

Is Greene's Groats-worth of Wit

About Shakespeare, or by Him?

by Robert R. Prechter

Biographies of Shakespeare suffer from a dearth of information about the playwright's presence in London. Perhaps the most enthusiastically cited reference to Shakespeare is from Robert Greene's *Greene's Groats-worth of Wit, bought with a million of Repentance*, a publication from 1592.

Who wrote the book? Why did the author craft its unusual mid-course transition? Was Greene's famous repentance sincere or pretended? Is Shakespeare involved, and if so, how?

One: Robert Greene Is a Pen-Name

Orville Ward Owen (1893-5) was the first to postulate that the name Robert Greene was a pseudonym; his candidate was Francis Bacon. Stephanie Hopkins Hughes (1998, 2009) and Nina Green (1999) have made a better case that Robert Greene was a pen-name of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. This paper offers some contributions to this line of thought.

Robert Greene's canon comprises thirty-six prose pamphlets and an estimated seven plays. Surely a writer this active would have a sound biography. Yet there is no record of a public life.

The Repentance of Robert Greene, written immediately prior to Greene's alleged death in September 1592, has the dying Greene testify to his own notoriety: "I became an Author of Playes, and a penner of Love Pamphlets, so that I soone grew famous in that qualitie, that who for that trade growne so ordinary about London as Robin Greene" (Grosart 12: 173). Yet, to the contrary, Greene's absence from the scene is a consistent theme in biographical research. Two of Greene's plays are noted, "As it was plaid before the Queenes Majestie" and "As it was plaid by her Majesties servants," yet no courtier wrote of having met the famous author or having seen his dazzling plays.

Even Greene's literary contemporaries never ran into him. Gabriel Harvey, who battled Greene quite personally in the press, in *Four Letters* (1593) admits, "I was altogether unacquainted with the man, never once saluted him by name" (Grosart 1: 168). In *Kind Harts Dreame* (1592), Henry Chettle talks not of meeting Greene personally, but of seeing a figure in a dream "whome I supposed to be Robert Greene, maister of Artes...." A certain "B.R." (widely presumed to be Barnabe Rich) in his preface to *Greenes Newes from Heaven and Hell* (1593) similarly speaks of the ghost

of Greene but “claims he never met Greene” (Carroll 21). In B.R.’s book, Greene’s ghost touches on Greene’s invisibility: “I am the spirite of Robert Greene, not unknowne unto thee (I am sure) by my name, when my wrytings lately priviledged on every post, hath given notice of my name unto infinite numbers of people that never knewe me by the view of my person.”

London was not that big a place in 1592. How could Robert Greene be the most popular writer of his day “for both press and stage,” be “famous” and “so ordinary about London,” and yet remain unseen?

The only writer who claims to have met Greene – and then “only for a carowse or two” – is Thomas Nashe, writing in *Strange Newes* (1593), published shortly after Greene’s death. Even Nashe is quick to admit, “I . . . have beene two yeares together and not seene him” (Grosart 2: 283). In other words, Greene and his supposedly closest friend failed to cross paths over a two-year period at the height of his popularity right through to his dying day. No one, including Nashe, ever mentioned attending a funeral. There is no birth or death record for the writer, either.

Greene’s invisibility extends even to his own pretenses. In *The Notable Discovery of Coosenage* (1591), Greene claims to have associated with criminals. But “some of the material in the pamphlets results not from personal observation at all, but from the reading of earlier exposés” (Crupi 17). Indeed “. . . Greene got all he knew about cheating at cards [from] the *Manifest Detection of Dice Play* (1552)” (Jordan 89). He seems to have associated mostly with books.

Gabriel Harvey is famous for a passage in his *Four Letters* (1592) describing Greene’s condition on his deathbed. Just a month after Harvey’s pamphlet was published, however, Nashe charged that the manner of Greene’s death was Harvey’s invention. In addressing Harvey in *Strange Newes*, Nashe refers to “that fatall banquet of Rhenish wine and pickled hearing (*if thou wilt needs have it so*).” (Grosart 2: 221; emphasis in the original). In the end, Nashe denies Harvey’s entire description: “For the lowsie circumstance of his poverty before his death, and sending that miserable writte to his

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wife, it cannot be but *thou lye*st, learned Gabriell, [with] palpable lies, damned lies, lies as big as one of the Guardes chynes of beefe” (emphasis in the original). In other words, Harvey made up the scene.

The lone likeness of Greene we have is a woodcut appearing on the title page of John Dickenson's *Greene in Concept* (1598). It is a drawing representing Robert Greene in his burial shroud, writing at a table. *The Dictionary of National Biography* called the image “doubtless fanciful” (“Robert Greene” DNB 8: 511).



As Hughes pointed out, four entries naming Robert Greene in university records and a mention of his name in the household accounts of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, provide barely credible evidence that Robert Greene existed. The name Robert Greene therefore may be an allonym rather than a pseudonym, matching Oxford's relationship with William Shaksper of Stratford.

Greene's Attributes Fit Oxford

Greene's sentiments mirror Oxford's position at the pinnacle of society. “To come to *Mamillia*, the first of Greene's works, after considering his life is to be struck first by an air of social pretension. . . . Greene seems to escape his Norwich origins . . . by

adopting an aristocratic pose [and] identifying with the older attitudes of nobility and gentry in his writing” (Crupi 7, 24, 36). Perhaps Greene could so fully “escape his Norwich origins” because he never had them.

Greene’s battles with Gabriel Harvey make sense in the Oxfordian context. In 1580, Harvey lampooned Oxford in a Latin poem, *Speculum Tuscanismi* [*Mirror of Tuscanism*]. The two men traded barbs for some time thereafter. On July 20, 1592, Greene registered a pamphlet titled *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier*, which included a section that “offended him mortally by scornful allusions to Harvey’s low-born family” (Kunitz and Haycraft 252). The idea that someone of obscure parentage – from a seacoast town lacking a noble house – would disparage a rival for his common birth is absurd. But birth status was the Earl of Oxford’s trump card against Harvey, who was the son of a humble rope-maker.

In *Groats-worth*, there is “an attack against Lord Burghley in a beast fable.” Allen Carroll observed, “The badger here, having lost all family and friends, has become, in effect, a ward and is urged to marry by the fox,” and “a fox in the early nineties has to be Burghley” (Carroll 108). That an independent Robert Greene would know or care about such matters is dubious. But this fable reflects Oxford’s personal life. He was a royal ward under Burghley’s care, and Burghley pressured him to marry his daughter, Anne (as he ultimately did).

Greene’s *A Notable Discovery of Coosnage* (1591) makes “a sweeping claim to know by observation the customs of Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Poland, and Denmark” (Crupi 6). There is no evidence that a writer named Robert Greene ever traveled to the continent, so most scholars rightly find this claim “difficult to take very seriously” (Crupi 6). In other words, they think Greene lied. But Oxford is known to have traveled through Italy, France, and Germany in 1574-6, and his servant William Lewin wrote to Lord Burghley about Oxford on July 4, 1575, “I am certainly induced to believe that, while traveling to Augsburg, he has turned aside into Poland, since it was once his plan to visit the Polish court” (Sutton). Oxfordians have long speculated that Oxford learned of Denmark through his association with his brother-in-law, Peregrine Bertie, who “was sent on embassy to the court at Elsinore” (Delahoyde). Thus, Oxford had at least five out of six of Greene’s destinations covered.

To explain Greene’s repeated selection of Italian settings for his stories, some scholars have simply presumed that he traveled. Storojenko imagined “reminiscences still fresh in Greene’s mind of Italy, from whence he must have returned in the spring or summer of 1580, that he laid the scene of his first story in Padua” (Storojenko, 1: 66). Grosart, to his credit, tested this theory: “I visited the famous University of Padua expressly to see if Greene could be traced there. I found many English and Scottish names among the lists of students, but nothing of Greene” (Grosart *Robert Greene* 1: 66fn).

At least one of Greene's poems was attributed – falsely according to critics – to the Earl of Oxford. Concerning “one of [Greene's] best-known poems, his Sonetto in *Menaphon*, What thing is Love? . . . Mr. Crawford (1908) points out that Allot in *England's Parnassus* wrongly ascribes this poem to the Earl of Oxford” (Jordan 128, 28fn). Yet Mr. Allot, writing in 1600 when Oxford was still alive, may have known what he was doing.

Direct Links between Greene and Oxford

No one since Allot has tied Robert Greene directly to the Earl of Oxford, but key connections exist. Between 1580 and 1589, Greene dedicated works to at least a dozen people who were among Oxford's family, friends, and allies.

1. In 1580, Greene dedicated *Mamillia* to “Lord Darcie of the North.” According to the genealogical website (<http://geni.com>), John Darcy, the second Baron Darcy of Chiche was born circa 1532. He was the son of Thomas Darcy, the first Baron Darcy of Chiche and Elizabeth Vere, sister of John de Vere, 16th Earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere's father. In other words, she was Oxford's aunt on his father's side, so John Darcy was Oxford's cousin. The following year, Oxford acknowledged this very relative. After Darcy's death on March 3, 1581, his daughter Elizabeth – Oxford's first cousin once removed – became the second wife of John, the first Lord Lumley. Oxford wrote to Burghley in June 1582, “I have bene an earnest suter unto yowre Lordship, for my Lord Lumley, [who] hathe ma[t]ched with a near kinswoman of myne, to whose father I allwayes was behouldinge unto, for his assured and kind disposition unto me” (Nelson 2003: 291).
2. In 1584, Greene dedicated *Arbasto* to Mary Cavendish, “Lady Mary Talbot, wife of Gilbert, Lorde Talbot.” Gilbert Talbot, born in 1552, was of Oxford's generation and a baron; later he became the seventh Earl of Shrewsbury and the seventh Earl of Waterford. Talbot was an early admirer of Oxford. On May 11, 1573, he wrote to his father, the Earl of Shrewsbury, as follows: “My Lord of Oxford is lately grown into great credit; for the queen's Majesty delighteth more in his personage, and his dancing and valiantness, than any other. I think Sussex doth back him all that he can; if it were not for his fickle head, he would pass any of them shortly” (“Edward de Vere” DNB 20: 226). One “F.D.” whom scholars identify as Francis Davison, in his *Anagrammata* (1603), listed Edward de Vere and Gilbert Talbot among thirteen politically aligned lords and knights. This dedication, then, was written to Oxford's friend's wife.
3. Greene dedicated *Morando, the Tritameron of Love* (1584) to Phillip Howard, who had become Earl of Arundel in 1580. Philip was the eldest son of

Oxford's cousin, Thomas Howard, fourth Duke of Norfolk, making him Oxford's first cousin once removed. Thomas's father was Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and Oxford's uncle, the man who pioneered English blank verse, the mode that helped make Shakespeare immortal.

4. Greene dedicated *Myrrour of Modestie* (1584) to the Countess of Derby, Margaret Clifford Stanley, whose husband, Henry Stanley, fourth Earl of Derby, had been among the dozen recipients, along with Oxford, of an honorary MA degree from the University of Oxford in 1566. Henry's maternal grandfather was Thomas Howard, patriarch of a line of Oxford's cousins. In January 1595, Henry and Margaret's son, William Stanley, married Oxford's eldest daughter Elizabeth, thereby becoming Oxford's son-in-law.
5. Greene dedicated *Euphues His Censure to Philautus* (1587) to Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. Essex was a royal ward under Lord Bughley, as Oxford had been.
6. In 1588, Greene dedicated *Alcida: Greenes Metamorphosis* to "Sir Charles Blount, Knight," thereby acknowledging Blount's rise to knighthood in 1587. Blount's father, James Blount, 6th Baron Mountjoy, served on the commission at the trial of Oxford's cousin, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, in 1572. Oxford's warder, Cecil, encouraged James's alchemical experiments "between 1566 and 1572," ("James Blount, 6th Baron Mountjoy" Wikipedia) when Oxford was serving his final years as Cecil's ward. Charles Blount did not become popular with the poets of his day until 1598-1606, after becoming a Knight of the Garter in 1597 and especially after helping defeat the Irish in 1602, but Greene had tipped his hat to him a decade earlier. The timing fits a likely interaction between two men. Blount was a presence at court, and "in 1588 he was one of those who built ships at their own expense to join the pursuit of the Armada" ("Charles Blount" DNB 2: 702). Several historical accounts report that Oxford was on the coast during the engagement. The Armada was defeated on August 8, 1588. That the two men had some share in this experience fits the timing of Oxford's choice of Blount as the dedicatee for Greene's *Alcida*, which was registered four months later on December 9, 1588. There is also a historical connection between the two men, as one of Sir Charles' ancestors was Sir James Blount, who with John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford, crossed the channel with Henry Tudor, Queen Elizabeth's grandfather, to fight against King Richard III. The future King Henry VII "sailed from Harfleur on Sunday 1st August 1485 and landed at Milford Haven a week later, with Oxford and James Blount, who was knighted upon arrival" (Anderson 116). One might conjecture that at some time during or after the Armada engagement Oxford and Sir Charles may have conferred on this interesting parallel to their own situation.

7. In 1589, Greene dedicated *Ciceronis Amor* to Ferdinando Stanley. Ferdinando was the eldest son of Henry and Margaret, the Earl and Countess of Derby. Upon Henry's death on September 25, 1593, Ferdinando became the fifth Earl of Derby and assumed the title of Lord Strange. His father had kept players, and Ferdinando expanded them into an acting troupe, Lord Strange's Men. The company is known to have acted one or more parts of Shakespeare's *Henry VI* trilogy, and tradition has it that "Shakespeare may have been employed by Strange in his early years" ("Ferdinando Stanley" Wikipedia). Upon Ferdinando's death in 1594, the Stanleys's younger son, William, became the sixth Earl of Derby and shortly thereafter married Elizabeth Vere. Shakespeare – as both Stratfordians and Oxfordians have pointed out – elevated the Stanleys clandestinely by going "out of his way to highlight the roles of the ancestors of Ferdinando and William Stanley during the War of the Roses, even distorting facts to achieve this effect [in] dramas such as *Henry VI Parts 1-3* and *Richard III*" (Dickson 262). Shakespeare began composing the *Henry VI* trilogy around 1590-1, shortly after Greene wrote his dedication.
8. In 1588 and 1590, respectively, Greene dedicated *Pandosto* and *Greene's Mourning Garment* to George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland. In 1595, Oxford's daughter Elizabeth Vere married George Clifford's nephew, William Stanley. Several documents tie Oxford to Clifford. In 1589, James Lea's pamphlet on the defeat of the Armada celebrated together the Earls of Oxford, Cumberland and Northumberland. In 1592, George Dingley, under interrogation, reported hearsay that "the erle of Oxford the erle of Cumberland the Lord Strange & my Lord Percy" were among "the nobillitye being dyscontentyd for that they were not advanced nor preferyd as they happelye expected" (Nelson 2003: 339). Whatever the balance of truth and lies in these reports, we may surmise that Cumberland was an associate of Oxford's. Nelson confirmed that a letter from late 1601 or early 1602 "incidentally reveals Oxford's association with the Earl of Cumberland (George Clifford)" (Nelson 2003: 404).
9. In 1587, Greene dedicated *Penelope's Web* to two sisters, one of whom is George Clifford's wife, Lady Margaret Russell Clifford, Countess of Cumberland. She was also the sister-in-law of the dedicatee of *Myrrour of Modestie*, Margaret Clifford Stanley (George Clifford's half-sister). Their relationship linked the Stanley and Clifford families.
10. In 1591, Greene dedicated *A Maidens Dreame* to "Ladie Elizabeth Hatton," the teenaged wife of Christopher Hatton's nephew, Sir William Newport, who had adopted the Hatton surname prior to his uncle's death on November 20, 1591. Lady Hatton, born Elizabeth Cecil, was the daughter of

Lord Burghley's eldest son, Thomas Cecil. Since Oxford had been married to Thomas's sister Anne until her death in 1588, Lady Elizabeth Hatton was Oxford's niece. Lady Elizabeth is the only member of the Hatton family who was related (by marriage) to Oxford. Is it more reasonable that she received a dedication from a dissolute pamphlet-peddler such as Greene or her own Uncle Ned?

11. In 1592, Greene dedicated *Philomela: The Lady Fitzwaters Nightingale* to Bridget Ratcliffe, Lady Fitzwaters, wife of Robert Radcliffe. Oxford served in Scotland in the spring of 1570 under the command of Robert's grandfather, Thomas, 3rd Earl of Sussex. As revealed on numerous occasions, as chronicled by Nelson, Sussex remained a staunch ally of Oxford's at court until his death in 1583. It makes sense that Oxford stayed close to his family.
12. In 1584, Greene dedicated his third work, *The Carde of Fancie*, "To the right honorable, Edward de Vere, Earle of Oxenford, Vicount Bulbeck, Lord of Escalles and Badlesmire, and Lord great Chamberlain of England." Given our context, it appears that Oxford wrote this dedication to himself. It was an effective ruse.

Robert Greene Sounds Like an Early Version of Shakespeare

Oxfordians contend that Shakespeare was a pen-name of Oxford's. If Shakespeare is Oxford and Greene is Oxford, then Greene must be Shakespeare. Following this equation, Robert Greene should read a lot like Shakespeare.

Scholars have offered so many examples of parallels between the works of Robert Greene and Shakespeare that to cite them all would take a book. Greene's plays contain Shakespeare's classical references, humanism, special vocabulary, humorous sub-plots, royal and noble characters, fully realized female characters, melancholy misanthropes, wise fools, and court, pastoral and Italian settings. Both writers' plots involve disguises, tavern scenes, love triangles, hidden nobility, challenges to the throne and multiple marriages at the end. Scholars have listed "numerous parallels in plot and character [and] deeper and more subtle parallels in structure and meaning. . . ." (Crupi 100) Collins declared, "We open Greene's comedies, and we are in the world of Shakespeare" (44). The same is true of their poetry, whose parallels are often "too obvious to ignore" (Hughes 2009: 43). Storojenko concluded, "Shakespeare's obligations to Greene . . . are beyond dispute" (1: 243).

What Greene did late in his career, Shakespeare did comparatively early in his. Speaking of a play written in Greene's final year, J.M. Brown wrote, "*James IV* is the finest Elizabethan historical play outside of Shakespeare, and is worthy to be placed on a level with Shakespeare's earlier style" (Brown 1: xxxiv). In other words, the two writers'

output forms a continuum. So do their lives; Greene left the scene in late 1592, and Shakespeare debuted the following spring, “appearing to pick up – as an already fully developed artist – right where Greene left off” (Hughes 2009: 25).

To conclude, substantial evidence from disparate sources supports the hypothesis that one writer is behind both famous names. As Hughes put it, “Robert Greene sounds like Shakespeare because he was Shakespeare” (2009: 38).

Evidence so far combines to suggest that “Robert Greene” and “Shakespeare” are both pseudonyms of the Earl of Oxford. But *Greene's Groats-worth of Wit* is an unusual publication. Are its most famous passages as intimately connected to the style of Shakespeare as the rest of Greene's canon?

Two: Greene's Groats-worth and Its True Connection to Shakespeare

Pamphlets in London generally sold for a few pennies, and a groat was worth four pence, thereby explaining Greene's title. The notoriety of Greene's most famous book comes not from its quality but its topicality and mystery.

Centuries of critical reviews of *Groats-worth* have focused primarily on its open letter to three fellow playwrights, which includes Greene's complaint about a particular theatrical personage he calls “an upstart Crow, [a] Shake-scene.” Critics have presumed that the target of the author's pique is William Shakespeare, a youthful playwright recently arrived from Stratford-upon-Avon. A primary reason for this presumption is the likeness of “Shake-scene” to “Shake-speare,” by which it seems that Greene is playing on Shakespeare's name as a means of disparagement. From that starting point, critics have taken hints from the rest of the brief text to construct character studies and biographical sketches of the young man from Stratford. Representing the ubiquitous mainstream view, Carroll declared, “That we learn from the letter something about Shakespeare . . . is what matters most” (Carroll 30). Perhaps, but what exactly do we learn about Shakespeare?

Theories vary about the roles that Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe and/or Henry Chettle may have played in producing *Groats-worth*. Many scholars accept that it's by Robert Greene. Thomas Nashe denied involvement in no uncertain terms, yet “numerous scholars in the centuries since have disbelieved Nashe's hot denial, and he remains one of the chief contenders for authorship.” (Hughes: 2009, 59). Others have asserted that the true author is Henry Chettle, the man who licensed the book. Carroll affirmed, “The case for a serious participation by Henry Chettle is much stronger. [While] Greene *may* have had something to do with the writing of *Groats-worth*, Chettle *certainly* did. If the book is indeed Chettle's, or largely his . . . then it ranks as one of the most successful creative hoaxes in our culture” (emphasis in the original). Other theories contend that combinations of these writers were involved.

None of these views is correct. I hope to show that Greene didn't write it, Nashe didn't write it, Chettle didn't write it, and there was no collaboration. Moreover, no one repented anything, no one forged anything, and no one disparaged Shakespeare. It's a hoax, all right, but the hoax is on the critics.

There are seven parts to *Groats-worth*: (1) the fictional story, (2) the transition, (3) a renunciation of prior works, (4) a set of homilies, (5) an open letter to three playwrights, (6) a versification of Aesop's fable of the Ant and the Grasshopper, and (7) a letter to Greene's wife. While all of them are instructive, for our purposes we will focus on items 1, 2, 3, and 5.

The Fictional Story Is by Greene

The fictional story in *Groats-worth* contains numerous signs of Greene's other writing. *Groatsworth* "bears a striking resemblance to the two parts of *Greene's Never Too Late*" (Carroll 22) in terms of plot, theme, realism, and language. "Francesco's story agrees in essential details with the story in *Groats-worth*" (Crupi 19). In sum, this part of Greene's piece "appears to be by him. Its motifs and method seem to be his, and it can be closely tied to several works by or related to him. Within the last two years Greene had made repentance his literary theme and used it, as here, with the prodigal son motif. "It contains some euphuisms, which had been, at least early on, a trick of Greene's style" (Carroll 22). A careful review confirms these conclusions. We are on safe ground, then, in attributing this part of the book to the usual author.

The Transition

Greene's tale comes to an abrupt halt in mid-plot with "Here (Gentlemen) break I off Roberto's speech. Hereafter suppose me the said Roberto, and I will go on with that he promised; Greene will send you now his groatsworth of wit, that never showed a mitesworth in his life. . . ." (12: 137). Greene's devaluation of his own literature from a "groatsworth" per pamphlet to less than "a mitesworth" for the entire canon is nearly unique among authors. We will address this anomaly in due course.

Thereafter Greene's monologue adopts a tone of fire and brimstone, and his focus shifts from story-telling to haranguing, confessing, and sermonizing as it fulfills the promise of the book's subtitle, *bought with a million of Repentance*. The change in tone is so drastic that "the malicious zest of the first three quarters [is] out of keeping with the soulful anguish of the last" (Carroll 22).

The literary influences within the book from this point forward are accordingly different from what went before. Carroll's footnotes tell the tale. For the fictional story of nineteen pages, his book lists over thirty references to Greene's prior works, eighteen references to Nashe, five to Ovid and only eight to the Bible. For the rest

of the book, which at only nine pages is less than half the length, he lists ten references to Greene, seven to Nashe, one to Ovid and forty-nine to the Bible. On a per page basis, the ratio of biblical references in the second part relative to the first is thirteen to one.

It seems hard to believe this could be the same writer who has Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* (3.2.77-80) exclaim, "In religion / What damned error but some sober brow / Will bless it, and approve it with a text / Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?" Is another author taking over, as many believe, or is Oxford role-playing again?

The Renunciation

Scholars of all types have established that the prose of Greene's fictional stories permeates Shakespeare's plays. If this new pulpit language is coming from the same writer, then we should see parallel prose in Shakespeare. Let's see where an investigation takes us.

Here is the renunciation from *Groats-worth*, with terms found in Shakespeare underlined for easy reference:

Ah Gentlemen, that live to read my broken and confused lines, looke not I should (as I was wont) delight you with vaine fantasies, but gather my follies altogether; and as yee would deal with so many parricides, cast them into the fire: call them Telegones, for now they kil their Father, and every lewd line in them written, is a deepe piercing wound to my heart; every idle houre spent by any in reading them, brings a million of sorrowes to my soule. O that the teares of a miserable man (for never any man was yet more miserable) might wash their memorie out with my death; and that those works with mee together might bee interd. But sith they cannot, let this my last worke witnes against them with mee, how I detest them. Blacke is the remembrance of my blacke workes, blacker than night, blacker than death, blacker than hell.

The search engine offered on line by the University of Sydney (Farrow, n.d.) proved useful in locating the following parallels in the Shakespeare canon (minor ones underlined above have been omitted):

"Ah Gentlemen" appears three times in Shakespeare as "O gentlemen," each time likewise at the start of an address.

"my broken and confused lines" is approximated in the dedication of *Venus and Adonis* with "my unpolished lines," in the dedication of *Lucrece* with "my untutored lines," and in Sonnet 103 with "my blunt invention . . . Dulling my lines."

“looke not I should . . . delight” echoes in *Macbeth* (5.3): “I must not look to have.”

“as I was wont” appears in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (2.4) and *Julius Caesar* (1.2).

“vaine fantasies” appears as “vain fantasy” in *Romeo and Juliet* (1.4).

“my follies” appears in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (2.2) and in *King Lear* (3.7).

“parricides” shows up as “parricide” in *Macbeth* (3.1).

“cast them into the fire” has echoes in *As You Like It* (1.2): “fall into the fire” and *The Tempest* (1.2): “dive into the fire.”

“kil their Father” appears in *Macbeth* (3.6): “kill their gracious father.”

“lewd line” is approximated in *Richard III* (1.3) with “lewd complaints.”

“piercing . . . to my soule” appears in *The Winter’s Tale* (5.3): “it is/ Now piercing to my soul.”

“wound to my heart” shows up in *Henry VI Part 1* (1.4) as “wounds my heart” and in *Titus Andronicus* (1.1) as “my wounded heart”; nearly identical phrases show up in *Henry VI Part 3*, *As You Like It*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *Lucrece*.

“idle houre” shows up as “idle hours” in *Richard II* (3.4), Sonnet 61, and the dedication of *Venus and Adonis*.

“houre spent” is in *Richard III* (3.6): “hours I spent”; *Troilus and Cressida* (2.2): “hours, lives, speeches spent”; and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (3.2): “hours that we have spent.”

“a million of sorrowes” echoes in *The Two Gentleman of Verona* (2.1): “a million of manners” and in *The Winter’s Tale* (4.3): “a million of beating.”

“sorrows to my soule” shows up as “sorrow gripes his soul” in *Henry VI Part 3* (1.4) and “my soul is full of sorrow” in *Richard III* (2.1).

“O that the teares”: Shakespeare pairs O and tears eight times.

“miserable man” echoes in *The Winter’s Tale* (1.2): “O miserable lady!”

“never any man” shows up three times in Shakespeare as “never a man,” with the same meaning and within similar constructions.

“more miserable” appears in *Henry VI Part 2* (3.1) and *Timon of Athens* (4.3).

“wash the memory out”: the same idea is expressed in *Macbeth* (5.3): “Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, / Raze out the written troubles of the brain. . . .”

“with my death” appears in *Much Ado about Nothing* (5.1) in the same context of wishing to obliterate distasteful deeds: “my villany they have upon record; which I had rather seal with my death than repeat over to my shame.”

“those works with mee together might bee interd”: The idea of one’s achievements being buried with one’s body is repeated in *Julius Caesar* (3.2): “The evil that men do lives after them; / The good is oft interred with their bones.”

“this my last worke” is approximated in *Pericles* (5.2): “This, my last boon.”

“witness against them” appears in *King John* (4.2) as “witness against us” and in *Henry VIII* as “witness . . . against you.”

“my blacke workes” shows up in *Macbeth* as “my black and deep desires.”

“blacker than night” is in *Pericles* (1.1) as “Blush not in actions blacker than the night.”

“blacker than death” shows up in *Hamlet* (3.3) as “O bosom black as death.”

“blacker than hell” shows up as “black as hell” in *Hamlet* (3.3) and famously in Sonnet 147.

These parallels fit the case that the man behind Shakespeare, the Earl of Oxford, is still holding the pen.

The Open Letter to Playwrights

Does Greene’s renowned open letter to three playwrights also have echoes in Shakespeare? Here is the opening part of that passage from *Groats-worth*, with Shakespearean phrases underlined:

If wofull experience may move you (Gentlemen) to beware, or unheard of wretchednes intreate you to take heed; I doubt not but you will looke backe with sorrow on your time past, and indeavour with repentance to spend that which is to come. Wonder not (for with thee wil I first begin), thou famous gracer of Tragedians, that Greene, who hath said with thee (like the fool in his heart) there is no God, he hath spoken unto me with a voice of thunder, and I have felt he is a God that can punish enemies. Why should thy excellent wit, his gift, be so blinded, that thou shouldst give no glory to the giver? Is it pestilent Machivilian pollicy that thou hast studied? O peevisch follie!

What are his rules but meere confused mockeries, able to extirpate in small time the generation of mankind. For if *Sic volo, sic iubeo*, hold in those that are able to commaund: and if it be lawfull *Fas & nefas* to do any thing that is beneficall, onely Tyrants should possesse the earth, and they striving to exceed in tyrannie, should each to other be a slaughter man; till the mightiest outliving all, one stroke were left for Death, that in one age man's life should end. The broacher of this Diabolical Atheism is dead, and in his life had never the felicitie he aemed at: but as he began in craft, lived in feare, and ended in despaire. *Quàm inscrutabilia sunt Dei iudicia?* This murderer of many brethren, had his conscience seared like Cain; this betrayer of him that gave his life for him, inherited the portion of Judas: this Apostata perished as ill as Julian: and wilt thou my friend be his Disciple? Looke unto me, by him perswaded to that libertie, and thou shalt find it an infernall bondage. I knowe the least of my demerits merit this miserable death, but wilfull striving against known truth exceedeth all the terrors of my soul. Defer not (with me) till this last point of extremitie; for little knowst thou how in the end thou shalt be visited.

And here are key parallels in Shakespeare (again with minor ones omitted):

“intreate you to take heed” is approximated in *Henry V* (1.2): “We charge you, in the name of God, take heed.” Shakespeare uses “entreat you” 25 times and “take heed” 31 times.

“I doubt not but” appears ten times in Shakespeare.

“looke backe with sorrow on your time past”: A version of this idea is in *Romeo and Juliet* (2.6), when the Friar prays, “So smile the heavens upon this holy act,/ That after hours with sorrow chide us not!”

“endeavor with repentance” appears in *Hamlet* (3.3) as “Try what repentance can.”

“time past . . . to spend that which is to come”: The same idea is expressed in *Henry IV Part 1* (5.2): “the time of life is short!/ To spend that shortness basely were too long. . . .”

“Wonder not” begins lines in *The Taming of the Shrew* (4.5), *Much Ado about Nothing* (3.2) and *Twelfth Night* (3.4).

“with thee wil I first begin” shows up in *Henry V* (1.2): “Then with Scotland first begin” and partially in *Hamlet* (3.3): “where I shall first begin”; “first begin” appears seven times in Shakespeare.

“thou famous” is in *Henry IV Part 2* (4.3) as “A famous rebel art thou, Colevile.”

“Tragedians” is used twice in Shakespeare, in *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Hamlet*.

“like the fool”: Shakespeare uses “like a fool” six times and “as the fool” in *Twelfth Night* (2.3).

“in his heart” appears in *Henry VI Part 1*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Hamlet* and *Coriolanus*.

“God . . . a voice of thunder” shows up in both Sonnet 5 and *Love's Labor's Lost* (4.2) in an address to Cupid: “Thy eye Jove's lightning bears, thy voice his dreadful thunder”; *Richard III* (1.4) has “Thy voice is thunder.”

“a God that can punish” shows up in *Coriolanus* (3.1): “As if you were a god to punish.”

“excellent wit” appears in *Henry IV Part 2* (4.3) and *Much Ado about Nothing* (2.1); variations appear three more times in the plays.

“give no glory” echoes in *Coriolanus* (5.6): “giving him glory.”

“the giver” is used in a similar context in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (2.4): “we thank the giver.”

“Machivilian pollicy” is approached in *Henry VI Part 2* (4.1): “By devilish policy art thou grown great”; *Henry IV Part 1* (1.3) speaks of “rotten policy.”

“O peevish follie”: *Henry VI Part 1* (4.6) has “O, too much folly”; Shakespeare uses *O* 1962 times, *peevish* 30 times and *folly* 78 times.

“meere confused mockeries”: *Cymbeline* (4.2) has “mere confusion”; *King John* (5.2) has “confused wrong”; and “mockeries” shows up twice in Shakespeare.

“extirpate” appears in *The Tempest* (1.2).

“in small time” is in *Henry V* (Epilogue): “Small time, but in that small . . .”

“generation of mankind” is echoed in *The Tempest* (3.3): “Our human generation” and in *Troilus and Cressida* (3.1): “generation of vipers.”

“able to commaund”: *Henry VI Part 1* (1.1) comes close to this construction with “deserving to command”; “to command” appears seventeen times in Shakespeare.

“if it be lawfull” is rendered in *King John* (3.1) as “Let it be lawful,” and the same conditional construction is in *Richard II* (3.3): “Because we thought ourself thy lawful king:/ And if we be. . .”

“striving to exceed” is echoed in *Henry VI Part 2* (4.1): “striving to shine.”

“each to other” is approached in *As You Like It* (5.4): “To one his lands withheld, and to the other. . . .”

“bee a slaughter man” is in *Henry VI Part 3* (1.4): “Had he been slaughter-man.”

“the mightiest outliving all” has an echo in *Henry VI Part 1* (3.2): “mightiest potentates must die.”

“one stroke were left for Death”: “one stroke” is used three times in Shakespeare, twice in the same context of a sword causing death; Greene’s clause creates a personified image of death poised to strike that is reprised in *Henry VI Part 2* (2.4): “till the axe of death/ Hang over thee.”

“in one age” is in *Henry VI Part 1* (2.5) and *Lucrece* (St. 138) as “in an age.”

“man’s life” is used twice in this general context, in *Cymbeline* (3.6): “I see a man’s life is a tedious one,” and in *The Tempest* (2.1): “Ten leagues beyond man’s life.”

“man’s life should end” is echoed in *Henry VI Part 2* with “there my life must end” and in *Henry VI Part 3* (1.4) with “here my life must end.”

“broacher of this Diabolical. . . .” is approached in *Henry IV Part 1* (5.1): “a portent/ Of broached mischief.”

“aemed at” is in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (3.1): “my discovery be not aimed at.”

“in craft” appears with the same negative meaning of someone who is crafty in *Henry IV Part 1* (2.4): “wherein cunning, but in craft?”

“lived in feare” is in *King Lear* (4.1): “lives not in fear”; Shakespeare pairs “live” and “fear” three times.

“ended in despaire” is in *The Tempest* (Epilogue): “my ending is despair”; in *King John* (3.1) the noun is likewise linked to death: “in despair die.”

“conscience seared” is approached in *Macbeth* (4.1), when the conscience-stricken Macbeth exclaims, “the spirit of Banquo . . . Thy crown does sear mine eye-balls,” and in *The Winter’s Tale* (2.1): “for calumny will sear/ Virtue itself”; similar phrases are presented in *Lucrece* (St. 36): “frozen conscience”; and in *Henry VIII* (2.2): “wringing of the conscience.”

“inherited the portion”: Shakespeare uses *portion* likewise to indicate a part of one’s inheritance, as when Orlando in *As You Like It* (1.1) complains, “What prodigal portion have I spent, that I should come to such penury?”

"Judas" is mentioned 15 times in Shakespeare.

"thou my friend" appears in *Othello* (3.1): "thou . . . my honest friend"; *King John* (5.6): "Thou art my friend"; *Henry VI Part 2* (5.1): "my friend, art thou"; *Hamlet* (2.2): "thou hear me, old friend"; Sonnet 149: "thee that I do call my friend"; and "you my friend" twice in *Pericles* (2.1).

"me . . . perswaded to that libertie [by a false doctrine]" is approximated in *Love's Labor's Lost* (4.3): "Persuade my heart to this false perjury."

"my demerits" appears in *Othello* (1.2): "my demerits/ May speak unbonneted"; Shakespeare also uses "his demerits" in *Coriolanus* (1.1) and "their own demerits" in *Macbeth* (4.3).

"the least of my demerits" is approximated in *Venus and Adonis* (St. 123): "the least of all these maladies" and in Sonnet 92: "the worst of wrongs,/ When in the least of them my life hath end." In all three cases, "the least of" is tied to a negative plural noun.

"this miserable death" is in *Titus Adronicus* (2.3): "leave me to this miserable death."

"wilfull striving" toward sin echoes in Sonnet 103: "Were it not sinful then, striving . . ."

"known truth" shows up in *All's Well That Ends Well* (2.5): "one that . . . uses a known truth to pass a thousand nothings . . ."

"all the terrors of my soul" is in *Richard III* (5.3) as "struck more terror to the soul."

"this last point of extremitie" shows up in *Richard II* (4.1) as "to the extremest point/ Of."

"little knowst thou" is used in the same way in *Cymbeline* (3.3): "These boys know little they are sons to the king."

"thou shalt be visited" is approximated in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (3.2): "thou mock'st me . . . look to be visited."

These parallels are compatible with the idea that Shakespeare, and therefore Oxford, is still writing *Groats-worth*.

The next part of the open letter is the most famous passage in *Groats-worth*, in which the author complains about actors, especially one "upstart Crow . . . in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrie." Traditional scholars believe that "Shake-scene" is a derogatory swipe at Shakespeare. How could Oxford have written

a passage attacking Shakespeare when he himself is Shakespeare?

First we must determine if Oxford is still holding the pen. We will begin by showing a progression in Greene's use of the language employed, as his rhetoric expands from one instance to the next. Shared words and ideas are underlined for easy reference.

In *The Myrroure of Modestie* (1584), Greene writes,

your honor may thinke I play like Ezops Crowe, which deckt hir selfe with others' feathers or like the proud poet Batyllus, which subscribed his name to Virgils verses, and yet presented them to Augustus. . . . I give quoth he another mans picture, but freshlie flourished with mine own colours. (3:7)

Greene refers again to Batillus in *Menaphon* and to Aesop's Crow in *Orpharion*.

Six years later, in *Francescos Fortunes* (1590), Greene turns such language into a weapon aimed not at himself but at actors and rival playwrights, the same target as in *Groatsworth*:

. . . in Rome . . . the Actors, by continuall use grewe not onely excellent, but rich and insolent. Amongst whome in the daies of Tully one Roscius grewe to be of such exquisite perfection in his facultie, that he offered to contend with the Orators of that time in gesture, as they did in eloquence . . . which insolence made the learned Orator to growe into these termes: why Roscius, art thou proud with Esops Crow, being pranct with the glorie of others feathers? . . . what sentence thou utterest on the stage, flowes from the censure of our wittes. [Yet] it grew to a generall vice amongst the Actors, to excell in pride as they did exceede in excellence, and to brave it in the streets, as they bragge it on the stage. (8: 131-133)

Does Greene's language ring a bell? Thomas Nashe had used much the same language in the preface to Greene's *Menaphon* just a year earlier. Hibbard, echoing other scholars, observed about the preface to *Menaphon*, "much in the *Preface* seems to reflect views and attitudes that we know Greene held" (Hibbard 34). Even its language is sometimes nearly identical to Greene's. In his preface, Nashe writes of those "who . . . get Boreas by the beard, and the heavenlie bull by the deaw-lap," while inside the book Greene writes of an ewe "whose fleece was as white as the haire that grow on father Boreas chinne, or as the dangling deaw-lap of the silver Bull." Several scholars have vaguely suspected that Robert Greene wrote the preface to his own book in Thomas Nashe's name. I think we may confirm this suspicion.

Here are the key portions of Nashe's tirade:

[Writers'] servile imitation of vainglorious tragedians [and] their idiote

art-masters, that intrude themselves to our eares as the alcumists of eloquence; who (mounted on the stage of arrogance) think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of a bragging blanke verse. . . . Sundrie other sweete Gentlemen I know, that have vaunted their pens in private devices, and trickt up a companie of taffeta fooles with their feathers, [who] might have antickt it untill this time up and down the cuntry with the King of Fairies and dinde everie daie at the pease porridge ordinaire with Delphrigus. But Tolassa hath forgot that it was sometime sackt, and beggers [have forgot] that ever they caried their fardles on footback: and in truth no meruaile, when as the deserved reputation of one Roscius, is of force to inrich a rabble of counterfets.

Observe that Greene in the passage from 1590 fleshes out the tale of “one Roscius,” expanding Nashe’s brief reference in 1589 to the “deserved reputation of one Roscius.”

Greene’s *Farewell to Follie* (1591) presents a similar image of the strutting pretender, in similar terms: “seeing the wings of youth trickt up with follies plumes” (9:243). So, from a misty beginning in 1584, we have a sequence of highly similar expressions in three consecutive years: 1589, 1590 and 1591.

Groats-worth in 1592 reprises the attack on actors from *Francesos Fortunes*. In so doing, it uses several phrases right out of Greene’s earlier writing. The first passage below is from the fictional story and the second from the open letter:

(quoth the player) . . . What though the world once went hard with me, when I was faine to carry my playing Fardle a footebacke. . . why, I am as famous for Delphrigus, & the King of Fairies, as euer was any of my time.

those Puppits (I meane) that speake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colours. . . . Yes trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a cuntry. [italics in the original]

Observe that even when specific words differ in our four examples, the construction and image are the same. The objects of the writer’s scorn are respectively *deckt*, *pranct*, *trickt* or *garnisht* in others’ *feathers*, *plumes* or *colors*. Likewise, *proud* in one passage becomes *insolent* in another, and *pride* in one passage becomes *arrogance* in another.

This confluence of material explains why some initial readers as well as later critics suspected that Thomas Nashe wrote the pamphlet. They might have noticed the similarity of language between parts of the diatribe in *Groats-worth* and Nashe’s pref-

ace to *Menaphon*. They guessed, quite correctly as it happens, that one writer penned them both. The similarities in the items quoted above further suggest that the same brain is behind all five passages.

Could the composer of the attack on “Shake-scene” also be Shakespeare? Linguistic agreement indicates not only that Nashe’s passage is written by Shakespeare but that the related one in *Groats-worth* is, too.

Here are Nashe’s key lines from the preface to *Menaphon* again, this time underlined for parallels in the Shakespeare canon:

[Writers’] servile imitation of vainglorious tragedians [and] their idiote art-masters, that intrude themselves to our eares as the alcumists of eloquence; who (mounted on the stage of arrogance) think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of a bragging blanke verse. . . . Sundrie other sweete Gentlemen I know, that have vaunted their pens in private devices, and trickt up a companie of taffeta fooles with their feathers, [who] might have antickt it untill this time up and down the countrey with the King of Fairies and dinde everie daie at the pease porridge ordinaire with Delphrigus. But Tolassa hath forgot that it was sometime sackt, and beggars [have forgot] that ever they caried their fardles on footback: and in truth no meruaile, when as the deserved reputation of one Roscius, is of force to inrich a rabble of counterfets.

Here are the parallels in Shakespeare (again with minor ones omitted):

“servile imitation” is rendered as “base imitation” in *Richard II* (2.1); “servile” appears eleven times in Shakespeare, and “imitation” appears four times.

“vainglorious” is rendered as the noun “vain-glory” three times in Shakespeare; there is also “Vain pomp and glory” in *Henry VIII* (3.2).

“tragedians” appears twice in Shakespeare and once in the singular.

“idiote art-masters,” where “idiot” is used in rare form as an adjective, is in Shakespeare as “idiot worshippers” in *Troilus and Cressida* (2.1).

“intrude”: The unusual position of this word just before a noun and without the preposition *upon* is repeated in *Lucrece* (St. 122): “Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud?” In these instances, the word takes on the meaning of *impose* and *invade*, respectively.

“our eares” shows up twelve times in Shakespeare. Nashe’s meaning is echoed in three instances: *Timon of Athens* (5.1): “And enter in our eares like great triumphers”; *All’s Well That Ends Well* (5.3): “She does abuse our eares”;

and in *King John* (2.1): "Our ears are cudgell'd."

"alcumists" appears in the singular ("alchemist") twice in Shakespeare, and both times it is employed metaphorically, as Nashe uses it.

"on the stage of arrogance" is approximated in *King Lear* (4.6) with "To this great stage of fools." Also, "arrogance" is in Shakespeare six times, and "on the stage" is in Sonnet 23.

"outbrave" is in *The Merchant of Venice* (2.1); "outbraves" is in Sonnet 94.

"better pens" echoes in "blazoning pens" in *Othello* (2.1).

"swelling" is in the canon 25 times, "bombast" three times, "bragging" six times and "blanke verse" three times.

"sweete Gentlemen" is in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (5.2).

"vaunted" as a verb is in *Henry VI Part 2* (1.3): "She vaunted 'mongst her minions."

"their pens" is approximated with "your pens" in *Henry IV Part 2* (4.1).

"in private devices" is a construction found in "in private brabble" (*Twelfth Night*, 5.1), "in private conference" (*Pericles*, 2.4) and "in private brawl" (*Twelfth Night*, 3.4).

"trickt up" appears, with the same meaning, as "trick up" in *Henry V* (III,vi).

"companie of taffeta fooles" is approximated in "company of awful men" in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (4.1); "taffeta fooles" is mirrored by "taffeta punk" and "taffeta fellow" in *All's Well That Ends Well*, (2.2 and 4.5) and "taffeta phrases" in *Love's Labor's Lost* (5.2).

"with their feathers" has the same meaning as a line in *Henry VI Part 2* (3.1): "his feathers are but borrowed."

"antickt it" is not in Shakespeare, although "antic" appears eight times, twice as a noun in a similar context, as cited below.

"untill this time" is in *The Comedy of Errors* (4.4). Shakespeare never says "until now."

"up and down the countrey" is approximated in Shakespeare in similar contexts: "stalks up and down like a peacock" (*Troilus and Cressida*, 3.3), "jaunting up and down" (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.5), "we do trace this alley up and down" (*Much Ado about Nothing*, 3.1), "walk up and down the streets" (*Julius Caesar*,

1.3), and “our marches through the country” (*Henry V*, 3.6).

“King of Fairies” is in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, where in the list of players Oberon is dubbed “king of the fairies.” (In 4.1 he is addressed as “Fairy king.”)

“dinde everie daie” echoes in “one meal on every day” (*Love’s Labor’s Lost*, 1. 1). Shakespeare pairs “dine(s)” and “day” six times.

“ordinaire” as an eatery is implied in *Anthony and Cleopatra* (2.2): “Anthony . . . invited her to supper . . . And for his ordinary pays his heart/ For what his eyes eat only.”

“it was sometime” is in *Pericles* (2.1) with the same meaning: “it was sometime target to a king.”

“sackt” is in *All’s Well That Ends Well* (1.3): “Was this fair face the cause . . . Why the Grecians sacked Troy?” In each case, the action is applied to an ancient city (Tolosa and Troy, respectively).

“caried . . . fardles” is approximated in *Hamlet* (3.1) in the clause, “who would fardels bear.”

“no mervaile,” appears eleven times in Shakespeare, usually followed in the same way by a comma to indicate an expletive, as in *Troilus and Cressida* (2.2): “No marvel, though you bite so sharp at reasons,/ You are so empty of them.”

“Roscius” is cited in Shakespeare twice: in *Hamlet* (2.2): “When Roscius was an actor in Rome” and also in *Henry VI Part 3* (5.6): “What scene of death hath Roscius now to act?”

“of force to” appears in *King John* (1.1): “Shall then my father’s will be of no force/ To dispossess that child which is not his? / Of no more force to dispossess me, sir. . . .”

“a rabble of counterfets” is well represented in Shakespeare: “a rabble” is used three times, “counterfeits” is used twice as a noun, and the entire phrase is approximated in “a rabble of his companions” (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, 3.5) and in “a rabble more/ Of vile confederates” (*The Comedy of Errors*, 5.1).

We established above that Nashe’s preface to *Menaphon* is by Robert Greene, and now we may contend that it is also by Shakespeare.

To complete the picture, we must see whether Greene’s kindred passages in *Groatsworth* also appear to be by Shakespeare. If so, then we may credibly credit all these

compositions to Oxford. Here they are again, newly underlined for parallels in the Shakespeare canon:

(quoth the player)...What though the world once went hard with me, when I was faine to carry my playing Fardle a footebacke. . . . why, I am as famous for Delphrigus, & the King of Fairies, as euer was any of my time.

those Puppits (I meane) that speake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colours. . . . Yes trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes fac totum, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrie.

Here are the parallels in Shakespeare (with minor and some repeated terms omitted):

“player” meaning stage actor is in Shakespeare six times, as well as twenty-two times in the plural.

“What though the” is used in Shakespeare three times, all in the same way as here: “What though the common people favor him” (*Henry VI Part 2*, 1.1), “What though the mast be now blown overboard” (*Henry VI Part 3*, 5.4) and “What though the rose have prickles” (*Venus and Adonis*, St. 94).

“the world once went hard” is approximated in *Henry VI Part 3* (2.6): “nay, then the world goes hard.”

“went hard with me” is echoed in *Henry VI Part 2*: “twill go hard with you” and in *The Merchant of Venice* (3.2): “It will go hard with poor Antonio.”

“I was faine to” appears twice in Shakespeare: “I was fain to draw mine honour” (*Henry VIII*, 5.4) and “I was fain to forswear it” (*Measure for Measure*, 4.3).

“Fardle” appears six times in *The Winter's Tale*; it is in the plural in *Hamlet* (3.1).

“as euer was” appears twice in Shakespeare: “a good plot as ever was laid” in *Henry IV Part 1* (2.3) and “Flat burglary as ever was committed” in *Much Ado about Nothing* (4.2).

“any of my time” is approximated in *The Taming of the Shrew* (3.1) in the same context of boasting: “I must . . . teach you . . . More pleasant, pithy and effectual,/ Than hath been taught by any of my trade.”

“Puppits” appears twice in Shakespeare and eight times in the singular form.

“I meane” pops up several times in the canon in the same way as Groatsworth’s inserted interjection, for example: “Command, I mean, of virtuous chaste intents” in *Henry VI Part 1* (5.5).

“speak from our mouths” is rendered in *Measure for Measure* (5.1) as “speak, as from his mouth.” Shakespeare places “speak” near “mouth(s)” seven more times.

“Anticks” to indicate people shows up three times in Shakespeare, and as in *Groats-worth* all of them have negative connotations, for example “witless antics” in *Troilus and Cressida* (5.3).

“garnisht in our colours” appears in *Love’s Labor’s Lost* (2.1) as “garnished/ With such bedecking ornaments.” Shakespeare uses “our colors” three times.

“upstart” (in “upstart Crow”) is likewise used perjoratively as an adjective in *Richard II* (2.3): “upstart unthrifts.”

“beautified with” is in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (4.1) as “you are beautified/ With goodly shape.”

“Crow...with...feathers” is approximated in *The Comedy of Errors* (3.1) as “A crow without feather?”

“Crow...beautified with [another’s] feathers” recalls an image from the Prologue of Act 4 of *Pericles* (32-33): “With the dove of Paphos might the crow/ Vie feathers white.”

“his Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide” appears as “O tiger’s heart wrapped in a woman’s hide!” in *Henry VI Part 3* (1.4). A Shakespeare precursor play, *The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of York*, acted by Lord Strange’s company for Henslowe in March 1591, contains the identical phrase.

“he is as well able...as...you” is in *Titus Andronicus* (2.1): “I am as able...as thou.”

“the best of you” appears in *Othello* (2.3).

“an absolute” shows up three times in Shakespeare as an adjective describing a person: “an absolute courtier” (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, 3.3), “an absolute master” (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 1.2), and “an absolute gentleman” (*Hamlet*, 5.2).

“his owne conceit” appears in *Hamlet* (2.2).

“the onely Shake-scene in a countrie” echoes faintly in *Henry V* (2.1): “And hold-fast is the only dog.”

“Shake-scene”: Under Oxfordian theory, Oxford coined a hyphenated pseudonym starting with “Shake-” and here is another.

Shakespeare, by the way, also shares Greene's earlier use of *plumes*, *jets*, *prank'd*, and “to brave it in the streets,” which is rendered in *Titus Andronicus* (4.1) as “I'll go brave it at the court” and in *Henry VI Part 2* (4.8) as “I see them lording it in London streets.” Everywhere we turn, we see evidence that Shakespeare and Greene are versions of the same writer.

The text explored above covers the most important parts of the most famous sections of Greene's infamous book. Skimming the rest of the passages in the final sections of *Groats-worth* for colorful words and phrases uncovers numerous additional connections to Shakespeare, which are omitted from this paper. We can already see how densely Greene's language in *Groats-worth* fits Shakespeare's. Further, I am unaware of any of Greene's constructions that conclusively contradict the dual-pen-name hypothesis.

Parallels between the language in *Groats-worth* and that in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* trilogy are especially numerous. The reason appears to be that the two works are contemporaneous compositions by the same author.

In *Kind-Harts Dreame*, published before the end of 1592, Henry Chettle protested that, despite rumors to the contrary, he was not the author of *Groats-worth*. From the perspective offered here, it is clear that nearly everything Chettle says therein about his minor role in the matter is true.

We might be able to demonstrate that, in toto, the language parallels offered above are uncommon among most independent Elizabethan writers. But doing so would first require excluding compositions written under any other pen-names Oxford may have adopted. Such a project is outside the scope of this paper. For now, we have established that Greene and Shakespeare's shared linguistic tendencies are compatible with the hypothesis that the same writer is behind the works published under both names, including the infamous *Groats-worth*.

Who is “Shake-Scene”?

From Greene's epithet “Shake-scene,” orthodox scholars have made bold, uncompromising assertions such as this: “The pun in ‘Shake-scene’ leaves no doubt that Shakespeare is meant” (Wilson 44). I have found matching “no doubt” statements on this issue from multiple biographers within each of four consecutive centuries, from the 18th to the 21st.

Many biographers have mined Greene's brief statement to produce analyses about the supposed activity and character of William Shakespeare. Extrapolating from a

feeling of certainty on this issue, “the commentators have sought primarily to establish the precise nature of the charge against Shakespeare” (Carroll 131).

But the charge cannot be against Shakespeare, because “Shakespeare” wrote the passage. Shake-scene is anyone *but* Shakespeare. If Shake-scene is not Shake-speare, at whom did Oxford aim with his newly mined epithet?

Marlovian A.D. Wraight (1965) was the first to attribute Greene’s tag to someone other than Shakespeare, namely the famous actor and stage manager Edward Alleyn. Dyce, Hughes and Detobel provided crucial details to the case: Henslowe’s diary shows that Robert Greene’s *Orlando Furioso* was staged by Lord Strange’s Men on February 21, 1592, a few months before *Groats-worth* came to press. Edward Alleyn is known to have acted in this drama. Directly to the point of Greene’s complaint is the fact that Alleyn expanded the text of Greene’s play. In Alleyn’s personal copy of the play, noted Dyce, “here and there certain blanks have been supplied in a different hand-writing, and that hand-writing is Alleyn’s” (Dyce 31). In other words, as Detobel put it, “the actor had had the temerity to add some 530 lines of his own” (Detobel 15).

As Detobel deduced, such audacity exquisitely explains Greene’s complaint about the playwrights’ mouthpiece – an actor dressed in their feathers – inserting his own (inferior) blank verse into their plays. Alleyn is the one who dared to “bombast out” some of his own lines within a play by another author, in this case the very author who complains about it: Robert Greene.

Detobel established that Alleyn trod on Marlowe’s turf as well:

Moreover, Alleyn was the owner of the play *Tamer Cam* and likely to have been the author or at the very least a collaborator. Greg comments: “I have little doubt that it was written as a rival to *Tamburlain* which belonged to the Admiral’s men” (Greg 155). Like Marlowe’s *Tamburlain* the play consisted of two parts. Only the plot of the first part is extant. The second part was staged by the Lord Admiral’s men on 28 April 1592. Thus, in the months leading up to the composition of *Groatsworth*, the famous actor Alleyn had manifestly dared to rival both Greene and Marlowe at playwriting.

(Detobel 15).

So, the other writer upon whose territory Alleyn encroached is none other than the first fellow playwright to whom Greene addresses his open letter: Christopher Marlowe (as scholars widely agree), adding further sense to Greene’s context.

From Greene’s quoting – in italics, as if rendered aloud – the “tiger’s heart” line, it seems that Alleyn probably acted in *The True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of York* and/or the ensuing version, Shakespeare’s *Henry VI, Part 3*, the latter of which is estimated

to have been completed in 1592, the year of Greene's complaint. Both plays contain the line, "O tiger's heart, wrapt in a woman's hide!" Alleyn must have boomed it out nearly to the point of shaking the scenery, earning him Greene's epithet, "Shake-scene."

To summarize the case: Alleyn is an "upstart" for being a presumptuous actor who adds lines to others' plays and even writes his own play. He's a "crow" dressed in the "feathers" of others partly for being an actor dressed as playwrights did, but particularly for slipping his own lines into their works. And he's a "Shake-scene" for his dramatic portrayals. *Groats-worth*, then, does not present a "sneering allusion to Shakespeare's blank verse . . ." (Carroll 143) but alludes to a mere actor's attempts to do what Greene and Marlowe were doing far better.

To reiterate, the line about "Shake-scene" is not *about* Shakespeare but *by* him. Oxford simply invented two similar pseudonyms: *Shake-scene* for Edward Alleyn and *Shake-speare* for himself. The two constructions appear in print for the first time within months of each other, in publications registered on September 20, 1592 (*Groats-worth*) and April 18, 1593 (*Venus and Adonis*), respectively.

Though the case identifying Alleyn as the upstart crow is strong, for our purposes it isn't crucial. Whoever Shake-scene may be, we can at least re-categorize the question as one of minor import rather than the earth-shattering reference to Shakespeare that Stratfordians take it to be.

The phrase "upstart crow . . . Shake-scene" has "produced on it a small library of serious comment" (Carroll 131). We can retire that library.

Three: Why Greene Shifted from Romances to Lust-Warnings to Confessionals

Groats-worth is a mysterious book. We have concluded that the Earl of Oxford wrote it. Can we figure out why?

Robert Greene spent his first decade writing sixteen romances. Then over three years he wrote five tales showing how love can lead to ruin. In 1592, he became a wailing penitent denouncing his previous works and his life. These are dramatic changes of heart.

In his final incarnation, "Greene evidently took a morbid delight in representing himself, his actions, and all his motives, in the foulest and most repulsive colors. If we are to believe Greene, his whole life was an endless round of intoxication, debauch, and blasphemy. In a fit of self-accusation, he endeavours to paint himself and all his actions in the worst of colours" (Storojenko 1:156; 1:53).

Scholars have found themselves aghast at Greene's self-loathing. "Usually autobiographies and memoirs are written by people for the purpose of defending themselves in the eyes of posterity, and showing their actions and motives in the best light possible." But because this one "is written for a diametrically opposite purpose . . . Greene's autobiography stands unique among works of the same kind" (Storojenko 1: 156). Among all autobiographies, if one stands unique, we should search for a unique explanation for the difference.

Most scholars, while on rare occasions expressing some hesitance about aspects of Greene's confessionals, have concluded that his self-described life of fathomless depravity is sincere and his agonized repentance genuine. Here is a summary of the main commentators' views:

Nicholas Storojenko would "fearlessly believe him when he speaks of the anguish of his soul and the sincerity of his repentance." J.A. Symonds thought "the accent of remorse . . . too sincere and strongly marked to justify a suspicion of deliberate fiction." As for the famous letter, there has been almost unanimous agreement that its bitterness is genuine, its "earnestness," as Dyce put it, "scarcely consistent with forgery." "Sincerity and reality," for A.B. Grosart, "pulsate in every word of these ultimate utterances."

Carroll (27-28)

Additional laments are stirring to read:

There have been too many of the Muses' sons whose vices have conducted them to shame and sorrow, but none, perhaps, who have sunk to deeper degradation and misery than the subject of this memoir [*Groats-worth*].

Alexander Dyce, 1831 (57)

The entire pamphlet [*Groats-worth*] of Greene's is, perhaps, one of the most extraordinary fragments of autobiography that the vanity or the repentance of a sinful man ever produced.

Charles Knight, 1843 (VII:74)

The devout state of mind, sincere contrition, and broken spirit of Greene, with which the *Groatsworth of Wit* is filled, stands out even more strongly in his *Repentance*. [W]e have no reason to doubt the sincerity of such a heart-rending confession [in *Groats-worth*]. Sitting on the edge of eternity, Greene only concerned himself with the salvation of the souls of those he loved on earth. [In *The Repentance*,] perhaps the strongest evidence in proof of the authenticity of this work is the style and spirit in which it was written – that spirit of unaffected repentance, sincere contrition of heart and self-abasement with which it is impregnated.

Nicholas Storojenko, 1878 (1:53, 148, 50, 55)

There is every probability (and no proof to the contrary or shadow of proof) that Greene was as careless of religion and as given to all evil in 1588-9 as at any time of his life.

A.B. Grosart, 1881 (*Robert Greene* 1:100fn)

Thus, in a whirlwind of remorse and contumely, affection and hatred, tears and flashes of humour, there passed away a son of storm and passion. By nature a nomad, his place was with Drake and Hawkins and Raleigh, who loved the restless element

J.M. Brown, 1877 (130)

The *Repentance* and the concluding pages of the *Groatsworth of Wit* give an impression of greater sincerity. [T]hey reveal clearly the state of mind in which he was – a sensitive being, friendless and in poverty, sick unto death, with conscience torturing him into anguish through memories of a wasted life. . . . I think the final repentance is genuine. . . . Greene was stricken with remorse He was terrified to his inmost soul.

John Clark Jordan, 1915 (72, 75, 79)

Greene was once, like Marlowe, a scoffer at religion . . . but now he has repented.

Charles Nicholl, 2002 (52)

“But there are those,” wrote Carroll, “who may hear, instead, something studied, overly self-conscious and literary. It may be [that] it strikes us as out-and-out clap-trap” (28). The literary experts have indeed been duped. They have failed to spot a shiny gold dubloon lying on the side of the road for 400 years.

We must first ask: did Oxford in the early 1590s undergo a phase of guilty religiosity in which he suffered agonizing remorse over Greene's prior books? Hughes thought so: “The shift in tone in 1590 reflects his troubles of that period” (2009, 37), and in 1592 Oxford would have repented writing Greene's stories because “a man of Oxford's stature may have suffered from knowing that in his world such frivolities were considered mere toys” (2009, 31). This conclusion is doubtful, however, because there is little suggestion of such a view in Shakespeare's canon or in Oxford's life. So, what in the world was he doing?

Of all the influences in Shakespeare's works, one stands out above all: that of the Roman poet, Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BC -18 AD). Oxford's childhood fascination with Ovid culminated with his translation (Prechter 7-14) of *Ovids Metamorphoses*, published under his uncle Arthur Golding's name in part in 1565 when he was fifteen, and in full in 1567 when he was seventeen. Robert Greene was equally enamored of Ovid. He cites him numerous times and credits him for the title and theme of *Alcida: Greenes Metamorphosis*. Carroll confirmed, “Greene thought of himself, as did others,

as an Ovid” (Carroll 77fn).

Ovid wrote in three literary modes. He first issued poetic instructions on succeeding at love in *Amores* (*Love Affairs*) and *Ars Amatoria* (*Art of Love*). He shifted gears to warn about the pitfalls of love in *Remedia Amoris* (*Love’s Remedy* or *The Cure for Love*). After being banned from Rome, he wrote two poetry collections titled *Tristia* (*Sorrows*) and *Epistulae ex Ponto* (*Letters from the Black Sea*), parts of which describe his misery and beg forgiveness for his former works. This sequence reveals shifts in Ovid’s views, from being a champion of amorous activity to a denouncer of it, and from being a bold issuer of love poetry to an agonized apologizer for it.

Does that sound familiar?

Robert Greene, in the dedication of *Mourning Garment* (1590), explained his intent to carry out the same transformation. He says:

Ovid, after hee was banished for his wanton papers written, *de Arte Amandi*, and of his amorous Elegies betweene him and Corinna, being amongst the barbarous Getes, and though a Pagan, yet toucht with a repenting passion of the follies of his youth, hee sent his *Remedium Amoris*, and part of his *Tristibus* to Caesar. . . that hee which severely punished such lascivious livers, would be as glad to heare of their repentant labours. Thus (Right Honorable) you heare the reason of my bold attempt, how I hope your Lordship will be glad with Augustus Caesar, to read the reformation of a second Ovid. (9:121)

And there we have it. He says, “*the reason of my bold attempt [is to effect] the reformation of a second Ovid.*” Oxford, then, will steer his beloved Robert Greene down the same course Ovid traversed. Oxford’s pseudonym will play a role, that of Oxford’s most beloved role model.

Greene continues his explanation in the ensuing address “To the Gentleman Scholars of both Universities.” He describes the deathbed conversion of Aristotle from atheist to fervent believer, foreshadowing the deathbed conversion of Greene in *Groats-worth* and *The Repentance*. He notes that Ovid underwent a like metamorphosis, and Greene will do the same:

What Ovid was in Rome, I referre to his Elegies: what he was amongst the Getes, I gather from his *Tristibus*: how he persevered in his repentant sorrowes [i.e. his *Sorrows*], the discourse of his death doth manifest. The Romanes that heard his loves beleevd his penance. Then Gentlemen let me finde like favour, if I that wholly gave my selfe to the discoursing of amours, bee now applied to better labours.

. . . please it you (Gentlemen) to put on my *Mourning Garment*, and see the effects that grow from such wanton affects, you wil leave Ovids Art [i.e. his

Art of Love], & fall to his remedy [i.e. his *Love's Remedy*] (9: 123-125)

Just as Ovid began by writing amorous *Elegies* and *Art of Love*, shifted gears with *Love's Remedy* and ended with "his repentant *Sorrowes*," Greene will follow his lead. Having begun with love pamphlets, he will shift gears to warnings against lust and from there to sorrowful confessionals.

Greene's warnings against lust cover four and a half books: *Never Too Late* (1590), *Francescos Fortunes* (1590), *Mourning Garment* (1590), *Farewell to Follie* (1591) and the first two-thirds of *Groats-worth of Wit* (1592). His confessional phase begins with the final third of *Greene's Groats-worth of Wit*, carries through *The Repentance of Robert Greene* and ends with the frame of *Greenes Vision*, published "posthumously" in 1593. Despite all that was going on in his life – including money woes and the escalating battle with Gabriel Harvey – Oxford held firm to his purpose, leading his literary creation, Robert Greene, to the end of his life in a state of profound *tristesse*, following the course of Ovid.

In retrospect, we can see that Greene had already applied the model of transformation from evildoer to penitent in *The Black Bookes Messenger . . . the Life and Death of Ned Bronne* from earlier that year. He follows the same template in *Groats-worth*, except that his exhortation to avoid evil courses is directed toward his fellow playwrights rather than to the reader. He completes his personal makeover in *The Repentance* and *Greenes Vision*.

Oxford had at least two specific literary sources for the language of Greene's repentant testimony. The Puritan Thomas Stocker, who had spent some childhood years in Oxford's father's house, dedicated *Divers Sermons of Master John Calvin* to Oxford on May 6, 1581. This book is likely a primary source of Greene's forceful rhetoric. It is also known that *The Repentance* "follows . . . Robert Parson's *A Booke of Christian Exercise* [1582], a popular work of the time that includes terrifying images of damnation . . . and the progress of the soul" (Crupi 33). Oxford likely placed both books in his library in the early 1580s and pulled them off the shelf a decade later to serve his purpose.

With much preparation and focused intent, Oxford concocts a tour-de-force. One of Greene's most revealing statements about Ovid is, "The Romanes . . . beleaved his penance." Oxford set out to achieve the same effect, and it worked; nearly every reader since has believed Greene's transformations to be "no doubt" partly or wholly genuine. No wonder a battalion of biographers has attested to their veracity. No wonder critics have been fooled for centuries. It's just literature, but it's highly effective literature. Orson Welles would have approved.

Now we can account for why Greene's autobiography paints him in the worst possible light: It is not an autobiography; it is a literary exercise. We can also see

why the language is so intense. Oxford went just as over-the-top with confession as he had done with euphuism. It's finally clear, too, why Greene's transformation has fooled even the brightest of scholars of Elizabethan literature: Oxford, the consummate playwright, created a compelling role and played it to the hilt. He proved he could out-sermonize what Greene called the typical "preacher [who will] carelessly and unskilfully...utter such balde stuffe" (Robert Greene, preface to *An Oration or Funeral Sermon* [1585]). Greene wasn't wallowing in self-condemnation; Oxford was having a rollicking romp, which, he had earlier declared, "I hope your Lordship will be glad...to read."

Greene's transformation is a triumph of feigned sincerity by the Earl of Oxford, who as the writer behind Shakespeare can present a picture of genuine humanity no matter what type of person he depicts. In modern times, some critics' belief that the author of *The Repentance* is not Robert Greene but some unknown Puritan is more testimony to Oxford's ability to create any type of human character, whether king, princess, constable, villain, witch, or sinner.

This context explains why "Harvey's account notably lacks any reference to [Greene's] repentance" and why "indeed, Nashe throughout [his books] makes no comment on Greene's repentance" (Crupi 28, 30). There wasn't any repentance, and Oxford's acquaintances knew it. In the third of his *Four Letters*, Gabriel Harvey flatly discounts Greene's conversion and labels him an "Arch-atheist." (1: 190) Harvey knew that Greene's devotional language was posturing and his conversion fictional.

Finally, there is the deceased author's own admission that *Groats-worth* is fictional. In 1593, the spirit of Robert Greene, writing in *Greenes Newes both from Heaven and Hell* (brought to press by "B.R."), makes this statement:

For if you had but scene *Greenes farewell to folly* [and] one other of my bookes called *Greenes groats worth of wit*: why, if there were but one peny worth of wit equally distributed you shall finde no lesse cause to laugh at the one, then to beleeeve the other.

Thus, Greene's own ghost – quite likely animated by the still-living Earl of Oxford – openly declares that *Groats-worth* is a fabrication not to be believed.

Confirmation from a Knowledgeable Admirer

Twenty-five years after Greene's death, a certain "I.H." (conjectured to be John Hind or Jasper Heyworth) appended a prose address and a poem to the 1617 quarto of *Greene's Groats-worth of Wit*. His address (rendered in full in Carroll, pages 99-103) clandestinely suggests that he knew *Groats-worth* was fiction and that "Robert Greene" was a pseudonym of the Earl of Oxford. His essay on literary creation makes at least four barely translucent references to Greene's famous book, as follows:

A Witte, that runnes this sublunarie Maze, and takes but Nature for its Originall, makes Reason, and Judgement, a payre of false spectacles, where-through [he] falles hudwinckt into the pitfall of his owne Folly.

Piping-hot Poetrie . . . notwithstanding she come cladde in the richest habite of Skill, and pranked out in the liveliest colours of Conceit; yet before Censures blinking eye, she appeares but an ill-favoured Dowdie.

Wit and Honesty cannot abide each others Company; for Necessitie is the go-betweene, to set 'em at oddes.

Now Reader . . . behold a drie and *withered shadow*, (which once was *Greene*) appeare in his native colour; new dipt, and a fresh glosse set on him; ready to enter upon the Stage of trial, to answeere upon's Cu, and speake his owne part. [original italics omitted except for this paragraph] (Carroll 99-101).

I interpret his words as follows:

This book is a maze wherein even a smart person will get lost if he assumes nature is its model. If you assume the book is based in reality, reason will hoodwink you and judgment will fail you.

Critics have no idea what a skillful piece of work this book is. They don't think much of it because they don't understand the brilliance of its conception. [That is, Greene's breaking off in the middle of his story to bare his heart and mind is nothing but effective literary manipulation of the reader.]

Greene could have been brilliant or honest, but not both.

A shadow, not an actual person, once was Greene. And the shadow was an actor, speaking a part.

I.H. also uses the words *pranked* and *colours*, which feature in Greene's attacks on players, as quoted above.

After discussing the book in prose, I.H. turns to praising its author in verse. In "Greenes Epitaph," he calls Greene "Minerva's nurse child," Minerva being Pallas, the Spear-Shaker, whom Oxfordians postulate is the basis of the pen-name "Shakespeare." He also calls him "great Apollo's sonne," perhaps referring to Orpheus, who charmed Hell with his music, as Oxford was an accomplished musician and both Greene and Shakespeare's writings are full of songs. He labels him "Englands second Cicero," referring to the Roman statesman; so about whom is I.H. really talking – the commoner-hermit Robert Greene or the politically active Edward de Vere? He tells us in his final couplet:

To make's not being, be, as he hath beene,

Greene, never-wither'd, ever-wither'd Greene.

In these obscure lines, I.H. says that Greene's "not being" was made to *be*; Oxford made a non-existent person exist, by way of his works. He puns on *E.Ver* in the final line, juxtaposing *never* and *ever* as Shakespeare often does. In closing, he says that Greene was *ever*-withered (being but a shadow) yet *never*-withered in that his works will live forever.

Greene's Legacy

Oxford's hoax has had a confounding effect on scholars. Storojenko lamented, "We can find no author whose writings and life are so opposed to each other, so decidedly contradictory, and seemingly so irreconcilable, as Greene's" (Storojenko 1:60). "Such phrases," noted Jordan, "are common among Greene's critics" (Jordan 75fn).

Recognizing that Greene's life is fictional and that Oxford had a model for it makes all the contradictions and mysteries evaporate. The true author is the Earl of Oxford, who wrote all the material under the names Robert Greene and William Shakespeare. Even though Oxford explained to readers exactly what he was doing, he played the part of Robert Greene so well that people believed he was real.



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