reare the Muse on stately stage,  
And teach her tread aloft in bis-kin fine,  
With quaint Bellona in her equipage.  
But ah my courage cooles ere it be warme,  
For thy, content us in this humble shade:  
Where no such troublous tides can us assaide,  
Here we our slender pipes may safely charme.

Thereafter, Piers acquiesces. So, in the end, all three shepherds *turn away from Harvey's suggestion*. In short, Spenser has given Oxford a forum in which to register a reply to Harvey in the negative and to frame the scene so that Harvey accepts it.

Subsequently, Oxford refrained for some time to pen war stories and rather continued in the “sweet” direction with the second book by **John Lyly** and the romances of **Robert Greene** and **Thomas Lodge**. After Christopher Marlowe came out with *Tamburlaine*, however, Oxford challenged its ethic by writing several plays of war under the names **Robert Greene** and **George Peele** (see the **Robert Greene** chapter's discussions of *Alphonsus* and *Selimus*).

#### *The Faerie Queene* (1590)

A number of dedicatory poems preface Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590). The one addressed “To the right Honourable the Earle of Oxenford, Lord high Chamberlayne of England. &c.” seems to imply that Spenser has written clandestinely within his great poem about Oxford and the house of Vere. He writes,

Sith th'antique glory of thine auncestry  
Under a shady vele is therein writ,  
And eke thine owne long living memory....

I have not studied *The Faerie Queene* for any such allegory. If one is there, I would like to know about it.

#### *Tears of the Muses* (1591)

In *Tears of the Muses* (1591), Spenser has the Muse Thalia say this about the recently silent theatres and “Our pleasant Willy”:

Where be the sweete delights of learnings treasure  
That wont with Comick sock to beautefie  
The painted Theaters, and fill with pleasure  
The listners eyes and eares with melodie;  
...And those sweete wits, which wont the like to frame, [“wits” might refer to multiple Voices]  
Are now despisd, and made a laughing game. [due to Oxford's disgraces?]

And he, the man whom Nature selfe had made  
To mock her selfe, and Truth to imitate,  
With kindly counter under Mimick shade, [one source\* footnotes *counter* as meaning *counterfeit*;  
Oxford is under the *shade* of his pseudonym]  
Our pleasant Willy, ah! is dead of late: [Oxford hasn't penned a play lately]  
With whom all joy and jolly merriment [he writes comedies]  
Is also deaded, and in dolour drent.

But that same gentle Spirit, from whose pen  
 Large streames of honnie and sweete Nectar flowe, [“large streames” indicates that Spenser knew of  
 Oxford’s voluminous output under various Voices]  
 Scorning the boldness of such base-borne men,  
 Which dare their follies forth so rashlie throwe, [**Thomas Nashe**, in the preface to **Greene’s Menaphon**,  
 issued just two years earlier, had railed against Thomas Kyd, whom one may characterize as a “base-  
 borne” man, who “rashlie” and with “boldness” “threw” out the “follies” of his *Verses Of Prayse and  
 Joye, The Householders Philosophie* and *Cornelia*; this is the only context that fits Spenser’s line, and  
 it fits only in the context of the story uncovered in the [**Thomas Kyd**] chapter]  
 Doth rather choose to sit in idle Cell, [as did Euphues, whom Munday equated with Oxford; see **John  
 Lyly** chapter]  
 Than so himselfe to mockerie to sell.

Some scholars have identified Willy as the deceased Richard Tarleton, but the phrase “dead of late”  
 better fits the idea of someone who is only temporarily absent. Ward\* thought Willy stood for Philip Sidney,  
 but the second and third lines quoted above laud Willy as a comic playwright, and Sidney was neither a  
 comic nor a playwright.

Most orthodox scholars have identified Willy as the actual John Lyly, because **John Lyly** was the  
 premier comedy writer of the 1580s. The usual faulty context has caused traditional scholars to eliminate  
**Shakespeare** as a candidate. As one of them explained, “the withdrawal to inactivity of a dramatist (safely  
 identifiable with Lyly) has been rashly referred to Shakespeare — who cannot, by 1590, be clearly shown  
 to have produced a single comedy.”\* Another critic asserted that as a reference to the Bard it is “an utter  
 impossibility chronologically and bibliographically,”\* so, once again, Willy can only be Lyly. Why, then,  
 if such is the case, would Spenser not simply have called him “Our pleasant Lyly”? Palgrave reluctantly  
 admitted, “To us, indeed, the gentle Spirit... must seem to be Shakespeare, and Shakespeare only, by natural  
 right.”\* These attributions to **Lyly** and **Shakespeare** are both wrong and right, because “Willy” is Oxford.

**Thomas Nashe** did not debut until 1589, so the seeming reference to **Nashe’s** outburst dates this line  
 to 1589 or later, fitting the 1591 publication date of the poem. But Grosart,\* noting verbal parallels, dated the  
 composition of *Teares of the Muses* to the time of *The Shepheardes Calender*: 1579-1580. His conclusion is  
 hardly definitive, but the idea of Willy suddenly giving up acting and becoming silent does fit Oxford’s life  
 at that time. (We can omit the idea that “solitary cell” refers to Oxford’s imprisonment in the Tower in the  
 second quarter of 1581, because he did not choose to be there.) According to Clark’s dating (see **Shakespeare**  
 chapter), many of **Shakespeare’s** plays first appeared in 1577-1579, after which there is a hiatus. Some of  
 the plays from that era, moreover, are comedies, fitting Spenser’s reference to “joy and jolly merriment.”  
 Oxford took a break from writing plays at that time probably because it took all his available time to compose  
 the prose masterpiece, *Euphues. The Anatomy of Wyt*, issued in the name of **John Lyly**, which he finished in  
 December 1579. If Spenser saw the manuscript of *Euphues*, it would explain his lament over Willy’s lying  
 “in idle Cell,” as Euphues himself does at the end of the story. If Grosart’s dating is correct, and if Spenser  
 did refer to **Nashe’s** tirade of 1589, he might have added that line nearer the date of publication.

*Colin Clouts Come Home Again* (1594)

In *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* (1594), Spenser’s words are mostly too vague to pin down, but  
 one writer discerned praise for four works by three Voices:

*Colin Clout* alludes to two minor epics, Raleigh's *Ocean To Cynthia* (c.1592) and **Samuel Daniel's** *Complaynt of Rosamond* (1592); it probably also alludes to the genre's inventor, **Thomas Lodge**, perhaps even his epyllion, *Scylla's Metamorphosis* (1589); and finally, it may allude to **Shakespeare's** two epyllia, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1593, 1594)."\*

Spenser praises another poet, who is generally presumed to be Michael Drayton:

And here, though last not least is Aetion,  
A gentler shepheard may nowhere be found:  
Whose Muse, full of high thoughts invention,  
Doth, like himselfe, heroically sound.

According to some critics, however, for these words "Spenser has been credited with making one of the earliest allusions to **Shakespeare.**"\* Brazil\* noted that the Vere family's coat of arms is topped with an eagle, and *aetion* is the Greek word for eagle.

Looney, however, dispensed with this interpretation a century ago: "When, however, in the following lines he places Philip Sidney first amongst the poets to whom he is alluding, we cannot accept 'Aetion' as **Shakespeare**...without discrediting Spenser's judgment."\* I agree.

^Anthony Munday (1553-1633) (ref. 1580)

As related in the **John Lyly** chapter, Anthony Munday's *Zelauto* came out in 1580, just after the publication of **Lyly's** second Euphues book. In it, Munday describes himself as "A.M. Servaunt to the Right Honourable the Earle of Oxenford." In his dedication to "Edward de Vere, Earle of Oxenford," he writes that his book is "Given for a frendly entertainment to Euphues, at his late arivall into England." In the final line of the novel, he repeats, "thus I byd Euphues hartily welcome into England." In the orthodox context, Munday is saying that Lyly modeled Euphues on the Earl of Oxford. In our context, he is implying that Oxford wrote the tales of Euphues in John Lyly's name. Oxford's personal secretary would have known that Oxford published through Voices. For more on Munday, see the [**Anthony Munday**] chapter.

^William Gager (1555–1622) (ref. 1583)

Dr. William Gager was Oxford's friend at Christ Church, Oxford. In 1583, **George Peele** seems to have directed two plays by Gager, a comedy, *Rivales*, and a tragedy, *Dido*, for the entertainment of a Polish dignitary. Gager wrote two poems to **George Peele**, one admiring and the other including a fanciful and humorous (non) description of him, indicating that he knew **Peele** was a Voice. In one of them, he praises one of Oxford's Voices and implies that there are others. As translated from the Latin, it reads, "**Golding** is golden, purer than clear water, *and there are many others (whom I don't wish to name here)* whom neither their death-day nor wrinkled, hoary old age can take away, whom gnawing envy cannot devour." For a fuller discussion, see the **George Peele** and William Gager chapters.

^John Soowthern (pseudonym of Morriss Denys) (ref. 1584)

In *Pandora* (1584), John Soowthern praises Oxford, saying "Dever merits a sylver pen.... I swear Dever tis thee,/ That art ornament of England." (See extensive excerpt in the Opening Argument.) Soowthern's words indicate that Oxford was the ornament of England at least partly because of his writing. With so little literature attached to Oxford's name, Soowthern must have known of his Voices. See also the John Soowthern chapter.

^THOMAS VAVASOR (1560–1620) (hint: 1585)

In January 1585, soldier and parliamentarian Thomas Vavasor, upset that Oxford had impregnated his elder sister Anne, sent Oxford a written challenge to a duel. He began (as rendered in modern English by Nina Green and posted at [www.shakespeare-oxford.com](http://www.shakespeare-oxford.com)), “If thy body had been as deformed as thy mind is dishonourable, my house had been yet unspotted, and thyself remained with thy cowardice unknown. I speak this that I fear thou art so much wedded to that shadow of thine that nothing can have force to awake thy base and sleepy spirits.” What is the meaning of “that shadow of thine”? It could refer to an associate of Oxford’s or to Oxford’s “decayed reputation,” to which Vavasor refers later in his missive. But perhaps it is a reference to Oxford’s role as an obsessively prolific ghost writer, an occupation that Vavasor might have feared occupied his enemy so thoroughly that it would keep him from the proposed fight.

^William Webbe (ref. 1586)

William Webbe’s *A Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586) identifies the Earl of Oxford as the “most excellent” among all court poets. He could have come to this conclusion from the few verses attached to Oxford’s name or initials, but more likely he knew that Oxford published under numerous allonyms.

^WILLIAM RANKINS (refs. 1587, 1588, 1598)

William Rankins may not have known Oxford. But if he did, he would not have liked him. His satires take aim at the literary arts and artists.

Rankins’ first publication, *A Mirrour of Monsters* (1587), denigrates plays and players. His second, *The English Ape* (1588), denigrates Englishmen who adopt Italian or French fashions. His third, *Seaven Satyres* (1598), mocks a character who writes “songs and sonnets” and falls for a tricked-up “players boy.”

Rankins’ first book is quoted in the Opening Argument of this book. His third book skewers the “gilded Braggadochio,” the “Artelesse mome bewitched with praise [for] a patched Pamphlet,” “his lines... peest with Ovids excrements,” his “rude rimes” and the way the writer “sonnets forth her beauty to the skyes.” He continues,

Take him within the streete, he is a Lord,  
And in a Taverne better than a king,  
With thousand brags heele bewtifie the boord,  
But in his purse the beggars bell doth ring,  
Yet once a yeere (as Cookoes use to sing:)  
He hath a little stipendary gold,  
Which sum, is spent before it can be told.

It is at least possible that Rankins had Oxford in mind. Oxford wrote plays, supported players, adopted Italian fashion, wrote songs and sonnets, was accused by Charles Arundell of pederasty, told wild stories that involved braggadocio (see **Edward Webbe** chapter), wrote pamphlets, drew from Ovid, made rhymes, wrote poems to women’s beauty, was a Lord, knew his way around a tavern, entertained at the dinner table (see Opening Argument), had by that time had lost much of his fortune, was accused of being a cuckold (for whom the cuckoo speaks, according to **Shakespeare**), had begun receiving an annual stipend from the Queen (see **William Warner** chapter) and spent it. Rankins identifies his target as “Lollus, a gentleman made ploughmans sonne,” which does not fit, except that the rest of the line is, “Who rightly from his birth-right never swarv’d.”

^George Puttenham (1529-1590) (ref. 1589)

In *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham lists the Earl of Oxford first among poets, first among writers of comedic plays and first among “many notable Gentlemen in the Court that have written commendably and suppressed it agayne, or els suffred it to be publisht without their owne names to it...” (See expanded quotes in the Opening Argument.) Puttenham clearly knew that Oxford wrote under allonyms.

^Anonymous Author of *The Cobler of Canterburie* (ref. 1590)

As noted in the **Robin Goodfellow** chapter, the anonymous author of *The Cobler of Canterburie* (see Independent Writers section) reports that his pamphlet, which is an “invective against Tarltons newes out of Purgatorie...might for my vaine, match **Lilly, Greene**, or any other in excellency of prose.” His sentence links three Voices: **John Lyly, Robert Greene** and **Robin Goodfellow**.

^Philip Henslowe (records 1592-1609)

Theatre owner Philip Henslowe kept a diary of his professional activities from 1592 to 1609. In it, he recorded payments for services, naming numerous playwrights in the process. His loosely organized play factory employed about twenty dramatists who wrote independently of Oxford. They include Francis Beaumont, George Chapman, Henry Chettle, John Day, Thomas Dekker, Michael Drayton, John Fletcher, Richard Hathwaye, Thomas Heywood, William Haughton, John Marston, Thomas Middleton, Anthony Munday, Henry Porter, Samuel Rowley, Wentworth Smith, John Webster and Robert Wilson. Many of Henslowe’s playwrights collaborated, although a few worked alone.

Henslowe staged several plays written by **Shakespeare**, but **Shakespeare**’s name is absent from his voluminous notes, even though his notes cover precisely the seventeen-year period during which — according to orthodoxy — Will Shaksper came to London and towered over his colleagues. The absence of any mention of **Shakespeare** in Henslowe’s diary is a serious strike against the traditional story but fits our cases not only for the true author’s anonymity but also for his independence from collaborators, as argued in the **Shakespeare** chapter.

It is a striking fact that Henslowe recorded the names of not one of Oxford’s playwriting Voices: not **Lyly**, not **Greene**, not **Lodge**, not **Peele**, not **Shakespeare**. He put on plays later attributed to **Robert Greene**, but he does not mention him by name. Henslowe’s purported mentions of **Thomas Nashe** turned out to be forgeries by John Payne Collier (see **Thomas Nashe** chapter).

I think Henslowe knew the true source of the Voices’ plays. That’s why he left Oxford’s name and the Voices’ names out of his records.

^Fulke Greville (1554-1628) (records: 1592, 1606-1628)

We may surmise that Fulke Greville knew that **Shakespeare** was a pseudonym, because of his stunning failure to say anything about **Shakespeare** or Will Shaksper of Stratford despite undeniable knowledge and ample opportunity to do so:

Fulke Greville was also a serious poet and dramatist. ...Greville preferred the company of poets and philosophers, and his closest friends were the poets Edward Dyer and Philip Sidney. Greville was also acquainted with John Florio, Edmund Spenser, and Ben Jonson. ...He was related to the Ardens, the family of Shakespeare’s mother, and displayed the arms of the Arden family on his own coat-of-arms (Adams 451). ...In 1592 he, Sir Thomas Lucy, and five others were appointed to a Commission to report on those who refused to attend church. In September of that year, the Commission reported to



the Privy Council that nine men in the parish of Stratford-upon-Avon had not attended church at least once a month. Among the nine was John Shakespeare, father of William (M. Eccles 33). Throughout his life Fulke Greville sought preferment at court, and eventually became Chancellor of the Exchequer and Treasurer of the Navy. On the death of his father in 1606, Fulke Greville was appointed to the office his father had held — Recorder of Warwick and Stratford-upon-Avon, and remained in it until his death in 1628. In this position he could hardly have been unaware of the Shakespeare family. ... Yet nowhere in any of Fulke Greville's reminiscences, or in the letters he wrote or received, is there any mention of the well-known poet and playwright, William Shakespeare, who supposedly lived a few miles away. Charlotte Stopes wrote: "It is always considered strange that such a man should not have mentioned Shakespeare" (1907, 171).\*

Greville was a poet and playwright who could not possibly have been unaware of his fellow poet and playwright **Shakespeare** or of Will Shaksper, denizen of the very town Greville served. Yet he never mentioned either name, either in surviving private correspondence or in his official capacity as official Recorder of Stratford-upon-Avon. The only sensible conclusion is that he chose not to mention either name for a reason unavailable within the orthodox context.

Oxford and Greville, fellow poets and playwrights, knew each other. Greville helped Oxford quell the flames of a house that caught fire from the mock battle scene Oxford staged in August 18, 1572.\* "Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, describes Oxford in early 1579 as 'Superlative in the Princes [Queen's] favour.'"\* In August 1579, Greville meticulously described for posterity the tennis-court quarrel between Oxford and Greville's close friend, Philip Sidney. After Oxford died, Greville's family bought King's Place from Oxford's widow, Elizabeth Trentham. He would have known that Oxford was behind the name **Shakespeare** and many other Voices.

^Thomas Edwards (ref. 1595)

Thomas Edwards wrote two narrative poems, *Cephalus and Procris* and *Narcissus*. He registered the first title on October 22, 1593, and he published the combined titles in 1595. Following *Narcissus* is a poem titled "L'Envoy to Narcissus." L'envoy is a clarifying addendum, per Adriano de Armado's explanation in **Shakespeare's** *Love's Labor's Lost* (III,i). Edwards might well have referred to the Earl of Oxford as Narcissus, because two of Oxford's Voices had told his story: **T.H. (Thomas Hackett)** in *Ovids fable of Narcissus* (1560), and **John Clapham** in *Narcissus* (1591).

Within this poem, Edwards "refers in appreciative terms to Spenser, **Daniel**, Watson, and Marlowe under the names 'Collyn,' 'Rosamond,' 'Amintas,' and 'Leander.' 'Adon,' another of Edwards's heroes, is probably **Shakespeare**."\* Buckley dispensed with that equivocation, saying, "It stands here *no doubt* for the great Poet himself,"\* whose *Venus and Adonis* had been published just six months before Edwards registered his poem. Edwards "laments the fact that *Amintas* (Thomas Watson) and *Leander* (Christopher Marlowe) are 'gone' — both of these poets having died by June 1, 1593."\* His stanza on **Shakespeare** reads as follows:

Adon deafly masking thro  
Stately troupes rich conceited,  
Shew'd he well deserved to,  
Loves delight on him to gaze,  
And had not love her selfe intreated,  
Other nymphs had sent him baies.

The key points of information here are that **Shakespeare** (“Adon”), in disguise (“deafly” = obscurely), acted on stage (as Buckley explained, “‘Maskt’ was used before...for acting”\*) with players of stature (“Stately troupes”) in lavish (“rich conceited”) productions, attended by Queen Elizabeth (“Love” and “lover her self” = Venus of *Venus and Adonis* = Elizabeth), who loved attending his plays (“delight on him to gaze”) and who arranged it (“intreated”) so as to keep “Other nymphs” from singing his praises (sending him “baies”). The first and final two lines imply that had Oxford not worked in obscurity for the advancement of Elizabeth’s reign, he would have been celebrated openly. An alternative, or additional, interpretation of the last two lines is that Love/Venus/Elizabeth “intreated” Oxford amorously, keeping rival ladies at bay.

These lines belie the notion that **Shakespeare** had been treading the boards in front of groundlings at the public theatres. He wrote to celebrate and delight the Queen.

The next two stanzas are the ones that matter most. Here Edwards speaks of a quintessential but unnamed poet in terms that perfectly fit the Oxfordian case.

Although the first publisher of Edwards’ obscure works in 1882 considered Edwards’ hints “so vague as to make identification a mere matter of conjecture,”\* he and his colleagues explored this unknown poet’s identity. They came up with ten names for consideration: Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst; Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex; Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton; Lord Robert Dudley, son of the Earl of Leicester; Francis Bacon; Michael Drayton; Robert Southwell; William Shakspeare; Fulke Grevile; and Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

Of the last of these names he wrote, “If ‘*purple robes*’ may mean a Nobleman’s robes, it gives some colour to the conjectures of Professor Dowden, that Vere, Earl of Oxford, may have been intended, ‘as his reputation stood high as a Poet, and Patron of Poets [and his] ‘power flowed far,’ as he was Lord High Chamberlain of England.”\* Nevertheless, Buckley avoided that conclusion and proceeded to dismiss all but two of the candidates, leaving Sackville, whom he preferred, and Bacon. Furnivall gave up, sighing, “none of us can suggest a man for this center hero.”\*

In 1948, Barrell expanded Dowden’s case that Edwards was describing the Earl of Oxford, although along with a Dr. B. Nicholson cited by Buckley, he believed that the two stanzas were designed to continue the preceding description of **Shakespeare**, quoted above. Buckley and most of his colleagues did not see it that way, and neither do I, because Edwards shifts gears in saying, “I have heard” of an unnamed poet. Even so, one can sympathize with Barrell’s frustration over the willful deafness of orthodoxy:

in the 1909 edition of *The Shakespeare Allusion Book*, Volume I, page 25. L. Toulamin Smith, one of the editors, adds this footnote: “The two stanzas referring to ‘one whose power floweth far’ I insert, but he has not been identified.” Editor Smith’s footnote has a familiar ring. It is another admission by a recognized Stratfordian expert that any such contemporary allusion as this to a “Shakespeare” who was obviously of premier social rank and Court influence when *Venus and Adonis* was published, is too inexplicable to warrant investigation.\*

Read the two stanzas in question, and then we will expand upon the observations of Dowden, Buckley and Barrell:

Eke in purple roabes destain’d,  
Amid’st the Center of this clime,  
I have heard saie doth remaine,  
One whose power floweth far,  
*That should have bene of our rime,*  
*The only object and the star.*

Well could his bewitching pen  
Done [present] the Muses objects to us,  
Although he differs much from men  
Tilting under Frieries,  
Yet his golden art might woo us,  
To have honored him with baies.

Everything here points to Oxford, and nothing points away from him.

By law, purple was a color to be worn only by royalty, nobility and Knights of the Garter. By a statute enacted by Henry VIII, “None shall wear in his apparel Any silk of the color purple...but only the King, Queen, King’s [relatives,] dukes, marquises, and earls...and those of the Garter, purple in mantles only.”\* Almost uniquely among prolific issuers of literature in the Elizabethan age, the Earl of Oxford was privileged to wear purple.

The robes, moreover, are described as *destain’d*; “The verb *distain* [means] to take the colour out of a stuff, to sully, to dishonor...”\* By 1593, Oxford’s ruined estate and his theatrical activities had sullied his reputation in the minds of some of his peers. So, these words fit him exceptionally well.

Buckley considered that “the Center of this clime” could mean the geographical center of the midlands of England, the cultural center of London. He further mused, “he must be looked for ‘*amidst*’ the center of this clime, not *in* or *at* but merely ‘*amidst*,’ as if one of a body or company such as the frequenters of a court would be.”\* These words do fit a courtier, but they also nicely fit the case set forth in this book that Oxford fronted for many literary Voices. A premier writer would typically be characterized as being *at* the center, but only Oxford existed *amidst* the gaggle literary personae he created and perhaps those he inspired as well.

The poet’s anonymity in Edwards’ coverage is unique. Buckley recognized, “There must have been some reason why...*he could not be openly designated* by any poetical title, as [*the*] others were...”\* Indeed, Oxford’s rank and the taboo against nobility participating in the theatre along with the likelihood that his activities were a state secret — an open one, perhaps, but with disclosure brutally punishable — provide excellent reasons for the required anonymity (see Opening Argument for more reasons for secrecy).

The poet in question “doth remaine”; in other words, he is still alive. Buckley allowed that there is “a special force in the words, ‘*I have heard say doth remaine*,’ as a star of that magnitude would be sure to reappear more brightly.”\* Oxford’s name could not shine brightly while hiding behind personae, and he seems to have been the type of person that Edwards would not, and apparently did not, know personally. He does not seem to have known that **Daniel** and **Shakespeare** were Voices, either. One must allow, however, that the separate listing of those Voices and the words, “I have heard saie,” may have been designed as a smokescreen behind which to hide. Buckley figured “...Thomas Edwards may have been in [on] the secret also...”\*

The poet is a man “whose power floweth far,” suggesting not a person of narrowly constrained power like, say, the mayor of London but one whose political power and cultural influence extended widely. Buckley conjectured that the power in question was “perhaps gained by the practice of law,”\* which fits Oxford, who attended Gray’s Inn.

This person, declares Edwards, *should have been* hailed as *the only star* of English poetry! That is a remarkable statement. In other words, the unnamed poet soars so far above Spenser, Marlowe, Watson and Sidney — otherwise the most accomplished poets of the day — that he inhabits a higher atmospheric layer. The past perfect tense of his words indicates a long period in which the poet’s praise has been neglected. He cannot possibly be referring to orthodoxy’s William Shakespeare, who had debuted just months before

Edwards registered his book. But he can be referring to Oxford, who by then had produced 34 years' worth of literary output.

This book shows that the Earl of Oxford wrote by far the most and the best poetry of the Elizabethan era, making him worthy of Edwards' description as "the only star." The Veres' battle shield, by the way, features a single star, fitting Edwards' choice of words in yet another way.

In the second stanza, Edwards confirms that the person in question is a playwright, who with his "bewitching pen" brought the Muses' objects — his plays — to us. Yet "he differs much from" the usual sort that put on plays. Buckley zeroed in on traits this unusual person must have had: "he must have been a person of noble birth — not like actors, clothed for a few hours with the trappings of royalty and rank...and of high natural and acquired mental endowments."\* This depiction fits Oxford perfectly.

Edwards refers to "Frieries," suggesting Blackfriars, the former monastery converted to a theatre that Oxford in 1584 leased in the name of his secretary, John Lyly. Blackfriars "was one of the theatres of the company to which **Shakespeare** belonged."\* Furnivall allowed, "*tilting* is like [**William**] **Warner's** *tilt*, [meaning] show in writing,"\* so "Tilting under Frieries" could mean staging shows at Blackfriars. Stritmatter\* alternatively proposed that the phrase refers to the extended conflict in which Oxford and Thomas Knyvet and their men engaged in swordfighting in the area near Blackfriars in 1582-83. If that were the case, I think Edwards would have chosen the word *near* rather than *under* and some word other than *tilting*, such as *dueling*. Whichever interpretation one chooses, it points to Oxford. Edwards may even have been clever enough to imply both meanings at once.

In his final two lines, Edwards seems to hold out hope that England will "Yet" honor this unnamed poet-playwright as he deserves, with bays, signaling the pinnacle of literary accomplishment. It never happened.

Edwards must be considered an exceptionally reliable reporter because he is neither a fawner nor an attacker. His review is balanced. He praises Oxford in all the right ways and honestly conveys his reduced social status.

One fact initially might seem to contradict the case. The Thomas Edwards chapter relates that in 1596, **Thomas Nashe** disparages *Cephalus and Procris*. Had Oxford interpreted these laudatory stanzas of "L'Envoy to Narcissus" as referring to himself, he surely would not have been so hard on the poem. We can allay this concern. **Nashe** delivered his blast only for the purpose of attacking Gabriel Harvey and his protégés, Barnabe Barnes, John Thorius and Anthony Chute. He had reason to be annoyed with Chute, because "Pierces Supererogation contains two poems by Chute and letters in which he praises Harvey and lambasts Nashe."\* In his long disparagement of Chute — who had died the previous year — **Nashe** misattributes *Cephalus and Procris* to him. He never even mentions Thomas Edwards. From this error, it is obvious that **Nashe**, and therefore Oxford, had not seen Edwards' book, much less "L'envoy" within it. It is too bad, because he would have appreciated Edwards' respectful words.

^W.C. (WILLIAM CLERKE) (formerly William Covell) (ref. 1595)

William Clerke was on the Cambridge University rolls from 1575 to 1582 and was a Fellow of Queens' College. William Covell (d.1613) was a Cambridge-educated churchman who wrote religious tracts dating from 1603 to 1606. One of these men is the "W.C." who authored *Polimanteia, or...the fall of a commonwealth*, published in 1595 at Cambridge.

Earlier references, such as the DNB, attributed the book to William Clerke. *Polimanteia*, like William Covell's known books, contains religious material throughout, but it predates his known books by eight years. It has been reported that *Polimanteia* is "now proven by the Bodleian Library to have been written

by William Clerke....”<sup>\*</sup> Throughout this book, I will refer to the author as W.C. (William Clerke) unless and until that identity becomes negated.

W.C.’s volume ends with “A letter from England to her three daughters, Cambridge, Oxford, Innes of Court.” This portion of the book famously contains a few pages of poetic criticism and a rare reference to **Shakespeare**.

Clue-chasers have smelled something important about the manner of this reference. Oxfordians have pointed out that W.C. writes the Bard’s name with a hyphen, as “**Shak-speare**.” Stratfordians have countered that the hyphen was required to fit the name in the margin, where it appears. Oxfordians have replied that W.C. could have fit it on one line had he had wanted to do so.

One Oxfordian stated, “I believe that the curious margin notes about ‘Lucrecia/ Sweet Shak-/ speare’ and ‘Eloquent/ Gaveston,’ *which aren’t obviously associated with the text to their right*, were compositors’ errors.”<sup>\*</sup>

On the contrary, the thesis of Oxford’s Voices allows us to see that W.C.’s marginal notes are in fact intimately associated with the main text to the right. W.C.’s few words celebrate the works of a single author.

### **W.C. Links Three Voices and Five of Their Works**

Here is the text, reproduced as it appears on the page. In the left margin are words stacked as follows (italics in the original):

*All praise  
worthy.  
Lucretia  
Sweet Shak-  
speare.  
Eloquent  
Gaveston.*

To its right is the main text, placed as follows:

And unlesse I erre, (a thing  
easie in such simplicitie) deluded by  
dearlie beloved *Delia*, and fortunatelie  
fortunate *Cleopatra*; *Oxford* thou maist  
extoll thy courte-deare-verse happie  
*Daniell*, whose sweete refined muse, in  
contracted shape, were sufficient a-  
mongst men, to gaine pardon of the  
sinne to *Rosemond*, pittie to distressed  
*Cleopatra*, and everliving praise to her  
loving *Delia*:

In this tight space, W.C. does nothing less than tie Oxford to his three most accomplished Voices of the 1590s while referring specifically to five of their works. He links *Oxford*, **Shak-speare** and his *Lucrece*, **Samuel Daniel** and three of his works — *Delia*, *Cleopatra* and *Rosemond* — and the only full play that Oxford’s issued in **Christopher Marlowe**’s name: *Edward II*!

Examine the text carefully. The first comment in the margin is “All praise worthy.” He means, “All the writers and works referenced here are praiseworthy.” His list starts with “*Lucretia* [by] Sweet **Shak-speare**.” He means the Bard’s epic poem *Lucrece*.

The next citation is “Eloquent Gaveston.” Gaveston was Edward the Second’s paramour and the most *eloquent* character throughout *Edward II*, a play issued in Marlowe’s name in 1595, the year after he died. As established in the **Christopher Marlowe** chapter, *this is the only play in the Marlowe canon written entirely by Oxford*. W.C. seems *purposely* to avoid naming Marlowe, since he names the other two writers outright. The specificity of W.C.’s reference to a single play therefore indicates he knew exactly which play in Marlowe’s name was Oxford’s. Had he wished to praise Christopher Marlowe *per se*, he would have mentioned the playwright’s name or cited his biggest hit, *Tamburlaine*. But because the actual Marlowe wrote most of the works published in his name, W.C. stayed accurate in his list of Oxford’s achievements by specifically naming a leading character in a play by Oxford whose eloquence had impressed him.

It is easy to see why scholars have thought W.C. was confused or that the printer erred in attaching the marginal notes. But neither conclusion is true.

In the main text toward the right, W.C. refers to three — and only three — of **Samuel Daniel**’s works: *Delia* (a sonnet sequence), *Rosemond* (a narrative poem appended to *Delia*) and *Cleopatra* (a play). Based on our delineation in the **Samuel Daniel** chapter, *all three of these cited works are Oxford’s*. W.C. lists nothing by the actual Samuel Daniel, despite the fact that the first four books of his massive *Civile Wars* had just come out, in 1595.

W.C. refers to Daniel’s “sweete refined muse, *in contracted shape*.” What does that mean? In the orthodox context, it makes no sense. In our context, W.C. conveys that he is referring only to a portion of the whole Samuel Daniel canon. It is a split canon, and he knows it.

Twice more, W.C. hints that he knows who stands behind the bevy of writers named in this section. He lists **Shakespeare** among the graduates of the University of Cambridge, a claim that orthodoxy is forced to dismiss as erroneous, because Will Shaksper never went to college. But the Earl of Oxford *did* earn a degree from Cambridge, making W.C.’s statement perfectly correct in our context. Also, W.C.’s final line states that **Daniel**’s *Delia* deserves “everliving praise.” The context implies that W.C.’s wording is an intentional *E. Ver* reference, capping his treatment of the subject. Thomas Thorpe adopted the term “Ever-living” in 1609 when referring to the “poet” in the dedication to *Shake-speares Sonnets*.

## Related Musings

The subtitle of this section of W.C.’s book seems to indicate that by *Oxford* in the excerpt quoted above, he is referring to the University of Oxford, which the actual Samuel Daniel attended. Scholars are well justified in taking the meaning this way. But W.C.’s marginal note suggests the possibility of another intention because Shakespeare and Marlowe (who went to Cambridge) did not attend the University of Oxford. Scholars have generally re-punctuated W.C.’s sentence to read, “*Oxford*, thou maist extoll thy courte-deare, verse-happie Daniell.” But this rendition makes Daniel, not his verse, the darling of the court. There is no indication that Samuel Daniel was a darling of the court. His best verse certainly must have been, though, because Oxford wrote it. We can more faithfully punctuate W.C.’s line as follows: “*Oxford*, thou maist extoll thy courte-deare-verse, happie Daniell.” In this rendition, W.C. with a wink may equate the Earl of Oxford, not the university, with **Daniell**. As with so much of the barely translucent writing of the day relating to **Shakespeare**, the convenient double meaning of *Oxford* here would have allowed W.C., if necessary, to wiggle out of any charge that he was outing the Earl of Oxford.

The anonymous author of the Parnassus plays (c.1598-1601) makes the very same connection in treating **Shakespeare** and **Daniel** as one person, and he does it in two instances. (See the discussion of the Parnassus Plays below.) The total of three **Daniel/Shakespeare** conflation by W.C. and the author of the second and third Parnassus plays make sense if educated Elizabethan readers knew that one man stood behind the names **Shakespeare** and the best works of **Samuel Daniel**.

W.C. adds, seemingly of the university's poets, "Oxford, thou hast many, and they are able to sing sweetly when it please thee." Yet the concluding phrase, "when it please thee," makes no sense with respect to a school. Once again, W.C. is probably referring to the Earl of Oxford and his "many" Voices, in whose names he can write whenever he pleases.

Given the dual meanings of *Oxford*, W.C. may or may not have known that Oxford was the hidden writer when he composed the main text. But by the time he composed the marginal notes he had made the connection. We may now conclude that the juxtaposition of all these names and titles confirms that W.C. used the hyphen in "**Shake-speare**" fully knowing he was presenting a pseudonym.

^Ben Jonson (1572-1637) (refs. 1595-1641)

The **Ben Jonson** chapter offers evidence that the Earl of Oxford helped Jonson get his start in the theatre, used him as a Voice for one play, contributed to four other plays of which Jonson was the main author, and provided two laudatory sonnets for Jonson's *Sejanus*. It shows that Jonson modeled himself after **Thomas Nashe** and paid homage to Oxford in his plays.

There are also indications that Jonson knew the story of Oxford's Voices. We will now review that evidence.

### ***Every Man in His Humour* Mocks Will Shaksper as a Stand-In for Shakespeare**

In his play of 1599, *Every Man out of His Humour*, Jonson presents Insulo Sogliardo, a doltish "essential clown" from "the country" who somehow has "land and money" and struggles in his visit to London to "stand for a gentleman" and even aspires to become a courtier while spouting garbled foreign utterings. Sogliardo is a man whose "gifts of mind...are as nature lent him them, pure, simple, without any artificial drug or mixture of these too threadbare beggarly qualities, learning and knowledge, and therefore the more accommodate and genuine." These characteristics fit both what we know and what Oxfordians suspect about Will Shaksper of Stratford-upon-Avon. The name Insulo suggests a man who is *insulated* from something. As a front man for Oxford, Shaksper was insulated from exposure by one of the highest-ranking earls in the land and indirectly by the crown.

Sogliardo is not a lifelong achiever but an overnight success, one of "those mushroom gentlemen,/ That shoot up in a night to place and worship." This description fits the Oxfordian view of Shaksper's luck. Despite myriad signs of Sogliardo's oafishness, a court lady takes him for a gentleman, as some people might have taken Shaksper when told he was Shakespeare.

Such evidence is not restricted to the realm of Oxfordian speculation, because even Stratfordians have admitted that Sogliardo is a parody of Shakespeare. One reason is that in the play, he spends money to obtain a coat of arms, as Will Shaksper had done just months before.

Sogliardo's coat of arms is dubbed with the motto, "Not without mustard." Jonson borrowed those words from his literary hero, **Thomas Nashe**, who in *Pierce Penilesse* offers a scene of someone eating haberdine who "cried out: not without Mustard, good Lord, not without Mustard."

Some Oxfordians have suggested that the phrase could be a parody of the words written on Shaksper's initially rejected appeal for a coat of arms from the College of Arms, which had been marked four times "Non,

sans droict,” “Non: sans droict” (“No, without right”) or “Non sans droict” (“Not without right”). Jonson could have known of these words written on the 1596 document, because his mentor William Camden helped draft the 1599 document, which finally granted Shaksper’s request. Property records from 1601 and 1602\* show that Shaksper was finally using the title of “gentleman.” In Jonson’s, play, Sogliardo is characterized as one who is “so enamoured of the name of a gentleman, that he will have it, though he buys it.” (For more on the story, see Green\* and Price\*.)

Is Jonson ridiculing the playwright William Shakespeare, as orthodoxy has it, or the true author’s stand-in Will Shaksper, as Oxfordians have it? The payoff with respect to the authorship question is in these lines from the play:

*Sogliardo*: ...how like you the crest, sir?

*Puntarvolo*: I understand it not well, what is ’t?

*Sogliardo*: Marry, sir, it is your *Bore without a head Rampant*.

*Puntarvolo*: A Boor without a head, that’s very rare! [This is taken from Price, who consulted the original. In Cunningham’s edited edition, this line is given to Sogliardo, and both *Bore* and *Boor* are spelled *boar*, a meaning the ensuing line from Carlo supports.]

*Carlo*: Ay, and rampant, too: troth, I commend the Herald’s wit, he has deciphered him very well: A swine without a head, without brain, wit, anything indeed, ramping to gentility.

The Vere family’s crest (at least through the 1570s) was a blue boar, and here Jonson ridicules Shaksper as *a boar without a head*. In other words, by posing as Shakespeare, Shaksper represents himself as the boar (Oxford) but he hasn’t the boar’s brain to carry it off.

Jonson has a character describe Sogliardo as “a mere *stuf suit*,” an image fitting Will Shaksper’s role as a front man. At the end of *The Case is Altered*, the only play in the Jonson canon that is almost entirely by Oxford, an exchange seems to have Shaksper in mind:

*Cobbler*: Wilt thou sell thy lordship, count?

*Count*: What! peasants purchase lordships?

*Cobbler*: Is that any novels, sir?

### More Hints That Oxford Is Shakespeare and Shaksper Is Not

As noted in the **Ben Jonson** chapter, Jonson in *Epigrammes* (1616) comments to and about quite a few poets, but he never mentions **Shakespeare**. Instead, he addresses “One That Desired Me Not To Name Him.” The difference is telling, and Oxford is the only sensible candidate. In his verses for the First Folio, Jonson gives three more hints that Oxford is behind **Shakespeare**’s plays.

First, Jonson’s famous address hints at the true author behind the **Shakespeare** canon. He begins, “To draw no envy (**Shakespeare**) on thy name....” *Envy* is pronounced “N.V.” As Brazil recognized, “N.V. might stand for Ned Vere, Oxford’s nickname, or for Nihil Verius, two thirds of his motto.”\* If so, Jonson is saying, “Not that I’m going to trace out “N.V.” over **Shakespeare**’s name....”

Second, he refers to the poet’s “well torned [turned] and true filed lines:/ In each of which he seems to *shake a lance*,/ as brandisht at the eyes of ignorance.” Jonson uses one of Oxford’s self-identifying words and links it to an image of the de Vere family’s Bolbec crest, which features a lion brandishing a lance. Jonson has the Bard’s text confronting *the eyes of ignorance*. Of what might most of **Shakespeare**’s readers in 1623, two decades after Oxford’s death, be ignorant other than the author’s identity?



Third, Jonson nears the close of his great poem with, “Shine forth thou Starre of poets,” a line that conjures the image of another of Oxford’s family symbols. “Rollett notes that the star was exclusively the heraldic badge of the Oxford family over the centuries.”\*

The symbolism attached to the First Folio, whom many Oxfordians argue was put together by Jonson, hints at Oxford’s authorship. Consider the following discussion:

...William of Stratford repeatedly attempted to attain his own coat of arms, which he finally got. But when the First Folio of Shakespeare’s works was published in 1623, the coat of arms was nowhere to be found in this volume. Instead, one finds heraldic elements similar to those of the Earls of Oxford integrated into the Folio ornamentation: one on top of “A Catalogue” and the other on top of “The Tempest.” These elements are calygreyhounds, hybrid creatures of antelope, deer and dog. The calygreyhound can also be found for example in the black marble on the gravestone of the 15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford in the Church of St. Nicholas in the village of Castle Hedingham. An almost identical ornamentation was already depicted in a book dedicated to Edward de Vere in 1582: *Hekatompathia* by Thomas Watson. ...An engraver or publisher...failed to include William of Stratford’s coat of arms in the *First Folio*, and at the same time engraved the Earl of Oxford’s calygreyhound in the volume.\*

So, the emblems on the First Folio are linked directly to at least two Earls of Oxford and in no way to the Stratford man.

Jonson refers to **Shakespeare** as “Sweet Swan of Avon.” Stratfordians — quite reasonably in this case — have cited these words as indicating Will Shaksper of Stratford-upon-Avon. Oxfordian Alexander Waugh dispensed with this dilemma once and for all, as recounted in the **Shakespeare** chapter, by explaining that *Avon* was an old word for Hampton Court, where the Bard’s plays entertained the Queen and her courtiers. As also suggested in that chapter, Jonson may have gotten from Oxford the idea of linking *Swan*, *Avon* and *Thames*.

Jonson both faults and praises **Shakespeare**. The way he does it links **Shakespeare** directly to the Earl of Oxford. Here is the entire statement, with the key portions underlined:

***De Shakspeare nostrat.***

I remember, the Players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in his writing, (whatsoever he penn’d) hee never blotted out line. My answer hath beene, would he had blotted a thousand. Which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted. And to justifie mine owne candor, (for I lov’d the man, and doe honour his memory (on this side Idolatry) as much as any.) Hee was (indeed) honest, and of an open, and free nature: had an excellent Phantsie; brave notions, and gentle expressions: wherein hee flow’d with that facility, that sometime it was necessary he should be stop’d: Sufflaminandus erat [he needed a brake]; as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his owne power; would the rule of it had beene so too. Many times hee fell into those things, could not escape laughter: As when hee said in the person of Caesar, one speaking to him; Caesar thou dost me wrong. Hee replyed: Caesar did never wrong, but with just cause: and such like; which were ridiculous. But hee redeemed his vices, with his vertues. There was ever more in him to be praysed, then to be pardoned.\*

Moore recognized that Jonson is charging **Shakespeare** with the same fault with which Charles Arundell charged the Earl of Oxford in 1581. Arundell said of Oxford’s storytelling,

in it he glories greatlie...and when he enters into it, he can hardlie owte[, and his guests are] driven to rise from his table laugheing.

Moore concluded, “So Jonson describes a characteristic of **Shakespeare** that is identical to what Arundell said of Oxford — that once he turned his wit on, he was unable to turn it off. But we should also note the emphatic nature of Arundell’s and Jonson’s comments, as indicating that the personal quality in question was a most salient feature of the man being described.”\* Thus, in yet another way, Oxford = **Shakespeare**.

Oxford’s Voices often identify themselves as Edward de Vere by writing dedications and introductions that include a *ver* word in both *the first and last sentences*. The chapters on **Thomas Lodge**, **Robert Greene** and **Shakespeare** offer examples. Jonson’s paragraph on **Shakespeare** begins and ends in the same manner. The first sentence ends, “he never blotted out a line.” The final sentence is, “There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned.” The placement of this pair of words might be coincidence. After all, Jonson uses six *ver* words in his paragraph on Francis Bacon, titled “*Dominus Verulamius*” (Bacon was styled “Lord Verulam”). But since Jonson knew about Oxford’s Voices, he would likely have known of the author’s clandestine method of signing some of his work.

In the First Folio, Jonson contrasts **Shakespeare** with three writers: “And tell, how far thou didst our **Lily** out-shine,/ Or sporting **Kid**, or **Marlowe’s** mighty line.” Jonson does not contrast his subject with what would have been Will Shaksper’s playwriting contemporaries of 1591-1616, but with playwrights from the period 1583-1593. **Lyly’s** plays date from 1583 to 1591, Marlowe’s from 1587 to the date of his death in May 1593, and Kyd’s *Cornelia* to 1589, as deduced in the [**Thomas Kyd**] chapter. As Frazer noted, “Lyly, Kyd and Marlowe were peers of Oxford...not of Shaksper.”\*

Consider finally Jonson’s famous response to a poem by William Basse, who had called for **Shakespeare’s** body to be laid by Chaucer, Spenser and Beaumont in Westminster Abbey. (See quote in the William Basse chapter below.) Perhaps concerned that someone might respond by moving the lowly Will Shaksper’s corpse to that sacred spot, Jonson “spiked the plea,”\* replying, “I will *not* lodge thee by/ Chaucer or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie/ A little further to make thee a room:/ *Thou art alive still while thy book doth live*.” In other words, **Shakespeare** was his works; leave Shaksper out of it.

### **Ben Jonson on Oxford’s Associates and Other Voices**

In his three earliest comedies, Jonson seems to have ridiculed three of Oxford’s associates. In *Every Man in His Humour* (1596) — as discussed above — he lampoons Will Shaksper as “Insulo Sogliardo.” In the opening act of *The Case Is Altered* (1599), his only contribution to the play, Jonson presents Oxford’s secretary Anthony Munday as the pretender, “Don Antonio Balladino.” In *Every Man out of His Humour* (1599), he “is supposed to have ridiculed Euphuism, in the character of Fastidious Brisk,”\* representing Oxford’s former secretary John Lyly, in “a prolonged and gratuitous lampoon.”\*

Jonson continues his jokes at Euphuus’ expense in *Cynthia’s Revels*, in which he has pretenders maul affected court speech and dress up the gift of a glove, delivered by the emperor himself via six coaches covered in black velvet, as a “golden legacy.” This is the term Oxford used for Euphuus’ comeback publication, **Thomas Lodge’s** *Rosalynde*. *Euphuus Golden Legacie*.

The same play contains a revealing reference to **Robert Greene**, hinting that he is a Voice. Brisk comments about his love’s wit, “she does observe as pure a phrase, and use as choice figures in her ordinary conferences, as any be in the *Arcadia*,” naming the popular pastoral romance by Sir Philip Sidney. His wry companion remarks, “*Or rather in **Green’s** works, whence she may steal with more security*.” Orthodox scholars have misunderstood Jonson’s meaning. Cunningham opined, “as Whalley says, and as Jonson

certainly means to insinuate, they [**Greene's** works] were less read." He then negated his own argument, observing, "But the fact is not so; **Robert Green** was at once the most voluminous and the most popular pastoral sonnet-maker."\* Any devoted fan of Jonson would have to admit that Jonson's extensive knowledge of the literature of his day excludes any possibility that Jonson thought **Greene** was less known than Sidney. So, what, then, is the basis of the joke? Knowing about Oxford's Voices allows us a better explanation for the meaning of the line: Brisk's lady could steal securely from **Greene** because **Robert Greene** was a *pseudonym for someone who had to remain anonymous*. No one, including Oxford himself, could complain openly about plagiarism from **Robert Greene**. In contrast, Philip Sidney's extended family was involved in both the court and the literary arts and might have taken offense at plagiarism and complained publicly.

Jonson may have derived four of his famous lines from Voices who in a single year offered similar constructions. In the First Folio, Jonson writes, "O could he but have drawn his wit/ As well in brass, as he hath hit/ His face; the print would then surpass/ All, that was ever writ in brass." **R.B. Gent. (Richard Barnfield)** in Sonnet IX of *Greenes Funeralls* from 1594 had written, "Then should his name be set in shining brasse,/ In shining brasse for all the world to show it." **Samuel Daniel**, in his address to Mary Sidney prefacing *Cleopatra*, also from 1594, had written, "This Monument cannot be over-throwne,/ Where, in eternall Brasse remains thy Name." **Daniel's** word *Monument* shows up in the First Folio as *Moniment*. Consciously or not, Jonson here links **Shakespeare** to two more Voices.

### **Jonson's *Time Vindicated* May Pertain to Oxford's Voices**

Jonson's participation in the First Folio project would have set Edward de Vere deeply into his thoughts in 1622-1623. His Twelfth Night masques of the winter of 1622-3 seem to reflect that state of mind. In *Lucrece*, **Shakespeare** had written, "Time's glory is to calm contending kings,/ To unmask falsehood and bring truth to light." The title of Jonson's masque, *Time Vindicated to Himself and to his Honours*, reflects that idea.

In the masque, the character Chronomastix — meaning Timehater — enjoys fame that does not belong to him. He is an enemy of time because time will someday set the record straight. Until that eventuality, he enjoys being a pretender whom "all the town admires," who calls himself "both beloved and famous" but who in truth is only "so much the friend of rumor." He converses directly with Fame:

*Chro*: ...who's this? my mistress, Fame!  
The lady whom I honour and adore!  
...to serve Fame  
Is all my end, and get myself a name.  
*Fame*: Away, I know thee not, wretched *impostor*,  
Creature of glory, mountebank of wit,  
Self-loving braggart, Fame doth sound no trumpet  
To such vain empty fools....  
Go revel with thine *ignorant* admirers,  
Let worthy names alone.

Chronomastix's admirers are *ignorant* of the fact that he is an *impostor*.

All this can be taken generally, but it seems like another drubbing of Will Shaksper. Jonson's generality, however, rather implies that Fame may more broadly represent all the people whose names Oxford borrowed for his Voices. At one point in the masque, Chronomastix conjures up a hoard of his "favourers," called Antimasquers, and Fame exclaims, "Is hell broke loose?" One of them "Ha's a male poem in her belly," a fitting description for *Antonie* by **Mary Sidney** or *Mariam* by **E.C. (Elizabeth Cary)**. Another is a "Printer

in disguise,” who “keepes/ His presse in a hollow tree, where to conceale him,/ He works by glow-worme light, the Moone’s too open,” to hide his secrets. Among people who could serve as Voices, there is a judge, a schoolmaster and a soldier, who “Dares make profession of Poetick truth.”

As Chronomastix’s admirers carry him off, Eies, Eares and Nose scoff, “Now, Fame, how like you this? This falls upon you for your neglect. He scorns you, and defies you,/ He has got a Fame on’s own, as well as a faction. And these will deify him, to despite you.” Fame replies, “‘Twill prove but deifying of a pompion,” the final word “alluding to the burlesque deification of Claudius by Seneca.”\*

Eies later explains, “We only hunt for novelty, not truth.” He seems to mean, “We seek the novelty of new Voices and do not seek out the man behind them.” The link to Oxford expands when Fame, in addressing King James, harks back to the Oxford character in **John Lyly’s** *Endimion*:

Within yond’ darkness, Venus hath found out  
That Hecate, as she is queen of shades,  
Keeps certain glories of the Time obscured,  
There for herself alone to gaze upon,  
As she did once the fair Endymion.  
These Time hath promised at Love’s suit to free....

Love wants the truth of those “glories” out, and Time had agreed to make it happen. The stage direction reads, “The Masquers are discovered, and that, which obscur’d them, vanisheth.” As the glorious faces are disclosed, the Votaries exclaim, “These, These must sure some wonders be!” *But Jonson’s text does not reveal what sight King James witnesses.* Were they portraits of Oxford? The Chorus exclaims,

What grief or envy had it been  
That these and such had not been seen,  
But still obscured in shade!

Hippolytus adds,

The iniury it selfe will right  
Which only Fame hath made a crime.  
For Time is wise,  
And hath his eares as perfect as his eyes.

Little did Time know that public revelation would take centuries.

^HENRY LOK (c.1553-c.1608) (ref. 1597)

Henry Lok served the Earl of Oxford for about twenty years, from 1570 or 1571 until 1590. Lok wrote a sonnet to Oxford, containing four instances of *true* or *trueth*, and he penned a rather passionate sonnet to Oxford’s daughter Elizabeth Vere. Both poems were published in his *Ecclesiastes* in 1597, which was augmented from *Sundry Christian Passions*, licensed in 1593 but not published until 1597. In the cryptic ending of Lok’s sonnet to Oxford, he hints that Oxford possessed hidden information:

your own experience much might say  
Would you vouchsafe your knowledge to bewray.

Lok also contributed commendatory verses to his cousin Michael Cosworth's translation of the Psalms, rendered in 1600. It is extant only in manuscript.

Lok's poetry is sufficiently different from the Voices' work that we can confidently list him as an independent poet. The anonymous authors of *The Returne from Parnassus* (1601) judged Lok's verse as suitable only "to lie in some old nooks amongst old boots and shoes." Sidney Lee agreed that his verse "is very poor, and is quite unreadable, rarely rising above doggerel."\*

^JOSEPH HALL (1574-1656) (refs. 1597, 1598)

In March 1597, Joseph Hall, Cambridge scholar, devout Puritan, later Bishop of Exeter and then of Norwich, issued an anonymous book of satires titled *Toothlesse Satyrs*. He issued *Byting Satyres*, also anonymously, in March 1598. The two books were combined for *Virgidemiarum*, which was issued in Hall's name in December 1599.

Satire 9 in Book I is a poem railing against the "ribald rimes" and obscene habits of a pseudonymous poet named Labeo. Given Hall's puritanism, I would refrain from surmising that the name he invented is intended as an obscene joke apropos of **Nashe's** *Valentines*. But he may have found it handy that the name "Labeo" ends with **E.O.**, implying the Earl of Oxford.

Some scholars have suggested that Hall chose the name to reflect Attius Labeo, a poet in the court of Nero who was ridiculed by the Roman satirist Persius for artlessness and writing "obscene and filthy stuff." Moreover, "as Labeo was a Roman lawyer [non-Stratfordians] are within their rights in assuming that Hall's victim was a lawyer."\* These two pieces of information are relevant, as **Shakespeare** was known for poems considered by Puritans to be obscene, namely *Venus and Adonis* and to a lesser degree *Lucrece*, and Oxford had a legal education.

Morris\* suggested as a possible model Quintus Fabius Labeo, one of the men suspected to be the hidden voice behind the works of Terence. Manzo made a case that Hall's target is the Earl of Oxford and that the name Labeo is not a reference to Attius Labeo but to Marcus Antistius Labeo (c.50 BC – AD 18), whose life offers no fewer than fourteen "parallels between the two men."\*

Hall prompts his readers, "search they that meane the secret meaning finde." To help them, he provides many hints of Labeo's identity. The later pamphlet's title — which means "a small bundle of rods to be used for scourging"\* — hints at the target, as it begins with *Vir*, implying that he is about to issue a *Vere-whipping*. Hall expresses a view shared by Oxford's detractors: "And were thy fathers gentle? that's their praise,/ No thanke to thee by whom their name decays."

In 1598, John Marston established the connection between Labeo and **Shakespeare**. Marston's *Pygmalion* "gives the reader a clue to Labeo's identity. Labeo, Marston notes, once wrote that 'his love was stone: Obdurate flinty, so relentless none.' This is a quote from line 199 of *Venus and Adonis*. ('Art thou obdurate, flinty, hard as steel?')"\* Morris\* perceived numerous subtle, at times obscure, indications that Hall's subjects include John and Will Shaksper.

Given some of the specific references in the poem, most scholars have agreed that Hall's main objections are to **Shakespeare's** *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. From references to "The Divell and Saint Valentine," Nicholl noted, "his portrait...may be partly aimed at **Nashe**."\*

Our special insight is that Hall expresses knowledge of the broader context of Oxford's Voices. He rails against the products of **Nashe** and **Shakespeare** jointly under a single name. In two revealing lines, he states that the poet in question "*may shift it to anothers name*" and is free to "*crowne what Laureats him list*." This book proposes that Oxford did just that throughout his career. The following excerpts from Hall's 1599 book seem the most clearly indicative of knowledge about Oxford's Voices:

Who dares upbraid these open rimes of mine [Someone has disparaged his verse]  
With blindfold Aquines, or darke Venusine? [suggesting the author of *Venus and Adonis*]

Labeo is whip't, and laughs mee in the face:

Why? for I smite and hide the galled place. [Hall both attacks and hides a key fact.]

Gird but the Cynicks Helmet on his head, [a reference to the satiric **Nashe** persona]

Cares hee for Talus, or his flayle of lead?

Long as the craftie Cuttle [cuttlefish] lieth sure [= hides]

In the blacke Cloude of his thicke vomiture; ["Lichfield" uses like terms in *The Trimming*]

Who list complaine of wronged faith or fame

When hee may shift it to anothers name? [Harvey mistreated **Robert Greene**, whom several new Voices — **Henry Chettle**, **R.B. (Richard Barnfield)** and **Thomas Nashe** — defended.]

So Labeo weens it my eternall shame

To prove I never earnd a Poets name. [Oxford has privately berated Hall's work]

Tho Labeo reaches right: (who can deny?)

The true straynes of Heroicke Poesie: [Labeo writes heroic verse well, as in **Shakespeare's** plays and **William Warner's** *Albions England*]

...He can implore the heathen deities [Oxford's Voices call upon the classical and rustic gods]

To guide his bold and busie enterprise; [a broad undertaking, as with Oxford's Voices]

Or filch whole Pages at a clap for need

From honest Petrarch, clad in English weed; [Sonneteers and other Voices draw from Petrarch]

While bigge *But ohs ech stranzae* [stanza] can begin ["But O!" begins lines in **Shakespeare's** *Venus and Adonis*, *A Lover's Complaint*, *Henry VI Part 1*, *Richard III*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello* and *Coriolanus*]

Whose trunke and tayle sluttish and hartlesse bin; [Oxford's extramarital affair with Anne Vavasor]

In Epithets to joyne two wordes in one,

Forsooth for Adjectives cannot stand alone; [Oxford invented hyphenated adjectives for epithets and adjectives; see list of hyphenated names in the **Shakespeare** chapter and hyphenated adjectives in the discussion of *King Leir* in the **Shakespeare** chapter]

Lastly he names the spirit of Astrophel: [the Voices wrote several elegies to Sydney, and **Thomas Nashe** aided Thomas Newman's publication of *Syr P.S. His Astrophel and Stella* (1591)]

Now hath not Labeo done wondrous well?

But now men wager who shall blot the most, [i.e. Labeo or Hall]

And each man writes: *Ther's so much labour lost*. [**Shakespeare's** title is *Love's Labour's Lost*]

Then Labeo, or write little, or write none. [Oxford's Voices are too prolific to be consistently good]

Tush in small paines can be but little art, [rushed works such as **Nashe's** are of poor quality]

Or lode full drie-fats fro the forren mart:

With Folio-volumes, two to an Oxe hide, ["Oxe hide" may imply Oxford]

Or else ye Pamphleter go stand a side [numerous Voices wrote pamphlets in the early 1590s; see Pamphleteers section]

But well fare Strabo, which as stories tell, [Strabo was a historian of ancient Greece.]

Contriv'd all Troy within one Walnut shell. [**Greene, Peele, Warner and I.O. (John Ogle)** wrote of Troy. Hall may have had in mind **George Peele**'s walnut-sized miniature book, *A Tale of Troy*. The first known printing is that of 1604, but Oxford's daughter had delivered a copy of the work to Lord Burghley in 1596. Hamlet's comment (*Hamlet*, II,ii), "O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space," may also inform the line.]

His curious Ghost now lately hither came [perhaps a reference to **Peele** as a modern-day historian, to the ghost in *Hamlet*, or to **Robert Greene**'s ghost, who wrote parts of **Henry Chettle**'s *Kind-Harts Dreame* and **B.R. (Barnabe Rich)**'s *Greenes Newes*, from 1592 and 1593, respectively]

But who conjur'd this bawdie Poggies ghost,

From out the stewes of his lewde home-bred coast: [**I.O. (John Ogle)** offers not a straight history but a modernistic poem with rapturous passages on Helen's beauty and such.]

Or wicked Rablais dronken revellings, [as in Act II, Scene iii in **Shakespeare**'s *Twelfth Night*]

To grace the mis-rule of our Tavernings? [Some of the Voices' plays may have served as tavern entertainment]

Or who put Bayes into blinde Cupids fist,

That he should crowne what Laureats him list? [Oxford continually introduces new Voices and has other Voices praise them, as when **Thomas Nashe** calls **George Peele** "the *Atlas* of Poetrie, & *primus verborum Artifex*."]

Oxfordians have long speculated that Oxford lost the bulk of his fortune staging elaborate theater projects, and Hall serves up precisely that portrait. Morris summarized one of Hall's fitting characters:

"Rich Naevius" has nothing left of his heritage but "a craz'd scaffold and a rotten stage," cheering playgoers and a lewd theater. The reference is to Naevius, a Roman poet/playwright ca. 265-202 BCE, "among the best for comedy" of the Latin writers, according to *Palladis Tamia* [by Francis Meres; see Meres chapter]. He also originated Roman historical plays, parodying daily life among the elite and their politics. ...Oxford's name appears in the same sentence as Naevius' in *Palladis Tamia* and is described as the first among the English who were good at comedy.\*

*Palladis Tamia* came out the same year as *Byting Satyres*.

John Marston was a fan of Oxford's. In his *Pigmaliions Image* (1598), he "vigorously criticized the whole of [Joseph Hall's] *Virgidemiarum*."\* A posting by the Francis Bacon Research Trust\* focuses on John Marston's line, "What, not *mediocria firma* [has escaped] from thy spite?" The italic words are the motto of Francis Bacon's family. From Marston's line, the writer concluded that Labeo is Bacon. But he is not. Marston is clearly saying to Hall, "What, you even criticize Bacon?"

The edict of 1599 that prohibited Gabriel Harvey from publishing any more books also banned "Joseph Hall's satires, John Marston's satires, John Davies' epigrams...and many other topical works. All were to be recalled and burned."\* For a discussion of Oxford's role in the ban, see the **Thomas Nashe** chapter.

Joseph Hall also wrote, under the name Richard Lichfield( see Richard Lichfield chapter), *The Trimming of Thomas Nashe*, which was published in October 1597, in between Hall's two other satires. The **Thomas Nashe** chapter quotes numerous passages from *The Trimming* demonstrating that "Lichfield" knew who **Nashe** really was.

^John Marston (1576-1634) (ref. 1598)

Satire IX in John Marston's *The Scourge of Villanie* (1598) is titled "Here's a top to mocke an Ape indeed." In the middle of a long attack on poseurs and imitators, Marston issues a soaring call for justice for an unnamed man "whose *silent* name/ One letter bounds." As Oxfordians have pointed out, this formula fits the name EDWARD DE VERE and even a common rendition of his title, EARL OF OXENFORDE. Here is the key text:

...Farre flie far thy fame,  
Most, most of me belov'd, whose silent name  
One letter bounds. Thy true judiciall stile  
I ever honour, and if my love beguile  
Not much my hopes, then thy unvalued worth  
Shall mount faire place, when Apes are turned forth.

Marston's subject, fitting an author who hides behind Voices. He has a "silent name," because it is attached to no publications. He possesses "worth...unvalued" by the world. Yet Marston predicts his glory "Shall mount faire place, when Apes are turned forth" — that is, when poseurs are exposed and/or when authorities hiding his accomplishments have been ousted.

At the end of his book, Marston writes a poetic address "To everlasting Oblivion." As noted in the **Thomas Nashe** chapter, Oxford had an affinity for the word *oblivion*. Yet nothing in that poem suggests he is referring to Oxford.

Marston, like Chapman and Jonson, contributed telling verses to **Robert Chester**'s *Loves Martyr*, as discussed at the end of the **Robert Chester** chapter. There is no question that all three writers knew what Oxford was doing.

### A Red Herring

One of Marston's satires has impressed some scholars as being unfriendly to **Shakespeare**, but it is surely aimed at someone else. He charges,

Nay, shall a trencher slave extenuate,  
Some Lucrece rape? And straight magnificate  
Lewd Jovian lust? Whilst my satyrick vaine  
Shall muzled be, not daring out to straine  
His tearing paw? No gloomy Juvenall,  
Though to thy fortunes I disastrous fall.

The word *extenuate* means "cause to seem less serious." Thus, Marston charges his target with having made light of Lucrece's rape. **Shakespeare**'s poem does nothing of the kind. Feldman may have found the answer:

it is not likely that Marston viewed the Bard as a "trencher slave" for writing *The Rape of Lucrece*... which neither excuses nor glamorizes the act of rape. Instead, Marston probably meant to attack Thomas Middleton [presumedly, from the attached moniker "T.M. Gent."] for writing *The Ghost of Lucrece*, a bitter, explicit, and satirical treatment of Lucrece's story which, although it was not published until 1600, is likely to have circulated in manuscript in the late 1590s.\*

A "trencher slave" is presumably a ditch digger, another term that does not fit the Bard, whereas someone who mined an exalted tale to make light of rape might be seen as digging in the dirt.



### ^The Anonymous Author of the Three Parnassus Plays (1598-1601)

Between 1598 and 1601, three anonymous plays, *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, *The First Part of the Return from Parnassus* and *The Second Part of the Return from Parnassus or the scourge of Simony*, were staged by students of St. John's College at Cambridge. The Earl of Oxford was on the books at St. John's College in January 1559, and **Robert Greene** and **Thomas Nashe** claim to have been associated with that college. The plays would have been especially entertaining to students who would have known of St. John's connection to the Earl of Oxford and two of his most prominent Voices. For my conclusion on the author's identity, see the discussion of the Parnassus Plays in the Independent Writers section.

A character in the Prologue to the third play says, "What we shew, is but a Christmas jest," and he invites us to "Conceive of this *and guesse of all the rest.*" In that spirit, I have some proposals. Most important for our purposes, Ingenioso represents the Earl of Oxford. An important character in all three plays, he is on stage at the end of the second play, and in the third play he delivers a soliloquy to open Act I and makes the final speech before the curtain falls. This character reflects Oxford and his Voices in at least six broad ways:

### **Ingenioso as Nashe**

Two major scholars of the Parnassus plays paved the way for this identification. In 1891, F.G. Fleay\* conjectured, "the figure of Ingenioso, who appears in all three plays and is very prominent in the second, was intended for **Thomas Nashe**. The evidence [later] gathered together by J.B. Leishman...adds up to a most convincing identification.... Their careers, their activities, their interests and their attitudes are substantially the same."\* Leishman filled pages with his observations in this regard. "Much that we hear of and from Ingenioso corresponds very closely with the known facts [i.e. the purely invented literary details — Ed.] of Nashe's life.... the author of the Parnassus Plays reveals a very close acquaintance with his writings, modeling...numerous passages upon them, and sometimes borrowing from them whole phrases, a large number of which he puts into the mouth of Ingenioso."\*

Here are but two examples: Ingenioso says, "I have burnt my bookes, splitted my pen, rent my papers, and curste the cooseninge artes, that brought me up to noe better fortune." In *Pierce Penilesse*, **Nashe** had said, "I accused my fortune, raild on my patrones, bit my pen, rent my papers, and ragde in all points like a mad man." Ingenioso praises Churchyard for only one thing, "Shor's wife," which is exactly the poem for which **Nashe** praises him, in similar language. In 1593, **Nashe** wrote to Churchyard, "in her you shall live when you are dead," and Ingenioso says, "Hat not Shor's wife...Given him a chast long lasting memory?" There are a hundred such parallel utterances, indicating that the author of the plays was a fan of **Nashe's** works.

By the end of the plays, Ingenioso finds himself on the lam from the Sergeant because "writs are out for me, to apprehend mee for my playes." This is the position in which **Nashe** found himself at the end of the 1590s after a series of scrapes, including accusations of libeling Leicester in his "Bear" fable in *Pierce Penilesse* in 1592; city officials' uproar over allegations against them in *Christs Teares* in 1594; being connected to banned play, *The Isle of Dogs* in 1597; and suffering the Archbishop's banning of his and Harvey's books in 1599. Cementing one of these connections, when Ingenioso departs he announces, "and now I am bound for the Ile of doggs."

The **Nashe** connection is indisputable, and it is accepted by Stratfordians and Oxfordians alike. Two contradictions, however, have left a question mark in proponents' minds, and three additional contradictions — treated below — have escaped them. The first two are: The players, including Ingenioso himself, (1) comment on **Thomas Nashe** *separately* from Ingenioso and (2) refer to him as *deceased*. Neither treatment makes sense in the orthodox context. Leishman recognized that this seeming contradiction raises "objections

to this whole hypothesis.”\* When we understand, however, that Ingenioso is *Oxford*, both contradictions melt away. Oxford was alive, but his Voice had been retired, making it “deceased.”

The author of the third play has Ingenioso say, “Soone should *my angry ghost* a story write/ In which I would new fostred sinnes combine....” Critics, quite rightly, don’t understand how a live Nashe on stage could refer to his own ghost. But if Ingenioso is Oxford, “my angry ghost” means “my erstwhile angry persona.” **Nashe** is Ingenioso’s *ghost* because he is merely a pseudonym, and he was specifically Oxford’s *angry ghost* as opposed to all his other, mellower, Voices.

### Ingenioso as Greene

Ingenioso is not *just Nashe*. He is also **Robert Greene**.

Ingenioso complains, “In faith I have bene pasted to everie poste in Paules churchyard...and like Dick Pinner have put out *newe books of the maker, new books of the maker.*” Leishman\* observed in a footnote that this line echoes Gabriel Harvey’s caricature of **Robert Greene** in *Four Letters*: “Is this **Greene** with the running Head, and the scribbling Hand, that never linnes putting-forth *new, newer, & newest bookes of the maker?*” So, Ingenioso is equated here with **Robert Greene**.

The students remind Ingenioso that he “was wonte to carie some dissolute papers in thy bosome... an *Omne tulit punctu, ere a Magister artiu utriusque Academiae, ere an Opus and Usus...ere a needy Pamphlet...*” All three Latin lines refer to publications by **Robert Greene**. Leishman noted that the first Latin line, from Horace, was “repeatedly used by **Greene** as a motto for the title-pages of his ‘pamphlets’”\* and cited five examples. The second Latin line is **Greene**’s *self-description* from “some of his title pages.”\* The third Latin line is featured in **Greene**’s *Groats-worth of Witte*.

Ingenioso promises a potential patron that he will make Cupid caper “*on a paper stage.*” In his Second Letter, Harvey calls **Robert Greene** the “king of the paper stage.”

Ingenioso declares to his printer, “Ile be paid deare even for *the dregs of my wit.*” This is nearly an exact rendition of what **Nashe** in *Strange Newes* had said about **Greene**: “glad was that Printer that might be so blest to pay him deare for *the very dregs of his wit.*”

In *Groats-worth*, **Greene** calls a fellow playwright a “young Juvenal” and encourages him to pen satires. At the start of the third play, Ingenioso is holding a book by Juvenal.

Ingenioso claims to make his sparse living selling pamphlets, even though he issues “*twoo Phamphlets a weeke.*” Two Voices and an independent writer attest to **Greene**’s rapid output of pamphlets, as quoted in the Summation; the playwright refers to it with humorous hyperbole.

One character refers to Ingenioso as “you tattered prodigal,” expressing in just three words **Robert Greene**’s self-image in his final books and Harvey’s magnification of it. (See **Robert Greene** chapter.)

In the third play, Judicio holds forth a book and says, “Looke, its here: *Belvedere.*” The Compilers section shows that Oxford may have produced this compendium of literature, which begins with a dedication by his secretary, Anthony Munday. Ingenioso reads from the book and exclaims, “What have wee heere? The Poett garish Gayly bedeckt like forehorse of the Parishe.” In 1592, when Gabriel Harvey was having his laugh over the dead **Robert Greene** in *Four Letters*, he described him in just those words: “and here a Poet garish,/ Gaily bedeck’d like forehorse of the parish.” Ingenioso must have gotten a hearty laugh when as Oxford he glanced at his own compendium and came out with a line Harvey designed to disparage him.

### Greene and Nashe Conflated

Numerous passages pertain to both **Nashe** and **Greene**. In the second play, Ingenioso flatters his patron by saying, “you could never endure the seven liberall sciences to *carie there fardles on there backs*

like footmen....” **Thomas Nashe** in the preface to **Greene’s** *Menaphon* had spoken of “beggars...that ever they *caried their fardles on footback,*” and **Greene** in *Groats-worth* had recalled a time “when I was faine to carry my playing Fardle a footebacke.”

The Parnassus plays even explain how Oxford’s Voices morphed from **Greene** to **Nashe**. Philomusus in the third play says to Ingenioso, “A gentle wit thou *hadst*, nor is it blame/ To turne so tart, for time hath wronged the same.” The *former gentle wit* produced romantic prose in the names of **Robert Greene** and other euphuists; the *later tart wit* produced satire in the names of **Thomas Nashe** and half a dozen other like pseudonyms, as discussed in the Pamphleteers section. Ingenioso’s response hints at the former name in referring to the shift in style: “cherish gentle wits in their greene bud:/ For had not Cambridge bin to me unkinde,/ I had not turn’d to gall a milkye minde.”

### Ingenioso as Shakespeare

When Ingenioso provides renditions of poetry in the vein of the great Chaucer and Spenser for Gullio’s consideration, he lifts most of the words directly from these poets’ works. When he presents his imitation of **Shakespeare**, however, *he composes language on his own*. Leishman confirmed, “These lines, intended as an imitation of **Shakespeare**, *are presumably original.*”<sup>\*</sup> Ingenioso, then, is able to compose as **Shakespeare** does.

Ingenioso knows **Shakespeare’s** Sonnets. In referring to another’s love as “that better part of youre amorous soule,” he echoes **Shakespeare’s** sonnet #74, “My spirit is thine, the better part of me.” When he says, “I have imortalitie in my pen, and bestowe it on whome I will,” he echoes **Shakespeare’s** vows to that effect in the Sonnets addressed to the Fair Youth.

Ingenioso can also string together insults as **Shakespeare** does. In the second play, he calls Gullio “this post put into a sattin sute, this haberdasher of lyes, this Bracchidochio, this Ladye munger, this meere rapier and dagger, this cringer, this foretopp...you whorsonne tintunabulum.” The author of the Parnassus plays seems to have taken special pleasure in the very aspect of **Shakespeare** that conforms closest to the personality of **Nashe**: his talent for scoffing.

### Conflating Shakespeare and Samuel Daniel

*The First Part of the Return from Parnassus* attributes a line from *Romeo and Juliet* to Samuel Daniel, as if he were **Shakespeare**. When speaking to Ingenioso, Gullio (the Shaksper figure) borrows a line from **Shakespeare’s** *Romeo and Juliet*. In an aside to the audience, Ingenioso exclaims, “Marke, Romeo and Juliet! O monstrous theft. I thinke he will runn throughe a whole book of Samuell Daniell’s!”

There are two orthodox interpretations of that line. McKay offered, “At the very least, this indicates that there was significant *confusion* over the authorship of the plays when Shakespeare was alive, even among a group as educated and aware as the Cambridge players.”<sup>\*</sup> That idea does not fly. In a play this knowing and witty, there surely must be a better explanation than ignorance. Alternatively, Herford<sup>\*</sup> figured that Daniel is being charged with stealing lines from Shakespeare.

With our knowledge of Oxford’s Voices, we can see a better angle to the joke. It would be funnier having Oxford as Ingenioso — *incorrectly* from the public’s perspective but *correctly* and wisely from the insiders’ view — conflate **Daniel** and **Shakespeare**, his two most active poet-playwright Voices of 1592-1600. By our lights, there was no authorship confusion among these aficionados at all but rather intimate knowledge allowing them to present and appreciate a barrage of literary in-jokes. Surely the audience of university students laughed heartily at the Oxford character’s conflating **Shakespeare** and **Daniel**, both of whom were he.

A line in the ensuing play, *The Second Part of the Return from Parnassus* conflates these two names yet again. Judicio praises “*hony* dropping Daniell” and his *sugred sonnetting*.” This construction echoes Francis Meres’ words describing “*hony*-tongued **Shakespeare** [and] his *sugred Sonnets*...” Surely Meres’ words of three years prior were well known to the audience, and if the actor emphasized the words I have italicized, he could have generated another knowing laugh.

### Ingenioso as Oxford

Queen Elizabeth, in a Latin letter addressed to foreign potentates in 1575 (see Part 2 above) referred to Oxford as *ingenioso*. Others seem to have seized upon the same term.

The plays affirm that Ingenioso has dedicated his life to literature. In the first play, he is a student; in the second play, he makes a meager living by publishing books; and in the final play, he has turned to satire. This is a pretty good summary of Oxford’s trajectory up to 1598.

In the second play, Ingenioso offers some poetic lines in “Mr. Shakspear’s veyne” that are a “parody of *Venus and Adonis*...”\* Gullio replies, “No more! I am one that can judge accordinge to the proverbe, *bovem ex unguibus*.” Waugh explained, “As the clever audience of Cambridge scholars would have known, Gullio is misquoting from Erasmus: ‘*Leonem ex unguibus aestimare*’ – ‘To recognise a lion by its claws.’ But the Erasmus quotation has been changed to...\* ‘to know an ox by its hoof’ ....”\* Ingenioso is **Shakespeare** is Oxford.

In the third play, Ingenioso vows, “Ile pawne my wittes, that is, my revenues, my land, my money, and whatsoever I have, for I have nothing but my wit...” The Earl of Oxford had dissipated his revenues, land and money while pursuing the arts.

Two lines in the play may hint at Oxford’s name. When holding the book by Juvenal, Ingenioso promises to “light my linke at thy eternall flame,/ Till with it I brand everlasting shame/ On the world’s forehead...” Ingenioso declines to satirize a serving-man, because “a verie goose quill scornes such a base subject...” It may mean that “Vere’s pen” did not stoop to low-level satire in the manner of, say, John Harington.

Six Voices, including the **Earl of Oxford** in two letters, present ironic portrayals of lawyers and cynically explain how they go about billing clients into poverty. In the third Parnassus play, Ingenioso does the same thing, saying,

its usuall with them to be bribed on the one side, and then to take a fee of the other to plead weakely; then to be bribed and re-bribed on the one side, then to be feed and reefed of the other, till at length, *per varios casus*, by putting the case so often, they make their clients so lanke, that they may case them up in a combe case [to live] like poore shorne sheepe.

Also in the third play, Ingenioso reads out names of poets for Judicio to judge. They are Edmund Spenser, Henry Constable, Thomas Lodge, Samuel Daniel, Thomas Watson, Michael Drayton, John Davis, Henry Lok, Thomas Hudson, John Marston and Christopher Marlowe. According to the analysis throughout this book, *every one of these eleven names attaches to an individual who wrote his own poems*, except in the case of Lodge, who wrote books only after 1600. This list suggests that the author can delineate Voices from independent writers.

The playwright’s knowledge of Oxford’s Voices explains an odd use of the plural at the end of the third Parnassus play, when Ingenioso entreats the students, “Vouchsafe to mention with teare-swelling eyes/ Ingeniosos thwarting *destinyes*.” One person cannot have multiple destinies, but a writer who commanded multiple personas could craft multiple destinies, and they could thwart investigation, as happened with Oxford’s timely dispatching of **Robert Greene**.

The overall characterization of Ingenioso fits *Oxford* and at least three, and as many as five, of his Voices. *It does not fit Nashe alone*. Proponents of the Nashe-only hypothesis have avoided making these connections to the character of Ingenioso. Not only *must* we deal with them; we finally *can*. Unlike orthodoxy's case for **Nashe** alone, the hypothesis that Ingenioso is Oxford produces no contradictions.

### **Gullio as Will Shaksper**

Ingenioso's primary nemesis is his patron, Gullio. The Parnassus plays' author displays knowledge of Oxford and his Voices by depicting Gullio as just who Oxfordians say he is.

Gullio pretends to scholarship, gentility, fine speech, poetic talent and excellence at tilt, all qualities that Oxford possessed. Gullio pretends to have traveled to Italy, as Oxford did, and to have "sojourned in the universitie of Padua," which Oxford visited. Ingenioso mumbles in an aside, "He was never anie further than Flushing..." Gullio, then, pretends to be Shakespeare/Oxford, but he isn't, and Ingenioso calls him on it.

Scholars think the Parnassus plays *ridicule* Shakespeare by putting his lines and praise of him in the dolt Gullio's mouth. That is not the case. Gullio mimics **Shakespeare** because that's what he was paid to do in real life.

If this doltish pretender is Will Shaksper, then why did the playwright choose to call him Gullio? It is not because he is a gull, as many critics would have it. William of Stratford was christened, in Latin, *Gulielmus*. Gullio is Gulielmus Shaksper in all his doltish glory.

^John Weever (1576-1632) (ref. 1599)

John Weever, in *Epigrammes* (1599), seems to offer clues about the true author behind three Voices. Referring to **Samuel Daniel's** *Delia*, he writes in one of his prefacing poems ("Lectores"),

I cannot reach up to a Delians straine,  
Whose songs deserve for ever your attention.

In Epigram 10 of "The sixt weeke," "*Ad Samuelem Daniel*," he lauds **Daniel** only for *The Complaynt of Rosamond* and *Cleopatra*, not for anything the actual Daniel wrote.

Speaking of **William Warner** in Epigram 13, "*Ad Gulielmum Warner*," Weever offers an even cleverer clue:

Live prince of Poets, thy affections guide,  
*Where Witte attires her selfe in Vertues sute.*

This line specifically associates the letters *Ver* with a metaphor of dressing up as someone else.

In Epigram 22 of "The fourth weeke," "*Ad Gulielmum Shakespear*," Weever writes of "Honie-tong'd **Shakespeare**," echoing Francis Meres' term, and says, "when I saw thine issue/ I swore Apollo got them." He is saying that as soon as he saw *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, issued in Will Shaksper's name, he could tell they were not his but Apollo's.

^Robert Armin (c.1568-1615) (ref. 1599)

**Thomas Nashe** mentions Robert Armin in *Strange Newes* (1593). The Robert Armin chapter credits Armin with an anonymous book published in 1599 titled *A Pil to Purge Melancholie*, which mines *Nashes Lenten Stuffe* for material. Sutcliffe cited two scholars who thought Armin's dedicatee in fact "might be **Thomas Nashe**."\* Yes, and he might be Oxford, too.

The dedication is addressed to “Maister Baw-waw, *as one unknown...beeing a Spirit* all composed of mirth and merrie conceite.” Armin’s words are carefully chosen to reflect clandestine knowledge that his dedicatee is not a real person, precisely in line with the conclusions in the **Thomas Nashe** chapter.

Armin was positioned to know about Oxford’s Voices. In 1600, he wrote a letter stating that he was in the employ of a “right Honorable good Lord my Maister” and was setting off to visit him in Hackney, where Oxford lived. See discussion in the Robert Armin chapter.

^Thomas Dekker (c.1572-1632) (hint: 1600; refs. 1606, 1607)

Thomas Dekker (see also the Thomas Dekker chapter) left behind several indications that he knew about Oxford’s Voices.

*Revisions of Sir Thomas Moore* (c.1600)

If handwriting experts are correct that Hand E in the revised manuscript of *Sir Thomas Moore* is Thomas Dekker’s, then Dekker knew that Oxford was **Shakespeare**. In **Shakespeare**’s *As You Like It*, Touchstone, who is half of Oxford’s split personality (the other being Jaques), says to William, “you are not *ipse*, for I am he.” As discussed in the [**Anthony Munday**] chapter, Dekker — either on his own or at Oxford’s direction — added the line, “I am *ipse*” to the speech of a character in *Sir Thomas Moore* who may be a caricature of Oxford. By that stroke, Dekker ties an Oxford character in *Sir Thomas More* to one in a play by **Shakespeare**.

*Newes From Hell* (1606) and *A Knights Conjuring* (1607)

Two years after Oxford’s death, Dekker’s *Newes From Hell* (1606) both imitates and celebrates **Thomas Nashe**. The following year, Dekker issued an expanded edition of the same book, retitled *A Knights Conjuring* (1607), in which he omits several bits of text as well as *the entire half page of praise for “T. Nash.”* This action suggests that Dekker’s take on **Nashe** had expressed sensitive knowledge that authorities quickly suppressed. If so, we can find out exactly what bothered them by reproducing the deleted passages.

In the middle of a short paragraph in the original version is a parenthetical text that did not make it to the second edition. It reads,

(even out of my love to Pierce Pennylesse, because *he hath beene alwayes a companion to Schollers*).

What is so dangerous about that? Well, the italicized phrase reveals that Pierce in real life had scholarly companions, a fact that might send some sleuth to search him out among lettered men of the age. Had they done so, they would not have found him.

Dekker’s half-page tribute to **T. Nash** in the 1606 edition eulogizes him straightforwardly for his talents and success (as quoted in the **Thomas Nashe** chapter), but it also identifies him in curious terms. Dekker begins,

And thou, into whose soule (if ever there were a *Pithagorean Metempsychosis*) the raptures of the fierie and inconsinable *Italian spirit* were bounteously *infused*, thou sometimes Secretary to Pierce Pennylesse....

This passage has at least three hints linking Oxford to the **Nashe** persona. *Metempsychosis*, of which Pythagoras was a vocal proponent, is “the supposed transmigration at death of the soul of a human being or animal into a new body.” Dekker was saying that something or someone *infused* the “Italian spirit” into the “soule” of **Thomas Nashe**, not by mere influence but *by the migration of a soul from one entity to another*. These are excellent terms to use if one wishes covertly to imply — with plausible deniability —

that a pseudonym came to literary life by receiving the soul of another entity. The infuser, moreover, was an *Italianate* person, one who might be identified by the nearby word *ever*.

Dekker may also have known that Oxford contributed to **Christopher Marlowe's** *Doctor Faustus*, the final scene of which has Faustus ruminating on "*Pythagoras metempsychosis*." In *Beware the Cat* (1561), William Baldwin had made "reference to the esteemed Pythagoras on metempsychosis — as does **Shakespeare** in a witty passage in *Twelfth Night*."\* Perhaps Dekker was connecting the idea to **Nashe** after having noted it in Oxford's text for Marlowe's play and/or in **Shakespeare**.

Dekker calls **Nashe** "sometimes Secretary to Pierce Pennylesse." That phrase implies that **Nashe** was separate from Pierce and only *sometimes* served Pierce, fitting the idea that at other times he served of other Voices.

Immediately following the excised passage is a sentence referring to Pierce's *Supplication to the Divell* that was maintained in the second book. It reads, "But the best is, *Facilis descensus Averno*, we may quickly have a ring through his nose if he do." The Latin phrase, meaning "descending to hell is easy," has a convenient *ver* within it. Intended or not, the censors missed it.

Dekker relates that when the Devil receives Pierce's supplication, he listens as "Malvolio his Secretarie is reading it to him." It may be more than coincidence that the devil's secretary has the same name as Olivia's steward in **Shakespeare's** *Twelfth Night*.

On the same page, there is a curious and very revealing edit. In the 1606 version, Dekker had written,

Serjeant Sathan gave him his blessing, and told him that during his absence, both Pierce Pennyles *and the Poet that writ for him* have been landed by Charon....

In the 1607 book, the passage was edited to read,

Serjeant Sathan gave him his blessing, and told him that during his absence, *the Wryter that penn'd the Supplication* had been landed by Charon....

In the first edition, Dekker had identified Pierce Penillesse and "the Poet that writ for him" as two different people, traveling together through hell. In the second edition, Dekker's duo became a single person. That shift explains the next excision, comprising the italicized words in the following passage:

In this Interim Sir Digoneis worshippe (our wandring knight) is walking *with the monillesse Orator* in one of the Elizian gardens....

In brief, Pierce's companion — "the Poet" and "monillesse Orator" "that writ for him" — was written out of the second edition. The Earl of Oxford was a Poet and an Orator (see Opening Argument), and by 1592 he had become relatively moneyless. The **Thomas Nashe** persona does not fit, because he was primarily a prose writer and never an orator.

Isn't it interesting how censors' efforts can end up having the opposite of the intended effect? Instead of hiding a fact, they turn it into a Roman candle. All one has to do is look (it) up.

The final substitution of interest involves but a single word. The 1606 edition unfortunately is missing a page, but the surviving text begins with this suggestive passage:

the trees *ever* flourishing, the fruits *ever* growing, the flowers *ever* springing.

In the 1607 edition, the full passage is available, but the final word is changed:

for Spring is all the yere long, tricking up the Boughes: for that the trees are ever flourishing, the fruits ever growing, the flowers ever budding.

Despite suspicions, the intent of substituting *budding* for *springing* was probably not in service of deleting a *ver* word, because four others are left intact. For that reason and because the final pages contain fresh text and were clearly subject to Dekker's editing, my guess is that this substitution was made for the sake of artistry. One pines to see that missing page.

In place of singing **T. Nash**'s praises, the 1607 book concludes with a benign but famous "dream" in which Dekker describes "The Grove of Bay Trees" in the underworld where ten dead poets reside. Chaucer calls Spenser "his Sonne," and the next passage lists six Voices (three of whom: Kyd, Marlowe and Chettle, were writers in their own rights), along with Oxford's associates, Thomas Watson and Thomas Achelow, in the same paragraph:

In another companie sat learned Watson, industrious **Kyd**, ingenius Atchlow, [the player Bentley,] carowsing to one another at the holy well, some of them singing Paeans to Apollo, whist **Marlow**, **Greene**, and **Peele** had got under the shades of a large vyne, laughing to see **Nashe** (that was newly come to their Colledge,) still haunted with a sharpe and Satyricall spirit that followd him heere upon earth: [I]n comes **Chettle** sweating and blowing, by reason of his fatnes, to welcome whom, because hee was of olde acquaintance, all rose up, and fell presentlie on their knees, to drinck a health to all the Lovers of Hellicon.

Even in this presumably unrevealing passage, Dekker has Chaucer and Spenser stand apart, and he groups Oxford's Voices and associates together.

Dekker has a bit of fun with **Nashe**, who not only rails about the state of the literary arts but also "inveyed bitterly (as he had wont to do) against dry-fisted Patrons, accusing them of his untimely death, because if they had given his Muse that cherishment which shee most worthily deserved, hee had fed to his dying day on fat Capons, burnt sack and Suger, and not so desperately have ventur'de his life, and shortend his dayes *by keeping company with pickle herrings*." Though **Nashe** did supposedly travel to Yarmouth to write his paean to the herring industry, *Nashes Lenten Stuffe*, the use of the term *pickle* with *herrings* in connection with **Nashe**'s untimely death conflates **Nashe** with **Greene**, whom Harvey described as having died in an untimely manner from too much "Rhenish wine and pickled herring" (see **Robert Greene** chapter).

Aside from the links to **Shakespeare** noted above, there is a bit of evidence suggesting that Dekker had read other materials by Oxford's Voices and knew who penned them. In *Remedies Against Discontentment* (1596), **Anonymus** had written,

In times past, there was a certaine Image painted in a Temple.... The Picture was of a Rope-maker, who did but labour continually, and suffered his Asse to eate that which was behind him.

In *A Knights Conjuring*, Dekker quotes **Thomas Nashe**'s spirit in hell complaining,

[A poet] workes but like Ocnus, that makes ropes in hell; for as hee twists, an Asse stands by and bites them in sunder, and that Asse is no other than the Audience with hard hands.

The book by **Anonymus** came out during **Thomas Nashe**'s heyday. Dekker surely read it, and knowing its true author, placed a version of one of its passages into the mouth of **Nashe**'s spirit.



^EDWARD PUDSEY (1573-1613) (hint: sometime between 1600 and 1612)

“Very little is known about Edward Pudsey, except that he was born in Derbyshire in 1573 and died in 1613 at Tewkesbury, about 25 miles from Stratford (ODNB). There is a 1591 record of a Pudsey family living at Langley, about five miles from Stratford, and only three miles from Park Hall, the home of the Ardens, parents of Shakespeare’s mother Mary (Savage vi). . . . In 1888 scholars were fortunate to discover a ninety-page manuscript that was inscribed ‘Edward Pudsey’s Book.’ . . . The dates entered in the manuscript range from 1600 to 1612, the year before Pudsey died.”\*

In his journal, Pudsey wrote out passages from 22 contemporary plays, including eight by **Shakespeare**, two of which — *Hamlet* and *Othello* — included lines, perhaps delivered from the stage, that had never appeared in print. “After the *Othello* quotation, Pudsey wrote the letters *sh*, a reasonably clear indication that he knew that the play was by William Shakespeare.

“The English scholar who examined the manuscript asserted that the quotations from *Othello* and *Hamlet* were written in a section that she dated no later than 1600 (Rees 331). . . . *But nowhere in the hundreds of entries in Edward Pudsey’s Book is there any indication that he was aware that the playwright whose words he copied so carefully lived in nearby Stratford-upon-Avon.*”\* If Hall knew who **Shakespeare** was, it makes sense that he did not bother mentioning the Stratford man.

^Charles Fitzgeoffrey (1576-1638) (ref. 1601)

Anderson\* pointed out two couplets “To the Bard” within Charles Fitzgeoffrey’s *Caroli Fitzgeoffridi affaniae* suggesting that Fitzgeoffrey was calling the Earl of Oxford “the Bard.” As translated from the Latin, they read as follows:

*To the Bard*

Are you healthy, he who writes for the last generation?  
Let “the letter” never be handed over. O Bard. Be silent.

*To the Bard*

You have been cautious, saying, “I will publish verses after my death.”  
I would not so hurriedly crucify yourself, O Bard.

Those lines seem to conflate Oxford and **Shakespeare**. Oxford had been complaining of ill health, and Fitzgeoffrey asks, “Are you healthy?” Oxford had been writing for over 40 years, making him the poet-playwright “for the last generation,” not one of the younger crew that cropped up in the late 1590s. **Shakespeare** had been “cautious” about keeping his Sonnets — later attributed to **Shakespeare** — private. Fitzgeoffrey urges him not to “publish verses,” because, he says, you would “crucify yourself.” If Oxford did make the quoted promise, it was fulfilled when Thomas Thorpe brought *Shake-speares Sonnets* to press in 1609. That Fitzgeoffrey, like so many others, felt compelled *not to name* his addressee fits our context.

The connection here is more tenuous than most. I do not know what “the letter” means, although the very next word is *never*.

^EDWARD BLOUNT (1565-1632) (access to Voices’ manuscripts: 1601, 1623, 1632)

Edward Blount, stationer, publisher, translator and owner of a shop in Paul’s Churchyard, was intimately connected with Oxford and his legacy. Blount knew who Oxford was, but he never said so.

In 1623, Blount was one of the publishers, along with Isaac Jaggard, of the First Folio of **Shakespeare**’s plays. Ben Jonson and Mabbe (as I.M.) contributed verses to the First Folio, and Blount published a

translation by James Mabbe with prefatory verses by Jonson and Leonard Digges. John Benson's 1640 edition of **Shakespeare's** sonnets contains verses by Digges. So, all four men worked together, and all four were connected to **Shakespeare** publications. Blount "also published **Shakespeare's** 'The Phoenix and the Turtle'..."\* as part of **Robert Chester's** *Loves Martyr* (1601). Blount "entered both *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* in the Stationers' Register in 1608, though he published neither."\* Extending his lists of people connected to the Bard, "Blount was also a close friend and professional colleague of Thomas Thorpe, the publisher of **Shakespeare's** sonnets."\*

"In 1632, he collected for the first time **John Lyly's** *Six Court Comedies*..." Impressively, "Blount appears to have had access to **Lyly's** manuscripts; in no earlier editions of the separate plays were any of **Lyly's** lyrics inserted."\* In praising **Lyly**, Blount says, "The Lyre he played on, had no borrowed strings," using a metaphor befitting Oxford's musical talents (see Songwriters section). Blount appears to have coined the term "Euphueisme" to describe the writing style that **Lyly** perfected.

So, for over three decades, Blount had access to the material of two of Oxford's most important Voices: **John Lyly** and **Shakespeare**. His connection to other shepherds of Oxford's legacy helped make him "the most important publisher of the early seventeenth century."\*

Blount also has a tie to **Shakespeare's** only dedicatee. In 1600 "...Blount published and dedicated to the Earl of Southampton a translation by 'a respected friend,' entitled 'The Uniting of the Kingdom of Portugall to the Crowne of Castill.'"\*

It is perhaps fitting that "...Blount was a remarkably secular bookseller. For instance, until he formed a business partnership with William Barrett (1609-1613), he did not publish a single sermon, although that genre was popular and profitable."\* **Greene, Nashe** and **Shakespeare** would have approved.

^F.D. (Francis Davison) (hints: 1602, 1603)

Francis Davison's *A Poetical Rapsody* (1602) includes poems by five Voices: **Anomos, Ignoto, Incerto, A.W.** and **Melophilus**. His *Anagrammata* (1603) includes a Latin poem titled "Edouardus Veierus." The same volume names nine lords, every one of whom is connected to works by Oxford's Voices. See discussion in the Francis Davison chapter.

^Henry Chettle (c.1564–c.1606) (refs: 1603)

Henry Chettle's *Englandes Mourning Garment* (1603) indicates knowledge of Oxford's Voices. He even indicates that **Shakespeare** was active in the 1580s (see **Henry Chettle** chapter).

In one poem, Chettle famously chides ten poets for failing to eulogize Elizabeth. Eight of them are independent of the Voices. I include the actual Samuel Daniel among them because Chettle cites him exclusively for his *Civile Wars*: "He that so well could sing the fatall strife/ Betweene the royall Roses White and Red." Only someone aware of Oxford's use of Daniel's name would pointedly omit the transcendent works: the poem, *Delia*, and the play, *Cleopatra*. In pointed contrast to all the other addressees, "Daniel, interestingly, is not given a pastoral name..."\* I think the reason that Chettle could not settle on a single appellation is that Daniel's name attends two writers: himself and a Voice, and their subjects and writing styles differ.

Chettle dedicates one poem to **William Warner**, and another to a poet whom orthodox scholars have agreed is **Shakespeare**:

Nor doth the silver tonged Melicert  
Drop from his honied muse one sable teare  
To mourne her death that graced his desert,

And to his laies opend her Royall eare.  
Shepherd remember our Elizabeth,  
And sing her Rape, done by that Tarquin, Death.

The reference to *Lucrece* in the final line confirms that Chettle is addressing **Shakespeare**. Yet there is a mystery: “Nobody has ever been able to explain, however, why Chettle calls **Shakespeare** Melicert.”\* Our context allows us to do just that.

We know from our analysis of **Robert Greene**’s *Groats-worth* and **Henry Chettle**’s *Kind-hartes Dreame* that in late 1592, Chettle became acutely aware that **Robert Greene** was a Voice of Oxford’s. In the style of Spenser and other poets, Chettle uses the name of a character the writer made famous to indicate the writer himself. In this case, he chooses the name *Melicert* because the hero of **Greene**’s *Menaphon* is a shepherd poet named *Melicertus*. The name has no other source; it is unique to **Robert Greene**. Further fitting our context of Oxford’s Voices, in **Greene**’s tale, “the character Melicertus assumes the name *as a disguise* (his real name is Maximus).”\* Chettle cannot be using Melicert to refer to **Robert Greene** — either in actuality or as a Voice — for two reasons: First, Chettle conflates Melicert and **Shakespeare**; second, by that time, **Greene** had been dead for eleven years, so he could not possibly be called upon to write a eulogy for Elizabeth. Here, then, is a flashing neon sign revealing Chettle’s knowledge that **Robert Greene** and **William Shakespeare** are one and the same person: the still-living, silver-tongued Earl of Oxford.

^Richard Carew (1555-1620) (ref. 1605)

The second edition (1605) of William Camden’s *Remains* incorporates Richard Carew’s “An Epistle concerning the excellencies of the English tongue.” In it, Carew lists England’s best writers: Sir Thomas Smith, Sir Thomas Moore, Ascham, Chaucer, John Cheeke, the Earle of Surry, **Shak-sppeare**, Barlowe, Daniel, Spencer, Sir John Davies and Sir Philip Sidney.\* He seems careful to name only independent writers plus **Shak-sppeare**, with a hyphen, indicating a pen name. He does not mention **John Lyly**, **Robert Greene**, **Thomas Nashe**, **William Warner** or any other Voice whose name does not also belong to an independent writer. On those bases, he seems to have known that **Shakespeare** is a Voice. On the other hand, he cites Samuel Daniel as the heir of Ovid, not the author of *Civile Wars*, so he may not have known that Daniel served as Voice. As noted below, William Camden offers the same type of list in the same book.

^SIR THOMAS SMYTHE (1558-1625) (ref. 1605)

Sir Thomas Smythe, a wealthy businessman, financier and London sheriff, served under King James as ambassador to Russia in 1604-5. Around September 1605, a book published under the titled *Sir Thomas Smithes Voiage and Entertainment in Rushia* detailed Smythe’s experiences there. Although the author is not named, only someone with the full cooperation of Smythe could have written it. Because Smythe stands behind the volume either as sole author or as collaborator, I will refer to him as the author.

Political events in Moscow in 1604-5 were intense, and Smythe muses about which great English writers could have dramatized most effectively the events he had witnessed, which in dramatic impact were “a first, but no second to any Hamlet.” He considers four writers: Sidney, “Lord Salustius” (du Bartas), Fulke Greville and Ben Jonson, two of whom were deceased and two living. Then he quotes a statement from the only person whom he refrains from naming, calling him only “the late English quick-spirited, cleare-sighted Ovid.”

Smythe’s comments show that he knew (1) that the English Ovid’s identity must be kept secret, (2) that with a single hint, some readers would know to whom he was referring and (3) that said writer was recently deceased. Smythe’s short reference, then, reflects key elements of the Oxfordian scenario.

Jan Cole\* spotted that line and deduced that the premier candidate for being the “English Ovid” appellation is **Shakespeare**, whom Frances Meres in *Palladis Tamia* in 1598 had tagged as embodying “the sweete wittie soule of Ovid.” Oxford translated Ovid as a teenager (see **T.H. (Thomas Hackett)** and **Arthur Golding** chapters), and nearly all the Voices draw from Ovid in one way or another.

Traditionalists might try to have it that Smythe was talking about Will Shaksper. But, as Cole noted, the Stratford man was still alive in 1605, whereas the Earl of Oxford had died just the year before, fitting Smythe’s term, *late*.

The English Ovid’s statement quoted by Smythe speaks to the wisdom of remaining silent when it comes to certain disturbing state matters. Putting a neat ribbon on the package, Cole found that the statement echoes lines delivered by Prince Hamlet in Act II, Scene ii of **Shakespeare**’s *Hamlet*, the very play to which Smythe refers.

Smythe expresses admiration for the English Ovid as having been “quick-spirited” and “cleare-sighted,” i.e. lively and wise. They fit comfortably alongside others’ positive assessments of the Earl of Oxford, as quoted earlier in this section.

^(SIR) GEORGE BUC(K) (1560-1622) (hint: 1605)

Buc was “patronized by the Earl of Oxford”\* and wrote privately about him (as quoted earlier in this section). Buc also had close connections to Oxford’s circle, including “the Most Noble and Incomparable Paire of Brethren” to whom the First Folio of **Shakespeare**’s plays is dedicated. “In the *History* he speaks of Pembroke, then Lord Chamberlain, as ‘my most honorable good Lord’ (as Lord Chamberlain), and ‘(in a word) a true heroicall gentilman,’ who has a brother Sir Philip as near to him in noble disposition and virtues as in blood.”\* “In 1601, Buc was sent to Sir Francis Vere at Middleburgh, with instructions from Sir Robert Cecil.”\*

In 1582, “G. Bucke” contributed “A Quatorzain, in the Commendation of Master Thomas Watson...” to *Hekatompathia*, which is dedicated to Oxford. “At this time Buc...was probably at Thavies Inn, where Matthew Roydon, who first appears as a poet in this volume, was also a student in 1581-2.”\* Buc’s poem is not in the Voices’ style.

A compatible “G.B.” “was **Greene**’s most faithful friend in the writing of complimentary verses to his prose works,” three in all, one of which, in *Ciceronis Amor*, “immediately follows one by his friend Watson.”\* Sisson\* attributed G.B.’s contributions to William Boston, because G.B. describes himself as of Cambridge, and William signed one set of verses “Gulielmus Boston, Cantabrigiensis.” That is a weak connection. We may be confident that G.B. is George Buc, because in *Daphnis Polystephanos* (1605), Buc offers a theme of trees representing kings, and in G.B.’s poem for **Robert Greene**’s *Mamillia Part 2* (1583), plants represent people (see quote in the **Robert Greene** chapter). If only because Buc contributed verses to **Robert Greene**’s books, we may conclude that he knew the name was a Voice.

A Stratfordian scholar asserted, “Inscriptions and documents in the hand of Sir George Buc reveal, among other things, that Buc knew **Shakespeare** personally, and interviewed him concerning the authorship of a play.”\* Among Buc’s annotated documents are copies of play quartos of *Orlando Furioso* and *James the Fourth* by **Robert Greene**, *Alphonsus, King of Aragon*, by (Buc informs us) “**R.G.**,” i.e. **Robert Greene**, and *Henry IV Part 2* and *Henry V* by **Shakespeare**.

Buc also wrote *History of the Life and Reign of Richard III*, published in 1646. “Buc is original in his defence of the character of Richard, whose annals were written under his Tudor enemies. He had denied the orthodox view as early as 1605 in his *Eclogue*.”\* Why would Buc introduce this point of view in 1605? **Shakespeare** was the principal Tudor shaper of Richard’s negative characterization. To maintain his friendship

with Oxford, Buc may have waited to express his opinion until after Oxford died in June 1604. This is a hint that Buc knew Oxford was **Shakespeare**.

Unfortunately, all “George Buc’s office books, which would have had the deepest interest for students of the drama, were consumed by fire.”\* This is the same fate that befell Ben Jonson’s library. Jonson likewise held the receivership of the Mastership of the Revels and was involved in the preservation of Oxford’s legacy (see **Ben Jonson** chapter). Notes in both libraries — we are tempted to believe, as Barrell did — might have contained “smoking guns” identifying Oxford as **Shakespeare**.

^M.L. (ref. c.1605-1615)

An otherwise unknown M.L. issued a book of verse titled *Envies Scourge, and Vertues Honour*, which is undated, but which scholars have variously dated to 1605, 1609 and 1605-1615. The words *Envies* and *Vertues* in the title are not meant to suggest “N.V.” (Ned Vere) and Vere, because the poem is an elegy on Edmund Spenser. The author has been praised for capturing Spenser’s style.

In Stanza 25, M.L. shifts gears to apologize for having disparaged a “sweet wit” and regrets “that giddy rage so clear a spring did stain [whose] verses live supported by a speare.”\* Peterson quickly understood that M.L. is addressing “none other than **Shakespeare**...”\* But there is more to M.L.’s identification, as his line links *spring* and *speare*, which is to say, *Ver* and *Shakespeare*. He also does not say that the author lives; he says only that the author’s “*verses* live.” It seems that M.L. was one who knew.

^WILLIAM CAMDEN (1551-1623) (refs. 1605, 1607)

“In 1603, the antiquarian and historian William Camden, in his *Remaines of a Greater Worke concerning Britaine* (1605), included ‘**William Shakespeare**’ as one of the ‘most pregnant wits of these times, whom succeeding ages may justly admire’ (294). Yet Camden said nothing of **Shakespeare** when discussing the worthies of Stratford-on-Avon in his later work of 1607, *Britannia*,”\* his meticulous, shire-by-shire history of England. Rather, “In the section on Stratford-upon-Avon, he described this ‘small market-town’ as owing ‘all its consequence’ to two natives — John de Stratford, later Archbishop of Canterbury, who built the church, and Hugh Clopton, later mayor of London, who built the Clopton bridge across the Avon. He failed to mention the well-known playwright William Shakespeare, who supposedly lived in the same town.”\*

One cannot dismiss Camden’s omission as being borne of ignorance, because this scholarly man was in fact *keenly aware* of the Shaksper of Stratford. In 1597, Camden had been appointed Clarenceaux King of Arms at the College of Heraldry, which means that he had the ultimate “authority to grant the coat of arms that identified a man as a gentleman.”\* That same year — over the vocal objection of some arms-holders of the day — Camden became “one of the two officials in the College of Arms who approved the application of John Shakespeare, William’s father, to have his existing coat of arms impaled with the arms of his wife’s family, the Ardens of Wilmcote. Thus, William Camden was acquainted with the Stratford Shakespeares, father and son.”\* With such intimate involvement in the Shaksper men’s ambitions, there is *no way* Camden could have *forgotten* to mention Will Shaksper among Stratford worthies had he been a great poet and playwright. He must have known that Shaksper was a mere stand-in who was unworthy of mention and the very subject of authorship off limits as a topic of discussion.

Camden’s appointment to the College of Arms in the very same year John Shaksper applied for a social upgrade seems mightily convenient. Under the scenario painted in the **Shakespeare** chapter, the granting of arms ultimately to his son William was probably part of the payment for his cooperation in the Shakespeare identity cover-up. Camden must at least have been privy to the plot, and he may have been one of Oxford’s agents in getting Shaksper’s arms validated.

There is another indication that Camden was Oxford's friend: **William Warner** praises Camden twice in *Albion's England*.

Several writers cited Camden as being a friend of Samuel Daniel, who served as one of Oxford's Voices. Camden's *Remaines* contains a list of poets whom he considered the best of the Elizabethan era dating from 1578. Here is his list: "Sir Philip Sidney, Ed. Spenser, Samuel Daniel, Hugh Holland, Ben. Jonson, Th. Campion, Mich. Drayton, George Chapman, John Marston [and] **William Shakespeare**." Precisely as with Richard Carew's list in the very same book, Camden declines to mention **Robert Greene**, **Thomas Lodge**, **William Warner**, **Richard Barnfield** or any other Voice of Oxford's who was not also a poet in his own right. His list comprises *real people*, every one of which I show in this book to be an independent poet, whether serving partly as a Voice — as did Daniel and Jonson — or not. By naming **Shakespeare**, he used only one of the Earl of Oxford's pen names to designate him. Citing other Voices would have been redundant.

^Michael Drayton (1563-1631) (ref. 1605; record 1612)

The Michael Drayton chapter notes that Drayton drew from **Shakespeare's** sonnet 107 for his own Sonnet 51 within the 1604 edition of his *Idea*. The editors of *The Works of Michael Drayton* were prompted to say "...Drayton had seen **Shakespeare's** sonnet and had it in mind."\* Duncan-Jones agreed, "This is indeed very probable..." and conjectured, "Perhaps Drayton wrote his 1605 sonnet in emulation of **Shakespeare's**."\* The emulation was appropriate. Drayton wrote his sonnet *about Shakespeare* just months after Oxford died. In three of its lines, Drayton may have connected the Bard to Oxford:

We and the Dutch at length our selves to sever;  
Thus the World doth, and evermore shall Reelee:/  
Yet to my Goddesse am I constant ever.

One reason to think Drayton chose these *Ver* words deliberately is that not one such word appears in the Bard's sonnet 107, from which he drew.

In "To My Most Dearely-loved Friend Henery Reynolds Esquire, of Poets and Poesie" (1627), Drayton discusses two dozen English poets. He does not offer Oxford's Voices the blanket courtesy they extended to him. He takes seven lines to rip "**Lyllies** writing" and that of his followers — all of whom, as shown in this book, are Voices. He scoffs at euphuism's "idle similes" and "ridiculous tricks" and calls its practitioners "mere lunatiques." He expresses a preference for more direct writers: Philip Sidney, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser and Ben Jonson but also **Thomas Nashe**, who "A branch of lawrell yet deserves to beare," and **Shakespeare**:

Shakespeare thou hadst as smooth a comicke vaine,  
Fitting the socke and in thy naturall braine,  
As strong conception, and as cleere a rage,  
As any one that trafiqu'd with the stage.

He calls **William Warner** "my old friend" but takes him to task: "Warner, though his lines were not so trimmed/Nor yet his Poem so exactly limn'd,/ And neatly jointed..." He calls the actual Samuel Daniel "too much historian in verse;/ His rimes were smooth, his meters well did close,/ But yet his maner better fitted prose." That is exactly my conclusion about the actual Daniel, as offered in the **Samuel Daniel** and **William Warner** chapters. In *England's Heroicall Epistles*, a line in one of Drayton's poems mentions "Sidney, Constable [and] Daniell," indicating that both times he was speaking of Daniel as an independent poet.

One conspicuously piece of *lacking* evidence indicates that Drayton knew that Will Shaksper was not **Shakespeare**:

The poet and dramatist Michael Drayton was born and raised in Warwickshire, only about twenty-five miles from Stratford-upon-Avon. He wrote plays that appeared on the London stage in the late 1590s, about the same time as those of **Shakespeare**. In 1612 Drayton published his poem *Poly-Olbion*, a county-by-county history that included well-known men of every kind. In it he referred often to Chaucer, to Spenser, and to other English poets. But in his section on Warwickshire, he never mentioned Stratford-upon-Avon or **Shakespeare**, even though by 1612 **Shakespeare** was a well-known playwright.\*

A “heraldic manuscript” from the early 1600s even places Michael Drayton’s and William Shaksper’s coats of arms side by side, because they were both from Warwickshire.

So, Drayton was (1) from Shaksper’s county of Warwickshire, (2) a meticulous chronicler of English towns and their respected denizens, (3) a poet and playwright himself and (4) one who praised **Shakespeare** in print, yet he omitted mention of Will Shaksper in his tally of notables from Stratford! This evidence essentially proves that Drayton knew that Shaksper of Stratford did not write **Shakespeare**’s plays and poems. When Drayton commented on **Lyly, Warner, Nashe** and **Shakespeare**, he was probably contrasting the Voices he liked with those he did not.

^WILLIAM BARKSTED (refs. 1607, 1611)

William Barksted was a poet, playwright and actor. In 1607 and 1611 respectively, he issued *Mirrha the Mother of Adonis* and *Hiren, or, The faire Greeke*, narrative poems “written in imitation of **Shakespeare**’s *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* respectively, suggesting that Barksted had taken the older poet-actor and playwright as a model for his career in the theatre....”<sup>\*</sup> Proving he has **Shakespeare** in mind, Barksted addresses him directly in the final stanza of *Mirrha*. In devaluing his own muse, he contasts her to the Bard:

But stay my Muse...  
His song was worthie merrit (**Shakspeare** hee)  
sung the faire blossome, thou the withered tree  
Laurell is due to him, his art and wit  
hath purchast it, Cypres thy brow will fit.

By using the verbs *was* and *sung*, Barksted indicates that **Shakespeare** was dead. “Cypres” should circle the brow of Barksted’s Muse for the same reason: “In classical antiquity, the cypress was a symbol of mourning....”<sup>\*</sup> So, Barksted knew that Will Shaksper, who lived another nine years, was not **Shakespeare**.

Barksted cannot be referring to a man in retirement, because no fan would be so discourteous as to assume his hero would never write again. On the contrary, he would be urging him to resume practicing his craft.

Barksted does not state who is behind the name **Shakespeare**, but his next book establishes a connection to our candidate. He dedicates the first part of *Hiren* “To the Heroicke Heros [sic; s is an error for e; the meaning is clearly singular], Henry Earle of Oxenford, Vicount Bulbeck, &c.” and the second part “To the Perfection of Perfection, the intelligent, and worthily admired, Elizabeth Countesse of Darby, wife to the thrice-noble William Earle of Darby.” These people are Henry de Vere and Elizabeth Vere Stanley, *Oxford’s only son and his eldest daughter*. Barksted’s later publications contain no dedications at all, so these are special.

The title page of *Hiren* features a quote from Ovid. Barksted's dedication to Henry borrows one of the Voices' terms in apologizing for "my unpolish't pen," recalling **Shakespeare's** "my unpolished lines" in the dedication to *Venus and Adonis* and echoing a dozen other such usages among the Voices, as listed in the **T.H. [Thomas Heywood]** chapter. Over nine lines of this dedication, he employs four *ver*-related words, the last of which puns on the family name:

To sing your vertues...  
truth's accepted ...  
That humble Rivers...  
which fame shall ever sound.

The first three items may or may not be conscious allusions, but the latter phrase ends the dedication and is surely an intentional reference to the Vere line. His dedication to Elizabeth praises her "Vertue and beauty."

^THOMAS GREENE (record: 1609)

This Thomas Greene is not to be confused with Thomas Greene the comic actor or **Thomas Greene** the Voice (see **Thomas Greene** chapter). This Thomas Greene was "the London solicitor for the Stratford Corporation, and the Town Clerk of Stratford-upon-Avon for more than ten years,"\* beginning in 1603. Greene attended Gray's Inn, so he was a smart guy. He knew poets, playwrights and Will Shaksper, with whom he shared in a minor business deal (see **Shakespeare** chapter). Greene kept a diary in which he mentioned "my cosen Shakspeare" in connection with a disagreement over an enclosure of land. "[I]n 1609, Greene drew up these notes, indicating that he was living at New Place,"\* Will Shaksper's big house. He knew the man well.

Greene wrote many letters that survive to this day. Nothing within his town records, his diary or his letters mentions that his cousin Shaksper was a poet or playwright or even that he was famous. His diary fails to note anything at all about Will Shaksper, much less does it extol him as the genius of his age. Greene seems to have known Shaksper — fitting what we know of him (see **Shakespeare** chapter) as one of Stratford's least laudable sons. He knew he wasn't **Shakespeare**.

This Thomas Greene would have known that **Shakespeare** was Oxford if he is the man who served as a Voice in 1603 (see **Thomas Greene** chapter). I think his affiliation with Gray's Inn makes that scenario quite possible.

^Thomas Thorpe (c.1569-c.1635) (ref. 1609)

*The Dedication Puzzle* demonstrates that Thomas Thorpe knew of at least several of Oxford's Voices. He contributed specially crafted prefaces to two publications of the Voices' works: **Richard Barnfield's** *Cynthia* (1595) and *Shake-speares Sonnets* (1609). Thorpe's 1609 book eschews the poet's first name, William, and hyphenates *Shake-speare*, as befits a pseudonym.

^JOHN DAVIES OF HEREFORD (c.1565-1618) (refs. 1610, 1618+)

John Davies of Hereford knew Oxford and his world intimately. In *Microcosmos*, "The sonnets in praise of 'worthy persons' show that Davies was well acquainted with many of the most exalted personages of the age."\* Among the dedicatees of Davies' publications were the Countess of Derby (in this case the widow of Elizabeth Vere's husband's deceased brother, Fernando Stanley); the Countess of Pembroke, **Mary Sidney** Herbert, who served as a Voice; and Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, later Susan Vere's husband and one of the "brethren" who directed **Shakespeare's** legacy through the First Folio. Along with the actual Samuel Daniel, Davies wrote verses to Southampton after his release from the Tower in 1603. The same



publication “is valuable in testifying the popularity of **Shakespeare’s** *Venus and Adonis*, and for its comments on [**Thomas**] **Nashe**, Gabriel Harvey...and others.”\* As we will see, Davies had a warm feeling for Oxford, although it was surely tempered by his disgust over the “Gomorrahs filth” of **Nashe’s** *Valentines* poem.

In *The Scourge of Folly* (1610), Davies addresses epigram #159 to “Mr. **Will. Shake-speare**,” the hyphen implying knowledge that the moniker is a pen name. The truncated “Will” leaves a “Have gun, will travel”-type calling card for the Bard, who upon demand “will shake spear” on stage.

The opening line of the epigram, “Some say good Will (which I, *in sport*, do sing)”, celebrates his subject by the name “Will” *in sport*, leaving his real name undeclared. Davies continues,

Hadst thou not played some Kingly parts in sport  
Thou hadst bin a companion for a king;  
And beene a King among the meaner sort.

In these and ensuing lines, Davies provides one of several indications (see discussion below) that **Shakespeare**, meaning Oxford, was an actor. Davies’ choice of words was almost surely deliberate: “to anyone conversant with contemporary English Law, ‘a companion for a king’ would have been recognized as an obvious and specific allusion to an Earl, as the term was written into English law in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century,”\* by which “it was agreed as law that the king should have companions...these companions are now called counts, from the Latin *comites*.”\* Subsequently, “The Germanic ‘Earl’ soon replaced the anglicized ‘Count’...”\* Davies’ lines indicate firsthand knowledge that Oxford sacrificed opportunities afforded by his noble birth to pursue his calling. Will Shaksper of Stratford would never have been a king’s companion, whether he trod the boards or not. But Oxford ruined the political potential of his lofty status in English society by producing plays and acting parts, resulting in the trade-off to which Davies refers.

Davies’ title addresses **Shakespeare** as “our English Terence.” “The title...refers to the practice of aristocrats writing plays under names not their own. In ancient Rome, two aristocrats, (Scipio and Laelius) were suspected of being the true authors of the plays that appeared under the name ‘Terence,’ a freed Carthaginian slave.”\* Supporting this inference, the final lines of his epigram read, “And honesty *thou sow’st, which they do reape;/* So to increase their Stocke which they do keepe.” As Charlton observed, “The last two lines of the epigram very frankly state that others claim ‘**Shake-speare’s**’ work as their own.”\* The use of *they* and *their* further suggest more than one front man, fitting our discovery of Oxford’s multiple Voices.

Davies’ *Speculum Proditorri*, published after his death in 1618, helps clarify the meaning of his earlier lines. He says,

I knew a Man, unworthy as I am,  
And yet too worthie for a counterfeit  
Made once a King; who though it were a game,  
Yet was it there where Lords and Ladyes met;  
Who honor’d him as hee had bene the same,  
And no subjective duties did forget.

His subject is “too worthie for a counterfeit,” in other words, of too high a rank and character to be “counterfeiting” others by playing the “game” of roles on stage. Hampton Court was “where Lords and Ladyes met” to see a play, and there they “honor’d him as [if] hee had bene” a King.

Davies’ subject possesses a sense of humor, revealed by this line: “When to him-selfe he smil’d, and said, lo here/ I have for noight, what Kings do buy so deere.” This is likely the same man who wrote for

**John Lyly's** Entertainment at Sudeley (1592), "In Theaters, artificers have plaide Emperours, yet the next day forgotten, neither their duties nor occupations."

Davies' poem cannot be about Will Shaksper because it begins, "I *knew* a Man." It is "written in the past tense following the death of Oxford,"\* six years before the death of the Stratford man.

^Thomas Heywood (c.1570-5 -1641) (hints: 1612, 1635)

In *Apology for Actors* (1612), Heywood appends a letter complaining that the 1612 edition of a compendium of verse published by William Jaggard, *The Passionate Pilgrime by W. Shakespeare* (see **Shakespeare** chapter) contains some of his poems. "Heywood had published these poems in 1609, and he claims in his letter that his greatest concern now is with accusations of piracy."\* That may be true, but there is much more to the story and his motivation.

Look at the language Heywood uses in referring to Jaggard's main author, whose name he thrice avoids repeating:

...I must acknowledge my lines not worthy *his* patronage under whom he hath publisht them, so *the Author* I know much offended with M. Jaggard that (altogether unknowne to him) presumed to make so bold with his name....\*

Heywood is reporting that Jaggard's original collection was unauthorized, that "the Author" was annoyed when it appeared, that Jaggard without permission included some of Heywood's poems in the 1612 edition, and that the quality of his own poetry could never match that of **Shakespeare**.

Heywood's words do not fit Will Shaksper of Stratford. He indicates that **Shakespeare** is one who offered *patronage*, which Oxford did but Shaksper did not. As Downs perceptively realized, "It would be more natural to write of *the powerful, wealthy, or the aristocratic* in that fashion."\* Heywood, a prolific and successful writer, nevertheless deems himself as having been "not worthy" of said patron's attention and is genuinely aghast that a printer *had dared* "to make so bold with his name." Had Will Shaksper suffered the extreme pique that Heywood describes, he would have dragged Jaggard into court, as he did so often with his meager acquaintances in Stratford, for pittances. But — naturally in our context — *he didn't do anything*.

Some readers of Heywood's lines have said that they indicate that Shakespeare was alive in 1612. They do not clearly so state, because Heywood omits the tense verb in "the Author I know much offended." Had he said the author *is* much offended, it would imply a living person; had he said the author *was* much offended, he could be living or dead. He doesn't say.

Heywood refers to **Shakespeare** a second time. Page 206 of his *Hierarchie of the blessed Angells* (1635) names fifteen notable English poets, including himself. The discussion is rather silly. He first observes that ancient poets were granted additional, respectful appellations as they matured, whereas English poets are disrespected to the extent that they suffer under diminutive nicknames. Then he contradicts his point of annoyance in saying that he *prefers* that his friends "bluntly" call him Tom. Some Oxfordians have tried to find hidden meaning in the passage, but I see nothing of value save for the fact that he spells **Shake-speare** with a hyphen, confirming that he knew it was a pseudonym.

Heywood seems not to have known much about Oxford's early Voices and playwriting career. In *Apologie for Actors* (1612), he makes an incidental note that *The Spanish Tragedie* was by "M. Kid." As shown in the [**Thomas Kyd**] chapter, that assignation is erroneous.

Did he, as one might infer from *Hierarchie of the blessed Angells*, personally know "**Robin**" **Greene** and "Tom" Watson, who died (on paper in the case of **Greene**) in 1592, "Kit" Marlowe, who died in 1593,

or “Tom” Kyd, who died in 1594? Heywood was a generation younger than these men and somewhere between the ages of 17 and 24 when they left the scene. He could not have known **Robert Greene** personally, because he did not exist. He did not know Thomas Kyd personally, because he was unaware that Kyd wrote only one play. I am guessing that Heywood knew the predecessors of **Shakespeare** mostly by their works and reputation.

^John Webster (c.1580-1625-34) (ref. 1612)

In his note “To the Reader” prefacing *The White Devil* (1612), John Webster comments on Chapman, Johnson, Beaumont [sic], Fletcher, Decker, Heywood and **Shake-speare**, *with a hyphen*. This rendering is deliberate, because he did not cite Chap-man, John-son, Beau-mont or Hey-wood. The use of a hyphen only for **Shake-speare**’s name suggests that Webster knew the name was a pseudonym.

^HENRY PEACHAM (1546-1634) (refs. 1612, 1622)

According to a proposal from Clark\* and an investigation by Astley-Cock,\* as reported by the Ogburns,\* Peacham seems to have buried hints of Oxford’s authorship in his “emblem book” of 1612, *Minerva Britanna*. Anderson summed up the case:

- 1) “Minerva was the Roman counterpart to the speak-shaking Greek goddess Athena[, so] one might translate *Minerva Britanna* as ‘England’s speak-shaker.’”
- 2) “The central engraving features a hidden man’s hand writing from behind a theatrical curtain.”
- 3) “The [hand of the] hidden playwright appears to be adding the letter *i* to *videbor* [in *Mente videbori*]. ...there is no Latin word ‘*videbori*,’ [but] Unscramble [it], and one Latin phrase [appears]: *Tibi Nom. De Vere*. Or in English: ‘Thy name is de Vere.’”
- 4) “Two candles burn at the top of the page, surrounded by the words, ‘I consume myself *for others* in a similar way.’ (*Ut aliis me consumo*.)”\*

For our purposes, the fourth item is the most important. As shown throughout this book, Oxford gave of himself clandestinely for the public glory of *others*, plural.

That is not all Peacham did. Recall from the Opening Argument that his book, *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622), lists the premier poets under Elizabeth as follows:

In the time of our Queen Elizabeth, which was truly a Golden Age...above others who honoured Poesie with their pens and practice...were *Edward, Earl of Oxford*, the Lord Buckhurst, Henry Lord Paget, our phoenix the noble Sir Philip Sidney, M. Edward Dyer, M. Edmund Spenser, M. Samuel Daniel, with sundry others.

As numerous Oxfordians have pointed out, Peacham “was extremely well-connected in the world of art and literature,” so “his omission of **Shakespeare**’s name on the list of great poets...could not possibly have been an oversight.”\* Peacham does list Oxford, so “the deliberate exclusion of **Shakespeare**’s name makes no sense unless Oxford and **Shakespeare** were one and the same man.”\* This is a valuable observation, but there is much more to the story.

Peacham undoubtedly knew about a great many of Oxford’s Voices, *because he did not cite a single one of them*. He lists the independent poets Sidney, Dyer, Spenser and Daniel. He fails to mention **Robert Greene**, **Thomas Lodge**, **George Peele**, **Thomas Nashe**, **William Warner**, **Richard Barnfield**, a dozen

Sonneteers and twenty Narrative Poets, including **William Shakespeare**, who created a sensation with the bestsellers *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* and whose plays are immortal!

The only explanation is that Peacham *did* include all those Voices, in that very first name: *Edward, Earl of Oxford*. I have confirmed throughout this book that the six other men he cites wrote their own material, and I concur that all but Paget (see Henry Paget chapter) were among the best runners-up of the day. (Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst deserves mention not as much for talent as for being early, and "...Buckhurst's name is no doubt preserved because his grandson was Peacham's patron..."\*)

Peacham revised and expanded his book for later editions in 1627 and 1634. Each time, he left this passage intact and never mentioned **Shakespeare** or any other Voice. Peacham knew what he was talking about.

Peacham was positioned to know the truth. "He had been the tutor of the three sons of Thomas Howard, [14<sup>th</sup>] Earl of Arundel, Oxford's cousin [twice removed]." Oxford was estranged from his devious cousin Henry Howard, but he remained close to Thomas' father Philip Howard. **James Lea** praised Thomas, and **Robert Greene** dedicated a book to his son Philip. From these associations, Peacham would have been privy to the information necessary to design his books as interpreted above.

^CHRISTOPHER BROOKE (d.1628) (ref. 1614)

Christopher Brooke, a member of Lincoln's Inn and of Parliament, issued several extended poems. He associated with Ben Jonson, Michael Drayton, George Chapman and John Davies of Hereford, all of whom had connections to Oxford's legacy. Brooke owned a portrait of Elizabeth Vernon, Countess of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley's wife.

C.B., whom scholars have identified as Christopher Brooke, issued *The Ghost of Richard the Third* in 1614. He has the ghost of the king say,

To him that imp'd my fame with Clio's quill,  
Whose magic rais'd me from Oblivion's den,  
That writ my story on the Muses' hill,  
And with my actions dignified his pen;  
He that from Helicon sends many a rill,  
Whose nectar'd veins are drunk by thirsty men;  
Crown'd be his style with fame, his head with bays,  
And none detract, but gratulate his praise.

Scholars have concluded that "Brooke was well acquainted with **Shakespeare's** *Richard III*, and gives it unstinted praise."\* What they have mostly avoided saying is that C.B. praises the author *without naming him*. (At least not directly; a *rill* is a stream, and streams are where *oxen ford*.) He may have felt that had he named **Shakespeare**, the wrong man would get the credit. For another writer on Richard, see the **Giles Fletcher** chapter.

^THOMAS FREEMAN (c.1590-1630) (ref. 1614)

In 1614, Thomas Freeman, Gent. issued a collection of Epigrams called *Rubbe, and a great Cast*. Epigram 44, "In Gulielmum" ("To William"), reads as follows:

WILL wuld have Officers reforme well one fault,  
And punish severely transporting of Mault:

Peace *Will*, there's none can remedy the matter,  
It hath gone, and will go away, by water.

Presumably, the malt will “go away, by water,” when it becomes beer. Like most epigrams, this one is obscure, but the reference to *malt* and the renditions of WILL in caps and *Will* in italics suggest that Freeman had Will Shaksper in mind. As described in the **Shakespeare** chapter, Will Shaksper provided malt to Philip Rogers, whom he sued for its value, 1£, 19s, 10d, in 1604. Perhaps he was still dealing in malt in 1614, when Freeman wrote his jibe. If he does have the Stratford man in mind, it is notable that he neglects to suggest that he is a poet or playwright.

Freeman's Epigram 92 is addressed “To Master **W: Shakespeare.**” He praises not just *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* but adds, “in plaies thy wit windes like Meander.” He seems to credit the Bard with originality, whereas “needy new-composers borrow more/ Thence Terence doth from Plautus or Menander,” possibly suggesting, as we know from numerous observations, that others have mined **Shakespeare's** works. Echoing Ben Jonson's entreaty in the First Folio, “Reader look, not on his picture but his book,” Freeman's final couplet reads, “Then let thine owne works thine owne worth upraise,/ And help t'adorne thee with deserved Baies.” (You can find the full text in modern spelling in Sobran.\*)

Although Freeman does not make any statements linking **Shakespeare** to Oxford, the mere fact that he addresses **Shakespeare** forges a link, because “... Thomas Freeman was half-brother to Sir Edward Vere, Edward de Vere's son by Anne Vavasour.”\* Had a member of Will Shaksper's extended family written the epigram, no doubt orthodoxy would be making much of it.

His Epigram 96 is titled “Of **Tho. Nash.**” It does not seem to hint of any authorship knowledge.

^I.H. (John Hynd) (ref. 1617)

In 1617, a certain “I.H.” appended an address and a poem to the 1617 edition of **Robert Greene's** *Greenes Groats-worth of Witte*. These initials almost certainly belong to John Hynd (also spelled Hind), per the analysis in the John Hynd chapter. As detailed in the **Robert Greene** chapter, I.H. left many hints that Oxford wrote *Groats-worth*, and he appreciated the talent it took to produce the book. Among them, he calls He calls **Greene** “Minerva's nurse child,” “great Apollo's sonne” and “Englands second Cicero.” His poem ends with an echo of Hamlet's most famous soliloquy and two *ver* words: “To make's *not being, be*, as he hath beene,/ **Greene, never-wither'd, ever-wither'd Greene.**”

^EDWARD ALLEYN (1566-1626) (records: 1617-1622)

The actor Edward Alleyn kept a diary. In it, “Alleyn documents nearly every day from September 29, 1617 to October 1, 1622, long after his retirement from acting.”\* This detailed record offers another instance of a dog that didn't bark:

...Edward Alleyn [was] the most distinguished actor on the Elizabethan stage. He was also a musician, a book and playbook collector, a philanthropist, and a playwright (Wraight 211-19). He was born about two years after William Shakespeare and came from the same [social] class.

...Edward Alleyn also kept a diary that survives, along with many of his letters and papers. They reveal that he had a large circle of acquaintances throughout and beyond the theater world that included aristocrats, clergymen, and businessmen, as well as men in his own profession, such as John Heminges, one of the alleged editors of the First Folio. In his two-volume edition of *Edward Allen's*

*Memoirs* (1841), John Payne Collier printed several references that Alleyn made to Shakespeare and to his plays, but they have all been judged forgeries (Chambers 2:386-90).

[N]owhere in Alleyn's diary or letters does the name William Shakespeare appear. It is impossible to believe that Edward Alleyn, who was at the center of the Elizabethan stage community for more than thirty-five years, would not have met the alleged actor and leading playwright William Shakespeare, and made some allusion to him in his letters or diary.\*

We may justly conclude that Alleyn failed to mention Shakespeare not from any oversight, which Jimenez rightly declared "impossible," but because Will Shaksper was a professional nonentity, and **William Shakespeare** did not exist.

Shaksper died in 1616, the year before Alleyn began his diary. Surely, had the deceased meant anything to him, he would have mentioned his name if not eulogized him. Alleyn's deafening silence seems also to belie all the wisps of information suggesting that Will Shaksper played parts — even small ones — on stage, as listed and dismissed in the **Shakespeare** chapter.

^HENRY MANSHP (hint: 1619)

As noted in the **Thomas Nashe** chapter, Henry Manshp referred to the author of *Nashes Lenten Stuffe* (1599) without naming him. Instead, he calls him "the late pleasant-pated poet." Like most of **Nashe's** works, *Lenten Stuffe* has no poetry in it. **Nashe** was a prose satirist and only incidentally a poet; and he was known for satire and contention, not pleasantness. Oxford was known for poetry, most of which was pleasant. Manshp's choice of words and omission of a name suggest that he knew **Nashe** was a pseudonym.

^THOMAS VICARS (1589-1638) (ref. 1621)

Thomas Vicars was a clergyman who wrote religious works, with one exception: a tome on the art of rhetoric. In the third edition of his book, published after the First Folio came out, he added two names plus a curious construction to his list of England's best poets:

A rhetoric textbook by Thomas Vicars entitled *Χειραγωγία, Manuductio ad Artem Rhetoricam...in usum Scholarum* (first printed in 1621...), which has hitherto languished in near-complete obscurity, has recently been thrust into prominence by F. Schurink, who in a brief *Notes and Queries* article [March 2006, pp.72-75] pointed out that in the third edition of that work (1628) Vicars inserted a hitherto-unnoticed reference to **William Shakespeare**. ...After repeating the list of England's best poets [Geoffrey Chaucer, Edmund Spenser, Michael Drayton and George Withers] from a previous rhetoric manual by Charles Butler, the 1597 *Rhetoricae libri duo*, Vicars added three more of his own: *Istis annumerandos censeo celebrem illum poetam qui a quassatione et hasta nomen habet, Ioannem Davisium, et cognominem meum, poetam pium et doctum Ioannem Vicarsium*.\*

The translation of these Latin words is as follows:

To these, I think, should be added *that well-known poet who takes his name from the shaking of a spear*, John Davies, and a pious and learned poet who shares my surname, John Vicars.\*

Vicars all but states that "**Shake-speare**" is a pseudonym, in three ways: He names the other two poets plainly but not name this one, despite his being "well-known"; he does not include the name "William"; and he says the poet "*takes his name*," implying that he was not born with it.

Conventional scholars (see source cited above) have opined — seriously — that Vicars, a consummate Latinist, must have been stumped rendering the name William Shakespeare in Latin and therefore took a roundabout turn of phrase. But Vicars was cleverer than they.

^JAMES MABBE (1572-1642) (ref. 1623)

Based on phrases that are nearly identical to those in a passage from James Mabbe's *The Rogue* (1623), "Mabbe is unquestionably the 'I.M.' who contributed one poem to **Shakespeare** in the First Folio preface."\* Mabbe's poem begins,

We wondred (**Shake-speare**) that thou went'st so soone  
From the Worlds-Stage, to the Graves-Tyring-roome.

That statement may seem benign, but it is completely at odds with the conventional story, which has it that Will Shaksper slowed down his playwriting drastically after 1604 and *retired*, either then or no later than 1611, returning to Stratford to putter around with commodities and lawsuits until he passed away in 1616. *But Mabbe states that **Shakespeare** went directly from the stage to his grave.* This scenario fits the Earl of Oxford, who was issuing dramatic masterpieces at a furious pace right up to 1604 and who died "so soone," in the prime of life, at 54 years old.

^LEONARD DIGGES (1588-1635) (refs. 1623, 1640)

Unlike Heminges and Condell, who were not men of letters (see **Shakespeare** chapter), Leonard Digges was qualified to contribute to the First Folio. He obtained a master's degree at the University of Oxford and was "a good classical scholar."\* "In 1622 he issued a translation of a Spanish novel...and dedicated it to the brothers William, earl of Pembroke, and Philip, earl of Montgomery."\* The following year, he contributed to the pair's First Folio project with an introductory verse titled "To the Memorie of the deceased Author, Master **W. Shakespeare**."

In his verse, Digges twice hyphenates the name **Shake-speare**. Twice in one line and twice again later, he seems to pun on Oxford's name:

thinke all is prodigie  
That is not Shakespeares; ev'ry Line, each Verse  
Here shall revive, redeeme thee from thy Herse....  
Nor shall I e're believe, or thinke thee dead....  
Be sure, our *Shake-speare*, thou canst never dye.

The fourth line can be read, "Nor shall I, E.Ver, believe or think thee dead."

As detailed in the **Shakespeare** chapter, Digges borrowed poetic ideas for his poem from **Samuel Daniel**'s dedication of *Cleopatra* to Mary Sidney. He thereby linked **Shakespeare**'s "Stratford Moniment" to Wilton House, the home of the "grand possessors" of that very moniment, or body of work.

Digges also wrote a poem that John Benson included in his 1640 edition of **Shakespeare**'s sonnets. The opening lines seemingly play with Oxford's name:

Poets are borne not made, when I would prove  
This truth, the glad remembrance I must love  
Of never dying *Shakespeare*...

as do these lines, near the close:

Like old coynd gold, whose lines in every page,  
Shall passe true currant to succeeding age.

For no reason outside our context, Digges also capitalizes the beginning of each word in his poem that begins with *Ver*: “But happy Verse though shalt be sung . . . Vermine forbear . . . You lame blancke Verse . . .” Although the meanings in these lines do not always connote Oxford, the penchant may have accompanied some eye-winking.

^Gervase Markham (c.1568-1637) (anagrams 1624)

A character in Gervase Markham’s play, *The Dumbe Knight* (1608), quotes six lines from *Venus and Adonis* and exclaims, “Go thy way thou best booke in the world.” Robertson\* and others have interpreted the line as ridiculing **Shakespeare**’s poem, but to me it seems to be a lighthearted tribute. Perhaps with a wink, the reader in the play calls it “A book that never an Orators Clarke in this kingdome but is beholden unto.”

Jannsch\* discovered that in *Honour in his Perfection* (1624), Markham complained that the name Vere had been whitewashed from the record. Stritmatter\* and Chiljan\* expanded the discussion. Markham registered his complaint the year after the publication of the First Folio, in which the true author’s name goes unmentioned. That omission seems to have prompted him to respond,

in every page, in every action, Vere cannot be omitted: only in that Storie there is one pretty secret or mysterie which I cannot let passe untouched, because it brings many difficulties or doubts into the minde of the ignorant Reader; that is, the mistaking of names. . . . the least spark of Vertue which is [myself], cannot chuse but repine [complain] when it finds a great Vertue injur’d by a pen [Ben Jonson’s] whose blanching [whitewashing] might make the whole World forgetfull.

If Markham is not talking about Edward de Vere, what else could he possibly be saying?

^JOHN HALL (1575-1635) (records 1630s)

Dr. John Hall married Susanna Shaksper and became Will Shaksper’s son-in-law. He was a highly educated man who practiced medicine in Stratford. Dr. Hall kept voluminous notes in Latin, noting the status and accomplishments of his notable clients. One would think he would have been proud that his father-in-law had been the most celebrated poet and playwright in England. But there is not a wisp of a trace of evidence that he considered him to be such any such person:

William Shakespeare’s own father-in-law, Dr. John Hall, kept hundreds of anecdotal records about his patients and their ailments. He frequently noted their characteristics and achievements, remarking, for instance, that Michael Drayton was an “excellent poet.” Dr. Hall surely treated his wife’s father during the ten years they lived within minutes of each other. But nowhere in his notebook is there any mention of William Shakespeare, not even at his death in 1616. It is indeed strange that in the early 1630s, as he was collecting the cases he wished to publish, he should neglect to include any record of his treating his supposedly famous father-in-law whose collected works had been published only a few years earlier.\*

Hall knew his own father-in-law well, but he did not know him as **Shakespeare**.



Like so many such items, this single tidbit — to any unbiased mind — establishes beyond a reasonable doubt that Shaksper was not **Shakespeare**. Because ten equally informed witnesses are equally silent, we have nothing short of proof. That people keep having to write whole books to shake the conventional view is sad testimony on the neglected art of deduction.

^J.M.S. (JOSHUA SYLVESTER) (1563–1618) (ref. 1632)

The Second Folio of **Shakespeare**'s plays, published in 1632, is mostly the same as the first, but it includes a lengthy new poem signed "J.M.S." In the final four lines, three of Oxford's self-referencing words pop up:

**Shakespeare** shall breath and speake, with Laurell crown'd  
Which never fades....  
So with this robe they cloath him, bid him weare it  
For time shall never staine, nor envy teare it. [*Envy* is a homonym of *N.V.*, for Ned Vere.]

Skimming general sources, I find no scholarly identification of this poet. Perhaps I am late in this observation, but I find that the rhymed couplets and the thoughts extending past line endings in J.M.S.'s poem are in the vein of Joshua Sylvester's book-length poem, *Divine Weekes*, translated from the French of du Bartas. Compare the styles of these two excerpts, which happen to be the first ones I came across:

But ev'n as many (or more) quarrels cumber  
Th'old heathen schools about the heavens' number  
One holds but one; making the world's eyes shine  
Through the thin-thickness of that chrystal line...  
— Joshua Sylvester, 3<sup>rd</sup> day of 1<sup>st</sup> week, *Divine Weekes*

A Mind reflecting ages past, whose cleere  
And equall surface can make a thing appear:  
Distant a Thousand yeares, and represent  
Them in their lively colours just extent....  
— J.M.S.'s opening lines in the Second Folio

Sylvester was in a position to have his verse read by the appropriate people, because "in 1606 Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales gave him a small pension as a kind of court poet."\* In 1614, Sylvester dedicated *Bethulians Rescue* (reprinted in *All the Small Workes of That Famous Poet Joshua Sylvester* in 1620) to 15 noblewomen, revealing his ties to the court. The list includes Susan Vere, countess of Montgomery, wife of Philip Herbert. He dedicated "Jobe triumphant in his tryall" within *The Second Session of the Parliament of Vertues Reall* (1615) to Archbishop George Abbot and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. William and Philip Herbert are the "incomparable brethren" to whom the First Folio was dedicated. Thus, it is on record that Sylvester had social relationships that are compatible with his identification as the J.M.S. who celebrates **Shakespeare**.

Identified as a "disciple of the Euphuists,"\* Sylvester must have admired the Voices' ornate style, giving us another reason why, despite his puritanism, he would have been disposed toward honoring **Shakespeare**. Although I find the "euphuist" tag a bit strong for him, I do observe a "Yet as" comparison in Sylvester's "A

Sonnet,” prefacing *The Triumph of Faith* (1592), and a like construction in his Sonnet to Essex prefacing *The Second Weeke* (1598); and his verse, true to Du Bartas, is passionate.

Sylvester died in 1618, so, if he is the author, he would have had to compose his poem to **Shakespeare** in or before that year. Perhaps he wrote it shortly after Will Shaksper died in 1616 and gave it to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, to whom he had just dedicated a poem in 1615. Is so, Pembroke employed it in the service of the Second Folio sixteen years later. Before judging such a scenario far-fetched, consider that Leonard Digges’ poem to **Shakespeare** in John Benson’s *Poems* of 1640 was posthumously published, as Digges died in April 1635.

Middle names were virtually nonexistent in Elizabethan England, and none of Sylvester’s acknowledged works offer a middle name or initial. But dedicatory sonnets and addresses provided by five poets, including Ben Jonson and Joseph Hall, for *Divine Weekes* repeatedly refer to the poet as “M. Joshua Sylvester,” using the capitalized letters M, J and S. Perhaps the editors of the Second Folio repositioned the three letters, declining to reveal outright the contributor’s identity because including a laudatory poem by someone sixteen years deceased might have raised questions. Anyway, it’s a guess, and if you have better information, please let me know.

^WILLIAM BASSE (c.1580-1653/4) (ref. 1633)

University of Oxford student William Basse wrote a famous poem eulogizing **Shakespeare**. It appeared originally in 1633 and was later published within Benson’s *Poems* in 1640. Some scholars have attributed the poem to John Donne. Oxfordians, however, have done their homework:

...Miller showed that Basse had been a servant, a retainer, of Francis, Lord Norris, later the Earl of Berkshire, and the husband of Bridget Vere, the second daughter of Edward de Vere.... A manuscript collection of poems by Basse, *Polyhymnia*, bears the autograph of Francis, Lord Norris. The manuscript is dedicated by the author to Bridget. Scholars state this was the grand-daughter of Francis...but as Miller shows, the dates render this identification...impossible.\*

Basse, then, was an employee of Oxford’s son-in-law. He should have known about whom he was writing.

Basse bids **Shakespeare** to lie in Westminster Abbey aside Chaucer, Spenser and Beaumont. His line, “Possess as *lord* not tenant of thy grave,” hints at Oxford’s nobility. Ben Jonson seems to have had this poem in mind when he wrote a well-known passage in the First Folio about the same three poets, as quoted above.

An Oxfordian\* has proposed that when Basse speaks of “your precedency in death,” he is referring to **Shakespeare**. If that were the case, he could not mean the Stratford man, who died after Beaumont, but he could mean Oxford, who predeceased him. The phrase, however, clearly refers to the three poets buried in Westminster Abbey. The word *your* is used thrice to indicate them:

Renowned Spenser...learned Chaucer...rare Beaumont  
...*your* threefold, fowerfold Tombe.  
If *your* precedency in death doth barre  
A fourth place in *your* sacred sepulcher,  
[Then,] Shakespeare sleep alone.

Basse is simply saying that if **Shakespeare** cannot be disinterred and moved to Westminster Abbey, then he will have to remain in “unshared Cave...thy Grave.”

An extended title, “On Mr. Wm. Shakespeare, *he dyed in April 1616*,” appears over the poem “on only three of the more than two dozen surviving manuscript copies”<sup>\*</sup> of the book. At first, it might seem that the added date is corroborating evidence of Basse’s intent to indicate the Stratford man. On the other hand, had there been no doubt about who **Shakespeare** was, there would have been no need to add the the clarifying phrase. Its appearance in so few copies suggests a belated afterthought. It also strikes me as protesting too much. Aren’t we supposed to know who the famous “Mr. Wm. Shakespeare” is? Are we being led by the nose to think, “Oh, *that* Mr. Wm. Shakespeare”? This evidence for the Stratford man is no less evidence against him.

^SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT (1606-1668) (ref. 1638)

Sir William Davenant’s *Madagascar; with Other Poems* (1638) includes an “Ode” “In remembrance of Master **William Shakespeare**.” It is a curious poem in which the flowers, trees and rivers of spring mourn the death of **Shakespeare**. The whole poem sets up the third and final stanza, which in turn leads to the sly identification of the author in the final two words. It reads,

The piteous River wept it selfe away  
Long since (Alas!) to such a swift decay;  
That reach the Map; and looke  
If you a River there can spie;  
And for a River your mock’d Eie,  
Will finde a shallow Brooke.

Oxen cross at the shallows of a brook. Davenant’s punning lines are saying, “If you can spy a (r)E.Ver, you will see that it is but an Ox-ford.”

Elizabethans capitalized nouns sometimes in “referring to a *specific thing...*”<sup>\*</sup> or person, as Roe<sup>\*</sup> stated **Shakespeare** reliably did, and sometimes randomly (see *Map* and *Eie* above). That *River* (E.Ver) and *Brooke* (Oxford) are capitalized at least fits the case that they are to be treated as names.

This interpretation may seem far-fetched, but the alternative — that Davenant wrote a dopey poem having nothing to do with **Shakespeare** — is more so. Without recognizing a hidden meaning, it just makes you say, “Huh?” The puns justify the exercise.

^RICHARD BROME (ref. 1638)

Among those who wished the Earl of Oxford had lived on was Richard Brome. His play, *The Antipodes* (1638), muses of actors,

These lads can act the Emperoers’ lives all over  
And **Shakespeare’s** chronicled histories, to boot.  
And were that Caesar, or that English earl,  
That lov’d a Play and Players so well, now living,  
*I would not be outvyed in my delight.*

So, immediately upon uttering the name **Shakespeare**, Brome gushes about how *utterly delighted* he would be were “that English earl” who loved plays and players still living.

Most orthodox sources stop quoting the passage at “boot.” Some Stratfordians do not realize how important the link is. Others have omitted the rest of the quote on purpose.

Traditional scholars have guessed that the earl in question is Southampton or Pembroke. Nothing in the play inclines one toward that idea. Brome's five lines have only one person in mind. Did you notice that Brome first calls him "that Caesar — excuse me — that English earl"? As quoted above, Anthony Munday called Oxford "young Caesar" in 1579 and "a second Caesar" in 1580. In 1604, Barnabe Rich said Oxford "is able with Caesar" to hold a spear and a pen. In 1624, Gervase Markham called the "Veres, as good, as excellent as Caesar...though Caesar were never so Noble by his Birth." Brome seems to have been acquainted with such references.

^JOHN SUCKLING (1609-1641) (perf. 1638; pub. 1646) (ref. 1638)

John Suckling was an alumnus of the University of Cambridge and Gray's Inn, both of which Oxford attended. Whispers of Oxford's activities surely continued in the four decades after his death.

Suckling's play, *The Goblins*, "premiered on the stage in 1638 and was first published in 1646."\* The drama "has some reminiscences of *The Tempest*"\* by **Shakespeare**. It also contains this pun on the true author's name:

The last a well-writ piece, I assure you,  
A Breton I take it, and **Shakespeare's** very way."\*

^JOHN BENSON (d.1667) (ref. 1640)

John Benson published the second volume of **Shakespeare's** sonnets, titled *Poems: Written by Wil. Shake-speare. Gent.* It was entered into the Stationers' Register on November 4, 1639 and published in 1640. Benson's preface "To the Reader" praises "Master William Shakespeare" and speaks of "his everliving Workes." The hyphenated name on the cover and the quoted phrase are reminiscent of Thomas Thorpe's title, *Shake-speares Sonnets*, and his line, "OUR EVER-LIVING POET," both of which appear in his predecessor volume of 1609. Both publishers hint that Shakespeare was dead, and only Oxford was dead in both years.

A copy of the Second Folio of **Shakespeare's** plays, held at the Memorial Library at Stratford, has "bound up with it"\* some pages from "the 12mo edition"\* of Benson's *Poems*. It features an engraving (done by either J. Payne or William Marshall; sources differ) that "almost exactly resembles Droeshout's engraving; but the head is turned a different way."\* Below the engraving is a poem of eight lines. It begins,

This Shadowe is renowned **Shakespeare's**?

The writer not only uses the word *Shadowe*, indicating something other than a person, but he also playfully adds a question mark at the end of the sentence, as if scoffing at the idea that the portrait is **Shakespeare's**. The final two lines of verse copy the Voices' tendency to place signatures at the end of their works:

For ever live thy fame, the world to tell,  
Thy like, no age shall ever paralell.

This last clause can be read to say, "no age shall parallel E. Ver."

^JOHN WARREN (ref. 1640)

John Warren contributed a poem to John Benson's 1640 book. It begins,

What, lofty **Shakespeare**, art againe reviv'd?  
And Virbius like now show'st thy selfe twice liv'd?

The Greek god Hippolytus died and was resurrected as the Roman deity Virbius, thus giving Warren a basis for his opening theme. He just happened to choose a name starting with *Vir* to make his connection to **Shakespeare**. He later invites readers to value the Bard's poems "with true judgement."

^ANONYMOUS AUTHOR of *Wits Recreation* (ref. 1640)

A book of epigrams, published anonymously in 1640 but perhaps written earlier, includes this one:

*To William Shake-spear.*

**Shake-speare** we must be silent in thy praise,  
'Cause our encomions will but blast thy bayes,  
Which envy could not, that thou didst so well;  
Let thine own histories prove thy chronicle.

The writer hyphenates **Shake-speare**'s name twice, showing he knew it was a pseudonym.

The first two lines say that to praise **Shakespeare** would be to blast away his crown of bay leaves. This claim makes no sense whatsoever in the orthodox context.

Yet it neatly fits the Oxfordian context: Praising either Shaksper or Oxford would knock the bayes off the other one's head. The third line proves that Oxford was envied for doing "so well." The last line echoes Ben Jonson, who says in the First Folio, "Reader, looke Not on his Picture, but his Booke." This poet agrees: The only thing left that truly represents the poet is "thine own histories [stories]," which, if read autobiographically, "prove they chronicle."

^QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA (1609-1669) (record: 1643)

Queen Henrietta Maria was, along with her husband King Charles of England, a passionate lover of plays, especially **Shakespeare**'s, and she acted plays at court. When civil war broke out in England in 1642, the Queen became actively involved.

Traveling on horseback, the 'Generalissima,' as she called herself, reached Warwickshire in early July 1643, and on the 11<sup>th</sup> arrived in Stratford-upon-Avon at the head of an army of three thousand foot, thirty companies of horse and dragoons, six pieces of artillery, and 150 wagons (Plowden 186).

The records of the Stratford Corporation document the visit of Queen Henrietta Maria and the substantial expense it incurred to provide a banquet for her (Fox 24). Although specific records of it are lacking, scholars accept a tradition that the Queen stayed two nights at New Place, then the home of William Shakespeare's daughter Susanna, her daughter Elizabeth and son-in-law Thomas Nash (Lee 509; Schoenbaum 305).

Queen Henrietta was an exceptional letter-writer. Hundreds of her letters to her husband, her nephew Prince Rupert, and others have been collected and printed. But none of the letters she wrote before or after her visit to Stratford-upon-Avon contains any mention of her stay at New Place, or any indication that she had met the daughter and granddaughter of the famous playwright whom she emulated and whom her husband venerated. ...One explanation might be that she knew that the Stratford Shakespeare was a myth. A decade earlier she had been closely associated with Beatrice, the Countess of Oxford, and her husband, Robert de Vere, the 19<sup>th</sup> Earl. She also knew Ben Jonson, the artificer of the First Folio...."\*

Anyone who knew Ben Jonson and the noble second cousin of Oxford' noble son would have known that Will Shaksper was not **Shakespeare**, and the Queen's silence on the matter proves she knew.

^LADY ANNE CLIFFORD (1590-1676) (ref. 1646)

In 1646, Lady Anne Clifford commissioned the Appleby Triptych, also called “The Great Picture,” a portrait of the Herbert family painted in 1634-5 by Anthony van Dyck. Its three panels are reproduced below.

Cutting made a convincing case that Lady Anne deliberately omitted **Shakespeare’s** First Folio from the array of fine books in the side panels of the triptych. That is not all the bitter lady omitted.



“Lady Anne Clifford was the *second* wife of Philip Herbert, the Earl of Montgomery. The Earl’s first wife was Susan Vere,”\* who died in 1629. The two women knew each other from being cast in two of Ben Jonson’s masques as well as Samuel Daniel’s *Tethys Festival*.

Philip Herbert adored and missed his first wife. When Philip and Lady Anne became estranged, he put her out of the house. Shortly afterward, she ordered the painting. For more on the family situation at that time, see Chapters 8 and 9 of Cutting’s book.\*

The authors represented on the bookshelves in the triptych include Ovid, Plutarch, Chaucer, Castiglione, Cervantes, Spenser, Sidney, Greville, Jonson, Daniel, Donne, Camden, Florio, Gerard and George Herbert. Conspicuously, there are no books containing anything by **Shakespeare**.

Cutting suggested that Lady Anne’s motivation for omitting **Shakespeare** was related to the possibly embarrassing revelations about real courtiers in the Bard’s plays, but those courtiers were all dead. A better motivation would be Anne’s resentment of Susan Vere. Our context supports that idea in spades because **Shakespeare** is not the only author missing from the Herberts’ bookshelves.

The shelves are also conspicuously void of books by **George Pettie, John Lyly, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, George Peele, Barnabe Rich, William Warner, Richard Barnfield, Robert Chester, Thomas Nashe**, as well all the other Pamphleteers, Sonneteers and Narrative Poets. In fact, *her shelves are void of works by all but one of Oxford’s 250-plus Voices, as deduced in this book*. The lone exception is a copy of **Arthur Golding’s Ovids Metamorphoses**. That book, however, is a translation of a work by a Roman author, not an original composition. It had been published 80 years earlier, when Oxford was a teenager, so Lady Anne might not have known that he did the translation. Regardless, the blanket omission of all but one of the Voices’ works is a statistical improbability absent intent.

Cutting mused, “Lady Anne’s exclusion of the Euphuist writers indicates that this trend [toward a preference for the Romantic school] was taking hold by the mid-1600s.”\* Literary taste, however, could not have been Lady Anne’s motivation, because she omitted the works of all the non-euphuistic Voices, too.

She also excluded plays by Christopher Marlowe, whose “mighty line” relies on no euphuism whatsoever. The reason is not that she disliked plays, because one of the books is Ben Jonson’s massive *Works* of 1616. Perhaps she just disliked Marlowe. More probably, she knew that Oxford wrote all or part of three plays published in Marlowe’s name (see **Christopher Marlowe** chapter) and wasn’t sure about the others, so she played it safe by leaving them all out.

Lady Anne’s shelves include two books by Samuel Daniel, who “is singled out for an additional tribute with a background portrait and a laudatory inscription.”\* Do they include the three glorious works — *Delia*, *Rosamond* and *Cleopatra* — that Oxford issued in Daniel’s name, as deduced in the **Samuel Daniel** chapter? They do not. The two titles displayed are *The Chronicles of England*, which the actual Daniel wrote, and *All the Works in Verse*, a collection of the actual Daniel’s poems. How could she be so sure whose works were whose? Lady Anne knew where to draw that line because she was in a unique position to be informed on the matter. Samuel Daniel tutored Anne face to face for years when she was young. She would have learned which books her beloved tutor wrote and which were penned by her husband’s former father-in-law.

There is no question that Lady Anne knew exactly what she was doing. The look of smug satisfaction on her face in the depiction in the left panel may owe something to the deliberate choice she made of whose massive body of work to omit from the panoply of great works displayed in the painting.

Anne’s sweeping omission of Oxford’s Voices’ works suggests a personal hatred of her estranged husband’s beloved first wife and her illustrious father. She probably also resented the fact that her husband had been one of the shepherds of **Shakespeare**’s legacy, as the First Folio attests.

Lady Anne obliterated Oxford’s literary presence from her home to spite the memory of her husband’s first wife. But there is another a reason why she may have disliked Oxford. Emilia Bassana, whom A.L. Rowse tagged as the Dark Lady of **Shakespeare**’s *Sonnets* (see *The Dedication Puzzle*), “attended [Lady Anne] during the halcyon days at Cooke-ham.”\* If Emilia is the Dark Lady, she would have resented Oxford’s ill treatment of her in his poems. Indeed, a prose page that Bassana inserted into her book (see Emilia Bassana chapter) seems to reply to the insinuations of the Dark Lady sonnets, which had been published the preceding year. Emilia’s book addresses Lady Anne in friendly terms, so we may assume that they remained close friends throughout their lives. Lady Anne may well have sympathized with Emilia’s resentment.

Whatever the reasons, Lady Anne’s triptych is an anti-tribute to Oxford’s Voices by someone whose education by someone who served as of Oxford’s most active Voices, Samuel Daniel, would have taught her the difference. She was clearly one of Those Who Knew.

^GEORGE DANIEL OF BESWICK (1616-1657) (ref. 1647)

In 1647, George Daniel of Beswick completed a manuscript titled “A Vindication of Poesie,” in which he celebrates selected poets from ancient Rome to his present day. One stanza is fully compatible with our authorship analysis in the **Samuel Daniel** chapter:

*The Sweetest Swan of Avon, to ye faire  
And Cruel Delia, passionatelic Sings;  
Other mens weaknesses and follies are  
Honour and Witt in him; each Accent brings  
A Sprig to Crowne him Poet; and Contrive  
A Monument, in his owne worke, to live.*

Like the authors of the second Parnassus play, George Daniel celebrates only one work within Samuel Daniel's canon: *Delia*, which is entirely Oxford's composition. Moreover, though he names Draiton, Shakespeare and Beaumont in the ensuing stanza and Jonson and Donne thereafter, *he neglects to name the author of Delia*. He likewise refers to Sidney and Spenser by citing each writer's primary work, yet the omission of Samuel Daniel's name is particularly curious given that George shares a last name with him; one would think he would be proud to cite it.

Instead, he credits the sonnets to "The Sweetest Swan of Avon," matching Jonson's words about **Shakespeare** in the First Folio, "Sweet swan of Avon!" George may be doing more than linking Daniel to **Shakespeare**, as we find in the Parnassus play; he seems to *attribute* these sonnets to **Shakespeare**.

George even hints that *Delia*'s author has no physical body. He does not say that Daniel can live in people's memory as a person, nor does he say that one should erect a physical monument to the poet. He says that the author can live only within a "Monument" *built of his work*. Ben Jonson in the First Folio says the same thing about **Shakespeare**: "Thou art a Moniment, without a tombe.... Look/ Not on his Picture, but his Booke." I think both writers are talking about the same author.

Why does George call the author of *Delia* the Sweetest Swan of Avon? He may be hinting that the term "Swan of Avon" stands for numerous Voices, the sweetest of which wrote his favorite poem.

A few lines later, he recommends, "To the Scene, and Act,/ Read Comicke **Shakespeare**." George prized *Delia* above all the Voices' poems and **Shakespeare**'s comedies above all the Voices' plays.

Among all Elizabethan and Jacobean writers, he lauds only seven: Sidney, Spenser, Drayton, Beaumont, Jonson, Donne, and Oxford twice: as **Shakespeare** and as the "Swan of Avon" who composed *Delia*. Mr. Daniel had good taste.

^SAMUEL SHEPPARD (1624-1655) (ref. 1651)

Samuel Sheppard (also spelled Shepphard) "commenced his literary career about 1606 as amanuensis to Ben Jonson.... He took holy orders, and...was an ardent royalist."\* As a royalist and Jonson's assistant, he was primed to be an admirer of Oxford and his Voices. Shepphard wrote up 25 items, which are catalogued in EEBO.

Writing in 1651, when there must have been but few people remaining who knew the truth, Sheppard in one of his *Epigrams theological, philosophical, and romantick* offers his list of great poets and playwrights of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. He begins with someone whom he does not name:

But yet to me more pleasant is  
To hear Tytirus play, I wis  
Upon his oaten Reed, while hee  
Doth make delitious mellodie,  
(As once to Orpheus Harp) each tree  
Does nod, Beasts of the wood agree  
To cast aside their furious kind,  
And take to them a gentle mind,  
While he records in pleasant verse  
Sweet tales of Love, and doth rehearse  
His dreams and songs, the stones do move.



Echoing a theme of numerous poems by Voices, he has the trees and woodland animals chime in. He says this man's song could move stones. Oxford is one of the few poets who also wrote songs, lots of them (see Songwriters).

Whoever Tytirus was, he was the chief, and Spenser ("Colin Clout") was next:

Next unto Tytirus there came  
One that deservd a greater name,  
Then was bestowed, but when She swaid,  
Whom to this day some call a Maid,  
Then Collin Clout his pipe did sound.

It is difficult to imagine whom Sheppard would have elevated above Spenser if not the Earl of Oxford, whose "songs" were numerous and whose "Sweet tales of Love" include numerous euphuistic prose stories, narrative poems and "sugred" sonnets.

After praising numerous poets, Sheppard addresses the Bard separately:

**Shakespeare** trod on English earth,  
His Muse doth merit more rewards  
Then all the Greek, or Latine Bards,  
What flowd from him, was purely rare,  
As born to blesse the Theater,  
He first refin'd the Commick Lyre,  
His Wit all do, and shall admire,  
The chiefest glory of the Stage,  
Or when he sung of war and Strage,  
Melpomene soon viewd the globe,  
Invelop'd in her sanguine Robe,  
He that his worth would truely sing,  
Must quaffe the whole Pierian spring.  
And now — (be gone ye gastefull feares  
Alas I cannot speak for teares)  
There is a Shepherd cag'd in stone,  
Destin'd unto destruction,  
Worthy of all before him were,  
Apollo him doth first preferre,  
Renowned Lawreate be content,  
Thy workes are thine own monument.

Stritmatter\* featured a portion of this tribute and marveled at how well two lines describe a hidden author whose name Sheppard thought would never be revealed: "a Shepherd cag'd in stone,/ Destin'd unto destruction." Sheppard is so distraught over the prospect that he "cannot speak for teares." He calls **Shakespeare** a "Larweate," which Will Shaksper never was, but which Oxford probably became when the Queen granted him an £1000 annual stipend in 1586 (see **William Warner** chapter). As if to dismiss the so-called "monument" in Stratford-upon-Avon, he declares, "They workes are thine own monument." Stritmatter

asked, “what sense can this possibly make from an orthodox biographical perspective?”\* It makes no sense at all, but in the Oxfordian context, *every line* makes sense.

It may seem problematic that Sheppard addresses Tytirus and **Shakespeare** separately. But because he keeps Tytirus’ real name hidden and ranks him above all writers, he must be speaking of Oxford, and because he describes **Shakespeare** as he does, he must be speaking of Oxford. I think, for whatever reason, he credited Oxford’s poems and songs to Tytirus and his plays to **Shakespeare**. Perhaps, like George Daniel, he was particularly fond of poetry by Voices other than **Shakespeare**.

Scholars have identified the other writers whom Sheppard praises as “Spenser, Sidney, Harington, Drayton, Daniel, Jonson, Shakespeare, Fletcher, Beaumont, Suckling.”\* No one has identified Tytirus, the best of them all. If you think Tytirus is *not* Oxford, who could he possibly be? Chapman? Heywood? I don’t think so.

A *Lycaena Tityrus* is a type of butterfly. If you look at the creature one day, it is a caterpillar. If you look the next day, it is a beautiful butterfly. If you look at Shakespeare one way, he is Will Shaksper, the worm. If you look at him another way, he is Oxford, the butterfly.

Scholars have credited Sheppard with a book published in 1688 titled *Fortune's tennis-ball: or the most excellent history of Dorastus and Fawnia rendered into verse*.\* This book turns the prose of **Robert Greene**’s *Pandosto* into poetry. Of all possible books to treat, Sheppard chose one by Oxford’s most prolific prose Voice.

^JAMES COOKE (record: 1657)

Dr. James Cooke was a surgeon from Warwick who translated Dr. John Hall’s casebook and published it in 1657. After Hall died, Cooke visited his widow, Susanna Shaksper, “to see the books left by Mr. Hall.” In his preface to Hall’s book, he describes his visit with Susanna and cites Hall as being “very famous.” But neither he nor Susanna mention her supposedly famous father or refer to any books *he* might have owned. Apparently, both Cooke and Susanna Shaksper were oblivious to the theory that Will Shaksper was William Shakespeare.

To the above list we can add the 35 people who praised Mary Sidney for her patronage and her work on the Psalms but never for the fine play issued in her name, *Tragedie of Antonie* (1592). Obviously, they all knew she didn’t write it (see **Mary Sidney** chapter).

If you are paying attention, you may have noticed a famous name missing from the list above. That is because, as best I can determine, the man knew nothing of Oxford’s Voices even though many Oxfordians think he did. See the Francis Meres chapter in Independent Writers.

### **Clear as Mud Becomes Clear as a Mountain Stream**

We have just reviewed hints and comments from 64 people, quite a few of whom left multiple clues linking Oxford to his Voices. Taken singly, these references can seem oblique and obscure. Together, they reveal a cadre of people who shared an open secret.

Observe that *none* of the many poems quoted above tell readers *anything* about Shakespeare the man, certainly nothing pertaining to Shaksper of Stratford. But many of them tell us *who the man is* if we read them properly. Once you become steeped in such references you may come to agree with Streit, who wrote, “Whatever name was on the poems and plays, it was as transparent as glass to the Elizabethans that the man standing behind the works was Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford.”\*

Knowledge of Oxford's Voices eventually dissolved from memories as the those who knew passed away, one by one. Oxford was convinced — as **Shakespeare** bewails in his Sonnets — that his achievements would be divorced from his name forever, and he has so far been right. But Oxford also said, "Time's glory is to...bring truth to light." Hasn't it been long enough?

### **Those Who Knew That Oxford Was an Actor**

In 1577, George Gascoigne referred to Oxford as "W.S." and an "old player" (see Henry Willobie chapter). In 1578, Gabriel Harvey's Latin address to Oxford may be translated to say that his *countenance* "shakes a spear." This image suggests an actor in costume. Harvey in *Four Letters* speaks of the dying **Robert Greene** as "a player" who "had played his last part." While his statement could be taken metaphorically, he may be implying for a second time that Oxford was an actor.

Edmund Spenser in *Tears of the Muses* (1591) lamented, "Our pleasant Willy, ah! Is dead of late," choosing rather "to sit in idle Cell/ Than so himselfe to mockerie sell." This depiction suggests an idle actor as opposed to a writer, for two reasons. First, the reference to Willy selling himself to mockery is barely applicable to writing but highly applicable to acting. Second, Spenser's image of Willy as unproductive because he is confined to his room does not fit a writer, who would be sitting at a desk while exercising his occupation. Ben Jonson uses the same term in the same context in "To the Reader," following *The Poetaster*, in which he says, "I, that spend half my nights, and all my days,/ Here in a cell, to get a dark pale face,/ To come forth worth the ivy or the bays...." Spenser's image fits a recently inactive performer.

Why did Spenser choose to depict Willy as one who chose "to sit in Idle cell"? He got it from Oxford's Voices. In 1570, **Edmund Elviden's** *Pesistratus* briefly takes up a hermit's life. In 1579, **John Lyly's** *Euphues* retires to his cell at Silexedra, and in 1588, his *Endimion* "hath chosen in a solitarie Cell to live." **Robert Greene's** *Frier Bungay* in *frier Bacon* (composed 1589-90) desires "To sit as melancholie in his cell." These images pre-date Spenser's "to sit in idle Cell" lament. Spenser pictured Oxford as one of his Voices' heroes.

When in 1592 Henry Chettle apologizes to a playwright we have identified as the Earl of Oxford (see **Robert Greene** chapter), he calls him "exclent [sic] in the qualitie he professes." Detobel explained, "In Elizabethan and Stuart times the phrase 'quality he professes' denotes the profession of a player. Thomas Heywood, himself a playwright and actor, uses the term 'quality they profess' (to describe the actor's profession) several times in his *Apology for Actors*, published in 1611. The term is also regularly used in official documents."\* So, Chettle may have implied that Oxford was a player.

In *Shakes-speares Sonnets* (1609), **Shakespeare** seems to admit to having trod the boards. Sonnet 110 expresses the poet's shame that he "made myself a motley to the view." Such embarrassment makes no sense for country-boy Will Shaksper, who, like actors Kemp and Burbage, would have been proud to have achieved success onstage. Oxford, however, would have squandered the social respect due nobility for the same achievement.

In 1610, John Davies in his *Scourge of Folly* noted that **Shakespeare** "played some Kingly parts in sport." There is no doubt that Davies is speaking of someone who acted, because later in the poem make that point clear:

No odds there was in shew (and but in show)...  
he/ Was but twelve gamesome daies [the length of the theatrical run] to king it so;  
...without bloud did he behead his foes [the fights were staged]  
He poison'd some...But twas with Suger and perfumed wines; [fake poison is a stage prop]  
He went with guards, yet stabbing feared not. [the knives were fake, too]

“In the 1623 folio edition of **Shakespeare**’s ‘Works’ his name heads the prefatory list ‘of the principall actors in all these playes.’”<sup>\*</sup> In the same volume, Ben Jonson refers to **Shakespeare**’s “buskin tread” that would “shake a stage,” a clear reference to acting.

All this evidence suggests that the Earl of Oxford acted on stage. Spenser’s reference to “Willy” in 1591 and Harvey’s use of “will shake speares” in 1578 further suggest that Oxford may have adopted “William Shake-speare” as a stage name — but not as an author’s name (see **Shakespeare** chapter) — some time before 1578. A likely time would be 1576, the year he returned from Italy and began writing plays that would later come out as **Shakespeare**’s.

### **Apes Turned Forth and Tears Dried**

I hope that Marston’s Apes have finally been turned forth and Sheppard’s tears dried. Perhaps **Shakespeare** would have eased his laments about retiring to oblivion in his sonnets if he knew posterity would eventually begin to understand his incomparable contribution to the literary, musical and dramatic arts. In the meantime, he might have drawn comfort from his own words, from his address “To my lovinge frende Thomas Bedingfield” in the preface to *Cardanus Comforte*:

For when all things shall els forsake us, vertue yet will ever abide with us, and when our bodies falles into the bowels of the earth, yet that shall mounte with our mindes into the brightest Heavens.

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