

An Alternative Theory of the Oxford Cover-Up

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If the Earl of Oxford was actually the writer William Shakespeare, he was obviously using the name as a cover. But also, judging by the allusions to Stratford and the Avon in the *First Folio*, his cover included, to some extent, the person of William Shakspeare of Stratford. Most Oxfordian writers seem to accept what might be called the stand-in theory, according to which Oxford was obliged to let his poems and plays be credited to Shakspeare while he stayed in the background to avoid the social stigma (for a noble) of being a published writer. But in addition, according to the more explicit descriptions of this theory, Shakspeare was bribed to make himself scarce, so that, as Ogburn put it, “his glaring disqualifications for the role of the dramatist would not queer the game.”¹

The main rationale for the stand-in theory, other than the *First Folio* allusions, is that a pseudonym alone would not have been sufficient to hide Oxford. Ogburn stated it this way: “Unless there were someone to point to, a stand-in for the author, the pseudonym was bound to be penetrated. There had to be a William Shakespeare in the flesh, somewhere.”²

However, there are some arguments against this theory which seem serious enough to suggest there must be a better way to explain the cover-up of the Earl of Oxford. First, it’s not clear how a stand-in who isn’t there can be an effective stand-in. Those who knew little about either Oxford or William of Stratford might readily accept the latter as the writer even if he weren’t around.

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But the stand-in scheme was presumably aimed at the opinion-makers of London, both present and future, the very people most likely to know about Oxford and the theater, and most likely to ask embarrassing questions about this absent "Shakespeare".

Then, in order to claim that he wasn't there, the theory must explain away the later references to "Shakespeare" as an actor and company member. The March 1595 payment record to Will Kempe, Will Shakespeare, and Richard Burbage for two plays before her Majesty on St. Stephens Day and Innocents Day is discounted by some Oxfordians with the supposition that the widow of Thomas Heneage, who had been treasurer of the Chamber, simply added Shakespeare's name to her records in order to help account for missing funds.³ But this couldn't have worked because the payment was at the usual rate per play, not per actor. Also, some writers discount this record by referring to evidence that it was the Admiral's Men who played at Greenwich on Innocents Day, and the Chamberlain's Men played at Gray's Inn. This may have been just a mistake, as some writers have said, or it's possible that the Chamberlain's Men gave two performances on that day in different places. At any rate, this reference to Shakespeare as representing the Chamberlain's Men in person can't be so easily dismissed.

If William of Stratford wasn't in London, the appearance of "Shakespeare" in the 1598 and 1603 cast lists given in Jonson's 1616 *Folio* has to be explained as Jonson slipping the name in as part of the cover-up. Similarly, the Globe "occupation" reference in 1599 and the King's Men references in 1603, 1604, and 1605 must have been arranged by the "cover-up" group - that is, if we're to believe the stand-in theory with Shakspere being absent.

But perhaps Shakspere wasn't absent all the time. He could have been called back on certain occasions to lend credibility to his role. This too would have to be arranged, since the Chamberlain's Men and the King's Men would not otherwise accept Shakspere unless he had been around long enough, at some time or other, to become a proven actor and reliable business partner. There doesn't seem to be any definite evidence to support that, given the paucity of references to Shakespeare as an actor, and the fact that none of the later theater references identify him as being from Stratford. Then, to the extent that he was in London and accessible, his disqualifications would, according to the theory, give away the game.

Some adherents of the "stand-in" theory believe that the Stratford man was an actor and member of the company all along, in which case there wouldn't be a problem with his prolonged absence. Aside from his disqualifications for the stand-in role and the lack of evidence of any sustained acting career, there is the problem of the real author necessarily often being present. Writing plays in Elizabethan England involved considerable interaction between the playwright and the company of actors; plays were often tailored for a particular group, and roles were designed for particular actors. Oxford lived close to The

Theater and it's very unlikely that he, as the playwright for a company of players, would have stayed in the background. It's also very unlikely that both he and his stand-in could have worked at the same time with the same company without the cover-up quickly becoming the joke of the theater world.

Perhaps the strongest argument against the stand-in theory is simply that Oxford would not have tolerated it. Everything we know about him contradicts the idea that he would allow someone he considered a "clown" and "arrant knave" to get credit for his plays and poems. Consider for a moment what we know about Oxford's character and opinions. He was proud, daring, and determined to have his way. He risked his life trying to save the Duke of Norfolk. He separated from his wife because of dishonoring rumours. He stood up to Lord Burghley about his agents spying on him, and threatened him with actions "that I have not yet thought of". He dared to accuse very influential people of plotting against the Queen even though it meant assuming great personal risk. Finally, he was willing to sell almost all of his land in order, apparently, to achieve his literary and theatrical goals.

He also had a marked aristocratic point of view and a corresponding intolerance of upstarts. There's his famous insult to Philip Sidney at the royal tennis court, his apparent caricature of Christopher Hatton in *Twelfth Night*, and his well-known "when Jacks start up" comment to the Queen about the Earl of Essex immediately after the latter's execution.

As for pride in what he did, note his striving to excel throughout his life, and also to be recognized for it: in tournaments, in dancing, in the way he dressed, in his upstaging of others at Court with his "railing", and even his unorthodox identification of himself as the author of some of his early poems.

Finally, he had a particularly refined sense of honor, even for his class and period, judging by a portrayal of Oxford in George Chapman's *Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* of 1613. Clermont, one of the characters, met Oxford returning from Italy:

"And 'twas the Earl of Oxford; and being offer'd
At that time, by Duke Cassimere, the view
Of his right royal army then in field,
Refused it, and no foot was moved to stir
Out of his own free fore-determined course;
I, wondering at it, ask'd for it his reason,
It being an offer so much for his honour.
He, all acknowledging, said, 'twas not fit
To take those honours that one cannot [return]...
[He] had rather make away his whole estate
In things that cross'd the vulgar, than he would
Be frozen up stiff, like a Sir John Smith,
His countryman, in common nobles' fashions;

Affecting, as the end of noblesse were
Those servile observations.”

In sum, not only would the stand-in scheme probably not work, but everything we know about Oxford indicates he wouldn't accept the personal affront implied by the Stratford man being his stand-in.

I will present an alternative theory that precludes the anomalies described above, presents a logical and coherent story of the cover-up, and is consistent with everything we know about Oxford, Shakespeare the writer, and Shakspere of Stratford. This theory is based on, among other things, evidence that Shakspere was bribed to retire,⁴ that he never again had anything to do with the theater, that Oxford himself was the “Shakespeare” referred to in 1595 and later in connection with the theater,⁵ and that the name was kept alive after Oxford's death in preparation for the *First Folio* cover-up. Only then was Shakspere of Stratford's identity used as a cover, and even then only in a very ambiguous way.

First, consider the bribe. No other plausible source for his sudden wealth in the mid-1590s has been found in all the years of research devoted to his life.⁶ Some writers have said it was to get him out of the way, which makes sense in view of the few identifiable traces he left in London, as will be shown later, and the many he left in Stratford. But I submit that it was not because he was to be an absent living pseudonym, but because he had allowed himself to be taken as, or was actively posturing as, the author of Oxford's plays in the late 1580s and early 1590s, thereby threatening Oxford's reputation and plans. The main evidence for this are the allusions to Shakspere of Stratford in *As You Like It* (V,i), *2 Henry IV* (V,i), and *Taming of the Shrew* (Ind.).⁷ These passages, clearly too specific and too linked to be imagination or coincidence, make no sense at all if they're not about William of Stratford. And why would Oxford chide and ridicule him in these very particular ways if not because of his name?⁸

Next, the references to “Shakespeare” as an actor and company member. The first of these is the March 1595 payment record discussed earlier. It was quite unusual for two lead actors plus a third person to receive payment for the company. Normally, the payee was a single lesser member, but sometimes with a second one present. So this record suggests that it was a special occasion - and indeed it was. One of the plays mentioned was the first appearance of the Chamberlain's Men at Court, and both were part of the Christmas Revels, the “Gesta Grayorum”, said to be the most famous of all such revels. It lasted from December 20, 1594, to Twelfth Night on January 5, 1595, with other events on Candlemas and Mardi Gras. Given the lack of evidence that Shakspere was an actor earlier (only *Groatsworth*), and not even as a member of the Chamberlain's Men when they were given a patent six months before the plays in question, one wonders how he could possibly have had a prominent position in this celebra-

tion. It's far more likely that this representative of the company was Oxford using his theater pseudonym. Oxford was an alumnus of Gray's Inn, and quite appropriate for the theater part of the *Gesta Grayorum*, given he was a leading playwright,⁹ a patron of players, and an actor at least once before. Another factor to consider is the likelihood that Oxford, a good friend of Henry Carey, the Lord Chamberlain who was usually occupied with military affairs near Scotland as the Warden of the East Marches, had effectively become the patron of the Chamberlain's players.

What seems to be an allusion to Oxford in this role at the *Gesta Grayorum* is quoted by Chambers in his description of one of the ceremonies at the court of the Prince of Purpoole: "On 30 December an indictment was preferred against a supposed sorcerer, containing a charge 'that he had foisted a company of base and common fellows to make up our disorders with a play of errors and confusions; and that that night had gained to us discredit, and itself a nickname of Errors.'"¹⁰ This is, of course, in the mock serious vein of the Court of Purpool, and the play was *The Comedy of Errors*, performed by the Chamberlain's Men two days before. One wonders who this "sorcerer" could have been if not Oxford. Certainly not the 70 year old Carey. Nor does it seem very plausible that one of the Burbages arranged this appearance at Gray's Inn. The "sorcerer" would have been "one of their own".

But why would Oxford himself appear as one of the payees for the company even if he were the company's patron? One can ask the same question about the company's two well-known leading actors, Burbage and Kempe. Their presence as payees wasn't normal either. The record doesn't say, but there was probably more to this appearance than just collecting money; it was a formal recognition of participation in the Christmas Revels, as was, in fact, given to other participants.

Shakspeare of Stratford has generally been taken as this "Shakespeare" of 1594-5, as well as the "Shakespeare" of later acting company references, because it was assumed Oxford would never have been a member of a company of actors, or even be that closely involved with them. But is this really a good assumption? It's certainly true, in general, that English nobles did not join acting companies, and most would have been horrified at the idea. Was Oxford different? Would he have condescended to that sort of thing?

Clearly, he was not a conventional noble. In particular, he wrote plays that found their way onto the public stage. But that must not have been all that shameful if Francis Meres could cite Oxford by name in *Palladis Tamia* as one of the best for comedies. Meres was certainly not the sort to be revealing disgraceful secrets about living Earls. But being a company member, being on the stage, and living (part time) the playwright's and actor's rather bohemian life was clearly beyond the pale. The allusions in the verses of John Davies of Hereford indicate he did some acting, and these were probably cautiously minimizing the extent. The allusions of Thomas Nashe in 1592 do more than

cautiously indicate his bohemian life style. He joked about him as “a good fellow” and “Alderman of the Stillyard”, a pub in the East End. Much earlier, Lord Burghley, in a letter to the Secretary of State, referred to Oxford’s “lewd friends”, and that too was no doubt just a hint of Oxford’s other life. So he had already condescended, if that’s really the right word. At times Oxford recognized it as shameful for his more proper life, but his theater work always seemed to prevail.

Ignoring the rules of his class in favor of his theater life probably goes back to his experience in Italy in 1575-76. He was apparently very impressed by their *Commedia dell’Arte*. Many of Oxford’s plays are known for the technique, spirit, and even scenarios of this kind of theater. His attendance at plays while in Italy was so frequent and active, that he was cited quite familiarly in a 17th century Italian book on their theater.¹¹

At the time Oxford was in Venice, the company performing there was *Il Comici Gelosi*, called the greatest of all the *Commedia dell’Arte* companies. Their director and scenarist, as well as one of their actors, was Flaminio Scala, a noble who used the pseudonym “Flavio”.¹² It would be very surprising if Oxford didn’t meet Scala in Venice and learn all about the company’s experience and practices.

Scala was not the only Italian noble who acted and directed. The reputed originator of the *Commedie dell’arte*, Angelo Beolco, was also a noble. He used the pseudonym “Ruzzante”. Another was Adriano Valerini, a noble from Verona as well as an actor with the *Gelosi* at the time of Oxford’s visit, and later the director of a company of actors in Milan. Venice must have been a great inspiration for someone of Oxford’s talent and inclinations, and it’s easy to imagine his wanting to apply what he had learned back in London, regardless of the narrow-mindedness of the Puritans and the traditional prejudices of the nobility.

Thus, there are good reasons for believing that Oxford would have “condescended” to be not only the “Shakespeare” of the 1595 payment record, but also the “Shakespeare” referred to later as a member of the Chamberlain’s Men and the King’s Men, as well as one of the holders of Globe and Blackfriars shares.

To anticipate an objection to the preceding, I should point out that around 1600 Oxford formed a company of his own again, which later combined with a company belonging to the Earl of Worcester. This combined group was authorized, at Oxford’s request to the Queen, to play at the Boar’s Head as London’s third approved company. Then, after King James arrived in 1603, they came under Queen Anne’s sponsorship, and “Shakespeare” appeared in records as a member of the King’s Men. So it would appear that Oxford couldn’t have been a member of the Chamberlain’s Men since he wouldn’t write for and manage one company while organizing and sponsoring another during these three years. Therefore, he must have left the Chamberlain’s Men in about 1599.

If this is really what happened, there should be some plausible reasons for it, as well as evidence that it happened. The reasons are not the sort of thing that would appear in public records or even in letters. Perhaps Oxford and Burbage had a falling-out about who was going to run the Globe and the Chamberlain's Men, and the Lord Chamberlain, George Carey (Henry's son) didn't support Oxford. It's not difficult to rationalize the first part of this. The Burbages considered the Globe as their own, a family enterprise, only reluctantly shared with others, etc. Also, Richard was known to have a quick temper. On the other hand, Oxford no doubt had his own ideas about how a theater should be run, and he certainly could be impatient and impetuous.¹³

That Carey didn't support Oxford is also plausible judging by what Oxford wrote to Robert Cecil in 1601: "In the beginning of my suit to her Majesty I was doubtful to enter thereunto for...the doubt I had of the Careys." The suit started in March 1601, and Oxford was speaking of difficulties he had with them before that. Perhaps they started as far back as 1596 when George Carey opposed the Chamberlain's men's use of Blackfriars as a playhouse, even though he was, at least nominally, their patron.

But the cause doesn't matter so much as whether "Shakespeare" actually did leave the Chamberlain's Men. There seems to be good evidence for it:

1. William Kempe, Christopher Beeston, and John Duke left the Chamberlain's Men in 1599 and went to the Oxford-Worcester company. Thomas Pope was in the Jonson play performed by the Chamberlain's Men in 1599 and then he too left the company. These departures just when the Globe was starting its famous life are very odd, and suggest that more was going on than just the move to the Globe.

2. "Shakespeare" was listed with the Chamberlain's Men in Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* in 1598 (according to Jonson's folio of 1616) but not in his *Every Man out of his Humour* in 1599. This could be just a matter of convenience, but it could also be because he was no longer there.

3. There was a flurry of registrations and publications of Shakespeare's plays in 1600, which might be explained as the company staking claim to the plays of their playwright who had left in 1599, a year of very few registrations.

4. *Much Ado*, *Henry V*, and *As You Like It* were "stayed" without approval in the Stationers Company in August 1600, presumably by someone objecting to their registration. *Much Ado* was registered later that month, but *Henry V* was pirated and published without registration, and *As You Like It* had to wait for the *First Folio*.

5. The risky 1601 performance of *Richard II* at the request of several of the Essex coup plotters suggests that Oxford (who would have known better) wasn't with them. The plotters negotiated only with Augustine Phillips and some unnamed other actors.

6. A Vice-Chamberlain was appointed in Feb 1601 after 6 years without one, and that 6-year period had been when the Lord Chamberlain himself was

seemingly too busy for theater affairs. This suggests that someone who had been looking after them was no longer there. Given the usual slowness of appointments, the need had probably arisen in late 1599.

7. The “Parnassus Plays” at Cambridge in 1599-1601 depicted Richard Burbage and Will Kempe as searching for a scholar to write for them, which makes sense only if “Shakespeare”, their in-house playwright, had left. And Burbage’s reference to him as “our fellow Shakespeare” is not, in the context, inconsistent with this.

8. 1602 is the only year of the “Shakespeare” period in which the records of the Treasurer of the Chamber contain no entry of payments made to the Lord Chamberlain’s company. Apparently the company had suspended official operations.

Thus the hypothesis of Oxford leaving the Chamberlain’s Men at this time is about as well supported as could be expected for this kind of event.

Now back to the track of logic about Oxford being the “Shakespeare” in the later theater references. The likelihood of this, which has been argued above, isn’t quite sufficient: It’s also necessary to show that it’s very unlikely that William of Stratford would have been this later Shakespeare. First, recall the evidence for “Shakespeare” being a company member and theater investor:

- He acted in two of Ben Jonson’s plays put on by the Chamberlain’s Men in 1598 and 1603, according to Jonson’s *Folio* of 1616.

- He was named as being “in occupation” of the Globe theater in 1599, along with “et aliorum”, not named.

- He was identified as one of the sharers in the Globe theater in 1599, and in the Blackfriars lease in 1608, according to 1619 and 1635 testimony.

- He was officially listed as a member of the King’s Men in 1603 and 1604.

- He was named as one of the King’s Men in the will of Augustine Phillips, which was dated May 4, 1605.

If one assumes Shakspeare was brought back from retirement to be these later “Shakespeares”, a number of unanswerable questions arise:

- Why bring him back since the same reasons for bribing him to leave were still there. In particular, Oxford wouldn’t tolerate him now any more than before.

Why only two performances before retiring from the stage again?

Why did the Stratford man lodge at the very opposite end of London from the Globe in about 1603 when he was supposed to be acting there?

- If he bought into the Globe and Blackfriars, why no later evidence that he had these valuable shares?

- How can one believe that only a few months after being brought back as a substitute of sorts, he is identified as being “in occupation” of the Globe theater when the Burbages were the principal owners?

There are no such difficulties - with two possible exceptions - posed by accepting Oxford as the company member, investor, and occasional actor. It

would be normal that he would share in the Globe early in 1599, and his departure from the company that same year is a good reason why he wouldn't keep his shares. It's also normal that he would be listed as a member of the King's Men in 1603 and 1604 (this last occurring before his death). His being "in occupation" of the Globe in 1599 is also to be expected since his rank (of course known to the others) would have put him at the head of the list of members taking possession, and the "inquisition" referring to this "occupation" would normally have used only this first name provided by the group plus "et aliorum" (as it did) for identifying the group of co-owners. Finally, it would not be surprising if he were in a play in 1598 and even in 1603.

Admittedly, this last acting occasion is not very probable because of his declining health. But there are possible reasons for Jonson including him in this 1603 list even if he did not act in the play. These "cast lists" may be just rosters of company members, not actual performers, since they are the only available basis for identifying the membership of the company during these years. Or it could have been part of the cover-up that began after Oxford's death, which will be discussed below.

One of the possible exceptions is his being named as one of the King's Men in the will of Augustine Phillips which was dated May 4, 1605. But since the will was probated on May 13, a remarkably short time for that legal procedure (Shakespeare's took 2 months), the date of the will was probably the date of his death. Furthermore, given the length and obviously careful preparation of the will, it must have been written long before. Since Phillips retired to Mortlake about a year before he died, perhaps he already had good reason at that time to make a will. If so, the will could well have been made before Oxford died and simply not changed before Phillips died. This hypothetical scenario is particularly plausible if Oxford's death had been kept quiet, which, as will be shown later, is quite probable.

The Blackfriars lease of 1608 is a much more clearcut case of the name "Shakespeare" appearing as a living man after Oxford's death. This could have been the Stratford man if he had been brought back for this purpose. But this isn't very credible because, as pointed out earlier, his participation in the lease as a relative stranger would obviously have been contrived as part of the posthumous cover-up, and if the company would cooperate to that extent, why wouldn't they simply put the name on the lease? The first we hear of this lease is in the 1619 testimony of Condell and Heminges in which they said that Burbage "placed" the names of certain of the players on the lease. The lease didn't survive, so we don't know who, if any of them, were actually present. Then in 1635 there was some additional testimony about that lease, this time by Cuthbert Burbage, Richard's brother, who added an interesting bit of information; namely, that the players who shared in the lease "had their shares of us [the Burbages] for nothing." E. K. Chambers found this incredible, and indeed it doesn't sound like Richard Burbage. It may be that Cuthbert was

simply not aware of all of his brother's dealings in that lease, and that it had simply been *given* to Richard. In that case, of course, Cuthbert would not have seen any money coming from the other players. A likely reason for such an action is that someone wanted the Burbages' and the company to have an incentive to cooperate with the Folio cover-up.

Thus the most logical conclusion seems to be that Shakspere of Stratford was not brought back to participate in this lease, but that the name "Shakespeare" was simply added to it along with several others. And the only plausible reason for that seems to be that the cover-up people wanted to maintain an impression, as best they could, that there was still a Shakespeare out there someplace.

At about the same time as this Blackfriars lease arrangement, three of Shakespeare's plays (*King Lear*, *Pericles*, and *Troilus and Cressida*) were allowed to be printed in violation of what appeared to be a total hold on the publication of his plays since 1604. Perhaps this was just an error on the part of the Master of the Revels as some historians have guessed, but it's at least consistent with the idea that they wanted "Shakespeare" to be seen as still actively writing (or updating) plays.

Also, the Stratford man's purchase in 1613 of the Blackfriars gatehouse is consistent with the idea of keeping "Shakespeare" alive. Shakspere had no intention of living there; it had nothing to do with the theater except being nearby; and also it was far from Stratford and he had no other property in London to bring him to town. One even wonders how he would have known about its availability, since he had apparently not been in London for at least five years. It was probably Heminges, one of the trustees for him in the purchase, as well as one of the actors involved in the *First Folio*, who arranged the deal. He also probably arranged for the other two trustees since they both came from his neighborhood. Shakspere came just to sign, and no doubt with a monetary incentive.

But why this desire to keep "Shakespeare" alive? One reason would have been to distance "Shakespeare" from Oxford. If "Shakespeare" appeared to live on after Oxford's death, the distinction would obviously be reinforced. Another reason was, perhaps, to make the *First Folio* more credible, given its long delay, by showing some plausible evidence of "Shakespeare's" continuing activity, and of course with a tie-in to the Stratford man.

As mentioned earlier, Oxford's death may have been deliberately kept quiet. There are several reasons for this impression. For one thing, there are no records or references to the sort of funeral one would expect for the Lord Great Chamberlain of England, senior Earl, 5th in precedence among all the officers of the state, member of the Privy Council, etc. Furthermore, when Countess Oxford died in 1612, she willed that "there be in the said church erected for us (Oxford and herself) a tomb fitting our degree", which means that when Oxford died eight years before there was no tomb - at least no "fitting" tomb - and this suggests that his funeral had been minimal.

There's another curious thing about his death on June 24, 1604. The word "plague" added to his burial record presumably meant he died of that disease. It's possible, since there was a bad epidemic the year before. But it barely carried over into 1604. The play restraint caused by the epidemic wasn't lifted until April 9 only because Lent continued until then. A play was presented at the "Curtain", near Oxford's house that same day, and some theaters had reopened as early as February. The areas most affected had been Bishopsgate, Aldgate, Cripplegate, Tower, and St. Stephen, which were suburbs close to the City. Oxford lived at Hackney, a good area farther out. But saying it was plague would, of course, have helped keep the funeral small and quiet if that's what they wanted.

Note that if Oxford's death and funeral were kept quiet, it was not because he had been forgotten. King James renewed his 1000 pound annuity, restored Essex Forest to him, gave him the keepership of Havering, and even appointed him to the Privy Council less than a year before his death.

But why try to keep his death and funeral quiet? One reason would be to avoid any revealing eulogies by writers or actors. Given the life he apparently led, what could they say that wouldn't be too revealing? And also to avoid association between his death and a sudden absence of "Shakespeare". They did what they could about this, as noted above, and also to link the name "Shakespeare" with Shakspere and Stratford. But in this latter they apparently were not convincing enough. There were no comments about the man from Stratford even after the *First Folio* made its identification and praised him to the skies. Not until 65 years later, did anyone make any connection between William Shakspere of Stratford and William Shakespeare the poet and playwright.

The theory described in this paper seems to be well supported in almost all particulars, and it precludes the anomalies of the current "stand-in" theory. Perhaps more important is that its main implication, that Oxford was living a life of irreconcilable extremes, seems suddenly to give new and more convincing meaning to many of the themes in his poems and plays, not to mention the frustrations of his personal life.

Endnotes

1. Ogburn, Charlton. *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1984. p. 194. "Disqualifications" refers to his lack of education and experience. Since I am assuming the Oxfordian authorship case in this paper, I will not try to defend this point.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
3. This argument was reinforced by the fact that Lady Heneage was the former Countess of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley's mother, who would have known something about Shakespeare.

4. It seems necessary here to account for several non-writer references to men with Shakespeare-like names in London who some writers claim were to the Stratford man, since these may be seen as inconsistent with retirement to Stratford. One had to do with a claim for “sureties of the peace” against a “William Shakspeare” and three others. But he was not identified as the Stratford man, so that even the fact that one of the others was Francis Langley, the owner of the Swan theater, doesn’t mean that he was Shakspeare of Stratford rather than Oxford. The others have to do with a “Shakespeare” of Bishopsgate, St Helens Parish, who was tax delinquent in 1597 and sought for payment of tax in each of the next three years. This illusive man was also never identified as the Stratford man. In 1595 Oxford addressed a letter to Lord Burghley from Bishopsgate, St. Helen’s Parish. (Looney, J.T. *“Shakespeare” Identified...* London; Cecil Palmer, 1920. p.313.) At that time Oxford’s residence was at Stoke Newington just north of The Theatre, but he could well have had a second residence near members of the Company just south of the Theatre and inside the City. Thus it seems quite possible that the tax delinquent William Shakespeare was actually Oxford. There are also references that place the identifiable Stratford man in London in these later years, but apparently not on any long term basis. First, the Quiney letters which seem to say he was in London temporarily in 1598. Then it is known that he lived with the Mountjoy family for some unspecified time between 1602 and 1604. However, this was in Cripplegate Ward near St. Giles, which is as far from the Globe as one can get and still be in London, which of course doesn’t suggest theater activity.
5. Note that none of the theater references to Shakespeare identified the Stratford man. The Blackfriars gatehouse papers did, but that had nothing to do with the theater except proximity.
6. Nicholas Rowe cited in his 18th c. biography of Shakspeare Sir William D’Avenant’s assertion that Southampton once gave Shakspeare of Stratford 1000 pounds for some unidentified purchase. This story lacks both substance and reliability. D’Avenant was the son of an inn keeper on the road from Stratford to London and only 10 yrs old when Shakspeare died.
7. In *As You Like It*, there is a William from the Forest of Arden in Warwickshire who is 25 - as the Stratford man was in 1589, about when this play was updated. Touchstone, who has many Oxford characteristics, lectures him about the cup and glass metaphor, which says that William can’t take something from Touchstone without Touchstone having less of it. Then he says: “For all your writers do consent that ipse is he... you are not ipse, for I am he”, ipse meaning the master or the real thing. “Therefore, you clown, abandon, which is in the vulgar, leave...” In other words, William from Arden has been pretending to be something he wasn’t and thereby taking from Touchstone something that was his. Since this is independent of the rest of the story, the author is no doubt talking about more than the country girl, Audrey. In 2 *Henry IV*, of about 1590, there is a William Visor from Woncot, who Justice Shallow says is an “arrant

knave” but “shall have no wrong”. Visor means a mask, suggesting pretense, and Woncot is recognizably similar to Wilmcote, the hometown of Mary Arden, Shakspeare’s mother. In the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, which was apparently added in about 1592, Sly is described as “Old Sly’s son of Burton-Heath and well-known at Wincot”. Barton-in-the-Heath was where William of Stratford’s uncle and aunt Lambert lived; Wincot is like the Woncot of *2 Henry IV* and the Wilmcote of Mary Arden; and the name Sly, like visor, can mean deceitful as well as clever. Sly is made to believe he is a great lord who has been under the delusion he was a wool-card maker, which William of Stratford well could have been, given his father was a wool-dealer.

8. This indicates, of course, that Oxford was known by the name “Shakespeare” at least by this time. Further probable evidence of Oxford’s early use of the name Shakespeare is in Gabriel Harvey’s 1578 speech in honor of Oxford, in which he said “thy countenance shakes spears” and “Pallas striking her shield with her spear shaft will attend thee”.

9. This is, of course, from Francis Meres’ praise of Oxford in *Palladis Tamia* of 1598.

10. Chambers, E.K. *The Elizabethan Stage*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923. v.IV, p.56.

11. Cited in Clark, Eva Turner, *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare’s Plays*. 3rd rev. ed., Kennikat Press: New York, 1974. p. 134.

12. Oxford was in Venice in March and September of 1575 and possibly most of the intervening six months. He was also there early in 1576 just before starting back to England. According to “The Italian Comedy” by Pierre Louis Duchartre (Dover, 1966), Il Comici Gelosi returned to Venice from a tour in May of 1574, but left again in 1576 for a tour in Austria. Duchartre said Scala “belonged to the nobility and was a man of extensive culture and remarkably versatile as an actor. He also left a collection of fifty scenarios.”

13. This notion of a falling out between Oxford and Burbage is consistent with a possible additional explanation for the delay in publishing the *First Folio*: It was probably necessary to wait until the Stratford man died in 1616, but the organizers also waited until after 1619, the year of Burbage’s death, to start the Folio project. Certainly Burbage would have been a much more authoritative company representative in the Folio than Condell and Heminges - but of course only if he had been willing.