

Censorship in the Strange Case of William Shakespeare: A Body for the Canon

Winifred L. Frazer

The literary theory positing the death of the author has become very popular as well as politically correct, in late twentieth-century literary criticism. As explained by Richard Levin through his disapproval of Feminist and Marxist interpretations in the 1990 *PMLA* article, “The Poetics and Politics of Bardicide,”¹ it has resulted even in the death of Shakespeare. Bardicide, however, is not possible without a body. I propose to show that for the designation of “William Shakespeare,” also known as “William Shake-speare,” there is no body. Nobody, according to the Renaissance records so far discovered, wrote the works attributed to that name. From New Critics to Deconstructionists of all persuasions, none has been able to provide an identifiable personality who shaped the greatest poetry and drama the Western World, and perhaps the whole world, has known. Besides William of Stratford, there have been in the last century-and-a-half three other significant and a number of less likely contenders, but none has seemed to supply the necessary connections between author and works, which exist for all other authors. Nobody has emerged so far who satisfies all critics.

An American judge has noted that if it had been a crime to write the poetry and plays of Shakespeare, William of Stratford could never have been convicted, and it should be added, neither, according to available evidence, could any other body in Elizabethan England. In order to help solve the case of the missing body, I propose to show how various levels of censorship — royal, political, and familial — functioned in Renaissance England to cover up the real body, which has been assumed by critics of several persuasions to be nobody *or* anybody *or* one of two bodies *or* a heavenly body *or* a ghostly body.

Annabel Patterson, for example, in discussing censorship of the Elizabethan stage, complains of Foucault’s position, which leads to a “theory of the theater’s ‘containment’ by the power system” or to the “dismissal of Shakespeare as *anybody*” (her italics) who wrote out of experience.² For our detective purposes, if Shakespeare was anybody, the collective genius of the age, it seems not to matter what body is assigned the role of author, and we may as well let things ride as they are – perhaps

the subconscious justification of Renaissance scholars, contrary to their view of authorship elsewhere, in assuming that the Stratfordian, without leaving any record of his growth, is the author of the Shakespearean works. Like Charles Dickens, who opined, “The life of Shakespeare is a fine mystery and I tremble every day lest something should turn up,” we sense that England’s star of poets should remain mysterious and apart from human kind. One wonders if the accusation of established scholars that anyone doubting the Stratford authorship is “naive” or “ignorant” or “obviously elitist” is due to fear of having the world’s greatest literary mystery solved, and orthodox pronouncements revealed as hollow, self-serving rationalizations.

However that may be, a critic like William Kerrigan further complicates the search by explaining that “The traditional doctrine of the king’s two bodies seems almost to have been made for Shakespeare,” the private one deploying “the outward personality in a self-interested way.”³ If we assume that the public body is revealed in the plays, we still must search for the private body, and Shakespeare, the creator, whether somebody, nobody, anybody, or one of the two bodies, remains unrevealed. Even more troubling is Kerrigan’s apparent endorsement of Borges’ view of Shakespeare as an author who creates so prodigiously “because he himself is no one.” The mystical Borges thought that “Shakespeare placed confessions of his inexistence in corners of his work,” resulting in the conclusion that “Shakespeare is deity’s signature.”⁴ Shakespeare, it now appears, is not any of the bodies proposed above, but God. In the same tone in which it is said, “God wrote the Bible,” it is now proclaimed, “Shakespeare was an incomprehensible genius,” whose identification only the foolhardy seek. “Ghosts” is the suggestion of Marjorie Garber, who in *Shakespeare’s Ghost Writers* concludes that the search for the true author is propelled by the “uncanniness” of the texts themselves.⁵

Rejecting the view that the author is a spectral nobody, I examine arguments for the two leading candidates today, illustrating throughout how various kinds of censorship functioned to suppress knowledge of the second, and then review five texts crucial to the Shakespeare story. The first candidate was a nobody, a village native, with, on the record, no education or talents, who for lack of any other body has held the field. The second was, at least temporarily, a somebody, perhaps for a while in the early fifteen-seventies the biggest somebody at court, the scion of one of England’s oldest families, a patron of the arts, with no published plays and little poetry to his credit, but who ended life as a disgraced nobody who had gone “here and there” and made himself a “motley to the view” through his only half-suppressed reputation as a comic dramatist and patron of the theatre.

The first, according to records in Stratford, was christened as Gulielmus Shaksper on April 26, 1564, licensed to marry Anne Whately of Temple Grafton on November 27, 1582, and on a bond the next day, with the bride named Anne Hathway of Stratford, as *William Shagspere*. As the father of twins in 1585, his name was recorded as *William Shaksper*. In other Stratford documents his father’s name appears as John *Shaxpere* and his daughter’s as Susanna *Shaxpere*. His only extant handwriting samples consist of six signatures, written during the last four years of his life on legal documents: *Willn Shakp* (1612), *William Shakspe* (1613), *Wm Shakspe*

(1613), and finally as *William Shakspere*, *Willm Shakspere*, and *William Shakspeare* (1616) on his will. In none of these instances was the name spelled with an “e” at the end of the first syllable. Thus assumption must be made that it was pronounced with a short “a,” and whether spelled with a “k,” an “x,” a “g,” or a “ck” was not pronounced like the word “shake.” In Stratford records, the name never appeared hyphenated, suggesting that the name “Shakespeare” or “Shake-speare,” if used by the Stratfordian, was a pseudonym different in connotation and pronunciation from his own.

There is no record of Shakspere’s having any education, having written a letter, or having owned a book. Indeed, we know nothing more about Shakspere of Stratford today than when Howard Staunton, editor of the *Globe Illustrated Shakespeare* wrote in the middle of the nineteenth century:

We may conjecture him to have arrived in London about 1586, and to have joined some theatrical company. How often and in what characters he performed; where he lived in London; who were his personal friends; what were his habits; what intercourse he maintained with his family; and to what degree he partook of the provincial excursions of his fellows during this period are points on which it has been shown we have scarcely any reliable information.⁶

Like many others, Staunton believes that Shakespeare left London for Stratford in about 1604 to “engage himself actively in agricultural pursuits.”

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Frederick Fleay, noting the valiant attempt of C. M. Ingleby to collect “Allusions” to Shakespeare, concludes that these “consist almost entirely of slight references to his published works, and have no bearing of importance on his career.” Obviously puzzled, Fleay continues: “Nor indeed, have we extended material of any kind to aid us in this investigation; one source of information, which is abundant for most of his contemporaries, being in his case entirely absent. Neither as addressed to him by others, nor by him to others, do any commendatory verses exist in connection with any of his or other men’s works published in his lifetime — a notable fact, in whatever way it be explained.”⁷ I propose to explain this “notable fact” as a result of the censorship imposed by Queen, Court, and family on the second candidate for the authorship of Shakespeare’s works.

Edward de Vere was the only son of the 16th Earl of Oxford, the hereditary Great Lord Chamberlain of England, the dignitary who presided at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth and entertained the Queen with his troupe of players at his seat of Hedingham Castle when Edward was eleven years old. Born on or about April 12, 1550 (April 23, new style). Edward’s early poetry appeared in various collections under several names: “E. O.” in *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1576); “Earle of Oxenforde” and “L. OX” in *England’s Helicon* (1600); “LO.OX,” “Vere,” “L.ox,” and “Edward Earl of Oxford” in *England’s Parnassus* (1600) and in various manuscripts; and according to J. Thomas Looney, under the signature of “Ignoto” in a number of poems in *England’s Helicon*. Oxford wrote a laudatory preface and a poem for

Thomas Bedingfield's translation from the Latin of *Cardanus Comfort* (1573), a work "published by commaundment of the right honourable the Earle of Oxenforde."⁸ He also wrote an introduction to Bartholomew Clerke's translation from Italian to Latin of Castiglione's *Courtier* (1572), using all his titles: Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, Viscount Bulbeck and Baron Scales and Badlesmere.

Oxford was also well known as a patron of the arts, having had thirty-three works dedicated to him. According to Steven May, "The range of Oxford's patronage is as remarkable as its substance. Beginning about 1580 he was the nominal patron of a variety of dramatic troupes."⁹ Besides modeling himself on the aristocratic ideal extolled in *The Courtier*, Oxford had triumphed with the spear at the great jousting tournament before the Queen in 1571. As Conyers Read explains: "Oxford, in short, when he became of age seemed to have everything. His family, the Veres, was one of the oldest and most distinguished in England. He was in person rather sturdy than tall, with hazel eyes and curly hair — a good dancer, a competent musician . . . a first-rate scholar, a fine horseman and now, as it appeared, already a master at the foremost of all courtly exercises, the tourney. No wonder that he speedily won for himself a high place in the royal favor."¹⁰

Such an ornament of the court could not have been known to have close connections with the common stage or to have played kingly parts in sport. So powerful was censorship in Elizabethan England that the obliteration of the author's body, leaving only his disembodied voice, was not the worst fate for which an offender might hope. According to Philip J. Finkelpearl, for the crime of speaking too freely about persons or state affairs, the Star Chamber imposed punishments of "fine, imprisonment, loss of ears or nailing to the pillory, slitting the nose, branding the forehead, whipping" and other physical cruelties "designed not for the protection of the innocent but for the conviction of the guilty."¹¹ If the hereditary Great Lord Chamberlain of England was a playwright, it was necessary to conceal his body, but undesirable to still the voice of one who brought so much pleasure to the Queen and the realm. Such an early play as *Love's Labour's Lost*, with its in-jokes about the Elizabethan court, could be enjoyed and no punishment decreed if written by a nobody.

Besides royal and political censorship, Oxford had familial restraints upon him. He was married at age twenty-one to Anne Cecil, daughter of the powerful William Cecil, Lord Burghley, who steered Elizabeth's ship of state for forty years. Robert Burghley then succeeded his father as chief minister to the Queen and to the King James. As a newly ennobled family the Cecils exercised their power to suppress any connection of Oxford with the stage, during his life and after his death. Oxford's three daughters, countesses associated with noble families, and his son, the Eighteenth Earl, serving the Queen under command of his gallant relative, Horatio Vere, maintained a silence about the author of the plays which made the Lord Chamberlain's Men the mainstay of the Renaissance theater.

Even in the case of courtly poetry, a strict self-censorship prevailed. Various poems which found their way into Elizabethan miscellanies, were, at least theoretically, printed without the consent of the writers. As J. W. Saunders points

out in “The Stigma of Print,” “We have lost much Tudor poetry because it was never preserved in print — most of the work, for instance, of Dyer, Raleigh and Oxford.”¹² Regretting the loss, Saunders notes, “Tudor poetry centered in the Court because Tudor life centered in the Prince,” and “Like the other despots of the Renaissance the Tudors required good servants . . .”¹³ Banishment from the royal presence or worse was the sort of fate imposed on a courtier rash enough to publish his poetry for the sake of publicity.

Various kinds of censorship explain why Oxford would have had to write under a pseudonym. In the case of a writer who was a commoner, quite the opposite was true, as Saunders explains: “Whereas for the amateur poets of the Court an avoidance of print was socially desirable, for the professional poets outside or only on the edge of Court circles the achievement of print became an economic necessity.”¹⁴ The writer who hoped to profit by his work had to make a reputation through getting his name in print. It follows that if censorship is to be considered a factor in the history of Renaissance literature, its influence was expressed in very different ways depending on the social class of the censored writer. While censorship which suppressed the name of a noble writer would have been influential for members of the aristocracy, such censorship could not have been similarly consequential for professional writers from the middle class.

It should be noted that in the late 1580s, before the name of “Shakespeare” had appeared in print, two writers extolled Oxford as the most brilliant of all the courtly poets. William Webbe in *A Discourse on English Poetrie* (1586) wrote, “The Right Honourable the Earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of the most excellent among the rest.” The anonymous *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), also praising the Courtly makers, “who have written excellently well,” likewise concludes, “of which number is first that noble Gentleman Edward Earle of Oxford.” Although these writers dare not mention Oxford’s authorship of any particular poems or plays, they do make us wonder at the complete absence of the name of Oxford as poet subsequently, and they do seem to provide evidence of an identifiable body.

Biographers of Shakspeare of Stratford have not been so fortunate, as will be shown by the following examination of five crucial texts: Robert Greene’s *Groats-worth of Wit* (1592), William Shakespeare’s dedication to *Venus and Adonis* (1593), Francis Meres’ *Palladis Tamia* (1598), *Shake-speares Sonnets* (1609), and, most importantly, Ben Jonson’s prefatory pieces to the First Folio of the plays (1623).

The name “Shakespeare” is not even mentioned by Robert Greene in *Groats-worth* or by Henry Chettle in *Kind-Heartes Dreame* (1592). Although attached to *Venus and Adonis* a year later, it did not appear as that of a playwright until six years later, in 1598, coincident with the appearance of Meres’ *Palladis Tamia* and after as many as eight plays had already appeared in anonymous quartos. Yet, frustrated by the long period of Shakspeare’s “lost years,” critics repeated without re-examination of the proof texts Edmund Malone’s suggestion of two centuries ago that Chettle and Greene are referring to Shakespeare. Ivor Brown, for example, in *Shakespeare*, welcomes Greene as an antidote to the “great gap” of “hidden years” in his subject’s life: “We have not a single documented fact about William Shakespeare between

the baptism of his twins Hamnet and Judith at Stratford on February 2, 1585, and the publication of Robert Greene's *Groats-worth of Wit* in London in 1592."¹⁵ Another popular biographer, A.L. Rowse, borders on the ecstatic about *Groats-worth*: "Suddenly, in September 1592, the obscurity in which we have been so long wandering, with Shakespeare, is illuminated by a flash of light: Robert Greene's attack on him."¹⁶ Brown and Rowse, like so many others, are more interested in "filling the gap" and "seeing the light" than in examining the evidence.

The seldom-read *Groats-worth* consists of the moralistic tale of Roberto, who, at the instigation of a wily actor, becomes a playwright —and ends up poor and deserted by the actors he has enriched. In the appended address Greene exhorts three fellow playwrights to distrust all actors.¹⁷ Chettle, who after Greene's death published the tract, and perhaps rewrote (or even wrote) the admonition to the three playwrights, claims in the preface to *Kind-Hart* that two playwrights, neither of whom he knows, have complained to him about the passage. One, he cares not if he ever knows, but the other has such "facetious grace in writing" that he is sorry he had printed the warning.¹⁸

At least seven problematical assumptions are made by critics in trying to impose a connection between the two passages and William Shakespeare. The first is that the same William Shakespeare, described elsewhere only as "gentle" and "honey-tongued," is that "upstart crow," "rude groome," "painted monster," with a "tiger's heart," that pernicious player, like all of his kind, deserts the playwrights in need. Second, Shakespeare could be both that "upstart," that "ape" of a vile actor and that "rare wit" of a virtuous playwright. Third, Shakespeare plagiarized the "tiger's heart" line from Greene, thus angering Greene against him as a playwright, a suggestion made by Malone, of which S. Schoenbaum notes, "Malone is wrong.... that Shakespeare started out as a playwright by refurbishing the works of established authors."¹⁹ Fourth, "Shake scene" is a pun on "Shake-speare," rather than contempt for a real scene-shaker like William Kempe, who, having replaced Richard Tarlton as the King of Clowns, was known to cavort around and shake a stage and who generally cause merriment among the groundlings with his own ad-libbed lines. A ballad, "The Crow Sits Upon the Wall," said to have been composed by Tarlton and acted out with clownish gestures, makes Kempe a likely "upstart Crow."²⁰

The fifth dubious assumption is that Chettle is sincere in claiming that of the three playwrights addressed by Greene — the "famous gracer of tragedians" (Marlowe); "Young Juvenal . . . no one so well able to enveigh against vain men" (Nashe); "no less deserving than the other two ... in nothing inferior" (Peele) — he did not know two of them. Phoebe Sheavyn, writing on the literary life in London of the time, rightly points out that "the world they all lived in was so small that they all knew each other and were, in some sense, rivals."²¹ Sixth, two playwrights would have cause to complain since Greene had complimented them.

The seventh and final seemingly insurmountable impossibility is that one of the playwrights — agreed by critics to be Marlowe, Nashe, and Peele²² — could metamorphose into Shakespeare, whom Chettle compliments for his "civil demeanor and grace in writing." According to Fleay, "Shakespeare was not one of those who

took offense; they are expressly stated to have been two of the three authors addressed by Greene ...²³

The scholarly contortion necessary to make the cawing crowplayer, beautified with Greene's words into a playwright factotum, stealing the "tiger's-heart" line to put in a play of his own, caused Shakespearean J. S. Smart to declare: "This passage from Greene has had such a devastating effect on the Shakespearean study that we cannot but wish that it had never been written or never discovered."²⁴ Indeed without it one wonders if Shakespeare would ever have been considered an actor or the plagiarizer of others' work. Certainly he would *not have been* considered present in London in 1592. If a prominent scholar like Schoenbaum notes that the "upstart crow" epithet, which Malone called "the chief hinge of my argument,"²⁵ is incorrectly applied, it would seem that nobody with any real relationship to the Shakespeare canon is produced by either document.

For Stratfordian scholars to be aware of the power of censorship in pertinent cases is essential, but to see it as causing the concealment of a name which did not even exist in print until later is misguided. If instead of "making clear" or "filling the gap" or "bringing new light," *Groats-worth* and *Kind-Hart* merely muddied the waters, one turns hopefully to the first appearance of the name "William Shakespeare," presumed to be the author of the erotic narrative *Venus and Adonis*, but actually signed only to its dedication to the Earl of Southampton. In tone of sincere or assumed subservience, "Shakespeare" appeals for acceptance by this noble "Godfather" of the "unpolish'd lines" of "the first heir of my invention," which if this noble patron approves, he will "take advantage of all idle hours till I have honoured you with some graver labour." Although the Earl was an unpromising patron, not quite twenty years old, with his funds still under the control of Lord Burghley, and although it would seem that Shakespeare must have consumed many "idle hours" composing this first "heir" years before,²⁶ critics interpret the dedication as an appropriate preface to a prosperous patron. William Keach points out that all the other epyllia, such as Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and Lodge's *Glaucus and Scilla*, were written by those associated with universities or Inns of Court, who lived in an environment in which ironic detachment and a pagan, rather than moralistic vision, made possible "an exploration of Ovidian eroticism and wit."²⁷

The arrogant Ovidian inscription on the title page — translated as, "Let the common herd admire common things, so long as to me Apollo's self hands goblets brimming with the waters of Castaly" — seems to make this author, as well, a learned sophisticate. One would think that Oxford, who apparently considered himself far above the common herd and who had been tutored by Ovid's translator, his uncle Arthur Golding, would have prepared the inscription. Enlightenment comes from outrageous parody of the epyllion and of its dedication in *Oenone and Paris* by T.[homas] H.[eywood] only a year later. Writing to "the Curteous Readers," T. H. parodies many phrases from the *Venus* dedication: "Heare you have the first fruits of my endeouours and the Maiden head of my pen...in some other Opere magis elaborato...be quit from the captious tongues and lavish tearmes of the detracting vulgar."²⁸ T. H. does not fail to note that Shakespeare's Latin motto translates

into a superior stance toward the vulgar crowd, and that the promise of a greater work, all the while apologizing for the lack of polish of the “first-try” effort, creates a purposefully humorous effect. According to Keach, “The comedy, satire, and witty eroticism of *Venus and Adonis* must have succeeded marvelously in diverting Southampton and his coterie.”²⁹

Of the two candidates, Shakspere would seem to have been too much of a newcomer to London to have got on joshing terms with the young nobleman, whereas Oxford was well situated within the court circle to have a bit of fun with the man betrothed at the time to his oldest daughter Elizabeth. In view of the censorship, royal and familial, which prevented a courtier from appearing in print, it was perhaps daring for a common playwright like Heywood to come close to revealing “William Shakespeare” a pseudonym. Heywood implies that like Apelles, the painter, as who would hide in a corner until he found out how viewers liked his work, so the author of *Venus and Adonis* is hiding behind a pseudonym to discover whether his work “prove deformed,” which if so, he will “never after ear so barren a land.” The popularity of the poem presumably assured the author’s publication of the “graver labour,” *The Rape of Lucrece*, in 1594. It too, however, bore the signature of William Shakespeare only on the intimate dedication to the same young nobleman, the Earl of Southampton. The writer, like Apelles, seemed still to be lurking in a corner, aware of the most rigid kind of social censorship. As Sir Walter Raleigh’s biographer, Agnes Latham, notes of courtier poets: “To publish at all was bad form.”³⁰

Four years later in 1598 Francis Meres, a patriotic schoolmaster and rector, wrote *Palladis Tamia* (lit., “The Servant of Pallas Athena”), to prove that contemporary British artists of all kinds compared favorably with the ancients. Most often cited is Meres’s mention that Shakespeare passed “his sugred Sonnets among his private friends,”³¹ a custom among noblemen. Most startling, however, as if to make up for the doleful lack of previous documentation, Meres provides titles of an even dozen plays by Shakespeare — six comedies and six tragedies. By way of contrast, although the names of Marlowe, Peele, Watson, Kyd, Drayton, Chapman, Decker, Greene, Lodge, Nash, Heywood, Munday and Jonson are included in various sections on playwrights, none of their plays is listed. Nor are any listed for the Earl of Oxford, even though his name heads the list of the “Best for Comedy.” Whether the name is first, as is sometimes alleged, because of Oxford’s rank, or for some more pertinent reason, it at least constitutes testimony that Meres considered him among the other known playwrights. Thus, after the absence of the name “Shakespeare” since 1593 and 1594, Meres, in what looks like a deliberate, authorized public relations move, planted the titles of twelve plays in public consciousness. Orthodox Shakespeareans conveniently ignore the implications of the astonishing pattern of publication of Shakespearean plays over the decades after Meres’ announcement. From 1598, new Shakespeare plays were printed each year until the Earl’s death in 1604. Thereafter no new plays, with three exceptions published in one two-year period,³² appeared until the First Folio nearly two decades later, when more than half of the thirty-seven canonical plays appeared for the first time.

TO . THE . ONLIE . BEGETTER . OF .
THESE . IN SVING . SONNETS .
M^r . W . H . ALL . HAPPINESSE .
AND . THAT . ETERNITIE .
PROMISED .
BY .
OVR . EVER-LIVING . POET .
WISHETH
THE . WELL-WISHING .
ADVENTVRER . IN .
SETTING .
FORTH .

T . T .

Figure One: Dedication page of the 1609 (Q) Sonnets, showing funeral urn design.

In 1609, five years after the death of Oxford and seven years before the death of Shakspeare, there mysteriously appeared, and shortly disappeared, a book entitled *Shake-speares Sonnets*. On the dedicatory page we come upon a body; we sense a bardicide. Thomas Thorpe's epigraph is in the shape of a funeral urn (Figure One), the pointing after each word of the inscription is that found on tombstones, and the epithet, "ever-living poet," no matter to whom it refers, makes us think of the immortality of the soul and is not applied to a living person. In his prize-winning *PMLA* essay (1987), "Master W. H., R.I.P." Donald Foster, speculating about the identity of W. H., chose an apt title. In wishing that "W. H.," according to his thesis a misprint for "W. Sh," might Rest in Peace, he was adding to the funereal imagery of Thorpe's epigraph.

Foster has hardly laid to rest the controversy, for in arguing in his book, *Elegy by W. S.*, that Shakespeare had given Thorpe permission to print the sonnets, Foster contends: "According to the ethical standards of the age, it was perfectly acceptable to print a manuscript without the author's permission — but it was never allowed in such cases to use his name, except after his decease."³³ Of the alternatives, that Thorpe had permission or that Shakespeare was dead, critic Robert Giroux chooses neither. Believing that the publication of the sonnets "horrified"

Shakespeare, he deduces: “The appearance of these privately circulated and very personal poems so late in his career might well have been an embarrassment to their author, considering their nature. He may also have felt betrayed by the badly supervised and sloppily edited text of Q. There is a plausible explanation of the silence that greeted the sonnets in career might well have been an embarrassment to their author, 1609.”³⁴ The “silence” that greeted the publication of the sonnets is indeed the awed silence with which one greets the desecration of a body — a private tomb opened to public view.

In the same year a quarto of *Troilus and Cressida* appeared with a preface advising readers that they were lucky to be able to purchase the book because it had barely made its “scape” from its “grand possessors.” If the sonnets had also made their “escape,” it might be the same “grand possessors” who exercised enough power of censorship to have them quickly withdrawn from publication. Whatever the case, the sonnets were not published again until 1640 in bowdlerized form by John Benson. The *Troilus* preface had begun: “A never writer to an ever reader,” a reminder that in the miscellany, *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* (1573), poems signed “Ever or Never” (presumably for E. Vere or Ned Vere), are attributed by one editor, Ruth Loyd Miller, to Oxford.³⁵

What we have located in the sonnets looks suspiciously like a body, perhaps a body for the whole canon, but no forensic expert has been able to determine whose it is. For its identity, we must move on to 1623 and Ben Jonson’s editing of the First Folio of Shakespeare’s plays.³⁶

Since Ben Jonson had published his own Works in 1616, he was the appropriate choice to manage the publication of Shakespeare’s plays seven years later. As the most prestigious epideictic poet in England at the time as well, it was advantageous for those who underwrote the huge expense of the Folio to obtain his services. He wrote the main eulogy, “To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author Mr. William Shakespeare: and What He Has Left Us,” and the short poem to accompany the Droeshout engraving, “To the Reader,” and in the opinion of such recognized authorities as W. W. Greg and A. C. Partridge, he also wrote the Dedication to the noble Herbert brothers, William, Earl of Pembroke, and Philip, Earl of Montgomery, and the promotional letter “To the Great Variety of Readers.”

In trying to decode Jonson’s words, I make the same assumption which, according to Jongsook Lee, the new historical critics espouse, that “In the Renaissance dissimulation was the mode of life and equivocation and defensive irony the mode of discourse.” Holding that “institutionalized censorship” was “the crucial factor” in determining what writers could say, she suggests that Jonson offers “a particularly fitting example of the predicament of a poet who has to work with duplicitous words in a duplicitous world.” Too often critics, in deducing the biography of Shakespeare from Jonson’s words, have fallen into the error of which she warns: “Taking what he says in his work at face value would be only a manifest symptom of one’s dangerous gullibility.”³⁷ I hope to avoid such error and circumvent the censorship under which I believe Jonson labored.

At the front of the Folio is the “figure” cut for Shakespeare by a Dutch engraver, Martin Droeshout, who (whether the younger or older), seven years after Shakspere’s death, could not have drawn from life. Its purpose is questionable. Giroux points out: “The format and design of Jonson’s folio, except for the title page, which has a classic ornamental frame instead of a portrait, were followed faithfully in the First Folio” (ix, x). I suggest that the purpose of the portrait— unnecessary in the case of Jonson’s Works — was to provide a body for the canon, a body missing from the scene during the poet’s lifetime. Still puzzling, however, since we see the picture, is the need for Ben’s explanatory poem. Even more peculiar, Jonson conveys two opposite messages. On the one hand, the engraver has “hit / His face” with great accuracy — a situation which would seem to make it especially pleasurable to look at his face. On the other hand, however, the reader is advised to look “Not on his Picture.” A later writer, Joseph Addison, tells us, “It is pleasant to look on the picture of any face where the resemblance is hit.”³⁸

I suggest that Jonson intends to advise the reader not to look at the face because the engraver has not hit, but hid it. The last six lines read:

O, could he but haue drawne his wit
 As well as in brasse, as he hath hit His face;
 the Print would then surpasse
 All, that was euer writ in brasse.
 But, since he cannot, Reader,
 looke Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

Ben has already alerted us to “hidden” implications by his use of the nebulous word, “Figure,” rather than “picture,” “portrait,” or “image,” and “cut for” (not “of” or “from” the life), and by his use of “gentle” to describe the author. And we feel very unsure why the engraver “cannot” draw the wit of his subject: Is it because of ineptitude or because of censorship? In the last two lines Ben, no mean grammarian, has mixed his pronouns, so that “he” [the engraver] refers to “his Picture” and “his Booke.” Whereas the “Picture” may belong to the engraver, the “Booke” must belong to Shakespeare.

It was not difficult to read “hid” for “hit” in pun-loving Renaissance England. If the engraver has hid the face of the poet, then we are sensibly advised not to look at the picture. If one argues that “hid” and “wit” don’t quite rime, it is nevertheless a combination which Jonson seemed to favor. In “To the Great Variety of Readers,” we find, “. . . his wit can no more lie hid, then it could be lost,” and again in *Timber*, Jonson writes “...the power of liberal studies lies more hid than can be wrought out by profane wits. It is not every man’s way to *hit*.”³⁹ Whose countenance is bidden behind what appears to be a mask on the over-large floating head of the engraving is unknown, but Jonson alerts us to its being some body — perhaps his “beloved, the author.”

As to the ensuing letters signed by John Heminge and Henry Condell, A. C. Partridge writes that Jonson, besides giving advice, “actually wrote four items

in the preliminary matter to the volume, the two poems already known to be his, the Dedication, and the Address to the Great Variety of Readers.⁴⁰ Even though, as Alfred Pollard notes, in order to protect their plays, the policy of the King's Men "was clearly against printing,"⁴¹ critics assume that Heminge and Condell, out of affection for their fellow, dead for the past seven years, would jeopardize their company by publishing his plays. According to Gerald Eades Bentley, the Folio "put into the hands of every purchaser the largest available collection of plays suitable for public performance."⁴² In fact on April 11, 1627, Heminge, in the name of the company, had to pay off the Master of the Revels "to forbid the playing of Shakespeare's plays, to the Red Bull Company."⁴³ Years later, that is, the company still suffered from the publication of the Folio — hardly a fate they would have brought on themselves. Fortunately for posterity, however, wealthy patrons saved the thirty-six plays in the Folio, more than half of which had never appeared in print.⁴⁴

If Jonson was duplicitous in the poem on the "figure" for Shakespeare, and wrote the addresses signed by Heminge and Condell, we should expect further subterfuge in the main tribute, "To the Memory of My Beloved," from which we learn more about Shakespeare, little though it is and concealed as it may be, than from any other single source. Lawrence Lipking echoes our dismay at its first section. "Many readers, coming to the poem in hope of finding the way a great contemporary perceived Shakespeare's greatness, have been taken aback to find the first sixteen lines look past Shakespeare to debate the proper mode of praising him."⁴⁵

Although critics have identified various sources, ancient and contemporary, for passages in Jonson's commendation of Shakespeare, none I believe has scrutinized the similarity between Jonson's sixteen-line introduction and the twenty-four line poem signed "Ignoto," one of seven "Commendatory Verses" preceding Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590). Ignoto's poem, in contrast to the other six, which extol Spenser's artistry and loyalty to the Queen, is a graceful poem *to a poet*, comparing Spenser to a host, whose wine is good that it needs no commendation: "For when men know the goodness of the wyne, / Tis needless for the Hoast to have a sygne." There is a slightly ironic twist in the last stanza— "And thus I hang a garland at the dore"—for in the mercantile metaphor, Ignoto has hung out a sign, though not a boar's head. Like Jonson's poem, Ignoto's first stanza begins with an infinitive explaining the danger of "envy":

TO looke upon a worke of rare devise
The which a workman setteth out to view,
And not to yield it the deserved prise
That unto such a workmanship is dew,
Doth either prove the judgement to be naught,
Or els doth shew a mind with envy fraught.

Ignoto's first sentence is clearer to twentieth century readers than Jonson's — "To draw no envy (Shakespeare) on thy name/ Am I thus ample to thy Booke, and

Fame.” We puzzle about “drawing envy” on a “name” and just what being “ample” to a “book” or to “fame” means.

In meter, rime, and sense, Jonson, in his next two lines — “While I confess thy writings to be such / As neither man nor Muse can praise too much” — echoes Ignoto’s last two lines of the third stanza — “I here pronounce this workmanship is such, / As that no pen can set it forth too much.” Using “writings” instead of “workmanship,” Jonson keeps the “such-much” rime, the “such / As” structure, and repeats “to be such” from the first line of Ignoto’s third stanza. Jonson has begun in first person, whereas Ignoto works through two stanzas of general speculation about “envy” and “judgement” before declaring, “I here pronounce...” By stanza three, however, he displays pride in his own “judgement,” insisting, “Thus then, to shew my judgement to be such / As can discern of colours blacke and white...” Jonson later in his tribute also makes a claim of discerning judgment: “For if I thought my judgment were of years, / I should commit thee surely with thy peers.” Both poets thus take credit as superior critics of the work they evaluate.

In addition to similar meaning, Jonson reveals semantic and oral echoes in many lines. To commend a work which everyone agrees is worthy, says Ignoto in the second stanza, “Would raise a jealous doubt...whereto the prayse did tend.” Jonson counters with “Or crafty malice might pretend this praise, / And think to ruin, where it seem’d to raise.” Jonson’s “pretend” has a sound like Ignoto’s “did tend,” and his end rimes, “praise” and “raise,” are verbs which Ignoto uses within his two lines. In other examples, Jonson complains of that ignorance which at best “but echoes right,” corresponding to Ignoto’s condemnation of poor judgment or envy “That never gives to any man his right.” Jonson concludes that Shakespeare is above the “need” of foolish praise, just as Ignoto insists that it is “needlesse” for Spenser to hang out a sign. Ignoto’s contention that no one “goes about to discommend” Spenser, Jonson puts in the affirmative: “all men’s suffrage” means that no one discommends Shakespeare.

To the end of the fourth stanza, Ignoto consistently controls the host-poet metaphor, and great as is the danger of over-praising Spenser to his detriment, asks only that Spenser be given his due: “And when your tast shall tell you this [the goodness of the wine] is trew, / Then looke you give your Hoast his utmost dew.” Jonson on the other hand belabors the whore-matron analogy as illustration of “silliest ignorance,” “blind affection,” and “crafty malice,” awkwardly twisting Horace’s suggestion that a strumpet differs from a matron as a faithless parasite differs from a friend. Only by contortion can Shakespeare become the matron complimented by the whore. When Jonson finally turns to the subject of his eulogy, he forgets “the wayes” of modest praise, which he intended, and blasts forth with “Soule of the Age!” — a judgment with which we concur, but which shows Jonson’s artistic inconsistency. If Ignoto’s is the superior poem, Jonson paid silent tribute to its author, indicating for the cognoscenti that he considered himself likewise a great poet paying tribute to a great poet.

It is noteworthy that in dedicating *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser wrote a sonnet, “To the right Honourable the Earle of Oxenford, Lord High Chamberlayne of England.” In contrast to his dedicatory sonnets to other nobles, whom he praised for their valor or noble heritage or patronage of the arts or management of affairs of state, Spenser praised Oxford as beloved of the muses, “. . . for the love which thou doest beare / To th’ Haliconian ymps, and they to thee; / They unto thee, and thou them, most deare.” He also asks to be defended from “foule Envies poisonous bit,” as Ignoto hopes to be freed from “envies tuch.” It seems there is danger of envy all around: Ignoto envies Spenser; Spenser envies Oxford; Jonson envies Shakespeare while imitating Ignoto. Spenser might well be grateful to Oxford for the publication of *The Courtier*, whose purpose, like that of *The Faerie Queene*, was “to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline.”

Jonson begins the eulogy itself by excusing Shakespeare’s not being buried in Westminster Abbey, as was Beaumont, who died in 1616, six weeks before Shakspeare’s death. Shakespeare, says Jonson, is too great to be ranked with past poets or with his “peers”: “And tell how far thou didst our Lyly outshine, / Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe’s mighty line” (29-30). Jonson puns with names, perhaps to distract the reader from the truth that Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe were peers of Oxford, who came forth when “all the Muses still were in their prime” (44), not of Shakspeare. According to Russ McDonald, “Shakespeare dominated the theatrical scene by the middle of the 1590s: The great crop of playwrights who had flourished at the beginning of the decade—Marlowe, Kyd, Lyly, Peele, Greene, and Lodge — were dead or had given up drama by 1593.”⁴⁶ While it would be foolhardy to assume that Oxford wrote plays attributed to Lyly, Kyd or Marlowe, Jonson directs us to consider a possible relationship between “Shakespeare” and these writers of the 1570s and 80s. John Lyly’s biographer, G. K. Hunter, explains that Lyly’s debut as a dramatist, “must have been financed by Oxford; the boys for whose performances at court he was paid in 1584 were Oxford’s boys and the opportunity to rehearse and perform at the private theatre in the Blackfriars was also due to Oxford’s initiative.”⁴⁷ After leaving Oxford’s employment, Lyly never wrote any more plays. Another biographer of Lyly, Joseph Houppert, concludes that Lyly’s position as Oxford’s secretary “undoubtedly enhanced his literary potential. De Vere was himself a poet and playwright, although no plays bearing his name survive.”⁴⁸

Because of the censorship which allowed Oxford to be patron of a company of actors, but not a playwright, and because Shakspeare in 1584 was fathering children in Stratford, the similarities between Lyly’s *Gallathea* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* seem to be borrowings by Shakespeare from Lyly rather than the reverse. Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* — which remained anonymous until ascribed to Kyd through a 1612 pun by Thomas Heywood, is said to have influenced *Hamlet*, and Marlowe’s *Edward II* to have been a model for Shakespeare’s history plays. The censorship which suppressed knowledge of Oxford was so restrictive and the ruse of Shakspeare as author so successful that the history of Renaissance drama has been distorted. A close relationship between Oxford and each of the three “peers” is well documented; yet we assume that the genius who wrote *Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *Henry*

the Fifth, borrowed from those he outshone. But Jonson made the truth clear to his noble patrons and to cultured readers accustomed to decoding the stratagems imposed by censorship.

In the whole eulogy, the only qualification that Jonson makes about Shakespeare — “And though thou hadst small Latine and less Greeke” (31)—while fitting Shakspeare, hardly seems to apply to Oxford, who could converse in Latin, French, and Italian and had degrees from both Oxford and Cambridge at an early age. The following comparison is strained, for if Shakespeare’s plays are better than “all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome” (39) produced, what does it matter whether or not Shakespeare could read Latin or Greek? As Lipking notes, it is “the one piece of personal information” in the eulogy. Elsewhere, he contends, “the tributes, though affectionate, are so formal that they might apply to any great author.”⁴⁹ While not accepting Dryden’s “invidious Panegyrick” as an epithet for the ode, we must wonder at the caviling tone of the “Latin-Greek” line.

Although a modern reader would consider Oxford very learned, Steven May, in writing of the courtier poets, claims that both Oxford, “who kept a wavering hold upon the pinnacle of Elizabeth’s favorites throughout the 1570s,” and Edward Dyer lacked serious University classical training and that “Cecil, Ascham, Wilson, and Elizabeth took care that their dabbling in poetry did not violate their positions as state dignitaries.”⁵⁰ In the case of poetry by courtiers, apparently a benign censorship prevailed, allowing for frivolity though a pseudonym or anonymity. Jonson, who would get no satisfaction out of deriding Shakspeare’s learning, might well have been unable to suppress annoyance at Oxford’s dilettantism. Of course the reference conveniently also pointed to a Stratford native with Stratford grammar school education.

The one command to the reader in the whole poem is “Look how the father’s face / lives in his issue; even so the race / Of Shakespeare’s mind and manners brightly shines / in his well-turned and true-filed lines” (65-68). Always interpreted metaphorically, since Shakspeare’s issue consisted of two apparently uneducated daughters who never left Stratford,⁵¹ the “face” would seem to be the same one which in “To the Reader,” we were advised to “look not at.” Now Jonson says with forceful rhetoric, “Look,” not just as *any* father’s face lives in his descendants, but look how *the particular face* “shines” in his “living line.”

Jonson’s imperative is reinforced by the genealogical terms: “father’s face,” “issue,” “race,” “mind and manners,” and “lines.” Lord Oxford’s family line was one of the oldest in Britain; his issue consisted of three countesses, two of whom played in Jonson’s masks at court, and a noble warrior heir, the Eighteenth Earl. One of the dedicatees of the Folio was the Earl of Montgomery, husband of Susan Vere. The brilliance of Oxford’s mind was attested to by his tutors, and in sponsoring *The Courtier’s* printing he established an ideal of manners. The British race, even the human race, should honor such lineage, whose issue quite literally did “shine forth” like the Star on the Vere Crest.

It was seemly for Jonson to compliment Oxford's living descendants, his noble patrons, "true-fled lines," being especially appropriate for the motto on the Vere crest: Vero Nihil Verius — "Nothing truer than truth" or "Nothing truer than Vere." Perhaps for the benefit of those not ignorant of the truth of Vere, he puns that Shakespeare seems "to shake a lance, / As brandished at the eyes of ignorance" (69-70) knowing that the Bulbec lion angrily brandishes a spear. Sara J. van den Berg, in her analysis of Jonson's poetry, concludes: "Because he can assume intimacy and equality when writing to artists when addressing the aristocracy, Jonson uses different conventions in the two situations. Only in the poem for Shakespeare does he combine both methods."⁵² If she is correct, there is every reason to hold that the poet honored is an aristocrat.

By repeating the name "Shakespeare" four times in the eulogy and punning on it twice, Jonson deflects attention from "the Author," who in the title of the poem he seems to separate from the name. The poet is "made, as well as borne" (64), because although Oxford is "high-borne," he has been "made" into Shakespeare. Jonson had to be duplicitous. He remembered his own incarceration for offense against the Scots in the seemingly innocent play, *Eastward Hoe* (1605), during which he had come close to having his ears cut off; he knew that John Stubbs for *The Gaping Gulf* (1579), lost his right hand, that Fulke Greville, who wanted to write a history of Elizabeth's reign, was "prevented by [Robert] Cecil from getting access to the necessary documents,"⁵³ and that words judged slanderous against the Lord Treasurer, William Cecil, during Elizabeth's reign resulted in whipping on the pillory. Aware of the censorship of the powerful Cecils and of their family ties to Oxford, Jonson apotheosized the "Swan of Avon," emphasizing, nevertheless, that it is on the "banks of Thames" that he should he should appear, and making one wonder if just as Horace called Pindar "Swan of Thebes," so Jonson desires to call Shakespeare, who knew "Pindar's string," the "Swan of Thames." In spite of Shakespeare's having become an Avon product since the mid-18th century, when David Garrick promoted a great festival in Stratford, it must have seemed bewildering to readers in 1623 (even if it were true) to have the great London playwright designated as from a small Warwickshire town.

Delicately balancing the truth with the ruse, Jonson created an incredibly moving tribute. In a paper on censorship and the Shakespeare mystery, the emphasis of course must be on Oxford, who all evidence shows could not be known as a playwright for the public theater or even as a poet of erotica. In the case of Shakespeare, except perhaps for minor revisions of plays by the Master of the Revels, censorship would seem to have played no part. Oxford, as Shakespeare, on the other hand, got away with plays which would have been censored if by a common playwright. How else to explain the satire of Lord Burghley as Polonius in *Hamlet*, or the fact that at the time of the Essex rebellion, for which Essex lost his head and Southampton was imprisoned, no punishment ensued for the author of *Richard II*, through which the conspirators thought to incite the crowds? We ask, therefore, how did a native Stratfordian with no standing at court, manage to escape the kind of imprisonment visited on Jonson Jonson for a seemingly lesser offense?

The final irony of the Oxford-Shakespeare drama is illustrated by Woody Allen's movie *The Front* (1976). Set during the McCarthy era, the worst period of boundless censorship in America, a Hollywood script writer, blacklisted as a "communist," funnels his movie scripts through an ineffectual lunchroom cashier. This nobody becomes famous with a good income from the payoffs. Shakespeare acquired a coat-of-arms, justifying Jonson's epithet of "gentle," and retired as the well-to-do squire of Stratford.

Since I agree with Richard Levin that the death of the author leaves a "hermeneutic vacuum."⁵⁴ I hope an E. Vere-living body, whose E. Vere y word does almost tell his Vere name, freed from censorship, will enliven Shakespeare's poetry and plays as well as a revised history of Renaissance drama.

Endnotes

- ¹ Levin, Richard. "The Poetics and Politics of Bardicide," *PMLA* 105 (1990): 491-504.
- ² Patterson, Annabel. *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*. Cambridge, Ma.: Basil Blackwell, 1989, 24.
- ³ Kerrigan, William. "The Personal Shakespeare: Three Clues." *Shakespeare's Personality*. Ed. Norman Holland, et. al. Berkeley: U of California P, 1989. 175-190, 175.
- ⁴ Borges, Jorge Luis. "Everything and Nothing," *Selected Poems 1923-1967*, ed. Thomas DiGiovanni. New York, 1972, 177.
- ⁵ Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers*. New York: Methuen, 1987.
- ⁶ Staunton, Howard. *The Globe Illustrated Shakespeare*. London: G. Routledge, 1858-61. Reprint: New York: Crown Publishers, 1983, 2347.
- ⁷ Fleay, Frederick Gard. *A Chronicle History of the Life and Work of William Shakespeare*. New York: Scribner and Welford, 1886, 73-74.
- ⁸ Looney, J. Thomas. "Shakespeare" *Identified in Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*. London: Cecil Palmer, 1920.
- ⁹ "The Poems of Edward De Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford and of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex." *Studies in Philology* 77 (1980): 1-43 and 67-83. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1980, 9.
- ¹⁰ Read, Conyers. *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth*. London: Jonathon Cape, 1960, 127.
- ¹¹ Finkelppearl, Philip J. "'The Comedians' Liberty': Censorship of the Jacobean Stage Reconsidered." *English Literary Renaissance* 16 (Winter 1986): 123-38, 123.
- ¹² Saunders, J. W. "The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry," *Essays in Criticism*, 1951 I(2):139-164, 140.
- ¹³ Saunders, "Comedians," 150.
- ¹⁴ Saunders, "Comedians," 141.

BRIEF CHRONICLES VOL. I (2009) 26

- ¹⁵ Brown, Ivor. *Shakespeare*. London: Collins, 1949, 72.
- ¹⁶ Rowse, A. L. *William Shakespeare: A Biography*. New York: Harper and Row, 1963, 96.
- ¹⁷ Greene, Robert. *Groats-worth of Witte Bought with a Million of Repentence*. 1592. New York: Burt Franklin, 1970.
- ¹⁸ Chettle, Henrie. *Kind-Hartes Dreame: Containing Five Apparitions, with their Invectives Against Abuses Rainging 1592*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966.
- ¹⁹ Schoenbaum, S. *Shakespeare's Lives*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1991, 121.
- ²⁰ The "Crow" ballad, attributed to Tarlton (xxxvi), appears in *A Collection of Seventy-Nine Black-Letter Ballads and Broad-sides Printed in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth Between the Years 1559 and 1597*. London: Joseph Lilly, 1867. William Kempe, though the most likely "upstart crow" was not the only clown whom Greene disliked. According to Greene's biographer, the "most mysterious, malignant, and perhaps wittiest of Greene's enemies was Robert Wilson, second to Tarlton alone in comic power ... especially renowned for his ready repartees and quickness of wit" *Greene's Works* (1,238-39).
- ²¹ Sheavyn, Phoebe. *The Literary Profession in the Elizabethan Age*. Edition revised by J.W. Saunders. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967, 128.
- ²² Schoenbaum, *Lives*, 23.
- ²³ Fleay, "Chronicle History," 111.
- ²⁴ Smart, J.S. *Shakespeare: Truth and Tradition*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966, 167.
- ²⁵ Schoenbam, *Lives*, 122.
- ²⁶ James P. Reardon in "Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Lodge's *Scilla's Metamorphosis*" (*Shakespeare Society Papers* III, Art. 16 [1847]: 143-46) notes: "I take it, that, like his 'sugred sonnets' mentioned by Meres in 1598, *Venus and Adonis* had been handed about in manuscript among his friends ...Lodge's poem [1589] . . . seems to adopt *Venus and Adonis* as a model."
- ²⁷ Keach, William. *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives: Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Their Contemporaries*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers U P, 1977, 32.
- ²⁸ Heywood, Thomas. *Oenone and Paris*. Ed. Joseph Quincy Adams. Washington D. C.: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1943.
- ²⁹ Keach, "Erotic Narratives."
- ³⁰ Latham, Agnes. Ed. *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1929, 11.
- ³¹ Meres, Francis. *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury*. Preface by Arthur Freeman. New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1973.
- ³² Between Oxford's death in 1604 and the Folio in 1623 (*Othello* in 1622), no new Shakespeare plays were published for two decades except *Troilus*, which "escaped," *Pericles* (1609), included in the Folio as Shakespeare's, and *King Lear* (1608),

apparently published to forestall a pirated edition.

- ³³ Foster, Donald. *Elegy by W. S.: A Study in Attribution*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1989, 230.
- ³⁴ Giroux, Robert. *The Book Known as Q: A Consideration of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. New York: Vintage Books, 1983.
- ³⁵ Miller, Ruth Loyd, Ed. *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres: From the Original Edition of 1573*. Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat Press Corp., 1975.
- ³⁶ All Folio quotations are from Shakespeare, William. *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies. First Folio*. London, 1623. New Haven: Yale U P, 1954.
- ³⁷ Lee, Jongsook. *Ben Jonson's Poesis: a literary Dialectic of Ideal and History*. Charlottesville: U P of Virginia, 1989, 80.
- ³⁸ *Spectator*, June 30, 1712.
- ³⁹ Walker, Ralph S. *Ben Jonson's Timber or Discoveries*. Syracuse: Syracuse U P, 1953, 53.
- ⁴⁰ Partridge, A. C. *Orthography in Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 1964, 137.
- ⁴¹ Pollard, Alfred W. *Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates and the Problems of the Transmission of his text*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1920, 51.
- ⁴² Bentley, Gerald Eades. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*. Vol 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941.
- ⁴³ Wickham, Glynne William Gladstone, Herbert Berry, and William Ingram. *English Professional Theatre, 1530-1660*. Cambridge U P, 2000, 584.
- ⁴⁴ If Jonson wrote the Heminge-Condell letters, we should reevaluate their content. Far from being verified by Jonson's own writings elsewhere, they are only evidence of his reiterated opinions. In "To . . . Readers," we learn that what Shakespeare thought "he uttered with that easiness, that wee have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." We take as verification the remark in Jonson's *Timber*, "I remember the Players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in his writing, whatsoever he penned, he never blotted a line." The truth would seem to be that Ben in both cases put words in the mouths of the players. The art-versus-nature controversy interested Jonson, but the players would have cared more if the censor had blotted out lines and eviscerated a scene, a practice probably not frequent if Shakespeare had influence with the Court-appointed Master of the Revels.

Another example of information which, upon examination, comes only from Ben Jonson is that Shakspere was an actor. In his Works (1616) Ben lists Shakespeare as one of the actors in his *Sejanus* (1603) and Shakespeare as one of the actors in his *Every Man Out of His Humor* (1598), and William Shakespeare heads the list of "The Names of the Principall Actors in All These Plays" in the First Folio. In no instance is there any record during his lifetime of Shakspere's having played any part.

- ⁴⁵ Lipking, Lawrence. *The Life of the Poet: Beginning and Ending Poetic Careers*. Chicago: The U

BRIEF CHRONICLES VOL. I (2009) 28

- of Chicago P, 1981, 141-42.
- ⁴⁶ McDonald, Russ. *Shakespeare and Jonson Jonson and Shakespeare*. Lincoln U of Nebraska P, 1988, 18.
- ⁴⁷ Hunter, G. K. *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier*. Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1962, 70.
- ⁴⁸ Lipking, *Life*, 142.
- ⁴⁹ Houppert, Joseph W. *John Lyly*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975, 14.
- ⁵⁰ May, Steven. *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets: The Poems and Their Contexts*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1991, 59.
- ⁵¹ Richard Peterson in *Imitation and Praise in the Poems of Ben Jonson* (New Haven: Yale U P, 1981) comes nearer than others to looking at the passage in the genealogical terms which seem hard to avoid, but even he assumes a metaphor: "For in creating his 'living line' Shakespeare simultaneously creates a race of poetic children, simulcra of his own mental features...." (189).
- ⁵² Sarah J. van den Berg, *The Action of Ben Jonson's Poetry*. Newark: U. of Delaware P., 1987, 154.
- ⁵³ Patterson, Annabel. *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1989, 78.
- ⁵⁴ Levin, "Poetics," 502.