“Had He a Hand to Write This?": Missing “Secretary” Hands

W. Ron Hess, Alan R. Tarica

When Elizabethan's were trained to read and write, the handwriting they first learned was “Secretary” (or “Secretarial”) hand, reflecting the style used by monks and scribes well back into the Middle Ages. Only in the mid-1500s did an alternative hand called “Italic” (or “Italianate”) slowly begin to be adopted as a second hand, reflecting handwriting used on the continent, and Italic was rarer than Secretary until well after 1600. Today, extant Elizabethan handwriting samples normally show each person used both hand styles, and where only one hand is extant for a given person, it is usually a Secretary hand. Thus, it's a surprise that two noblemen, the great William Cecil, Lord Burghley, and his son-in-law Edward De Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, are each assumed to have only Italic hand samples among their voluminous collections of handwriting. Did they not learn and never use Secretary hands, or is it that any Secretary hands in their documents are simply presumed to be written by clerks? This article begins with questioning whether the two men really were limited to Italic hands, finds a few plausible Secretary hand samples for one of them (possibly for both), reconstructs a hypothetical Italic alphabet for him, and nominates many candidate manuscripts (MSS, singular MS) for having been written or contributed to by him, some of which may be relevant to Shakespeare studies. Other subjects touched on are calligraphy, a clerk (or amanuensis), and griffe de notaire (literally a “notary's scratch”, or identifying scribble).

Keywords: Elizabethan handwriting-calligraphy; William Cecil, Lord Burghley; Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford; Shakespeare; calligraphy; clerk-scribe-amanuensis; griffe de notaire

Introduction

Shakespeare's line in *King Lear* (I.ii), “Had he a hand to write this?,” was asked by “The Earl of Gloster” to deceitful “Edmund” about “Gloster's” son “Edgar's” writing hand, alleged by “Edmund” to betray an evil personality. This showed a belief that a hand witnessed a person's nature, his practice in writing, level of education, social status, and even presumed veracity. Or, a handwriting could identify its user as surely as his face, voice, or words could do.

In the Summer of 2013, University of Texas Prof. Douglas Bruster had wide press coverage (see URL Schuesler-2013) for claiming that Shakespeare wrote *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592) based on comparison of the “Secretary” (or “Secretarial”) hand used in a manuscript (MS) of that play as compared with Shakespeare's six

W. Ron Hess, B.A. in European History, M.S. in Computer Sciences; Retired Civil Servant and former Adjunct Professor in IT Security at Johns Hopkins University Graduate Extension Center, Gaithersburg, MD. E-mail: BEORNsHall@earthlink.net; URL: <http://home.earthlink.net/~beornshall/index.html/>.

Alan R. Tarica, M.S. in Information Systems; Senior Software Engineer. E-mail: atarica@verizon.net; URL: <http://sites.google.com/site/eternitypromised/>.

known signatures and the last three pages of the MS play *Sir Thomas More* (generally dated to circa 1591-98), or what is known as “Hand D”.¹ This revived a topic that Alan Tarica and W. Ron Hess had written about in an intended “Appendix R” to Hess’ long overdue Vol. III to *The Dark Side of Shakespeare* trilogy.

Tarica had run across citations (Byrne, 1925, p. 199; Preston & Yeandle, 1992, pp. vii-viii) which stated that in Elizabethan England, “practically everybody” literate wrote with a Secretary hand, whereas relatively fewer also used the newer innovation of an “Italic” (or “Italianate”) hand, as a supplement to their Secretary hand. Italic was often used by women, including Queen Elizabeth, and most users mixed the styles together in any give MS (Preston & Yeandle, 1992, p. viii). Still, we’ve discovered that there were apparently at least two exceptions: William Cecil, Lord Burghley, and his son-in-law, Edward De Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, for each of whom only Italic hands are known. Yet, there are many instances of documents signed by Burghley that are written in Secretary, presumably dictated to a clerk/scribe (or amanuensis in Latin). And there are documents dealing with Oxford’s affairs that bear Secretary hands in them, at least one entirely in Secretary, and even one case of Oxford’s Italic interspersed with snippets of Secretary hand in them. So, Tarica hypothesized that Oxford was not limited to just his Italic hand. After searching for occasional use of Secretary-form individual characters inside of words used in Oxford’s Italic writings, and trying to reconstruct what Oxford’s Secretary hand would have looked like, Tarica sought instances of a comparable hand in a range of documents, including some potentially relevant to Shakespeare.

Tarica brought his theory to Hess, and the two did additional research for Hess to write this article. This is only hypothetical, but the potential is astounding—at the very least it has more evidence for it than similar efforts made by orthodox scholars (such as Prof. Bruster) to identify a Secretary hand for Mr. Shakspeare of Stratford (the man identified as author of the works of Shakespeare, or the gratuitously hyphenated “Shake-speare”, as used in about half of the title-pages referencing him). If the hypothesis could be verified, it might be shown that Oxford perpetrated a documentary hoax related to Mr. Shakspeare that can be demonstrated. Hopefully this can be reviewed by objective handwriting experts about the Elizabethan era. Along the way, Hess and Tarica discovered a mysterious “WSS” symbol affixed to Oxford’s letters sent home from the continent, and learned other matters of interest to those devoted to Elizabethan history, paleography, and calligraphy.

This article updates and improves upon a speech presented by Hess at the Sept. 2014 Madison, WC conference of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship.² Earlier drafts go back to 2003.

What’s in a Person’s “Hand?”

When a person writes a note in ink, he/she is leaving a testament for posterity. He or she could have chosen pencil, but then the message might get smudged, unauthorized changes could be more easily made, and with ink

¹ An excellent, if more adventurous, analysis of *Sir Thomas More* is Gidley’s 2003 article (dating the MS to as early as c.1581). In her opinion, “Hand D” was the actual author’s hand, while the other hands in the MS were Anthony Munday’s and others to whom the author was accustomed to dictating (i.e., secretaries).

² The website for the Shakespeare Oxford Society is <http://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/>. They are part of a growing number of scholars who believe that there is “reasonable doubt” that Mr. William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon fully accounts for authorship of the works attributed to “Shakespeare” or “Shake-speare” (see the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition or SAC website from <https://doubtaboutwill.org/>).

his or her identity can be more proudly registered with a distinctively personalized signature. A writing hand and signature each bear eccentricities which can be as revealing as a face, clothing, or emblem.

Let's consider the signatures of three men. The six known signatures of Mr. Shakspeare of Stratford were different from each other (even the three in his will are quite different from each other), each was spelled differently, and may in fact have been signed for an illiterate by scribes or attorneys;³ five of the six seem unskilled, even sloppy, quite unlike a practiced author, as if to say, "I care not who reads these words and for whether my message is understood!" Similarly, when Lord Burghley and the 17th Earl of Oxford boldly wrote their distinctive signatures, and put their messages in their Italic-form hands, they each presented underlying messages. Burghley's signature was forceful, firm, unsubtle, and sweeping, showing that he had his world by the throat; and his Italic was about as convoluted and difficult to read as the relatively simplified Italic could be made to be, with leaping ascenders and descenders which obscured interpretation of lines above and below, as if saying that he cared not for the convenience of his readers, nor perhaps for the clarity of his message (a vast bureaucracy of subordinates, each schooled in deciphering Burghley's notes, essentially did the day-to-day work of ruling England). Strikingly, Oxford's signature was an elaborate yet apt statement of his pedigree and standing in the Elizabethan world—ciphering an earl's coronet with seven pips above a horizontal bar (designating the factor of ten), or the only 17th of any dynasty in his era. And Oxford's hand was clear and well-practiced Italic, meant to be appreciated, enjoyed, and fully understood by his readers—and by posterity!

Despite Mr. Shakspeare of Stratford's brief illiterately scrawled six signatures, every so often various orthodox scholars (or "Stratfordians") have floated balloons proposing that Mr. Shakspeare's hand can be found elsewhere, such as in "Hand D" of the circa 1598 MS play *Sir Thomas More*, even though 3/4 of that MS is almost universally said to be in the hand of Anthony Munday (Gidley's 2003 article tries to minimize Munday's involvement in the MS, nominating Oxford himself to a role on the basis of comparisons of anachronisms and allusions to Oxford's biography and heritage). As it turns out, Munday was one of Oxford's acknowledged servants from at least 1579 to circa 1586; had changed from a boy actor to an apprentice printer in 1576; in 1578 to 79 was an anti-Catholic spy abroad (presumably at Oxford's urging); after 1586 to circa 1603 was elevated to an ill-defined position of "Messenger at her Majesties Chamber" (which apparently had him hunting down and exposing "pirate" publishers and extremists of all stripes); in the later 1590s was a playwright and translator whose works were often dedicated to his old master Oxford; and in the 1600s to his death in 1633 was a member of the Draper's guild, and a chronicler and pageant writer for the City of London. The Secretary hand of "Hand D" is only the last three pages, yet it is said to be of such superior artistic quality to the rest of the MS that those

³ See Hess' webpage article # 3 (<http://home.earthlink.net/~beornshall/index.html/id14.html>) which features extensive quotes from the 1985 article by Jane Cox, an expert in "Her Majesty's Stationery Office" in London, arguing that none of the 6 signatures match each other and all may be signatures added for the client by clerks or attorneys. Article # 4 (<http://home.earthlink.net/~beornshall/index.html/id15.html>) by Robert Detobel has more to offer on this matter, showing by the odd places where the signatures were affixed that Mr. Shakspeare was almost certainly illiterate. Tarica's criticism of Mr. Shakspeare asserts that Oxford was well schooled in penmanship from an early age, whereas there is no indication of such for the man from Stratford. He also believes that just in the normal functioning of an Earl in managing estates, Oxford would have not only learned the standard Secretary, and less standard Italic hands, but for reading of business and legal documents two forms of "Chancery" hand, citing the "Chancery Hand" URL given in "Works Cited". Note that Hess' Spring 1990 article also suggested Oxford had almost uniquely learned "Old English" (Anglo Saxon) in connection with the antiquarian movement conducted by his tutor, Lawrence Nowell, at the behest of Burghley and Archbishop Parker, who wished to use ancient law to help buttress the Elizabethan "religious settlement".

pages bear comparison with the works of Shakespeare, even though some scholars have suggested that in form it still resembles the bulk of the text written in Munday’s hand. Most scholars avoid taking a stand about “Hand D”, but they don’t go out of their way to question the extremists who insist that the hand has occurred elsewhere and can be identified as by the Bard. Their problem, of course, is that Mr. Shakspeare’s six short selections (constituting less than 10 unique characters in total) do not a “hand” really make! And yet, the balloons keep getting floated, such as by Prof. Bruster, that “Hand D” proves the Bard wrote other MSS (e.g., a 320-line MS thought to be a “foul copy” for Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, often earlier attributed to the Bard based on mere style considerations).⁴ Yet, the sole underpinning for all those balloons, the only string holding them to the ground, are those six absurd ill-formed signatures, which say in total, “we were not written by a literate man!”⁵ Tarica’s set of hypotheses is far less conjectural than any of the orthodox cloud palaces.

We have examined images of the text from “Hand D”, and Tarica has opined that it is merely a scribal Secretary hand, not likely by the Bard, which Hess concedes may be the case. Yet, Hess is willing to concede that it was indeed by the Bard, as long as the conclusion is based on a solid foundation. Still, orthodox approaches are “dead on arrival” when they start with those six non-matching signatures. We Oxfordians (those who suspect that the literary circle surrounding the Earl of Oxford, perhaps Oxford himself, accounts for the works attributed to Shakespeare) have a difficulty of our own, because Oxford’s Italic hand doesn’t make for a reasonable comparison with the Secretary hand MSS that are most often alleged to have been written by the Bard. Yet, if it could be established that Oxford did indeed have and use a Secretary hand, experts would be able to compare that hand to the MSS and try to make their own conclusions, possibly favoring or refuting the Oxfordian cause about Oxford’s role in the works attributed to Shakespeare.

In general, Secretary hands were all so standardized among scribes and other users that often only experts can distinguish MSS from one writer to another. And the standardization increased as more manuscript copy-books achieved greater distribution. Later in the 1500s, scribal hands were published and distributed in printed copy-books (e.g., a penmanship book by Jehan de Beau-Chesne and John Baildon published in 1570, as depicted in the Wiki report on “Shakespeare’s Handwriting”), making it even more difficult to distinguish MSS from later periods if the works were undated. Many well-to-do persons preferred to dictate to scribes rather than dip their own thumbs into the ink pots, particularly for formal correspondence, and formal correspondence was almost invariably in Secretarial hand (yet, recall that the bulk of both Burghley’s and Oxford’s correspondences were in their Italic hands!). Tarica believes these matters were important for understanding the kind of scribes

⁴ Thanks to Peter W. Dickson (pwdbard@aol.com) for relaying Bruster’s claims as reported in the *NY Times* of 8-12-2013 (www.nytimes.com/2013/08/13/arts/further-proof-of-shakespeares-hand-in-the-spanish-tragedy.html?pagewanted=1&r=0). A fuller Bruster article has been expected in *Notes & Queries*, unless it fails to pass muster with peer review and editors. Orthodox scholars have all too often adopted the “Cold Fusion” approach of bold announcements to the press that flop under later scrutiny.

⁵ This is Hess’ interpretation from Jane Cox’s and Robert Detobel’s articles, as noted in endnote #2 above. In an all-day “panels debate” on April 19, 2003 at the Smithsonian Institution, author Irvin Matus and Profs. Alan Nelson and Steven May were debated by Oxfordians Joseph Sobran, Katherine Chiljan, and W. Ron Hess. Hess had supplied the organizers with a 22 page’s handout that was provided to each of the 200 or so paying attendees, and included among other matters selections from Cox’s article which dealt with the question of Shakespeare’s six signatures. Prof. Nelson’s response for his panel was that he personally had written a “White Paper” refuting Cox’s article, which he stated would be “soon published” in a prominent journal. To date, no such paper has emerged, to our knowledge. And we should emphasize that Cox was no skeptic about Mr. Shakspeare as author of the works of Shakespeare—rather, she was a leading handwriting expert of Elizabethan signatures, and she simply criticized prevailing scholarship about the six Shakspeare signatures, on the basis that none of the six match each other.

that Oxford would have employed when he dictated letters rather than to write them himself as reported by Deborah Thorpe:

Late medieval letter-writers ... ranged from high-ranking servants to royalty... Merchants and lower-ranking gentlemen often put pen to paper themselves but wealthy men and gentlewomen were more likely to employ a scribe... As the 15th century drew to a close, more correspondents began to write their own letters... Once they'd finished writing, scribes could dry the ink quickly by dusting it with ashes from the chimney. Then they'd fold the letter, tie it up with strips of paper, and give it a wax seal. (Thorpe, 2013, p. 28)

Although Thorpe's article was about the 15th century, much of it still pertained to the Elizabethans. And a May 1448 letter illustrated on the tops of her pp. 30-31 showed a letter from Margaret Paston of Norfolk, which seems very similar in many ways to the Secretary hands we'll be discussing here from the Elizabethan era.

Amusingly, other impediments listed by Thorpe's article for sending a letter included:

Find a messenger going the right way ... selecting the right man or woman to convey the letter to its destination was critical.

Have mail guarded from your enemies ... correspondents could only pray that their letters weren't intercepted en route ... especially if the letter contained sensitive information.

Try to track down the letter's recipient... [the "poor messenger"] might travel hundreds of miles to deliver a letter, then, once he'd arrived, could only pray that someone was home.

Don't shoot the messenger... a letter could send its recipient into a fit of rage [calling for] a messenger who was skilled in the art of conciliation.

Burn after reading. Some people insisted that letters be destroyed, while, luckily for us, others were obsessed with filing them away. (Thorpe, 2013, pp. 30-31)

Certainly, we should be grateful that Burghley filed away so many of his son-in-law's incoming letters, although he normally didn't include his own letters to which Oxford was replying, so we see a distinctly one-sided correspondence. We can also assume many others of Oxford's letters were "burnt after reading" (as Thorpe said). Some have suggested that Burghley appeared to have structured a self-aggrandizing record about himself and his son-in-law for posterity (e.g., Ogburn, 1984, pp. 199-207). Among those burnt may have been more formal letters from Oxford, which were more likely in Secretary hand, albeit possibly via dictation to scribes. About the apparent scarcity of Oxford's non-Italic hand(s) in Burghley's archives, Tarica suggests that Oxford knew of Burghley's own obvious preference for Italic, and as a courtesy wrote to him in kind. Given the various hazards listed by Thorpe, we may wonder that so many of Oxford's letters survived after all.

At the suggestion of Stephanie Hughes (longtime editor of *The Oxfordian* journal), Hess in 2014 sent the following note to Hatfield House where nearly all of Oxford's letters are archived, copying as well to Stephanie and to Prof. Alan Nelson (author of 2003 *Monstrous Adversary*, a biography of Oxford):

I am writing a brief article on the topic of the handwritings of the first Lord Burghley and his son-in-law, the 17th Earl of Oxford. From what I've been able to discover so far, both men had only Italianate hands. And yet it puzzles me that until at least 1600 the Italianate hand was relatively rare compared to the Secretarial hand taught to nearly all literate young men in their homes and schools. So, I'm searching for instances of MSS where each man may have written in their well-known Italianate hands, but there are also associated Secretarial hand(s) which may be alternative hands used by each man.

Noting that Lord Burghley began his career in 1547 as a secretary to Lord Protector Somerset, wouldn't it be logical that he had his own Secretarial hand at least during that period, when he himself was a secretary? Are you aware of any documents which show suspected instances of Lord Burghley's alternative hand or hands? Of course he used amanuenses,

but in that early period it may be more reasonable that whatever hand appears on any of his documents was his own hand, don't you agree?

As to the Earl of Oxford, whatever hand he used in his teens was more likely to be his own hand than in his later adulthood, and the same for after 1583 when the Earl reportedly was near to bankruptcy and had dismissed all but a few of his servants, don't you agree?

From Prof. Nelson came this helpful e-mail note:

I saw your letter of inquiry. Just wanted to let you know that Hatfield House has a new librarian/archivist. She may not yet be acquainted with Burghley's hand across the years. In his early years Burghley was a secretary, but that doesn't mean he was a scrivener or an amanuensis, any more than John Kerry as Secretary of State can take shorthand.

Then came a brief reply from Hatfield House:

We have a lot of instances of Burghley's writing (which is very distinctive later on), but I will see if I can find the earliest that we have.

A subsequent response was that the earliest Burghley letter they had was from 1546, and even it was in *Italic*. So, it's probably safe to assume that they have no instances of Secretary hands for Burghley or Oxford which they don't regard as most likely clerical hands. We regard the question of Burghley having no extant verifiable Secretary hand as closed, unless other archives besides Hatfield offer examples we're unaware of.

And yet, as we'll see below, there are many instances of documents signed by Burghley that are written in Secretary, presumably by various clerks, whose hands are hard to distinguish from one another. And there are documents dealing with Oxford's financial affairs that bear Secretary hands in them, and even cases of Oxford's *Italic* interspersed with snippets of Secretary hand in them. So, here are the set of hypotheses to be discussed here (and our conclusions reached after our studies, as described in this article):

- (a) Did Oxford have a Secretary hand? (Answer: Almost certainly, all literate men did!)
- (b) Do we have extant fragments of Oxford's Secretary hand? (Yes, as we will see)
- (c) Can we reconstruct Oxford's Secretary hand? (Probably, as Tarica demonstrates)
- (d) Can we find other documents containing that hand? (An expert in Elizabethan handwriting might be able to do so, so we list some suggestions, although we're not experts)
- (e) Do some candidate documents pertain to Shakespeare or Mr. Shakspeare? (Yes!)

And about these hypotheses the best thing is that there is considerably more primary evidence about Oxford's Secretary hand than there is about Mr. Shakspeare's putative hand. And we know with absolute certainty that Oxford was literate—dubiously so for Mr. Shakspeare!⁶

⁶ As discussed in endnotes # 2 and # 4 above, Mr. Shakspeare of Stratford was indeed almost-certainly illiterate. One of the favorite “games” of orthodox scholars is to quite correctly point to all the “anti-Stratfordian” candidates that have been proposed over the past 200 years (e.g., the 17th Oxford; his son-in-law William Stanley the 6th Earl of Derby; Oxford's wife's 1st cousin Sir Francis Bacon; Roger Manners 5th Earl of Rutland, who was the nephew of Oxford's boyhood friend the 4th Earl; Sir Henry Neville; Sir Christopher Dyer; Christopher Marlowe; most recently Thomas Sackville the 1st Earl of Dorset, whom Hess has described as Oxford's “literary mentor”; and others). Even though Oxford is today the leading unorthodox candidate, the fact that there have been many others is a matter orthodox critics seem to think derisively meaningful. Actually, the real reason there have been so many candidates is that the orthodox candidate was almost-certainly illiterate and has few if any records tying him to a literary life (as opposed to a money-grubbing real-estate and theatrical investor). By contrast, each of the others proposed was “infinitely better qualified for the job”, so to speak, since each was demonstrably literate! There may have been candidates with greater extant poetry-drama than Oxford (e.g., Sackville or Marlowe, whereas Oxford has no extant plays and only about 20 authenticated poems). But none alive in 1594-1604 when Shakespeare's works were first being published was praised as much for

What Was Behind the Name of “Will/iam Shake Spear?”

Several months after the 2003 publication of Vol. 2 of Hess’ trilogy *The Dark Side of Shakespeare*, Tarica introduced himself to Hess and related his intriguing theory about Shakespearean authorship and the 17th Earl of Oxford’s “missing Secretary hand”. Hess has provided him with materials and has crafted this article. We note that Oxford was a celebrated poet-playwright (e.g., as noted by Wm. Webbe (1586), *Discourse of English poetrie*, George Puttenham (1589), *Arte of English Poesy*, Francis Meres (1598), *Palladis Tamia*, and later by others such as Henry Peacham the Younger’s (1622), *The Compleat Gentleman*) who undoubtedly would have spent much time composing works and taking notes from an early age, almost certainly using both an Italic and a Secretary hand. This is consistent with Oxford as annotator in his 1568 Geneva bible (see Stritmatter’s 2001 book), and in the 1550 *Halles Chronicles* probably while he was still a teen (see Figure M.1 here and the Hess-Tarica joint two-part 2006 article, where the *Halles* annotator signed “iptsubion Edward,” with the “E” appearing to be an amusing device containing all the components for “de Vere”). By contrast, it is inconsistent with a man such as Mr. Shakspeare, who apparently wrote no known MSS at all.

As it happens, Hess’ Vols. 1 and 2 (e.g., Appen. F, pp. 489-530, and in forthcoming Vol. 3 Appen. G) lay out an argument that the name “Shake Spear” or “Shake-speare” was actually an internationally celebrated heroic poetic concept derived from the hero “Astolfo” of Boiardo’s 1499 *Orlando Inamorato* and its successor, Ariosto’s 1516-32 *Orlando Furioso*. In some respects, those were the “pulp fiction” of the 16th century, often containing illustrations of knights in brutal combat. One knock-off from that poetic tradition (focused on by Hess’ Vol. 2, Appendix F) was the prose romance *Palladine of England*, which was translated in 1588 from the Spanish and French by Anthony Munday. In that epic, Hess noted that “Palladine’s” father named his son in honor of “Pallas Athena”, the Greek goddess of war, wisdom, literature, and the arts, and that depictions of “Pallas” often show her brandishing her shield and spear, with the epithet of “Spear-shaker”. Hence, a poetic courtier who also jousted, as was the 17th Earl of Oxford, might well have chosen the epithet of “Spear-shaker” or “Shake-speare”, with the gratuitous hyphen meant to denote a pseudonym (i.e., the epithet doesn’t use a hyphen only at the end of a line, so its gratuitous use was intended to be a message).

And the name “Will” could be a poetic message as well, as in a “Will-o-the-wisp” poet, or even (in a concept often attributed to A. L. Rowse), a sly hint at “country matters” (or sexual joking) whereby the “will” meant both

their works quite as Oxford was (e.g., by Wm. Webbe (1586), *Discourse of English poetrie*, George Puttenham (1589), *Arte of English Poesy*, Francis Meres (1598), *Palladis Tamia*, Henry Peacham (1622), *The Complete Gentleman*), and had gathered about him such pioneers in the craft of writing (e.g., Lyly, Munday, Lodge, Daniel, Lok, Churchyard, Greene, Watson, Spenser). Nearly as important, following their deaths, none had a family that was as influential in the Publishing Industry as did Oxford, particularly the post of Lord Chamberlain (LC here, held 1603-14 by Oxford’s 2nd cousin Thomas Howard Earl of Suffolk, 1614-26 by Oxford’s daughter Susan’s brother-in-law William Herbert Earl of Pembroke, and 1626-41 by Oxford’s son-in-law Philip Herbert Earl of Pembroke-Montgomery). The LC’s subordinate was the Master of the Revels Office (which censored publications and playhouses), and the LC had authority over all royal entertainments, often issued orders concerning publications, sometimes (as in 1619) specifically concerning publication of Shakespeare works, and negotiated terms with the London Council for public theaters inside the city. For example, in 1623 the Revels Master, Sir George Buc (in Oxford’s literary circle circa 1582) died and was replaced by Sir Henry Herbert (a cousin of William and Philip Herbert) just as the 1623 *First Folio* of Shakespeare’s plays was about to be printed, sold, and dedicated to “the incomparable paire of brethren” (those same William and Philip Herbert, Oxford’s in-laws). Thus, Oxford’s family and extended family essentially oversaw the publishing industry while mznzykey Shakespeare documents were being produced (1609 Sonnets, 1623 F1, 1632 F2, and 1640 Poems).

male and female genitalia, as in Shakespeare’s famous “Will Sonnets” (#s 134-136, and possibly others featuring “will”).⁷

Figure M.1: "iptsubion Edward" margin annotation in copy of 1550 2nd Folio *Halles Chronicles* with "E-d-e-V-e-r-e" device packed inside of the "E"

Figure M.1. "iptsubion Ebward" margin annotation in copy of 1550 2nd Folio Halles Chronicdes with "E-d-e-V-e-r-e" device packed inside of the "E".

So, it’s possible that Oxford repeatedly adopted a heraldic flourish which may have been meant to pictorially identify himself with the mythical knight-errant “Shake Spear” (or “Spear-shaker”), even with “Will” as a given name for the flourish. To a limited extent, we also wrote about these matters in our 2006 two-part joint article about Oxford’s personal library. Certainly, the 1580 *Euphues and His England* novel, dedicated to Oxford

⁷ E.g., Sonnet # 135’s lines (underlines added): “Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy will, / And will to boot, and will in over-plus / ... Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine? / Shall will in others seem right gracious / And in my will no fair acceptance shine? / ...So thou, being rich in will, add to thy will / One will of mine, to make thy large will more. / ...Think all but one, and me in that one Will.” Once recognized, it’s certainly hard to explain the “hide my will in thine” other than as sexual joking.

by his secretary John Lyly, and the many Anthony Munday translations dedicated to Oxford of heroic knight errant literature from the continent, all argue for Oxford having been amused, or even enthralled by the genre.⁸

Immersed in circumstantial evidence are hints that a “conspiracy” transpired to obfuscate the official records and other matters related to “Shake-speare”; in fact, out-and-out fraud and forgery by a number of orthodox scholars has been well-documented (see Dickinson, 2001, pp. 104-113). What is new here is that Tarica may have found limited direct evidence that: (1) as early as 1569 until 1602 Oxford referred to himself pictorially as “Will/iam Shake Spear”; and (2) following 1594, Oxford tried to disassociate himself from that pseudonym by personally creating a heraldic identity for Mr. William Shakspeare through Shakspeare’s father’s pedigree. Thus, one reason such a “conspiracy” may have been so successful was that Shakespeare-Oxford may have personally manufactured and manipulated documents. When understood in light of “Oxford’s personal hoax”, among others perpetrated by Oxford’s friends and relations, and compounded by the documented frauds of more recent corrupt scholars (e.g., by John Payne Collier in the mid- to late-1800s), many problems about the evidence in the Shakespeare authorship question can be better understood. If our hypothesis holds up, it wasn’t just that Shakespeare-Oxford passively accepted his forced disassociation from an alternate identity—he seems to have actively constructed and enforced the disassociation throughout much of his life, in his own Secretarial hand!

Did Oxford Use a Heraldic Flourish Emblematic of “Will Shake Spear?”

If Oxfordians are right that the “Shake-speare” persona was Oxford’s creation, when did he do so? The reason we believe Oxford referred to himself as “Will/iam Shake Spear” long before the creation of the other Shakespeare persona (i.e., Mr. Shakspeare’s “authorship identity”) is that there is circumstantial evidence that Oxford pictorially referred to himself as “WSS”, and those initials were affixed to the outside (obverse) of some of his handwritten personal letters from 1569 to 1602, in addresses on his surviving letters to William and Robert Cecil. After conferring with several Oxfordian scholars and one orthodox biographer of Oxford, their reactions have been that the “WSS” flourishes seem to have simply been innocuous flourishes with no greater meaning. None have thought these “WSS” flourishes worthy of additional study.

What convinces us that the “WSS” flourishes are “for real” is that they each actually contain all the elements necessary for a stylized “WSS”, especially a series of figure eight loops, and the flourishes always start at the top as a “W” would start, and always finish on the bottom as a handwritten “S” would finish (see Figure R.1, illustrations R.1.1 and R.1.2). Moreover, out of seven flourishes thus far found, five support our findings exactly, a sixth is probable and the seventh is an interesting variant because it is only enough to represent a “WS”.⁹

⁸ Lyly’s *Euphues* novels (the 2nd one in 1580 dedicated to Oxford) featured a heroic knight “Euphues” (= cultured, well-born) who journeyed very much as Oxford had in 1575-76, from Mt. Parnassus in Greece, via Italy, to England with a mission to reform the English universities and language. Per Gillespie (302-10) 1580 *Euphues and his England* was a source for Shakespeare. Munday’s 1580 *Zelauto* was not only the 2nd book he dedicated to Oxford, but identified Oxford as “Euphues” in its secondary dedication: “to Euphues on his entering into England”. *Zelauto* also influenced Shakespeare (ibid., 373-74). Munday’s later translations included *Amadis De Gaulle*, *Palladine of England*, and *Primaleon*, several dedicated to Oxford or his family, and at least the last noted by Gillespie as a source for the Bard (ibid., 374-76). So, it seems clear that Oxford’s “Euphuistic” circle of writers were important sources for Shakespeare.

⁹ Remember, these are on the obverses of the letters in question, where Oxford would have written in his addresses after folding the letters into deliverable packets. Three that are the most legible and are the most clear “WSS flourishes” are Cecil Paper (CP) 8.12, CP 8.76, and CP 8.24 retained at Hatfield House. Two that are not as legible are CP 9.15 and BL Lansdowne MS 14 185-86 which both appear to have the exact number of elements to compose the “WSS”. A third, BL Lansdowne MS 11 121-22, is even

Figure R. 1. WSS/WS or Flourish and Secretary Hand (Pg.1 of 2).

If these “WSS” flourishes were random figure eights we would expect there to be different examples with several more or fewer figure eights. Yet, the one definitive exception to the “WSS” form was included on the obverse of a letter in 1602, a letter at Hatfield House designated CP 181.99 which consists of only enough elements to form a “WS” (see Figure R.1, item R.1.3). This is possibly revealing as well because it contains a flourish. Which begs the question of whether a flourish would likely be embellished by another flourish? In addition, all these supposed flourishes appear directly under the address and isolated in the very way one would expect to see some type of signature. For those that believe they are “meaningless” we feel that at the very least

more illegible but still believed to be “WSS” like. It is worth considering as well that these are just the only seven we’ve seen so far Hess’ collection of images of Oxford’s letters (obtained from the generosity of Prof. Alan Nelson) that were complete enough to show the obverses, and so there may be obverses to many other letters which we’ve simply not seen and thus haven’t identified.

they are clever plays on the meaningless flourish and that ambiguity was important. We believe that Oxford never signed his name as “William Shakespeare” (except through his publisher in the 1593 and 94 dedications of his narrative poems). If he had done so his secret would probably not have been kept so well. But we feel he could use a flourish symbolizing his alter-ego, possibly sending it to only those “in the know”, such as his Cecil in-laws.

The shorter “WS” flourish in the CP 181.99 letter does not create a problem for this theory since it was likely that “Shake Spear” became the one word “Shakespeare” or “Shake-speare” by 1602. However, it is interesting for several reasons. First, it was many years since Oxford had used this flourish, so one may wonder if there was any specific reason for his using it again at this late date (possibly it was a connection with the succession of James I, which happened the next year).

Figure R. 2. [J]ohn Shakespere reconstruction & various symbols.

Secondly, we speculate the “WS” is actually a constricted version of “WSS”, in which the “W” forms both the “S’s” and the second and third ascending elements. However Tarica illustrated that the number of termination elements as well as the loops contained in the letters necessary to form the WSS also equaled the same number of required loops to form the griffe de notaire. Such a constricted form of “WSS” might have been the inspiration for the insignia that appears on a 1587 edition of the Holinshed Chronicles (owned by the Countess De Chambrun, and containing annotations presumed by many to be by “Shakespeare”) and the coversheet of the Northumberland Manuscript. But perhaps as important, the insignia seems to represent that the letters contained are actually WSS and thus far more in keeping with the name as a pseudonym and hyphenated variation of Shake-Speare. In those documents, the insignia is formed by using symmetry and overlay from the “WSS” (see Figures R.2.3 and R.2.4). In addition, it is possible that Oxford, as a preeminent figure of the time, inspired emulations from others, such as John Lyly and Robert Devereux, in their use of vertical figure eights in their signatures (see Figures R.1.4 and R.1.5).

Implications of Oxford Establishing a Heroic Alter-Identity

Regardless of the previous speculation, there is an additional hypothesis that is important in potentially establishing Oxford’s identity as Shakespeare. As said above, we believe Oxford deliberately created this identity from an early age. Later, it may have been supplemented by the three coat of arms applications filed for John Shakspere (Mr. Shakspere’s father) in 1596 and 1599, and that Oxford may have written this in his own hand.

The three applications were written mostly in Secretary hand, and we believe Oxford used that hand at least to a limited extent (bear in mind that Burghley’s archives aren’t necessarily representative, so Secretary may have actually even been Oxford’s primary hand). To demonstrate Oxford’s hypothetical Secretary hand, Tarica has recreated the words “[J]ohn Shakespeare” by using individual characters taken from one of Oxford’s letters to Burghley, CP 88.101 (our “Rosetta Stone” document!), and contrasted it with the same name as written in the second 1596 application (see Figure R.2, items R.2.1 and R.2.2, the first being the reconstruction and the second the 1596 usage). We invite experts to judge if they are similar enough to warrant further analysis, to compare our suggested Oxford Secretary hand to other documents.

It may be revealing that the two unsuccessful 1596 coat-of-arms applications spelled the name “>speare” while the successful 1599 application spelled it “>spere”. Was there “payola” involved? Can we conclude that part of the reason that the first two applications were denied was that insufficient evidence existed for the “>speare” usage of the name, and thus had to be replaced by the “>spere” usage? When the coat-of-arms was eventually granted it was contested in 1601 as part of an official examination by Ralph Brooke, the “York Herald” (supervisor of the offices of heraldry records), who criticized laxness of William Dethick in granting weak applications, and cited the John Shakspere grant as a prime example, particularly criticizing its premise that Shakspere claimed gentry status through his wife’s Arden heritage!¹⁰ It should raise our suspicions about how the Shakspere clan would have been able to get something so controversially substandard approved in the first

¹⁰ Ogburn Jr., 28, 74-75. Also see <http://www.hotfreebooks.com/book/Shakespeare-s-Family-Mrs-C-C-Stopes.html>. We later note that Oxford’s father’s mother had Arden heritage too, possibly making Oxford and Mr. Shakspere distant relatives (a depiction of the hunting lord’s encounter with the imposturous Christopher Sly in the “Induction” to *Taming of the Shrew* perhaps?).

place, arguing for intervention by one as influential as Oxford. In any case, Brooke implied that undue influence was used on behalf of Mr. Shakspeare's father, and that it was more than just a coincidence that the insufficient claim for the Shakspeare gentility occurred at about the same time as the appearance of the pseudonym publications after 1593 and 94.

As just noted, the method used to obtain a coat of arms for John Shakspeare was to list a connection to his wife's mother's Arden family, a connection shared by the Earl of Oxford through his father's mother Elizabeth Trussell's Arden blood (Ogburn Jr., 745). Oxford's overestimation of the Ardens from his own pedigree may have caused use of the Arden family connection for John Shakspeare, but for John himself it was a grossly insufficient usage. In other words, only a high nobleman with Arden blood himself would have entertained the absurd belief that Arden blood in John Shakspeare's wife was gentle enough to raise John to the gentry! Or, put another way, even though for obvious reasons it was useful for Oxford to have a frontman or stand-in, only an arrogant nobleman would have regarded it necessary to elevate even his insufficient stand-in (“I'm so noble that my horse has a pedigree, my hounds were begat by princely sires, my hawks eat only squab, and even my stand-in is a gentleman”). And we believe this is further corroborated by the Brooke vs. Dethick controversy regarding the insufficiency of the Shakspeare coat-of-arms applications.

Figure R.3. Oxford Mixed Hands c.1595 Tin Mines Inset.

But prior to theorizing, much less establishing, that Oxford wrote these documents it was the first order to establish with some probability that he had a Secretary hand at all, as well as one that was similar. One of the first indications that he did have that hand is in one of his tin-mining Memoranda (EL 2349 undated, but in a set likely circa 1595), of which Figure R.3 is an inset. In that document is a list of tin prices 1571-95. This lone secretary portion is limited to only a couple of abbreviated words repeated for each year that reflect the time of year the prices are quoted, either Midsummer or Michaelmas (according to Nina Green who also supplied the image to Tarica). When Tarica originally conceived his hypothesis he was not aware of this particular document, but it goes much farther in directly establishing the likelihood that Oxford did himself possess a secretary hand than he had thought. There is every reason to believe that Oxford composed the list of prices himself. The Figure R.3 inset shows that Oxford's Italic left column of writing is paralleled by the mixed numbers and Secretary hand regarding dates, and in one place (focused on by the inset) the left Italic column is interrupted by 5 lines showing two totals for 1593, two for 1594, and one for 1595, matching the hand of the right column.

The tin mines item is what we believe to be our “Rosetta Stone” document, because as we will see, and Tarica demonstrates, the interspersed Secretary characters provide 14 letters of the 22-letter Elizabethan alphabet (letters a, c, d, e, h, i, l, m, n, o p, r, s, and t, plus all the numerals). The two columns were clearly written by the same hand, as can be seen in Figure R.3, where Oxford's Italic both precedes and follows the 5 lines in the left column. Compare our total of 14 letters and all numerals garnered from the right column repetitions in Figure R.3 with the compilation from hapless orthodox scholars who pretend to resurrect Mr. Shakspeare's putative hand's alphabet from only 8 letters (and no numerals) in six dubious signatures. Where those orthodox scholars proceed to build great cloud palaces in the sky, Tarica's hypothesis leads to something a bit more modest: merely the complete undermining of the Stratfordian mythology!

Figure R.4. Burghley 6-1590 Secretary Inset (Egerton 2618-11).

When he examined character-for-character the Secretary from Oxford's tin mines hand, Tarica found that it bears a very strong resemblance to characters in a letter about the disposition of some of Oxford's lands signed by Burghley (Egerton 2618 f11, June 1590, see Figure R.4). And this document's hand in turn reflects close similarity to the “Knight of the Tree of the Sunne” affront that is in a discernably different hand from the other affronts for the tournament (see Figure I.1).¹¹ Further, there appears to be a corroboration of the numerals and Secretary letters in the tin mining memoranda to that of the Burghley letter mentioned above. The commonality of all of these documents is that they each relate to Oxford.

¹¹ (a) The “Sunne” affront is Lansdown 99 ff.261-262v. An affront is a rebuttal to a challenge, and in the Jan 22, 1580/1 (1581 modern dating) the challenge was delivered under the pseudonym of “Callophissus” by Oxford's 2nd cousin Philip Howard, only weeks after he had been raised to his late grandfather's vacated Earldom of Arundel. Other extant affronts were by the Red, Blue, and White Knights, with the latter likely Sir Philip Sidney. P. Howard is not to be confused with his uncle Henry Howard, nor with his and Oxford's distant cousin Charles Arundel (from the notoriously Catholic Arundels of Cornwall). In the prior Christmas season, both H. Howard and C. Arundel, along with Francis Southwell (another Oxford distant cousin), had been accused by Oxford before Queen Elizabeth of having been Marianist plotters of treason, and were at the time of the joust languishing in the Tower, preparing their own Libels against Oxford (they had earlier tried to obtain protection in the house of the Spanish ambassador, who instead negotiated their surrender after being assured they weren't to be prosecuted for capital offenses). P. Howard was in 1585 to be revealed as a Marianist Catholic and disgraced, tried in 1589 by his House of Lords peers (including Oxford) for treason related to the Spanish Armada, and died in the Tower in 1595. This was the context for Oxford's “Sunne” knight's affront: each participant argued that their chosen dame, whose identity was hinted at in each case, but not revealed (most likely each was Queen Elizabeth), was fairer than any other lady in the land—a standard jousting theme. Oxford's gilded “Sunne” knight was by far the most elaborate, literate, and expensive of the lot, and Oxford shared the victory with P. Howard. (b) Tarica believes the “Knight of the Tree of the Sunne” affront (a sketched inset is in Fig. I.1) was a good match for the candidate Oxford hand, but not for the other affronts. My own analysis of the Jan 22, 1581 affronts is that they were different from the “Sunne” MS, but similar enough to propose that Oxford wrote all of them, not just the one, attempting to disguise the hands slightly from one affront to the next. For example, as noted in Fig. I.1, I find it strange that the affront for the Blue Knight is populated with the emphasized “d” ascenders that are nearly devoid in the “Sunne” affront, except for two errant instances, where my interpretation is that the writer seems to have briefly forgotten that he was supposed to be disguising his hand. Still, and in any case, I'd be content to believe that Oxford merely dictated them all (i.e., organized the whole jousting pageant) to one or more scribes, since the tournament's sponsor, the Lord Chamberlain (Thomas Radcliffe, 3rd Earl of Sussex), was Oxford's political mentor. The one most likely to have been in Oxford's personal hand was of course the one intended to be used by his Page to read from.

Figure I.1. Affronting Knights, Insets, From Jan 22, 1580/1 Joust.

An additional candidate Oxford Secretary hand is a letter address found on the obverse of Oxford's letter Lansdowne MS 14 ff 186 (see Figure R.1, item R.1.6). It is very likely that Oxford addressed this letter as he addressed his others. And while a clerk may have been used for each, that clerk would have had to have been intimately connected to Oxford. We believe it possible the same hand was involved in writing the Shakspeare coat

of arms applications 1596-99. Still, any clerical theory must account for the decades of time for the span of documents.¹² Also for the unexpected nature of the three coat of arms applications, each apparently composed by the same person. The similarity of these to our proposed candidate MSS for Oxford's hand is yet another argument in our favor.

Ironically, some Oxfordians have apparently been content to aid the standard paradigm by adhering to the notion that Oxford had no secretary hand. Yet, we have every reason to believe independently that Oxford must have had a secretary hand at least as a boy. Noted paleographers, such as Miss M. St. Clair Byrne, said that almost everyone at the time had a Secretary hand.¹³ Still, this potential Oxford secretary hand presents a difficulty, because the example cited is probably not long enough to allow conclusive comparison between it and the applications. This is complicated by the fact that both hands bore much similarity to many other samples of writing from this period. In fact there is an abundance of writing from this period that is not attributed to anyone and has been frequently attributed to a clerk. We believe Oxford's hand was similar to these hands. But, we can at least get a sense of possible Secretary hand candidates that logically would have involved Oxford's writing (see the next-to-last endnote (# 13) for a list of those candidate MSS).

Establishing candidate Secretary hands for Oxford however could offer yet another opportunity for linking Oxford to Shakespeare, as Tarica has begun to do. And this opportunity is less speculative or subjective than most others, since handwriting is understood to be forensic evidence. Among the candidates, Tarica has noted a very large manuscript from the Huntington Library designated HM 60413, which contains a piece of *Othello*, and he believes that portions of it (mostly the end) were written by Oxford. One reason for looking at the HM 60413 is that this portion of the manuscript contains the Latin of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, written in an embellished Italic hand resembling the Roman style typeface writing that is displayed in several annotations of Oxford's 1568

¹² Tarica's conclusions about the decades of appearances of our suspect Secretary hand are well taken, making it much more simple-likely (= Occam's razor) that Oxford wrote that hand vs. used the same scribe over so long a time. By my own reckoning, Oxford's secretaries included but were not limited to: c.1567-c.80 Edward Hubbard, c.1575-c.90 Angel Day, c.1576-c.86 Anthony Munday, c.1579-c.90 John Lyly, c.1580-88 Thomas Watson—plus, the role of a secretary was not equivalent to that of a scribe. But there was one secretary we should not overlook: Henry Lok (nephew of the infamous Michael Lok) was Oxford's secretary c.1570-c.90 and 1601-04 (Nelson, 516, has index refs. to him, and elsewhere entries for the others). Oxfordians often refer to these men as secretaries, which seems reasonable by modern parlance, but for the most part the men themselves called themselves Oxford's "servants" in their publications, or in the letters of others who referred to them in connection with Oxford. As such, they may not have been merely secretaries—for instance, it's suggested in some biographies of Munday that he began his service to Oxford as one of his boy actors, and was even working for Oxford when Munday traveled to France and Italy as a spy 1578-79, and of course we know that Munday was taking dictation from someone when he wrote the bulk of the MS *Sir Thomas More*, usually dated to c.1598. Finally, note that there were gaps in Oxford's life when the above named were not in his employ, and we may doubt that Oxford used a secretary or scribe pre-1567 when he was a teen, or post-1586 when, as early as 1583 he was already said to be nearly bankrupt, and had laid off but a few of his family servants. Only through a L250 quarterly annuity from the Queen's Privy Purse and by liquidating most of his patrimony was he able to keep up due appearances for an Earl (and perhaps continued his personal financing of "the golden age of English literature"?).

¹³ Byrne (1925, p. 199) says the Secretary hand was: "...the ordinary current hand used for ordinary purposes until about the end of the century; after 1600 we begin to find it being at any rate partially superseded by the new Italian hand." Although we use the analogy of Secretary = cursive and Italic = printing in our modern comparison, that was only to score the point that nearly all of us have two hands today—normally harder to read cursive for "formal" and easier to read printing for "informal" use by practically everybody (word has it that due to the popularity of keyboards, only printing is now being taught in elementary schools). However, in Elizabethan times it was difficult to read Secretary that was formal and easier to read Italic was informal, since the latter was newer, and not everyone was yet using it. Thus, to see that anyone, especially a well-educated man like Oxford, had an accomplished Italic hand (well known from his letters to Burghley) makes it almost certain that such a person was first taught and also used the formal Secretary hand, even if no examples have yet been identified. Thus, finding instances of a formal Secretary hand in a few documents dealing with Oxford's finances would not be surprising.

Geneva Bible (Stritmatter, 2001, pp. 113, 213, 429-439, 460). In addition the manuscript contains several elements that match the “WSS” flourish from Oxford’s letters (as displayed in Figure R.2.5). That insignia is rather intriguing for its similarity to what appears in the Holinshed Chronicles of Countess De Chambrun.

The Huntington HM 60413 contains several Secretary hands that resemble the standard “copybook” we have already mentioned that makes handwriting identification so confusing and thus hard to ascribe to anyone in particular. This, however, should not disqualify Oxford from having been the source of one or more of these copybook hands. What is more difficult to believe, that Oxford wrote nothing in Secretary (or nothing that survives) or that some of the wealth of Secretary writing that survives from this period, and is not attributed to anyone, was written by Oxford? We believe the latter is much more likely and worth serious consideration by handwriting specialists. In fact, Tarica believes Oxford’s handwriting potentially exists in many places and can even be traced from that of his early childhood in the annotations to a celebrated copy of the 1550 2nd edition of *Halles Chronicle* (see Figure M.1, illustrating what we believe is Oxford’s ingenious signature therein!). This has a potential connection to a possible Shakespearean juvenilia and proto-Shakespearean play *The Famous Victories of Henry V* and which was linked to this version of the Halle by Keen and Lubbock (in *The Annotator: The Pursuit of an Elizabethan Reader of Halle’s Chronicle Involving Some Surmises about the Early Life of William Shakespeare*).

An additional item includes the play often referred to as “*July and Julian*” a MS surviving as an “anonymous school play residing in the Folger Library”. This early MS play features a version of the griffe de notaire emblem, an item that may have been added later (possibly as an indication of its association with Shakespeare). If demonstrated to match Oxford’s hand, it provides an illustration of Oxford’s early participation in dramaturgy. As such it would show Oxford’s greater experience composing plays than would have been feasible for the Stratford man or other Shakespeare candidates, and the kind of early development we have come to expect from artists of Shakespeare’s caliber. Other potential sources of Oxford’s “Secretary Hand” include MS 1627 in the Schøyen Collection, a website developed by the National Library of Norway (see endnote # 12 B.1, and one that contains a small portion of Henry IV part 1 and is comparable to the 1596-99 writing that appears in the Shakspeare coat of arms applications discussed.

The emphasis in illustrating all the examples here is not to suggest that all candidate examples are proof of Tarica’s basic hypotheses. Rather, it is to provide evidence that can be tested by more experienced examiners into Elizabethan handwriting and griffes.

Conclusion: Potential of Oxford’s Hypothetical Secretary Hand

While the evidence for Oxford using a Secretary hand and for the flourishes has not necessarily been conclusive, we hope it provides a framework not just for discovery of Oxford’s links to Shakespeare but perhaps insights into how the late-16th century Shake-speare myth came into being. Moreover, it might help clarify the mystery if we realize that after 1594 Oxford orchestrated the charade. We suggest that the role of Mr. Shakspeare is better understood as a frontman, or stand-in, when seen as involving Oxford’s secret complicity. It may even explain Mr. Shakspeare’s newfound wealth, as we can assume he was remunerated generously for his service. It certainly adds to evidence that “Shake-speare” was a created identity distinct from Mr. Shakspeare, with Oxford linked to the creation of that identity. And it should also be clear that this conjecture is consistent with the odd

historical fact that there was seemingly very little mourning or notice of the Stratford man’s demise. It was certainly contrary to the tens of thousands of mourners who lined the streets of London when the lesser dramatist Francis Beaumont died a few weeks before Mr. Shakspeare did, as Beaumont’s coffin was trundled from the provinces to be buried in the “Poets Corner” of Westminster Abbey. The notion that no one questioned the authorship for a very long time, so often made by orthodox scholars was certainly of great irony if Shakspeare-as-Bard was actually a joke at the time.¹⁴

In summary there are three main points we have illustrated. That Oxford likely had a secretary hand and that it should be possible to identify it. That Oxford possibly had suggestive inferences indicating he was Shakespeare by virtue of the flourishes and the griffe de notaire. And finally, that both of these propositions converge, though are also separate, from the notion that Oxford’s Secretary hand is possibly evidenced in the establishment of one of the key pieces of evidence linking the Stratford man to the name Shake-speare.

Recall that we claim not to be experts, and that nothing we’ve discovered is beyond challenge. During our labors on this article we examined numerous MSS and found many had within them samples of apparent matching Secretary hands. We’ve been informed that the similarity can be explained by the fact that nearly all English grammar school students were drilled into using nearly exactly the same handwriting style. However, perhaps a future article can isolate and examine more closely those suspect MSS’s which may represent a hypothetical “Oxford’s Secretary Hand”. Unfortunately, to make such discussions clear to the readers, that article will require getting permissions from numerous sources in order to illustrate the points we would want to make. Tarica believes that a pattern of matches will develop that most likely would be only associable to Oxford—a sort of “signature fingerprint”! We also invite any paleographers/orthographers to pursue their own investigations, with which we will happily cooperate.¹⁵

¹⁴ See from www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/04/21/how-shakespeare-lives-now/.

¹⁵ Mr. Tarica has identified many documents as promising candidates for containing Oxford’s secretary hand (items are grouped to illustrate where similar comparisons are best made). Among these are:

- (A.1) Latter Portions of HM60413 at the Huntington Library.
- (B.1) MS 1627 in Schøyen Collection (see from http://www.schoyencollection.com/modernlit_files/ms1627a.jpg) which has been identified as part of a version of *Henry IV*, Part 1 Act 2.
- (B.2) The two 1596 and one 1599 applications for John Shakspeare’s coat-of-arms at the College of Heralds.
- (B.3) Lansdowne MS 14 ff186 address of letter.
- (C.1) Annotations in key copies of Halles Chronicle (see Figure M.1 here), Holinsheds Chronicles, and writing on the Northumberland manuscript.
- (C.2) “Prologue to *Julius and Caesar*” appearing in *Elizabethan Handwriting 1500-1650* and residing at the Folger. This is a c.1560 MS play at Cambridge University (where Oxford was enrolled from age 8 to 12, 1558-62), identified as an “anonymous school play”.
- (D.1) A letter signed by Burghley about the disposition of some of Oxford’s lands (folio 11 from Egerton 2618), in which the upper part is not in Burghley’s hand, but rather in a Secretary hand. We suggest the upper part is Oxford’s Secretary hand, matching the hand of the “Sunne” MS (D.3 below) and from reconstruction from the 14 letters culled out of the Tin Mines letter (see Figure R.2.1).
- (D.2) A letter written for Burghley to Charles Howard, Lord High Admiral, Folger MS. X. d. 494 folio 1r (recognizing that Mr. Hess’ Chapter 6 proposed that Howard was Oxford’s 2nd cousin and one of his closest friends and allies).
- (D.3) The handwritten portions of the Tournament texts for the “Knight of the Tree of the Sunne” (noting that Mr. Hess’ forthcoming Vol. 3, Appen. I, will suggest that Oxford authored all of the knights’ handwritten texts, including the text for “The Knight of the Tree of the Sunne”) (See Figure I.1 and note 5 above).
- (D.4) Lord Brooke’s letter in another man’s hand, MS Lansdowne 88 art I fol. 2., appearing in *English Literary Autographs*.
- (E.1) The famous “Hand D” of the c. 1598 MS play *Sir Thomas More*, located at the Folger Library. About 3/4 of this MS is identified as the hand of Oxford’s one-time servant Anthony Munday, as if Shakespeare had been dictating to scribes. And there are editorial notes throughout the MS by the future Sir George Buc, who was in “Oxford’s literary circle” (according to Prof. Alan

Meanwhile, there are a surprising number of resources out there aiming to educate would-be students of Elizabethan calligraphy and paleography, in addition to the Handbook by Preston and Yeandle (Hess was given his copy by no less than Prof. Alan Nelson). Scholars who suspect that Mr. Shakspeare did not write the works attributed to Shake-speare owe it to their cause to become more adept at these skills, such as availing themselves of the “Digital Resource and Database of Paleography, Manuscripts and Diplomatic (DigiPal)”¹⁶

Nelson’s biography of Oxford, 2003, p. 287). The remainder was in different hands. But the best quality part was the 3 pages in “Hand D”, which orthodox scholars have frequently identified as the hand of Mr. Shakspeare of Stratford, based upon little or no actual evidence other than his six identified signatures. Tarica does not think that “Hand D” is a good match for Oxford’s Secretary hand, so it may be the hand of yet another unidentified scribe. Still, we’d be happy to get other opinions.

(F.1) Tarica did a Google search and discovered that the *Sydney Morning Herald* of June 22, 1936 (p. 11) had an article “Shakespeare: Old Books Discovered” which was principally about the *Holinshed’s “Chronicles”* owned by Capt. William Jaggard (described as “the Stratford-upon-Avon bibliographer and scholar”, a descendant of the Elizabethan printer). We wrote about the book in our Summer-Fall 2006 two-part article (about the copy studied by Charles Hamilton at the Folger Library, STC 13568b, copy 3, 1577). The article had the following, which we regard as a sort of roadmap for further texts that need to be searched through for potential examples of Oxford’s handwriting:

“Handwriting experts in London, Paris, and Geneva are unanimous in the matter. They declare that the marginal notes, sundry phrases, quotations, and an epigram jotted down in various parts of the book are in the same hand as the signatures to Shakespeare’s will, the deeds of his Blackfriars property, the Mountjoy law case, the Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* at the Bodleian Library, and the Florio’s *Montaigne* at the British Museum.”

Of course, the alleged Shakspeare signatures in the Ovid and Montaigne are not among the standard 6 listed earlier in the paragraph, but it would be worth examining the two documents more fully in order to see if marginal inscriptions exist to match our proposed Oxford hand.

(F.2) Possibly a *Timon of Athens* MS at the Victoria and Albert Museum; possibly the Huntington Library HM 60413 MS, with a piece of *Othello*; and possibly the *Spanish Tragedy* MS referenced above concerning the theory of Prof. Bruster.

(G.1) Hess suggests another potential line of inquiry is the “Liber Lilliat” described by Doughtie’s book and by pages 87-119 in Knight’s book (both have figures which include annotations in them). Hess noted that the book stamp used in the 1590s MS, principally in an interleaved copy of Thomas Watson’s 1582 *Hekatompathia* (which had been dedicated by Watson to the Earl of Oxford), took the form of “John Lilliat” (with a period ending). Thus, Hess asked if the period represents an abbreviation for a stamp hypothetically used by Oxford’s secretary John Lyly, who had dedicated a poem to Watson at the beginning of the book. When Hess broached the theory to Latinist Dana F. Sutton, Sutton initially suggested if Hess’ theory was valid, perhaps the abbreviation was “‘Liliaticus’ (i.e. a humorously pretentious title ‘A Liliatic Book’ in place of the expected ‘Lily’s Book’).” Later Sutton decided that Hess’ theory was invalid for technical reasons and his aversion to the Oxfordian theory. Yet, Hess believes that since both Lyly and Watson were living with or employed by Oxford at his “Fisher’s Folly” residence throughout most of the 1580s, it may still be possible that the *Hekatompathia* copy that makes up much of the MS had been a “presentation copy” gift from Watson to Lyly, who then stamped the book to differentiate it as his property, as distinct from other book collections commingled in that mansion. When Oxford’s financial problems (including huge debts to the Queen) forced him to sell his mansion in late 1588, perhaps a subordinate of Burghley’s, the Queen’s Jeweller Robert Sharpe, was assigned to handle liquidation of some of Oxford’s assets. Thus, it’s interesting that near its beginning the “Liber Lilliat” has a Latin statement that the book was given to Lilliat on May 3, 1589 by one Robert Sharpe (Doughtie, 1985, pp. 43-44, reads “Liber Lilliat. Anno. 1589. Maii. 3. / Ex dono Roberti Sharpe. /”). It may be that the copy of *Hekatompathia* was given to John Lilliat (a dean and musician in Chichester Cathedral, with connections to the Chapel Royal and Oxford University, pp. 24-32) by Sharpe shortly after the sale of “Fisher’s Folly” precisely because Sharpe noticed the many “John Lilliat”. book stamps used in it. And Hess suggests that some of the annotations in the *Hekatompathia* part of the MS may have been made by Lyly or even by Oxford (with the many attached pages annotated by Lilliat). Some intriguing examples of griffe de notaire appear to also be involved (Doughtie, 1985, p. 44; Knight, 2013, pp. 98, 100, 103, plus 2 pointing fist “manicules” on 103).

¹⁶ Courtesy of Tarica, in addition to Preston and Yeandle, more resources on calligraphy and paleography include:

(a) See “Paleography: Reading Old Handwriting 1500-1800, A Practical Online Tutorial” by the UK National Archives from <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/palaeography/default.htm>.

(b) See “Secretary Hand” by Stephan Glanville from <http://tudorblog.com/tag/secretary-hand/>.

(c) www.digipal.eu/ by “Digital Resource & Database of Paleography, Manuscripts & Diplomatic” (DigiPal) funded by EU’s “Seventh Framework Programme (FP7)”. Note discussion of “Rationale”, describing abuses up to date and remedies.

(d) see “English Handwriting 1500-1700” by Martin Billingsley from <http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/eres/hoc/billingsley/>.

(e) “http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chancery_hand” describes two very different hands historically used for business and legal transactions, which the Earl of Oxford would have been taught early in his life.

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(f) "<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/collections/treasures/the-quiney-letter.html>" by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, for the only extant letter written to Mr. Shakspeare, but not delivered, the so-called "Quiney letter," asking Shakspeare for money.