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ESSAY

'My Beloved the AVTHOR': The Subtext of Ben Jonson's First Folio Encomium to William Shakespeare

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HIGHLIGHTS

Did poet Ben Jonson, a master of double meanings, identify Edward de Vere as the author Shakespeare in his famous tribute poem in the historic *First Folio*?

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the ingenious hidden allusions and double meanings that Jonson embedded throughout his famous tribute 'To the Memory of my Beloved the Author Mr William Shakespeare', shedding new light on misunderstood phrases such as 'Small Latine and lesse Greeke', 'Sweet Swan of Avon', 'my gentle Shakespeare' and 'Shine forth, thou starre of Poets', which reveal by number, pun, innuendo and learned literary allusion, that Jonson was alive to the fact that "William Shakespeare" was the pseudonym of one of the Age's most revered literary patrons and concealed poets – Edward de Vere 17th Earl of Oxford.

KEYWORDS

Shakespeare, Shakespeare Authorship Question, Ben Jonson, First Folio, Edward de Vere.

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INTRODUCTION

Ben Jonson's magnificent 80-line tribute to the 'memorie' of the author William Shakespeare and his literary legacy was first printed in 1623 on recto and verso of the fifth preliminary leaf of a book containing 36 plays now known as the First Folio (See Appendix for text). It was reprinted, once during Jonson's lifetime, on the eighth preliminary leaf of the Second Folio of 1632, with minor amendments to spelling and punctuation. Both editions were dedicated to his patrons, the brothers William and Philip Herbert, respectively the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery. No manuscript has survived.

While Holland (ca. 1624) responded by hailing Jonson a 'recent vindicator of buried genius', others were critical of his intentions.[1] Dryden (1693) called the poem an 'Insolent, Sparing and Invidious Panegyrick', while Malone (1816) complained of its 'clumsy sarcasm and many malevolent reflections.'[2] Had they better understood his method, and indeed the methods of many of his learned literary contemporaries, they might not have been so scathing, for it was the common practice among Tudor and early Jacobean poets to lace their lines with multiple meanings. They were emulating, with reverence, the classical poets whom Harrington (1607) wrote would 'wrap, as it were, their writings in divers and sundrie meanings which they call the sences or mysteries thereof.'[3] Beneath the surface or literal sense – usually a history of the deeds

and exploits of someone worthy of memory – was buried a moral sense or some profound truth of natural philosophy, politics or divinity. The result was high-brow literary 'allegory' which word, according to Harrington, 'Plutarch defineth to be, when one thing is told and by that another thing is understood.' J.B. Black in his comprehensive 1959 history of the Elizabethan age notes that 'the passion for [this kind of writing] was universal in the days of Shakespeare, Jonson and Fletcher: it flung itself like a creeper over the entire literary output of the period'.[4]

Jonson's contemporaries reckoned him above all others to be the master of double-meaning and Jonson himself revelled in the fact that his works were hard to understand. He deliberately wrote in an elevated, opaque and coded language that confined his readership to a small highly educated literary elite. His worldview was an arrogant one which set the poet above the ordinary man, with an attitude borrowed from his favourite poet, Horace: *Odi profanum vulgus et arceo* - 'I hate the uninitiate crowd and keep them far away' (*Odes* III. 1). The title page of Jonson's *Workes* (1616) bears another Horatian quotation: '*neque, me vt miretur turbo laboro: Contentus paucis lectoribus*' - 'I do not labour for the crowd to admire me, I am content with a few readers' (*Satires* 1.10.73-74) . In the same volume John Selden hails Jonson with the words: 'Let Palaemon write his songs for the crowds in the street...You like to delight the ears of the learned, those of the few' (3v). Those who failed to comprehend Jonson's deeper meanings were airily dismissed as the 'ignoramus crew', the 'sluggish gaping auditor', or the 'multitude whose judgements are illiterate and rude' while in this poetic tribute to Shakespeare, Jonson chides such shallow types as 'grope and urge all by chance' or assume in their 'silliest ignorance' a hollow satisfaction with that which 'when it sounds at best but eccho's right' (2.7-8).

In a posthumously published commonplace book *Discoveries* (1640) Jonson writes enigmatically of a 'Shakespeare in our fashion' whom many post-Stratfordian scholars take to mean the Warwickshire businessman-actor as distinct from the pseudonymous playwright.[5] In this single dense and confounding paragraph of 17 lines Jonson lampoons Shakespeare as a ridiculous and irrepressible gabbler, describing him in phrases lifted directly from a passage in Seneca's *Controversiae* about a ridiculous and irrepressible gabbler called Quintus Haterius. Seneca remembers Haterius as a puppet orator, who could speak only as and when directed to do so by an unnamed instructor. The 'learned few' among Jonson's readers would have recognised the classical source and understood the subtle connection between puppet Haterius and actor Shakspere 'in our fashion'.[6] They might also have noted Jonson's phrase 'I doe honour his memory (on this side idolatry)' and linked it to the sin of 'idolatry' (the setting up of false idols) in Jonson's celebrated honouring of Shakespeare memory: 'To the memorie of my beloved, Mr William Shakespeare'. In *Discoveries*, Jonson intriguingly precedes his remarks on Shakespeare with thoughts and ideas concerning falsehood and the general ignorance of those who could not distinguish a writer from a fencer or a wrestler:

> The power of liberal studies lies more hid, than that it can be wrought out by profane wits... The Writer must lie, and the gentle Reader rests happy, to heare the worthiest works misinterpreted, the clearest actions obscured; the innocent'st life traduc'd... As Euripides saith, No lye ever grows old... indeed, the multitude commend Writers, as they do Fencers, or Wrestlers. But in these things the unskilfull are deceived; nor think this only to be true in the sordid multitude, but the neater sort of our Gallants: for all are the multitude; only they differ in cloaths, not in judgment or understanding.
> (*Discoveries*, in Herford & Simpson, Vol. 8, p. 56)

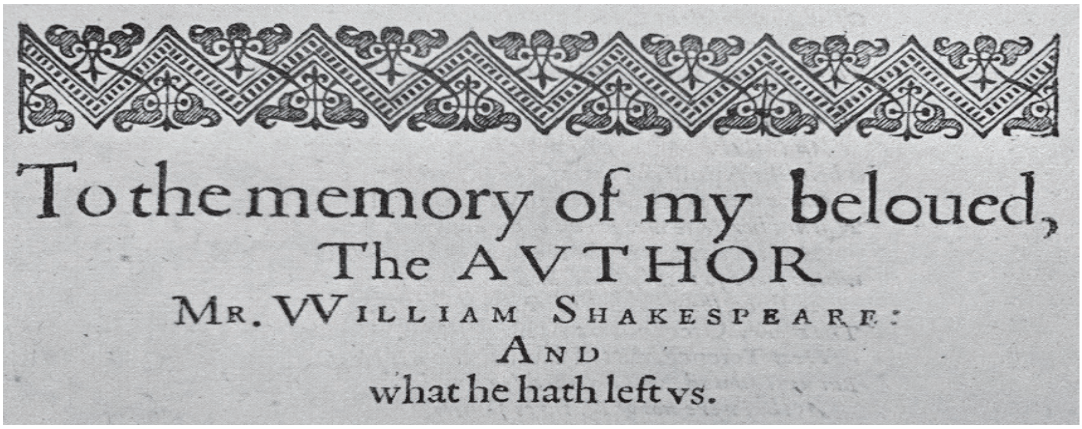
To the memory of my beloued,
The AVTHOR
Mr. William Shakespeare:
And
what he hath left vs.

Figure 1. *The odd title of Jonson's tribute.*

The Title

The title of Jonson's tribute is notable for two reasons – his description of 'The AVTHOR' as 'my beloued', and his typography. The epithet 'my beloved' has led many to assume Jonson to have been a close personal friend of William Shakspere of Stratford, nine years his senior. Greenwood (1921), however, searched in vain, finding 'nothing whatever to show that there was any real intimacy, nay, friendship between Jonson and William Shakspere' (viii), while Gilvary (2018) after careful analysis of all relevant contemporary documents concluded that 'overall, there is no firm basis for stating that Jonson and Shakespeare were ever known to each other personally... the biographers of Shakespeare have imagined a relationship, which goes far beyond the existing evidence'.[7]

As to his typography (See Figure 1), the sizing of letters was an ancient way of conveying emphasis and Jonson was known to lean over the shoulders of his compositors directing their typographical formulae in order to convey meanings above and beyond the sense of the words they were typesetting.[8] In the title to this poem the exaggerated font size and bold inking of the word 'AVTHOR' compared with the small font size and fainter inking of 'VVILLIAM SHAKESPEARE' conveys an extra-lexical messaging. Note how the A in AVTHOR is twice the size and boldness of the A in WILLIAM printed directly beneath it. Should these sizes not have been reversed so that the name was bigger and more prominent than the job description? Were the intrusive words 'The AVTHOR' even necessary? Would 'To the memory of my beloved MR WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE and what he hath left us' not have done the trick? Note how the capital 'A' of 'AND' printed below the name is also considerably larger than the capital 'A's in 'William' and 'Shakespeare'. The effect of such an unusual arrangement is to promote the 'AVTHOR', at least to the mind's eye, as one of greater importance and more beloved of Jonson, than the name - a first hint perhaps that 'William Shakespeare' is not the true name of the 'author' to whom the plays in this book are attributed.

The Refusal (lines 1-16)

Unaware, perhaps, that Jonson was emulating a well-established classical model (Meskill, 2009) protests that his opening lines constitute 'a ritual denial...one of the strangest openings in the history of panegyric'.[9] By declaration Jonson begins his poem on line 17 ('I, therefore will begin'), leaving the first eight couplets to serve as a detached exordium in the Augustan tradition of '*recusatio*' or 'refusal'. Latin authors were well practised in this popular poetic form, which aped the emperors' refusals to evoke exceptional powers (*recusatio imperii*), by putting into verse their own refusals to accept commissions from their wealthy patrons.

Perhaps the most famous example of this is to be found in Horace's verse epistle to Augustus (2.1) in which the poet refuses Augustus's commission to compose an epic song in praise of a recent military victory at the outset of which Horace artfully confuses 'the prince as poet' only to return at the end to muse on the lofty idea of 'the poet as prince'.[10] Such themes would be irrelevant to Jonson's encomium to Shakespeare were it not for the possibility of a poet and prince of the English nobility concealed behind the pen-name 'Shakespeare'.[11] There can be little doubt that Jonson had Horace's epistles in mind when he composed these lines for he closes the section by comparing the praise of Shakespeare's name to the false flattery of a respectable matron (a married woman) by a 'bawd or whore' (13-15), an idea borrowed from Horace's epistle to Lollius: 'As a matron and a whore will differ in temper and tone, so will the true friend be distinct from the faithless flatterer' (18. pp. 1-4). In *Discoveries* he complains of the effect of false flattery specifically upon noble persons: 'It is as great a spite to be praised in the wrong place and by the wrong person, as can be done to a noble nature' (ll. 173-174).

Jonson's *recusatio* is a refusal to praise the bracketed *name* of 'Shakespeare' - 'To draw no envy (Shakespeare) on thy name'. Having explained that Shakespeare's *writings* are the true and worthy object of all men's highest opinion ('all mens suffrage') , he proceeds to give three reasons why he will not praise the author's name. Each of these reasons relates to *truth* as perceived first by sight, then by hearing and lastly through speech (7-12). First he warns that praise of Shakespeare's name could lead to those of 'silliest ignorance' being unable to distinguish a true sound from a mere echo (7-8); secondly that those of 'blind affection' might be left groping through darkness in vain pursuit of truth (9-10) and finally that those of 'crafty malice' might seek to confound the truth by pretending their praise - not to extol the playwright's fame - but to ruin it (11-12). That Jonson's three reasons for not praising Shakespeare's name are each concerned with *truth* is corroborated by remarks later published in *Discoveries.* In respect of the first and second he describes 'ignorance' as the 'darkner of man's life...the common confounder of Truth with which a man goes groping in the darke, no otherwise than he were blind' (2. pp. 801-806) and, in respect of the third (concerning 'crafty malice') he writes: 'Without truth all the actions of mankind are craft, malice, or what you will, rather than Wisdom' (ll. 534-536).

Was Jonson's *recusatio* written in response to an instruction from the folio's patrons to praise the name of

Shakespeare? We may never know, but his willingness to write verses in praise of other people's names renders his refusal to do the same for Shakespeare an anomaly in need of explanation.[12]

Jonson's first four lines vow to defend Shakespeare against envy, while his remark: 'While I confesse thy writings to be such /As neither Man nor Muse, can praise too much' bears striking resemblance to lines published under the 'posy' or penname 'Ignoto' meaning 'The Unknown':

> Thus then to shew my iudgment to be such
> As can discern, of colours blacke and white,
> As alls to free my minde from enuies tuch,
> That never gives to any man his right,
> I here pronounce this workmanship is such,
> As that no pen can set it forth too much.

'The Unknown' is praising Spenser in the prefatory pages of the first edition of *The Faerie Queene* (1590). In the same edition (two pages on) Spenser hints at the identity of 'Ignoto' in lines addressed 'to the right Honourable Earle of Oxenford' in which he extols Oxford's 'long living memory' and his loving communion with the Muses while calling upon him to defend his *Faerie Queene* from 'Envy's poisonous bite'. A poem using this same posy ('Ignoto') printed in 1600 ('In Peascod Time') is assigned to Oxford by a contemporary MS at the British Library (Rawl. poet. 172, fol. 6v), while other 'Ignoto' poems from *Englands Helicon* (1600) are printed as by 'William Shakespeare' in *The Passionate Pilgrime* (1599).[13]

'My Shakespeare' (lines 17-19)

Early Modern poets were often commended by use of the possessive adjective 'our' as a way of enrolling them into a pantheon of England's national treasures, as for example 'our Chaucer' (Ascham, 1570), 'our Spenser' (Purchas, 1613), 'our Shake-speare' (Digges, 1623), 'our Fletcher, our Dunn, our Sidney, our Bacon' (Belasye, 1657). In this familiar context Jonson's double use of '*My* Shakespeare' (ll. 19 & 56) is striking, for in calling upon *his* beloved, 'Soule of the Age! ... the Wonder of our Stage!' to 'rise' he appears to be consciously distancing *his* poet, *his* beloved from '*our* Shakespeare' whose name is ignorantly, craftily or maliciously lauded by the common multitude in his *recusatio* (ll. 1-16). That Jonson's address to '*My* Shakespeare' should begin on the 17th line and proceed from the 17-word title's last line of 17 letters by leap-frogging the *recusatio*, serves to connect Jonson's Shakespeare with the number 17 in much the same way as William Covell connected this same number to Shakespeare by aligning his margent note 'Sweet Shakspeare' to a charade revealing 'our de Vere – a secret' in *Polimanteia* in 1595.[14]

His 'moniment' (lines 19-24)

As Jonson was composing his panegyric to Shakespeare, manuscript copies of an elegy (now thought to be by William Basse) were circulating privately among learned men. The opening couplets of Basse's poem called upon the interred corpses of Spenser, Beaumont and Chaucer to budge up to make room for Shakespeare's remains: 'Renowned Spenser lie a thought more nigh / To learned Beaumont, and rare Beaumont lye a little nearer Chaucer to make room / For Shakespeare in your threefold-four-fold tombe'. Cain and Connolly (2022) correctly note that Basse's poem 'places Shakespeare in what was to become known as Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey', thus aligning Basse's understanding of where Shakespeare was buried to that of other prominent 17th century authors such as Davenant (1638), Sheppard (1651), Denham (1667) and Short (1674), all of whom left written testimony to suggest that Shakespeare's true grave was not beneath the carved monument at Stratford-on-Avon but somewhere in Westminster Abbey.[15] That Shakespeare's mortal remains were hidden in an unmarked tomb ('this uncarved marble') clearly irked Basse who feared that his 'precedency' (i.e. his social rank), even in death, might prohibit acknowledgment of his burial near to Chaucer, Beaumont and Spenser.

> But if Precedencie in death doe barre
> A fourth place in your sacred Sepulcher,
> In this uncarved marble of thy owne,
> Sleep, brave Tragedian, Shakespeare, sleepe alone.

Basse's poem closes with a plea that Shakespeare should possess his tomb 'as Lord, not tenant...that unto others it may counted be / Honour hereafter to be layed by thee'. He wished for Shakespeare's 'uncarved marble' to bear witness to his name, titles and literary achievements.

Jonson, who was doubtless aware of Shakespeare's published declaration 'My name be buried where my body is' (Sonnet 72), responds directly to Basse's poem by dismissing Shakespeare's burial 'without a tombe' (l. 22) as of no concern on account of his immortal works which will remain alive so long as his 'book doth live' (l. 23). Here Jonson leans, once again, on Horace (*Odes*, Book 2,), in which the classical poet prophesises his own death and the immortality of his work, imploring his patron,

Maecenas, to 'restrain all cries and do not trouble with the empty tribute a tomb' (ll. 23-24).

The word 'moniment' – so spelled with an 'i' – is entered into George Mason's *Supplement to Johnson's Dictionary* (1801) where it is defined as an 'inscription.'[16] 'Thou art a Moniment without a Tombe' may mean that Shakespeare is remembered by an 'inscription' at Stratford-on-Avon while his body lies, as Basse hinted, at Westminster Abbey near to Beaumont, Chaucer and Spencer in an unmarked grave. Jonson must have been aware of the Stratford monument and its riddling, cryptic epitaph. Green (1989, rev. 2001). makes a compelling case that he was the author of it, while another tribute to Shakespeare from the prefatory pages of the 1623 folio affirms that 'we alive shall view thee still' when 'Time dissolves thy Stratford Moniment.[17] The word 'dissolve' in the sense of to 'decipher', 'solve' or 'figure out' is so used by Gardiner (1551) who wrote of those 'who labour with questions to *dissolve the truth* of the misterie' (p. 135), and by Beaumont and Fletcher (ca. 1616-1619) who wrote 'at last we shall *dissolve this Riddle'* (V.ii.59). The riddle on the Stratford monument to Shakespeare was 'dissolved' in 2014: 'Figure out if you can (in this monument) with whom Shakespeare is buried' or, in the precise obfuscatory words of the stone itself: 'Read if thou canst, whom envious Death hath placed, with in this monument Shakspeare:' (see Figure 2 below). The riddle's solution is to be found in the Latin couplet above: 'Earth covers the Pylean with his judgment, Socrates with his genius and Maro with his art' – respective allusions to Beaumont, Chaucer and Spencer, buried in precisely that order at Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, a few yards from where Shakespeare's marble monument was erected in 1740.[18]

Oxford, who died in June 1604, was buried at the parish church of St Augustine's Hackney, but according to his first cousin and Vere family historian, Percival Golding, his remains were, by 1619, lying at Westminster, where, to this day, no carved marble preserves his memory.[19]

Jonson (ca. 1612) compares *his* Shakespeare to John Lyly, Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe, three playwrights of the 1580s, but why does he list these three as Shakespeare's contemporaries ('if my iudgement were of yeeres') when none of them can be shown to have written a single play for stage performance after 1593, the year in which the name 'William Shakespeare' was *first* associated with literature?[20] Modern orthodoxy places the composition of all of Shakespeare's plays roughly between the years 1590 and 1614, but no single play can be assigned to a specific year without controversy.

By describing Shakespeare's peers Lyly, Kyd and Marlowe, as 'disproportn'd Muses' (26) whom he 'did outshine' Jonson casts Shakespeare in the role of Apollonian *patron* of the three lesser dramatists, for Apollo was, first and foremost, patron of the Muses and, as 'Phoebus' the embodiment of the outshining sun. Jonson corroborates this connection in line 45 when 'like Apollo he came forth to warme our ears' (l. 45). Martin Doeshout's famous engraving of Shakespeare which serves as the folio's title page, depicts the dramatist as Phoebus-Apollo brightly shining from behind the theatrical mask of a player with sun rays bursting forth on his collar.

William of Stratford, being no patron of the muses, would never be described as Phoebus-Apollo by his contemporaries. Oxford, however, was drama's most generous patron in the 1580s when Kyd, Marlowe and Lyly were in their literary prime. According to playwright Robert Greene, Oxford was a 'Maecenas ... to whom all scholars flock'. Thomas Nashe (1592) wrote in a dedication to him: 'all poor scholars acknowledge you as their patron, providitore and supporter, for there cannot be a threadbare cloak sooner peepe forth, but you strait presse it to be an outbroker of your bounty.'[21] Among the poets and playwrights to whom he served as 'providitore and supporter' in the 1580s were John Lyly, Anthony Munday, Thomas Churchyard, Thomas Watson, Thomas Nashe, Robert Greene and several others among the so-called 'university wits' - all of whom are said by Stratfordian commen-

The Patron (lines 25-30)

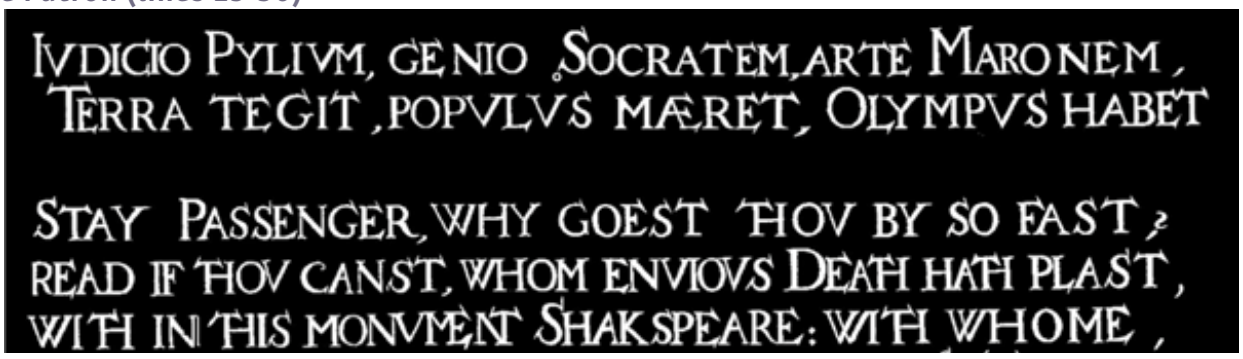

Figure 2 *The riddle in the epitaph to Shakespeare from the wall monument at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford on Avon.*

tators to have influenced Shakespeare. Marlowe's close friends Nashe and Chapman respectively described him as 'our Patron, our Phoebus' and as 'liberal as the Sun' while Oxford, who alluded to himself as an Apollo, was likewise alluded to by Spenser, Watson, Day, Lyly, Davison, Lok, Soowthern, Meres, Harvey, Coryate, Heywood and John Bodenham as Apollo. A significant body of evidence showing that Marlowe and Kyd were among the dramatists evicted from Oxford's scriptorium following a rent scandal at Mistress Juliana Penne's house at St Peters Hill in 1591 is assembled in a sleuthing paper entitled '1591 – A Watershed Year for Oxford and the English Theatre'.[22]

'Small Latine and Lesse Greeke' (lines 31-49)

In 1767, Cambridge don Richard Farmer, published an essay entitled 'On the Learning of Shakespeare' which took as its starting point Jonson's remark 'though thou hadst small Latine and lesse Greeke' to advance a theory that the playwright was ignorant of those languages and of the great body of classical literature written in them. Farmer's thesis was controversial at the time and has since spawned an industry of rebuttal. Collins (1904), Bullough (1957-1976), Werth (2002) and Bate (2019) are among many who have insisted that Shakespeare's knowledge of the Classics was considerable - far greater than that which could be garnered between the ages of 7 and 13 at the Stratford free school.[23] What then did Jonson mean by Shakespeare's 'Small Latine and Lesse Greeke'?

Jonson's works lean heavily on classical sources and formulae, both overt and veiled, while Shakespeare's learning is worn lightly as his works appear to stand in sympathy with the reforming, anti-scholastic movement which aimed to free English literature and language from pedantic classical influences, to bring an end to the habit of bulking out written English with Latinate inkhorn words and to reject the rules of rhetoric and grammar imposed on written English through centuries of misguided pedagogy. Until the 1570s deviations from the grammatical rules of Priscian, the fifth century author of *Institutiones Grammaticae* ('Institutes of Grammar'), was deemed an unacceptable breach of English linguistic manners. Wainwright (2018) identified Oxford, his father-in-law (Lord Burghley) and his tutor (Thomas Smith) as leading English followers of Petrus Ramus (1515-1572) a French humanist who campaigned against the imposition of Aristotle's unities of Time, Place and Action (as did Shakespeare) and forcefully opposed the pedantic intrusion of Priscian's Latin rules into the European vernacular languages.[24]

Oxford stood at the forefront of this movement which strove to minimise the influence of Latin and ancient Greek on English verse by discarding antiquated models while actively seeking to enrich the vernacular tongue by the reintroduction of old and obsolete English words, phrases and meters, mined from early masters such as Chaucer, Lydgate and Gower.[25] In 1592 Thomas Nashe praised Oxford as the 'famous persecutor of Priscian' entrusted to ensure that 'Chaucer bee new scourd against the day of battaile, and Terence come but in nowe and then with the snuffe of a sentence'. Within four years of making this statement Nashe confirmed that Oxford had achieved 'high fame' by his pen as the 'first in our language that repurified Poetrie from Arts pedantism, & instructed it to speak courtly'.[26]

In 1998, independent scholar Nina Green published compelling evidence revealing Oxford as the mysterious annotator of Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* hidden behind the initials 'E.K', who, in 1579 railed against those English writers that 'make our English tongue a gallimaufray or hodgepodge' by 'patching up the holes with pieces and rags from other languages, borrowing here of the French, here of the Italian, everywhere from the Latine; not weighing how ill those tongues accord with themselves, but much worse with ours.'[27] That which Nashe most admired in his literary patron, his natural wit and his use of 'wonted Chaucerisms', were not however universally accepted. Philip Sidney, Oxford's social and literary rival, criticised poets reintroducing 'olde rusticke language' to 'bewtify our mother tongue' while Jonson, complained of Lucretius's efforts to reintroduce antiquated words into Latin in the first century BCE, adding 'as some do *Chaucerisms* with us, which were better expunged or banished.'[28] Gabriel Harvey (1578) publicly mocked Oxford as 'this English poet' who, while affecting the clothes and mannerisms of the Italians, insisted on 'valorous' (i.e. chivalrous or courtly) linguistic Chaucerisms: 'Stowte, Lowte, Plaine, Swayne, quoth a Lording.'[29]

In light of this literary controversy Jonson's phrase 'though thou hadst smalle Latine and lesse Greeke' may, with little intellectual strain, be transferred from the man to the anti-scholasticism of his works, as if to say: 'though you borrowed little from Latin and even less from ancient Greek authors, yet may I compare your works with the best of Latin and Greek playwrights' an interpretation which brings Jonson neatly into line with his friend Leonard Digges (1588-1635) who wrote that Shakespeare 'doth not borrow one phrase from Greekes, nor Latines imitate, nor once from vulgar Languages Translate'. Anti-scholasticism surely provides the spur to Jonson's remark that Shakespeare's natural wit leaves classical playwrights 'antiquated and deserted ... as though they were

not of nature's family' (ll. 50-54).

It was not for lack of learning in Latin and Greek that Shakespeare wrote as he did, but the result of a deliberate policy, inspired by patriotic ambition to purify the English language and pave the way for a new English literature designed to supersede the great continental literatures of France, Italy, Ancient Greece and Rome. Jonson vouches that Shakespeare has succeeded in this ambition by giving Britain 'one to showe / To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe' (ll. 41-42).

Jonson cannot have been ignorant of Oxford's public enthusiasm for Baldassare Castiglione's (1528) handbook of courtly manners, *Il Courtegiano* (*The Courtier*). In a Latin preface which appeared in no fewer than six editions between 1571 and 1612, Oxford recorded his 'highest and greatest praises' for Castiglione's work which he had 'studied with a mind full of gratitude' both in the original Italian as well as in Bartholemew Clerke's Latin translation. *The Courtier* was to Oxford the 'most noble and most magnificent task ever undertaken' . Castiglione advised the courtier to act with '*sprezzatura*' a newly coined word implying 'a certain nonchalance, so as to conceal all art and make whatever one does or says appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it'.[30]

Following the publication of Oxford's Latin edition of *The Courtier*, the concealment of learning, skill, practice and application ('trade') in poetry became a hallmark of the English *courtier* poet. As the anonymous author of *The Arte of English Poesie* recorded in 1589:

> We do allow our courtly poet to be a dissembler only in the subtleties of his art; that is when he is most artificial [i.e. artful], so to disguise and cloak it as it may not appear, nor seem to proceed from him by any study or trade of rules, but to be natural.[31]

The courtly concealment of Oxford's poetic 'Art', was noted as early as 1579 when his aesthetic was explained as 'an arte or rather no arte, but a divine gift or heavenly instinct, not to be gotten by laboure and learning, but adorned with both'.[32] Leonard Digges (c.1623?) echoed these words when describing Shakespeare's 'Art without Art', a concept confirmed by John Warren (1640) in his reference to Shakespeare's 'learned poems' in which only those 'with true judgment can discerne his Art'.[33]

Thus Jonson, who was surely aware of all this, had multiple reasons for allowing those of 'silliest ignorance' to be misled by the phrase 'small Latine and lesse Greeke.' He was opposed to some of the aesthetic aims of the anti-scholastic movement and may have been under an obligation to deflect attention from a concealed courtier poet. Several commentators have suggested that he suffered from envy of a fellow playwright whose talents were greater and more natural than his own. Endymion Porter (c. 1628) accused Jonson and Ford of 'contriving a rape' on Shakespeare's fame 'to raise their pedant selves'.[34] It is tempting to assume that shame over his posthumous treatment of Shakespeare later inspired Jonson to write:

> It is a barbarous envy to take from those mens vertues, which because thou canst not arrive at, thou impotently despairest to imitate. Is it a crime in me that I know that, which others had not yet knowne, but from me? Or that I am the Author of many things, which never would have come in thy thought but that I taught them?' (*Discoveries,* ll. 262-267)

Nature versus Art (lines 41-70)

'To the memorie' is a poem of two halves, each of 40 lines, in which the second mirrors the first. As the opening *recusatio* had warned that historical truth would be distorted by the vulgar praises of Shakespeare's name, so the second half begins with 16 lines explaining how Britons may triumph in their erroneous notion of a Shakespeare whose literary successes were solely attributable to 'Nature' – that is, to innate and instinctive genius. From the 17th line of the second half (l. 57) Jonson presents his case against this common misconception. Proceeding from a warning that we 'must not give Nature all' (l. 55) he records how 'My gentle Shakespeare' by dint of hard work (his 'sweat') had cast his lines, like a blacksmith at a forge, 'striking the second heat upon the Muses anvile' (ll.60-61) to produce an 'art' that was hidden from those of 'blinde affection'.

Jonson explains how Shakespeare, by his 'Art', succeeded in perfecting Nature (the 'Poets matter') thus allowing his 'minde and manners' (i.e. his virtue) to shine brightly 'in his well-turned and true filed lines' (ll.67-68) - a notion that boldly reflects Oxford's words: 'although Nature herself has brought nothing to perfection in every detail, yet the manners of men exceed in dignity that with which Nature has endowed them.'[35] In Shakespeare's 'well-turned and true filed lines' Jonson may also have been alluding to hereditary 'lines' as the children of Lord Montgomery (patron and dedicatee of Shakespeare's 1623 folio) were Oxford's granddaughters and grandsons.

Shakespeare's courtly aspect is further underscored by Jonson's epithet 'My gentle Shakespeare' (l.56) reminding the reader of a noble poet who conceals his 'Art' by sprezzatura, just as he conceals his true identity from the general public. The English word 'gentle' derives from

the French gentil meaning 'high-born' or 'noble' and is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as: 'well born, belonging to a family of position, originally used synonymously with noble'.

In 1578, Cambridge don Gabriel Harvey publicly lauded Oxford's epistle from *The Courtier*. His eye had been caught by Oxford's comments on Nature and Art and by his praise of Castiglione as one who 'surpassing others has here surpassed himself, and has even outdone Nature which by no-one has ever been surpassed.'[36] Praising Oxford's style Harvey wrote that he 'testifies how much he excels in letters, being more polished and more courtly than Castiglione himself' adding that Oxford's virtue 'wondrously penetrates the aethereal orbs ... with that mind, that fire and noble heart you will surpass yourself, surpass others and your great glory will everywhere spread beyond the frozen ocean'.[37] The idea of Oxford's 'great glory' spreading, like some enormous cloak, beyond the poles, thus clothing all of Nature, is elaborated by Jonson in four skilfully written lines about Shakespeare:

> Nature her selfe was proud of his designs,
> And ioy'd to weare the dressing of his lines!
> Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
> As since, she will vouchsafe no other wit
> (ll.47-50)

In the same address Harvey, memorably compares Oxford to Pallas-Minerva, writing that his: 'will shakes spears'.[38] Jonson makes the same connection stating how every line of Shakespeare's 'seemes to shake a Lance / as brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance' (ll.69-70)'. This allusion to the spear-shaking goddess of the Greeks and Romans comes dangerously close to revealing 'William Shakespeare' as a classically inspired pseudonym, for Minerva was not only patron goddess of playwrights to the Romans, but as 'Pallas' to the Greeks (whose name derives from πάλλειν as in the 'shaking of a spear'), who, by her will, did shake the spear of Achilles at Ilium enabling him to slay Hector. By reminding his readers of Pallas-Minerva's role as patron goddess of knowledge (the divine enemy of ignorance) Jonson deftly returns them to his opening *recusatio* and his strike against those of 'silliest ignorance' who see fit to praise a name that, to the learned, stands out as an obvious classically inspired literary pseudonym (ll.1-16).[39]

'Swan of Avon' (lines 71-74)

Jonson's epithet 'Sweet Swan of Avon!' has long been used in support of Stratfordian narratives. The swan has served since the days of Horace and Virgil as the symbol of a poet and since Shakespeare's verse was lauded as 'sweet', 'honeyed', 'sugared', 'mellifluous' by his contemporaries, it has been argued that 'Sweet Swan of Avon' could refer to none other than William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon. This identification has not, however, remained secure as 'Avon' (the name of no fewer than seven British rivers) was shown in 2014 to have been historically and poetically applied to the palace at Hampton Court. Early Modern poets and antiquaries John Leland, William Lambarde, Raphael Holinshed, Laurence Nowell, Henry Peacham and Richard Polwhele all testified to this.[40] According to the first of these (Leland) the name 'Hampton' was a vulgar corruption of *Avondunum* (meaning 'fort by the river') while the last (Polwhele) recorded that Hampton Court is 'now a royal palace of our sovereign, which was called Avon in that it stood on the river'.[41] William Camden, whom Jonson had hailed 'most reverend head, to whom I owe all that I am in arts, all that I know'[42] left a description of Hampton Court in his antiquarian masterpiece *Britannia*:

> A Stately place for rare and glorious shew
> There is, which *Tamis* with wandring stream doth dowse;
> Times past, by name of *Avon* men it knew:
> Heere Henrie, the Eighth of that name, built an house
> So sumptuous, as that on such an one
> (Seeke through the world) the bright Sunne never shone.[43]

Neither Queen Elizabeth ('Eliza') nor King James ('Our James') ever visited a public playhouse, so there can be little doubt that the Thames-side performances of the 'Swan of Avon's' plays to which Jonson refers ('those flights upon the bankes of Thames that so did take Eliza and our James') were staged, not at the Globe, Hope, Rose, Swan or any other public Thames-side playhouse but at these monarchs' favourite theatrical venue, the Great Hall at Hampton Court ('Avon'). Thus, in the phrase 'Sweet Swan of Avon', Jonson once again skilfully alludes to Shakespeare as a courtier poet.

While no documentary evidence can be found to place William of Stratford at any time at Hampton Court, the Earl of Oxford, described by his contemporaries George Puttenham and William Webbe as 'first' among the 'Courtly makers' and as 'the most excellent' among those 'noble Lords and gentlemen in her majesties court in the rare devises of poetry' who deserved the 'highest prize' for his comedies, had multiple links with the court and with court theatre and was present at Hampton Court on numerous occasions.[44]

Another possible connection of 'Sweet Swan of Avon' with the concept of a courtly Bard takes the reader in the direction of chivalric romance, a literary form, popular from Medieval to Early Modern times, in which a noble knight errant typically sets out on a virtuous quest. This literary form was especially beloved of Oxford, who had six books of chivalric romance dedicated to him.[45] The medieval legend of the 'Knight of the Swan' concerns a mysterious knight who, arriving by river on a swan-drawn boat, vows to undertake virtuous deeds on condition that no one ask his name. Such an allusion would have no relevance to the man from Stratford, but to Oxford, the 'concealed poet' whose verses were, according to John Bodenham (1600) published under other men's names, the connection would have been pertinent.[46] In 1804 Walter Scott wrote that 'A peer of England, the Earl of Oxford, if we recollect aright, conceited himself to be descended from the doughty Knight of the Swan'. Scott's source for this tantalizing record is unknown.[47]

Astronomical Death and Transfiguration (lines 75-80)

In his last three couplets Jonson compares the deceased and ascended playwright both to a 'constellation' and to a 'starre' (ll.76-77) which is peculiar since a star cannot by its singular nature also be a constellation. Several scholars have identified the constellation to which he refers as Cygnus (the Swan) on account of the fact that Shakespeare is addressed as 'Sweet Swan' at the beginning of the sentence (l.71) and because Jonson is likely to be alluding to a Latin ode in which Horace envisaged his own death and metamorphoses into a swan vowing to leave behind no trace on earth, no monument, only his immortal verse which he hopes will benefit mankind (Horace, *Odes* II. 20).

As Jonson left sufficient clues for the reader to identify the constellation as Cygnus so, in the extended metaphor of his last four lines, he left sufficient clues to identify the star into which Shakespeare is poetically transfigured. Taking the 'stage' as a time-honoured metaphor for the 'world' he describes a bright, shining star that first appeared *after* Shakespeare's death ('since thy flight from hence') which was visible both by night and by day and which, significantly, did 'with rage or influence, chide or cheer the drooping stage' (i.e. the drooping world).

In Jonson's day the stars were viewed as 'fixed' and the appearance of a new one was an extraordinarily miraculous and portentous event. No new star appeared in the heavens following Shakspere of Stratford's death in 1616 in time for Jonson to comment upon it in 1623. Indeed no new star appeared visible to the naked eye between 1616 and 1987. However, a sensational new star appeared for the first time in October 1604. Known as 'SN 1604' or 'Kepler's Supernova' in the constellation of Serpentaria, this new star formed the subject of lectures by Galileo and of Kepler's astrological treatise, *De Stella Nova in Pede Serpentarii* (Prague, 1606). Remarkably it was visible around the world both during the day and at night for at least three weeks. Kepler believed it to have been sent by God to exhort humans and to inform them of his divine opinions. The star was noted by contemporary artists and writers of the time including Rubens, Velazquez and John Donne. In his play *Volpone*, Jonson described it as 'the New Starre full of omen'. By this spectacular allusion Jonson discreetly informs his learned followers that *his* Shakespeare died shortly before October 1604 as Kepler's supernova was first observed to 'shine forth' on 9th October 1604 just three months and three days after Oxford's burial on 6th July 1604.

With this remarkable allusion, Jonson brings to mind Oxford's words from 'Hamlet's Book' *Cardanus Comforte* (1573): 'When all things shall forsake us virtue yet will ever abide with us and when our bodies fall into the bowels of the earth, yet that shall mount with our minds into the highest heavens.'[48]

Two years after the publication of the First Folio, Abraham Holland wrote an elegy on the death of Oxford's son, Henry, 18th Earl of Oxford, which alludes to the last six lines of Jonson's poem to Shakespeare. To Holland, the vanished supernova that Jonson had compared to the risen Shakespeare was now an 'empty space' in the heavens to be 'supplied anew' . In these lines, Holland mirrors Jonson's peculiar comparison of Shakespeare to both a constellation and a star within two consecutive lines, and applies the same figurative concept that Jonson had given to Shakespeare to Oxford's successor in titles and honours, who, in direct allusion to Jonson's lines 77-78, is described as one that 'like a Comets rage / Strikes amazement on the trembling age':

> What Starre was wanting in the Skie? what place
> To be supplied anew? What empty space
> That requir'd OXFORD? Was some Light growne dim,
> Some Starre Decrepit that suborned Him
> To darke the Earth by his Departure? Sure
> The Thracian God to make his Orbe more pure
> Hath borrow'd him; where in his fiery Carre
> He shines a better MARS, a brighter Starre?
> Or like a new Orion doth he stand
> In Christall Maile, and a bright blade in's hand
> An armed Constellation, while the Quire
> Of Pyrrhick dancers, with reflecting fire

Glitter on him? Or like a Comets rage
Strikes he amazement on the trembling age?
(C3, lines 1-14)

Shakespeare's posthumous disappearance may have been inspired by Ovid, the exiled poet who confessed his life through his works into which he ultimately metamorphosed. Many books have been written by Oxfordian scholars explaining the lengths to which Oxford, ostracised from the court, confessed his scandalous life through the plays and poems ascribed to William Shakespeare. Oxford was nephew, patron and pupil of Shakespeare's favourite translator of Ovid, Arthur Golding and, according to historian Thomas Coxeter, was himself a translator of Ovid. Shakespeare's Ovidian self-eradication, his disappearance from the biographical record and his metamorphoses into a canon of lasting works can be traced though sonnets 71, 72 and 81:

'If you read this line, remember not the hand that writ it' (71);
'In me each part will be forgotten' (81);
My name be buried where my body is and live no more to shame nor me nor you' (72);
'After my death…forget me quite' (72);
'no longer mourn me when I am dead…do not so much as my poor name rehearse (71)
for I once gone to all the world must die… your monument shall be my gentle verse' (81)

Numerical Structure

Poetic lines, verses and metrical feet were known as 'numbers' in Early Modern England and as Fowler demonstrates in his ground breaking study, *Triumphal Forms* (1970), Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser and many of the finest poets of this period typically structured their verses upon significant numbers.[49] Jonson, who was known to his contemporaries as the 'Prince of Numbers', based the structural form of his encomium to Shakespeare upon the numbers 17 and 40.

In 1570, John Dee, Queen Elizabeth's mathematician, cryptologist, oracle and sage, urged readers of his 'Mathematical Preface' to 'be led upward, by degrees, toward the conceiving of numbers absolutely that at length we may be able to find the number of our own name gloriously exemplified and registered in the book of the *Trinitie* most blessed and aeternal'.[50] Oxford chose 17 and 40 as numbers that aligned his name to the Trinity, a fact that was evidently recognised by a host of contemporary authors including Covell (1595), Porter (1596), Holland (1623), Heywood (1635), Warren (1640) and Sheppard (1651).[51] The number 1740 may be decoded in four different ways from Oxford's signature (see Figure 3), once on images of Oxford's uncarved marble tomb at Hackney, on the Shakespeare monument at Stratford-upon-Avon, in the Sonnets' dedication (1609), and four times on Peter Scheemaker's marble monument to Shakespeare erected at Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey in 1740. The first appearance of Shakespeare's name in a literary context (the 1593 dedication of *Venus and Adonis* to Southampton) is book-ended by representations of 17 and 40 as are the sonnets in the editions of 1609 as well as the last words of the autobiographical Prince Hamlet in the first folio edition of 1623.[52]

In his encomium to Shakespeare, Jonson specifically marks passages in which Shakespeare is addressed in the second person and passages in which he is referred to in the third person by counts of 17 or 40 lines thereafter. His title of 17 words, which introduces the poem's 40 rhyming couplets, refers to Shakespeare in the third person ('he'). The first 40 lines of the poem are addressed to the playwright in the second person ('thee/thy'), while the second half (also comprising 40 lines) begins with Jonson's address to Britain ('Triumph, my Britaine') . By declaration the poem begins on the 17th line ('I, therefore will begin') with a sentence in which the poet pointedly addresses his subject as '*My* Shakespeare' (19). On the 17th line of the second page Jonson turns his address from Britain back to Shakespeare in the *second* person ('*Thy* Art, My gentle Shakespeare'). Including the subscript ('BEN: IONSON') Shakespeare is re-referred to in the *third* person starting from the 17th line from the end ('Looke how the fathers face Lives in *his* issue'), thus separating the two later passages in which he is addressed in the *second* person – '*Thy* Art' (line 55) and 'Sweet Swan of Avon what a sight it were to see *thee*…' (71-72) by 17 lines.

With astounding ingenuity Oxford succeeded in aligning his name, title and earldom number to the 'blessed Trinitie' using the numbers 17 and 40, while mirroring the same (40 and 17) in his chosen pseudonym. In simple gematria the letter V (the 20th letter of the Latin Roman alphabet) is 20. Double V ('VV') therefore equals 40 (there being no W in the Latin alphabet). Thus 'VVilliam Shakespeare' as printed in Jonson's title represents the number 40 followed by 17 letters 'ILLIAM SHAKESPEARE' which, as stated, ingeniously evoke associations with Pallas-Minerva (patron goddess of the playwrights) with her spear-shaking will at Ilium.

'Double V' ('VV') which contracts Oxford's motto, *Vero nihil Verius* – meaning nothing truer that Vere/Truth – is found on a Vere family seal ring (before 1578), and was used as a pseudonym subscribed to a prefatory letter in a pamphlet by Oxford's servant, John Lyly. The letter ends

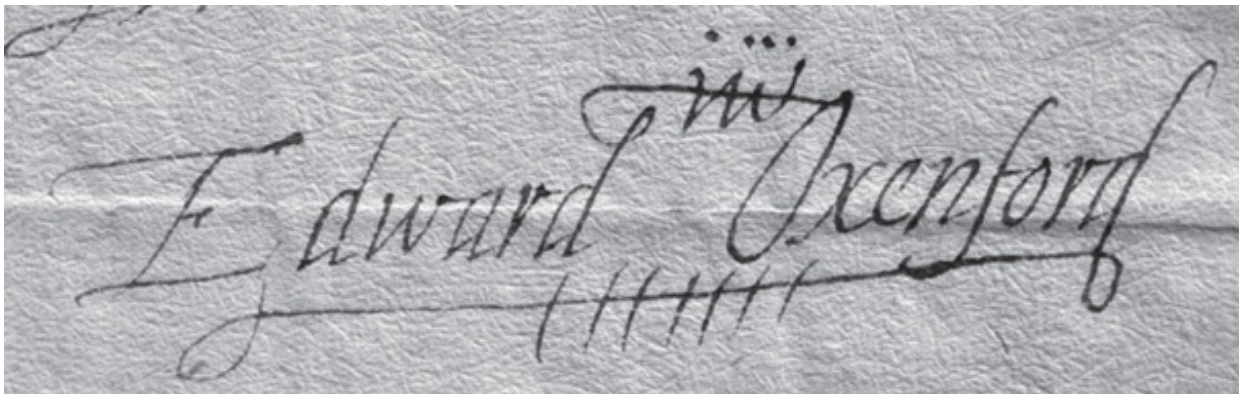

Figure. 3. *Oxford's signature contains 1740 enciphered four different ways.*

'yours at an houres warning Double V', which may be numerologically translated 'yours 1740'.

CONCLUSION

Only two elements in Jonson's multi-layered poem appear to connect the poet Shakespeare with the biography of William of Stratford – 'Swan of Avon' and 'Small Latine and Lesse Greeke' –both of which are herein shown to be of as much, if not greater, relevance to Oxford. When the poem is examined holistically it becomes clear that Jonson was playing sophisticated games with his readers. By sending those of 'silliest ignorance' off on false trails while preserving the truth of Shakespeare's identity, he was able to avoid accusations of indiscretion by withholding from the uninitiated information which his patrons (Oxford's son-in law Lord Montgomery and his brother Lord Pembroke) may have wished to keep hidden. In this way Jonson has bequeathed a stunningly cryptic and elegiac masterpiece to mankind.

BIOGRAPHY

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ENDNOTES

1 *'Vindex ingenii recens Sepulti'* is the third line of Abraham Holland's epigram to Ben Jonson captioning Robert Vaughan's celebrated engraving of his effigies (ca. 1624).

2 John Dryden (trans.) 'The Dedication', *The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis Translated into English Verse* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1693), p. iii; and Edmond Malone, 'An Essay Relative to Shakespeare and Jonson', *Works of Shakespeare in Sixteen Volumes*, Vol. 1, (London, 1816), p. 269. See also Endymion Porter, 'Upon Ben Jonson and his Zany', in Boswell's *Variorum edition of Shakespeare*, Vol. 1, verse 3, (1821), p. 405; and [Alexander Brome], 'To the Readers', in *Five New Playes* by Richard Brome, (1658).

3 Sir John Harrington, 'A Preface', *Orlando Furioso in English Heroical Verse*, (London: John Norton and Simon Waterson,1607).

4 J. B. Black, *The Reign of Elizabeth* (2nd edition), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 295.

5 Jonson sets a Latin margent note (*de Shakespeare nostrat.*) against a paragraph about Shakespeare, which is usually interpreted to mean 'apropos our countryman Shakespeare', with the word '*nostrat.*' An abbreviation of '*nostratis*' ('of our country' or 'native'). However, it may equally be intended as an abbreviation of '*nostratim*' meaning 'in our manner' hence 'apropos Shakespeare in our fashion' or 'in our way' i.e., 'the way in which the common players perceived their fellow actor'.

6 In his *Controversiae,* Seneca the Elder wrote of the orator Haterius that he 'couldn't control himself, so had to look to a freedman who would tell him to make a transition when he had been too long on a topic – and Haterius would make the transition. He would tell him to concentrate on the same subject and he would stay on it. He would tell him to speak the epilogue and he would speak it' (4.8).

7 George Greenwood, *Ben Jonson and Shakespeare*, (London: Cecil Palmer, 1921), p. viii; see also, Kevin Gilvary, *The Fictional Lives of Shakespeare*, (New York: Rout-

ledge, 2018), p. 200.

[8] David Ganz and Tom Lockwood, 'The Printing and Publishing of Ben Jonson's Works, *The Cambridge Edition of The Works of Ben Jonson* (online); see also, *Typographies of Performance in Early Modern England*, by Claire M. L. Bourne, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 77-136.

[9] Lynn S. Meskill, *Ben Jonson and Envy,* (Cambridge: The University Press, 2009), p. 36.

[10] Kirk Freudenburg, 'Recusatio as Political Theatre: Horace's Letter to Augustus', *Journal of Roman Studies*, available on CJO 2014 DOI: 10.1017/S0077543581300124X

[11] In Jonson's day an 'earl' was considered a 'prince', e.g., Gervase Markham's *Honor in his Perfection* (1624), a treatise in commendation of 'those Illustrious and Heroyicall Princes HENRY Earle of *Oxenford.* HENRY Earle of *Southampton.* ROBERT Earle of *Essex'.*

[12] Jonson's epigrams to Robert Lord Salisbury, William Lord Mounteagle, Sir Horace Vere, William Lord Pembroke, Susan Vere, Sir Edward Herbert all praise their names. His epitaph to Drayton reads: 'Doe Pious Marble Let thy Readers Knowe / What they and what their children owe / To DRAITONS name… /And when thy Ruines shall disclame / To be the Treas'rer of his NAME; / His Name, that cannot fade, shall be / An everlasting MONUMENT to thee.'

[13] An 'Ignoto' poem ('My Flocks Feed Not'), which appeared for the first time in print among Thomas Weelkes' Madrigals (1597), was published as by 'William Shakespeare' in *Passionate Pilgrime* (1599), as was the plaintive verse 'As it fell upon a day', which is was also ascribed to 'Ignoto' in *Englands Helicon* (H2).

[14] In a cryptic passage from *Polimanteia* (Cambridge, 1595) Covell set 'Sweet Shakspeare' alongside the unique hyphenated epithet 'courte-deare-verse', under the word *Oxford,* thus identifying Shakespeare as 'our de Vere – a secret'; '*Oxford*' is the 17th word from the page's end, as is 'Shakspere' when the words in the margent are also counted. See Alexander Waugh, 'A Secret Revealed – William Covell and his *Polimanteia* (1595)', (*De Vere Society Newsletter*, *20*(3), Oct. 2013), 7-10. For other contemporaries who connect Shakespeare to the number 17, see A. Waugh, YouTube lecture: 'Revealing the Number that unmasks Shakespeare'.

[15] Tom Cain and Ruth Connolly (Eds.), *The Poems of Ben Jonson*, (London: Routledge, 2022), p. 648, footnote. Additionally, John Denham ('On Abraham Cowley', 1667) and Samuel Short (*Fragmenta Carceris*, 1674) both place Shakespeare's grave in Westminster Abbey. John Davenant (*Madagascar,* 1638) warned that the eyes of Shakespeare pilgrims to Stratford would be mocked while Samuel Sheppard (Epigram 17, 1651) vowed to visit Shakespeare's tomb 'as Statius once to Maro's urne', invoking the record of Cluverius that Statius knew the true whereabouts of Virgil's tomb, at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, while others erroneously went to Pausillip, two miles north of Naples. Sheppard's poem was printed next to another explaining that he was imprisoned for revealing state secrets about Westminster.

[16] George Mason's 'MONIMENT', in *Supplement to Johnson's English Dictionary,* 1801, sites Spenser's 'round plates withouten moniment' as an example of the word being used to mean an 'inscription.' Mason states that the word can mean 'inscription' or any other form of 'memorial' or 'remembrance.' While it is true that the word 'monument' was occasionally spelled with an 'i' it is equally the case that 'moniment' meaning an 'inscription' or 'memorial' may be found spelled with a 'u', e. g., John Foxe (1583): 'I found an olde written monument'; William Fulke (1579): 'Take this as a monument or remembrance of my bodie crucified of you.' (ibid), p. 231, etc.

[17] 'Did Ben Jonson write the inscription for the Shakespeare monument in the church at Stratford upon Avon?' by Nina Green (Nov 1989), (*Edward de Vere Newsletter*, (9), revised 2001).

[18] Alexander Waugh 'Thy Stratford Moniment' – Revisited', (first published in *De Vere Society Newsletter* (Oct 2014), revised online version 2019). https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/thy-stratford-moniment-revisited/

[19] 'Of him [Oxford] of whom I will only speak what all mens voices confirme: He was a man in minde and body absolutely accomplished with honourable endowments. He died at his house at Hackney in the monthe of Junne Anno 1604 and lieth buryed at Westminster.' Percival Golding (Harl. MS 4189).

[20] Kyd's translation of Robert Garnier's French tragedy *Cornélie* (a 'closet drama' written to be read, not performed on stage) may have been made as late as 1593, but is probably older. It was entered for publication on 26 Jan. 1594 by Nicholas Ling and John Busby: 'A booke called Cornelia, Thomas Kydde beinge the Author' (Arber, 2, p. 644).

[21] Thomas Nashe, *Strange Newes* (1592), dedication to 'Apis Lapis' [Oxford]. In the original Nashe wrote 'Yea, you have been such an infinite Maecenas to learned men'; in the revised version 'you are such an infinite Maecenas' from which it may be inferred that Oxford was offended by the suggestion that his patronage of scholars had ceased altogether on account of his financial troubles.

[22] Alexander Waugh, '1591 – A Watershed Year for Oxford and the English Theatre', (*De Vere Society Newsletter*, *28*(3), July 2021), pp. 4-18.

[23] William Shaksper's attendance at the Stratford school is not supported by any contemporary evidence. Evidence of his background, purported signatures, family literacy etc, make it unlikely that he received any formal schooling in youth or thereafter. Those support-

ing the playwright's considerable classical scholarship from internal evidence include Churton J. Collins, *Studies in Shakespeare*, Westminster: Archibald Constable (1904); Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (8 vols), London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (1957-76); Andrew Werth, 'Shakespeare's "Lesse Greek"', *The Oxfordian 5* (2002), 11-29; and Jonathan Bate, *How the Classics Made Shakespeare,* Princeton University Press (2019).

[24] Michael Wainwright, *The Rational Shakespeare – Peter Ramus, Edward de Vere and the Question of Authorship,* London: Macmillan Palgrave (2018).

[25] For extensive investigation of Oxford's involvement with this movement see Alexander Waugh, 'That Famous Persecutor of Priscian' – Oxford, Shakespeare and the Repurification of English', *De Vere Society Newsletter*, *27*(2), (April 2020), 17-26.

[26] Thomas Nashe, *Have with you to Saffron Waldon*, London: John Danter (1596), p. M2v. Like many of Nashe's allusions to Oxford, this one does not name him, but internal evidence establishes him as the only courtier famed for his poetry, who was also Nashe's patron, a knight companion in tilting tournaments with Sidney, who lost the fortune of his youth. Furthermore Nashe here is referring to a person living in 1596 of whom Harvey had written condescendingly in his *Gratulationes Valdinenses* (1578), thus Detobel & Brackmann prove, by elimination, that Nashe cannot have been referring to anyone but Oxford; see Robert Detobel & Elke Brackmann "Teaching Sonnets and de Vere's Biography at School", *Brief Chronicles*, vol 6 (2016), 108-9.

[27] E.K. 'The Epistle' in Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* (1579), p. iii.

[28] Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie*, London: William Ponsonby (1595), B2^{r} & H3^{v}; Ben Jonson, 'Timber or Discoveries', in *The Workes of Beniamin Jonson*; London: Richard Meghan (1640), p. 119.

[29] Gabriel Harvey, 'Speculum Tuscanismi', *Three Proper and wittie, familiar Letters*, London: Henry Bynneman (1580).

[30] From Baldassare Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (1528): a translation of '*.... per dir forse una nova parola, usar in ogni cosa una certa sprezzatura, che nasconda l'arte e dimostri ciò che si fa e dice venir fatto senza fatica e quasi senza pensarvi.*' Turin: Einaudi (1965 edition), p. 44; for Oxford's prefatory letter to *The Book of the Courtier* see notes 34 & 35 below.

[31] *The Arte of English Poesy* (anon., 1589), modern scholarly edition edited by Frank Whigham and Wayne A, Rebhorn; Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2007), p. 382.

[32] Oxford's views on poetry are laid out by 'E.K.' in the 'Argument' that prefaces the 10th Eclogue (October) of Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* (1579), wherein Oxford is represented under the pastoral name of 'Cuddie'. For Oxford as 'Cuddie' see Eva Turner Clark, *The Satirical Comedy of Love's Labour's Lost*, New York: Farquhar Payson (1933) and Roger Stritmatter, 'Spenser's "Perfect Pattern of a Poet" and the 17th Earl of Oxford', *Cahiers Elisabéthains*, 77:1 (2010), 9-22. The name 'Cuddie' may have been devised as an allusion to oxen as ruminants chewing their cud. The 'Earle of Oxenforde' was called 'Ox' by Charles Arundel (1582).

[33] Poems about Shakespeare by Leonard Digges and John Warren both published for the first time in *Poems written by Wil. Shakespeare. Gent*, London: Iohn Benson (1640). Digges died in 1635. His verses were probably composed c. 1623.

[34] In Boswell's variorum edition of Shakespeare, vol. 1 (1821), p. 405, taken from *Old Ben's Light Heart made Melancholy by Young John's Melancholy Lover* (ca. 1628) no copy of which survives.

[35] Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, prefatory greeting to the reader in *Balthasaris Castilionis Comitis De Curiali sive Aulico,* London: John Daye (1571), pp. 13-14: *Atque ita, ubi natura ipsa nihil omni ex parte perfectum expoluit: hominum autem mores eum, quam tribuit natura, dignitatem pervertunt.*

[36] Ibid. p. 14: '*Castilio vicit, qui reliquos vincit et naturam superavit, quae a nemine unquam superata est.*' English translation by B. M. Ward, *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, London: John Murray (1928), p. 81.

[37] Gabriel Harvey, *Gratulationis Valdinensis*, London: Henry Binneman (1578). '*Macte animo, flammaque ista, Praenobile pectus, Te vinces, vinces alios; tua gloria passim Oceanum glacialem ultra, spatiabitur ingens.*' English translation by Thomas Hugh Jameson, *The Gratulationes Valdinenses*, Yale University dissertation (1938), p. 2.

[38] Harvey wrote of Oxford '*vultus tela vibrat*' which has caused some argument as to whether 'vultus' may be legitimately translated as 'will' rather than 'countenance'. The matter is settled however by early dictionaries. *The dictionary of syr Thomas Eliot knyght* (1528, 1542 & 1545) explains '*vultus* of olde wryters is taken for wylle', while Cooper's *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae & Britannicae* (1565) translates '*Inuito vultu ridere*. Horat. to laugh agaynst his will'.

[39] The association of Minerva as protector and inspirer of playwrights goes back to the 2nd and 3rd centuries C.E. when a society of Roman dramatists was, by imperial decree, permitted to base its headquarters and archives at the Temple of Minerva on the Aventine Hill. The 'Quinquatria', an annual festival of plays and poetical and oratorical contests, was consecrated by the Romans to Minerva. Associated with wit, eloquence, and learning, this spear-shaking goddess served as the inspirational object of appeal for many English Renaissance poets and playwrights.

[40] Alexander Waugh 'Waugh on Jonson's "Sweet Swan of Avon", *The Oxfordian 16* (2014), pp 97-103.

[41] John Leland, *Kykneion Asma-Cygneia cantio* (1545), p. 108; Richard Polwhele, *Historical Views of Devonshire*

(1793), vol 1, p. 175.

[42] Ben Jonson, Epigram 14 'To William Camden', ll.1-2 (ca. 1612)

[43] Camden's English translation from Leland's *Genethliacon* (1543) in *Britannia* (1610 English edition), p. 420; from the Latin: *'Est locus insolito rerum splendore superbus, Alluiturque vaga Tamisini fluminis mpore dictus Avona. Hic Rex Henricus taleis Octavius aedes Erexit, qualeis tot Sol aureus orbe Non vidit.'*

[44] William Webbe in his *Discourse of English Poetry* (1586) writes 'I may not omit the deserved commendations of many honourable and noble Lords and Gentlemen in Her Majesty's Court, which in the rare devices of poetry, have been and yet are most skilful; among whom the right honourable Earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of most excellent among the rest.' The anonymous author of *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) writes: 'And in her Majesties time that now is are sprung up another crew of Courtly makers Noble men and Gentlemen of her Majesties owne servants, who have written excellently well as it would appear if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest, of which number is first that noble Gentleman *Edward* Earle of Oxford...That for Tragedie, the Lord of Buckhurst, & Maister *Edward Ferrys* for such doings as I haue sene of theirs do deserue the hyest price: The Earl of Oxford and Maister *Edwardes* of her Maiesties Chappell for Comedy and Enterlude'

[45] *Palmerin of England,* I & II (1581-7), *Palmerin D'Oliva,* I & II (1588) and *Primaleon,* I & II (1595), were all dedicated to Oxford, though the last two dedications were later changed.

[46] 'Edward Earle of Oxenforde' is listed among five other courtier poets whose verses were published 'under other personages writings' on the 5th preliminary page of John Bodenham's *Bel-vedere* published by Hugh Astley (1600). Knight-errant or Paladin romances originally dedicated to Oxford include two volumes of *Palmerin of England* (1581-87), two volumes of *Palmerin de Oliva* (1588) and two volumes of *Primaleon* (1595).

[47] Celeste Turner, *Anthony Mundy: an Elizabethan Man of Letters*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), pp. 42-43.

[48] Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, 'To my loving frende Thomas Bedingfield', *Cardanus Comforte*, (London: Thomas Marshe, 1573), A4^{r}.

[49] Alastair Fowler, *Triumphal Forms – Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry*, (Cambridge University Press, 1970).

[50] John Dee, preface to Henry Billingsley's translation of *The Elements of Geometrie of the most auncient Philosopher Euclide, (*London: John Daye, 1570), p. ii.

[51] For explanations as to how and why Edward de Vere chose 17 and 40 to align the number of his name with the Holy Trinity see Alexander Waugh, 'The Incalculable Genius of John Dee', YouTube lecture, (2021). The connection between Oxford-Shakespeare and 17 40 is examined in a great many of Waugh's YouTube lectures including 'What's in a Name? – Shakespeare's Question applied to Shakespeare', (2021), 'William Covell Knew...', (2018), 'Scandal at the Abbey', (2019), 'Francis Meres Knew...' and 'John Warren Knew...', (2017), while the phenomenon is also extensively covered by John Anthony in his YouTube lectures including his 'Shakespeare and 1740', (2020) and 'Shakespeare by 1740 and R.T.', (2021).

[52] The dedication of *Venus and Adonis,* (1593) is all in Italic script but for the two elements that begin and end it – an illuminated 'R' at the start (17 in the Latin alphabet) and a subscript of 40 characters at the end: 'Your Honors in all dutie, William Shakespeare.' Hamlet's last words in the *First Folio*, (1623) printed as 17 characters ('The rest is silence.), followed by 4 Os, thus 'The rest is silence. o, o, o, o. *dyes'* may be enumerated as '1740 dies' For *Hamlet* as an autobiographical play about the Earl of Oxford see Eva Turner Clark, Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays' (1974 edition), pp. 634-679.

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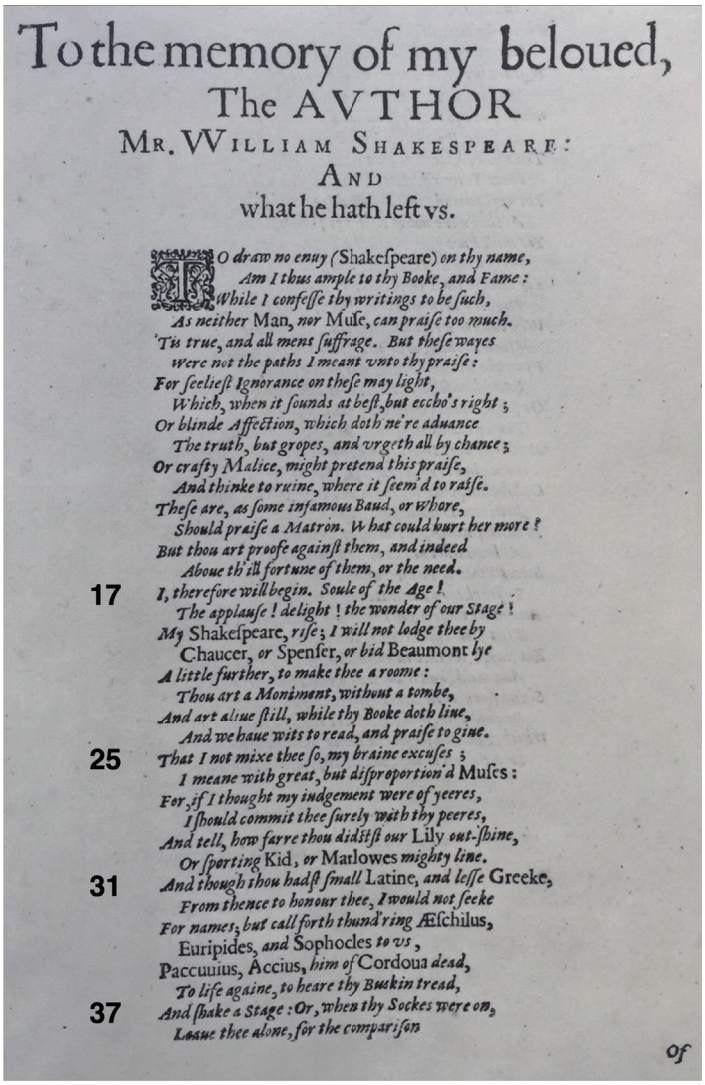
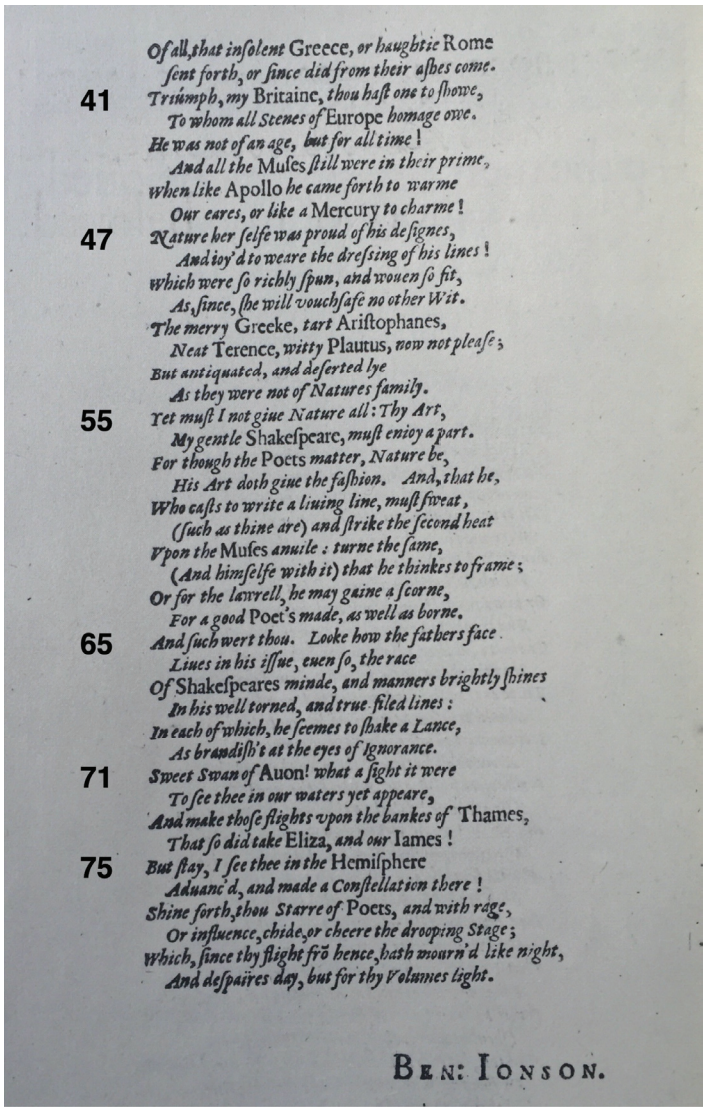
APPENDIX: THE POEM AS FIRST PRINTED



To the memory of my beloued,
The AVTHOR
MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE:
AND
what he hath left vs.

TO draw no enuy (Shakespeare) on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy Booke, and Fame:
While I confesse thy writings to be such,
As neither Man, nor Muse, can praise too much.
'Tis true, and all mens suffrage. But these wayes
Were not the paths I meant vnto thy praise:
For seelyest Ignorance on these may light,
Which, when it sounds at best, but eccho's right;
Or blinde Affection, which doth ne're aduance
The truth, but gropes, and vrgeth all by chance;
Or crafty Malice, might pretend this praise,
And thinke to ruine, where it seem'd to raise.
These are, as some infamous Baud, or Whore,
Should praise a Matron. What could hurt her more?
But thou art proofe against them, and indeed
Aboue th'ill fortune of them, or the need.
I, therefore will begin. Soule of the Age!
The applause! delight! the wonder of our Stage!
My Shakespeare, rise; I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lye
A little further, to make thee a roome:
Thou art a Monument, without a tombe,
And art aliue still, while thy Booke doth liue,
And we haue wits to read, and praise to giue.
That I not mixe thee so, my braine excuses;
I meane with great, but disproportion'd Muses:
For, if I thought my iudgement were of yeeres,
I should commit thee surely with thy peeres,
And tell, how farre thou didst'st our Lily out-shine,
Or sporting Kid, or Marlowes mighty line.
And though thou hadst small Latine, and lesse Greeke,
From thence to honour thee, I would not seeke
For names; but call forth thund'ring Æschilus,
Euripides, and Sophocles to vs,
Paccuuius, Accius, him of Cordoua dead,
To life againe, to heare thy Buskin tread,
And shake a Stage: Or, when thy Sockes were on,
Leaue thee alone, for the comparison

of



Of all, that insolent Greece, or haughtie Rome
sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britaine, thou hast one to showe,
To whom all Scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time!
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
When like Apollo he came forth to warme
Our eares, or like a Mercury to charme!
Nature her selfe was proud of his designes,
And ioy'd to weare the dressing of his lines!
Which were so richly spun, and wouen so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other Wit.
The merry Greeke, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please;
But antiquated, and deserted lye
As they were not of Natures family.
Yet must I not giue Nature all: Thy Art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enioy a part.
For though the Poets matter, Nature be,
His Art doth giue the fashion. And, that he,
Who casts to write a liuing line, must sweat,
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Vpon the Muses anuile: turne the same,
(And himselfe with it) that he thinkes to frame;
Or for the lawrell, he may gaine a scorne,
For a good Poet's made, as well as borne.
And such wert thou. Looke how the fathers face
Liues in his issue, euen so, the race
Of Shakespeares minde, and manners brightly shines
In his well torned, and true filed lines:
In each of which, he seemes to shake a Lance,
As brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance.
Sweet Swan of Auon! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appeare,
And make those flights vpon the bankes of Thames,
That so did take Eliza, and our Iames!
But stay, I see thee in the Hemisphere
Aduanc'd, and made a Constellation there!
Shine forth, thou Starre of Poets, and with rage,
Or influence, chide, or cheere the drooping Stage;
Which, since thy flight frō hence, hath mourn'd like night,
And despaires day, but for thy Volumes light.

BEN: IONSON.