# CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO

WILLIAM SHAKSPER of Stratford is again referred to as one ambitious for gentility in *The Winter's Tale,* where he is also called "a clown." In fact, that is the only name he has in the play, A Clown—in the section which was obviously added during the 1590's. One reason for believing that Sordido in *Every Man Out* is John Shaksper is the fact that, in *The Winter's Tale,* it is the Clown's father, the Shepherd, a dealer in

wool, who finds the repudiated infant, Perdita (the plays) and realizes her great value to him and his son. His first exclamation is significant:

> Mercy on 's, a barne; a very pretty barne! A boy or a *child,* I wonder? (III.3.68-9.)

Writers of the time commonly referred to their works as their "children." [1] Oxford himself said, in Sonnet 59:

> Which, labouring for invention, bear amiss
> The second burden of a former *child;*

and in No. 77:

> Look, what thy memory cannot contain,
> Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt find
> Those *children* nurs'd, deliver'd from thy brain.

The Shepherd's use of "child," instead of the more natural "girl," is, in this connection, at least arresting. And there is more than a hint of the immortality the dramatist expected his work to have in the Shepherd's first words to his son:

> What! art so near? If thou'lt see a thing *to talk about when thou art dead and rotten,* come hither.

(Sonnet 81 says the poet's "gentle verse" shall be "o'er-read . . . When all the breathers of this world are dead.")

There has been a "storm" which wrecked the ship of Antigonus, who, as guardian of the child, is Oxford, suffering his usual "wrack." And a "bear"—Authority—has chased and partially devoured him. The Clown says—IV.3.812-13—". . . though authority be a stubborn bear . . .")

> But . . . to see . . . how the poor gentleman roared, and *the bear mocked him,* both roaring louder than the sea or weather. (III.3.94-9.)

We may take it, for nothing could be more consistent with his temperament, that Oxford had had a stormy session with the Privy Council, of which Burghley was by far the most influential member, when it was decided, either in 1593 or earlier, upon the formal presentation of his grant of a thousand pounds per annum that he must remain permanently anonymous. This was necessary partly because plays so full of political implications could not be known as the work of the Lord Great Chamberlain of England. (They were too full of the truth about Burghley also.)

"You're a made old man," says the Clown; and his father [2] replies:

[1] Robert Chester, in his dedication of the symposium, *Love's Martyr, or Rosalins Complaint,* to Sir John Salisburie, winds up by saying: "To the World I put my Child to nurse, at the expense of your favour."

[2] Here we have the father and son to match not only Sordido and Sogliardo in *E.M.O.,* but also the peasant father and his son in *The Return from Parnassus,* II. See Chap. Seventy-eight.



> This is fairy gold. . . . We are lucky, boy; and *to be so still requires nothing but secrecy.* (120-3.)

This passage would seem to imply that when the Shakspers, father and son, learned that a great but anonymous poet had adopted a pseudonym similar to their own name and heard it rumored that this poet was the author of many popular stage-plays, they began to scheme. In London, the son found the prospects for peddling actors' memory versions of the plays exceedingly attractive. He could have done this in the name of William Shakespeare—setting up his bills, like Shift, in *Every Man Out*—and said the name was his own. The nobleman-author could make no public protest. We seem to have both Shakespeare's and Jonson's word that such was the general procedure.

We have spoken cursorily of the partial identity of Autolycus (*Auto* giving a hint) with the courtier-jester aspect of Oxford, a more ribald Touchstone, and have quoted the candid passage (IV.2.51-2):

> *Autolycus.* O! that *ever I* was born!
> *Clown.* I' the name of me!

which seems as clear a revelation of the state of things as the author could possibly have given; for the prototype of the Clown is going to capitalize on the similarity of Shakespeare to Shaksper.[3] Deeply impressed by Autolycus (as the gull Sogliardo is by Puntarvolo) the Clown says (IV.3.757-62):

> This cannot but be a great courtier. . . . He seems to be *the more noble* in being *fantastical:* a great man, I'll warrant; I know by *the picking on 's teeth.*

These phrases had become *cachets* for Oxford. "Let him," says Autolycus (IV.3.850-3),

> let him call me rogue for being so far officious; for I am proof against that title and what shame else belongs to 't. To him will I present them: *there may be matter in it.*

In the scene where the Clown and the Shepherd beg Autolycus to introduce them to the prince, so they may confess everything to him, we have a suggestion of that in which Puntarvolo took Sogliardo to court for a jest.

[3] The Clown's speech which precedes this passage concludes with,

> . . . a pound of prunes, and as many *raisins o' the sun.* . . .

Whereupon, at the mention of risings of the sun, which is the true meaning here, Autolycus throws himself upon the ground and grovels, before moaning, "O! that ever I was born!" Apparently the Elizabethans pronounced "reason" as we do "raisin"; *vide* Falstaff: "if reasons were as plenty as blackberries" (*1 H. IV:* II.4.241); and perhaps they pronounced "raisins" as we do "risin's." Oxford was sensitive to a reference to the "raisins o' the sun," or the risings of the sun, because the Fair Youth is his son (sun).

*Autolycus.* Whether it like me or no, I am a courtier. Seest thou not the air of the court in these enfoldings? hath not my gait in it the measure of the court? receives not thy nose the court-odour from me? reflect I not on thy baseness and court-contempt? . . . I am a courtier, cap-a-pe, and one that will either *push on or pluck back* thy business there. (IV.3.738 *et seq.*)

Later, after having introduced the yokels to the prince, Autolycus remarks:

. . . But 'tis all one to me; for had I been the finder-out of this *secret,* it would have not relished among my other *discredits.* Here come *those I have done good to against my will, and already appearing in the blossoms of their fortune.* (V.2.125-9.)

Oxford, who had "discredited" himself by writing the plays, certainly had "done good" to the Stratford Shaksper against his will, adding "blossoms" to his "fortune" then and for more than three centuries.

It is now, after his meeting with Autolycus and consequent introduction to the prince, that the Clown decides to become "a gentleman."

*Shepherd.* Come, boy . . . thy sons and daughters will all be *gentlemen born.*
*Clown* [*to Autolycus*]. You are well met, sir. You denied to fight with me this other day, *because I was no gentleman born. . . . Give me the lie, do,* and try whether I am not *now gentleman born.*
*Autolycus.* I know you are *now, sir, a gentleman born.*
*Clown.* Ay, and have been so any time *these four hours.*
*Shepherd.* And so have I, boy. (V.2.130-42.)

This testimony, together with Jonson's—because Sogliardo, the "essential clown," is simply a replica of this Clown—would seem to make it irrefutable that the provincial from Stratford, who has a shadowy connection with the plays and who is known pre-eminently for his determination to become "a gentleman," [4] is the "clown," the "gull," the boastful simpleton, whom both dramatists are ridiculing.

But we have still further corroboration in Jonson's *The Poetaster,* where Crispinus is a now very prosperous Sogliardo, the *arriviste,* pretending that he is also Cri-spinus (Cri-*hyphen*-spinus.) It will be recalled that *crispo* means to brandish (a spear). Unfortunately, in some modern editions of *The Poetaster,* the editors have dropped the hyphen, not suspecting its importance.[5] He, too, boasts of being quite suddenly "a gentleman born," in exactly the same phraseology as that used by the Clown in *The Winter's Tale;* and his arms are described, like Sogliardo's, with contempt for their absurdity.[6]

[4] This fact is so well known about the Stratford man that James Joyce called *Shakespeare* a "toady!"
[5] Notably the Everyman ed. of *The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson.*
[6] Chap. Seventy-six.



Again, in the first play of the *Parnassus* trilogy,[7] we meet this same man, the "gull" or "essential clown" of *Every Man Out,* bearing now the name of Gullio. This clown is deferential to the true dramatist, as Sogliardo was to Puntarvolo and as the Clown in *The Winter's Tale* was to Autolycus; and, indeed, as he will be every time they appear in conjunction. The evidence piles up, and it is all consistent. Many chapters could be written about this contemporary presentation of the ambitious provincial who came to London and sailed under false colors.

The Second Part of *King Henry IV* has a very cryptic passage (V.1) which was obviously augmented in the late 1590's and bears a close relation to scenes we have quoted from Jonson's *Every Man Out.* Here, instead of a "gull" or a "Clown," we have William cook and William Visor (Visor of course meaning mask) of Wincot. Wincot may stand either for Wilmcote,[8] which is very near Stratford-on-Avon, or, as Phillips surmises, for the Gloucestershire Woncot (Woodmancote) not far away.[9]

Davy—a young False Taffy? Robert Cecil perhaps?—defends William Visor, who he admits is "an arrant knave" and whom he wishes to have "countenanced." It is particularly significant that there are two Justices, or representatives of Authority, in this scene and its sequel (3): Shallow, who, though originally Leicester, is now Burghley grown old—more garrulous even than Polonius, Pandarus, or the hospitable Capulet—and the irresponsible Silence. "Justice" is then both "shallow" and "silent." So, we may be sure, Oxford regarded it.

He is telling us here something very important, using necessarily obscure symbolism, not the simple allegory of Jonson and the others. In "William cook" we seem to have the concoctor of the plays; Shallow sends for him, but he never appears. Falstaff is now the bohemian aspect of the dramatist, as he appears in Nashe's *Summer's Last Will.* For the first time, the knight is wanting in aplomb, he is strangely quiescent; is this because he is helpless in the domain of Shallow Justice? Until he is left alone again, he speaks only one sentence: this when Shallow refuses to allow him to leave:

You must excuse me, Master Robert Shallow.

But his host is all wound up to manage things.

[7] Chap. Seventy-eight.
[8] Sidney Lee spells it Wilnecote and says it was pronounced Wincot. (*A Life of Wm. Sh.;* p. 166.) He is, however, so adept at rationalizing from his chosen premise that one hesitates to depend upon what he says, much of which is demonstrably unreliable.
[9] *Ld. B. in Sh.;* p. 29.

*Shallow*. I will not excuse you; you shall not be excused; excuses shall not be admitted; there is no excuse shall serve; you shall not be excused. Why, Davy!

*Enter Davy.*

*Davy*. Here, sir.
*Shallow*. Davy, Davy, Davy, Davy, let me see, Davy; let me see: yea, marry, William cook, bid him come hither. Sir John, *you shall not be excused.* (V.1.3-12.)

So much stress is laid upon this that one supposes Sir John's prototype has committed some inexcusable act. And when Davy speaks of "precepts," we recall that both Burghley and Polonius were famous for theirs.

*Davy*. Marry, sir, thus; those *precepts cannot be served:* and again, sir, shall we sow the *headland* with *wheat?*
*Shallow*. With *red wheat,* Davy. But *for William cook:* are there no *young pigeons?*
*Davy*. Yes, sir. Here is now the smith's note for shoeing and *plough-irons.*
*Shallow*. Let it be cast and paid. Sir John, *you shall not be excused.* (13-21.)

All this is figurative and highly suggestive. "Those [revealing] precepts cannot be served" to the public, oh, no! The "headland" is the untilled land that lies at the end of the row. Oxford was at the end of his row and could go no farther, but a man who was accustomed, like Sogliardo, to "holding the plough," could take the job in hand, if provided with the proper tools. It will be recalled that Sordido speculated in "corn"—which is of course "wheat": the English have no corn, or maize—and "pigeon" is another word for "gull." So that "for William cook" there is a "young pigeon," or "gull." (Sogliardo was called "a gull.") Phillips observes that "red wheat" was sown in the autumn, "known in the Cotswolds as 'red lammas wheat.'" He remarks that it "has a somewhat sinister sound, and if taken metaphorically, suggests blood." [10] Whatever the full intention be, one cannot evade the consideration that Oxford was in the autumn of life, and Burghley had been the prototype of Shylock.

The references in the ensuing lines are too recondite to be elucidated here; they may concern matters to which we have no clue. (The link which seems to have been broken in the well-bucket chain reminds Phillips of *Ecclesiastes,* III.6.) But we recognize the allusion to the dramatist's "lewd friends," of whom only Bardolph is present now, when Shallow says, in reply to Davy's question whether "the man of war will stay all night,"

Yea, Davy. I will use him well. A friend i' the court is better than a penny in purse. Use his men well, Davy, for *they are arrant knaves, and will backbite.* (30-3.)

[10] Op. cit.; p. 28.



Hamlet has enjoined Polonius to use the players well, since it is better to have a bad epitaph than their ill report.

There is no mistaking the point of the following passage:

*Davy*. I beseech you, sir, to *countenance* William Visor of Wincot against Clement Perkes of the hill.
*Shallow*. There are many complaints, Davy, against *that Visor:* that Visor is *an arrant knave,* on my knowledge.
*Davy*. I grant your worship that he is a knave, sir; but yet, God forbid, sir, but a knave should have some *countenance* at his friend's request. An honest man, sir, is able to speak for himself, when a knave is not. . . . The knave is mine honest friend, sir; therefore I beseech your worship, *let him be countenanced.* (38-53.)

It is only after he is left alone that Falstaff recovers himself. He pays his private respects to the bundle of thin "bearded hermit's staves" that is this Robert Shallow and to his sycophants; and it is characteristic that he plans to turn the tedious incident into a comic device:

I will *devise* matter enough out of this Shallow to keep Prince Harry in continual laughter. . . . (79 *et seq.*)

But when Authority calls him, and now that William Visor is to be "countenanced," he must needs obey:

*Shallow (within).* Sir John!
*Falstaff*. I come, Master Shallow; I come, Master Shallow.

This scene was not written in jollity.

There are two other definite references to "William" by name in the plays—in *As You Like It* and *The Merry Wives*—and a further one which we take to be a reference to William Shaksper in the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew,* obviously a late addition—an incident which sounds like one of Oxford's pranks.[11] It seems to have only a tenuous connection with this very early play. But he meant it to be so.

A feudal lord returns from the hunt and, like Hamlet-Oxford, the feudal lord living at Elsinore-Hedingham, entertains a company of players.

Now, fellows, you are welcome.

He comes upon Sly lying on the ground, either dead or drunk. (Perhaps he is merely drunk with ambition.) His remark recalls the "swine without a head" of *Every Man Out*—this having of course been written first:

[11] *The Taming of the Shrew* was first published in 1594. Sidney Lee takes this to be the old play which the dramatist used for the finished version printed in the First Folio. It is the one in which the Induction appeared. (*A Life,* etc.; p. 163.)

O monstrous beast! how *like a swine* he lies.
. . . . . .
Sirs, I will practise on this *drunken man.*
What think you, if he were convey'd to bed,
Wrapp'd in sweet clothes, rings put upon his fingers,
A most delicious banquet by his bed,
And brave attendants near him when he wakes,
Would not the beggar then *forget himself?* (*Ind.* 1.34-41.)

It may be purposive that, just before the Lord discovers Sly, he has been speaking to his First Huntsman about his dogs; and the latter, defending one called Bellman, says:

Trust me, I take him for the better *dog;*

to which the Lord replies:

Thou art a fool: if *Echo* were as fleet,
I would esteem him worth a dozen such.

This is arresting, because Jonson makes such extravagant use of the "dog"-idea in his play which introduces Puntarvolo-Oxford in a travesty on this very scene, while *Act* I of *Cynthia's Revels* is based upon an encounter of Amorphus-Oxford with "Echo."

Sly, whose name is in itself significant, protests in the very beginning that he is well-derived—in other words, a gentleman—his family having come in with Richard Conqueror. But when he has been dressed in rich apparel and is waited on by attendants, one of whom is the Lord in disguise, he begs for "a pot of small ale" and "beef": he wishes to be merely himself, just as Shift did, who regretted his pretences and efforts to be thought "a tall man." But the Lord protests:

Heaven cease this idle humour in your honour! (2.13.)

And when he is finally coerced into agreeing that he is indeed a lord, not "a tinker, nor Christophero Sly" (73), the Third Servant reproaches him for having believed he knew such persons

As *Stephen Sly,* and old John *Naps* of *Greece,*
And Peter *Turf* . . . (*Sc.* 2.93-4),

recalling Macilente's epithet for Sogliardo, "this dusty turf, this clod," and implying opprobrium in each name, Sly, Naps, Greece (grease).[12]

It is as if the Lord were tacitly saying, "You have wished to pass yourself off as the author who is a nobleman. Well, you shall have your fill!" When the Page enters, impersonating his wife, and Sly demands,

Madam, undress you, and come now to bed (117),

[12] In *Parnassus,* Stercutio (John Shaksper) is said to wear "greasy slops." And the character representing Shaksper in *The Tempest* is Stephano, to match Stephen Sly.



he is quieted and told he must "hear a play" instead. For it is plays he has wanted, isn't it? Well, *a play then he shall have.* "You have been a *sly tinker* with my plays," says the true author, in effect, "going about using my good name and collecting money for garbled editions of my work. [That is to say, for surreptitious copies put together by Sly tinkers, like Stephano and Trinculo, in *The Tempest,* who plan to steal by 'line and level.'] [13] Go on dreaming; for the only way I can rebuke you without taking further honor from my name is thus to ensnare you, preserve you for posterity in the amber of my wit, showing you for what you are."

He did the same thing again, with variations, in a revision of *As You Like It, Act V, scene* 1—the very same scene of the very same act he had used for planting the clue in 2 *Henry IV.* As in one, so in the other, the incidents and some of the characters are quite extraneous to the action of the play proper. And here we have straight allegory, for Audrey (an anagram for de Uary or de Vary) stands indisputably for the plays; Touchstone, the courtier-clown, for the dramatist Oxford. William, who appears in no other scene, is listed in the *Dramatis Personnae* as "A country fellow, in love with Audrey": which is precisely what William Shaksper was. The scene is the Forest of Arden, which lay between Oxford's home on the Avon and the village of Stratford.

We have, however, had a preliminary glimpse of Audrey in III.3, which begins with Touchstone's demanding of her,

And how, Audrey? *Am I the man yet?* doth my simple feature content you?—

which we take to mean, Am I still the man to whom you belong?

There follows Touchstone's pun about Audrey (the plays) among the goats like the capricious (i.e., goatlike) poet Ovid among the Goths, and Jaques's sour comment about "knowledge ill-inhabited"; then Touchstone's highly significant reflection,

When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward child Understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room. (11-14.)

Here the dramatist is saying, so plainly that there is no excuse for evading his meaning, that if his audience—or readers—do not realize what he is telling them as clearly as he can, restricted to symbolism, allegory, and suggestion as perforce he is, it tortures him more—kills his spirit more—than being called to reckoning in a torture-chamber.

[13] In the Induction, written by Webster, to Marston's *The Malcontent* (1604), this same presumptuous man appears, this time named William Sly. He has a conversation on the subject of his excellent memory with "Burbadge" and Condell. As in Jonson's satires, he has a cousin, here named Sinklo.

There is some rather vague talk about poetry being "a true thing"; and Touchstone says "the truest poetry is the most feigning"—which is what we have found it to be in the plays, where there is so frequently a hidden meaning. Does the author not say so himself in *The Midsummer-Night's Dream?* (V.1.1-27)[14] He expects to be taken at his word.

Touchstone-Oxford would seem to be speaking in bitterness when he calls Audrey "a foul slut." The common theatre was unspeakably foul in those days, and many of the plays were being performed there. Any theatre was considered so by the Puritans, who were becoming increasingly influential and whom he evidently has in mind, for he proceeds to speak of Sir Oliver Martext. (The name Mar-text is significant, of course, for the plays were often garbled. It is probably a complex pun, including not only Martin Marprelate but also Sir Oliver Pigge, who had in 1582 marred the text of the Geneva Bible by his own interpretation of *The First Epistle of St. Peter,* which became quite popular.) But Touchstone is going to stand by Audrey and marry her.

Jaques—the melancholy, reflective Oxford—appears and offers to "give" Audrey, calling Touchstone "motley," which he has previously said (II.7) is *his* "only suit."

Touchstone remarks,

> As an *ox* hath his bow, etc.,

hoping no doubt that *this* allusion will be met with "the forward child, Understanding."

The scene ends with Sir Oliver fearing he is being flouted, or mocked, by these "fantastical" knaves: which was the case with Marprelate by one of Oxford's own company in 1590.

With this necessary preamble, we now return to V.1, where Touchstone pacifies Audrey:

> We shall find a time, Audrey: patience, *gentle* Audrey.

So she is no longer a "foul slut": that was a passing bitterness on his part.

Audrey's rejoinder gives us an interesting clue; she calls Jaques "the old gentleman":

> Faith, the priest was good enough, for all *the old gentleman's* saying.

[14] When Theseus flouts "these antique fables . . . these fairy toys," Hippolyta replies:

> But all the story of the night told over,
> And all their minds transfigur'd so together,
> More witnesseth than fancy's images,
> And grows to something of great constancy,
> But, howsoever, strange and admirable.



Now, when *As You Like It* was first produced, Jacques-Oxford was young and debonair, but here we are definitely informed that he has grown old: hence we learn that this part belongs to the 1590's, probably the latter half of the decade. Incidentally, he is of gentle birth, not a man of the people.

> *Touchstone.* A most wicked Sir Oliver, Audrey; a most vile *Martext.* But Audrey, there is a youth here in the forest *lays claim to you.*
> *Audrey.* Ay, I know who 'tis: *he hath no interest in me in the world.* (5-9.)

We have the dramatist's word for it. And the word of a Vere is not to be doubted. The juxtaposition of "Mar-text" with the man who "lays claim" to the plays is not by any means accidental. Garbled editions were being surreptitiously published, actors' memory versions, etc. (Caliban strove to people the island—or the theatre—with Calibans like himself.)

*Enter William.* And we are straightway told that he is "a clown." If we are to do our part and understand Touchstone-Oxford's "good wit," we must recognize him.

> *Touchstone.* It is meat and drink to me to see *a clown.* . . .
> *William.* Good even, Audrey.
> *Audrey.* God ye good even, William.
> *William.* And good even to you, sir. (10-16.)

Here we have the amiable William showing the same deference to Touchstone that the clown Sogliardo shows Puntarvolo, for Touchstone says kindly:

> Good even, gentle friend. Cover thy head, cover thy head; nay, prithee, be covered.

He calls him "gentle" either in recognition of his courtesy and to indicate good will, or else because William is by now a gentleman.

He inquires William's age, which the latter says is "twenty-five." Since Shaksper was twenty-five in 1589, it may be that William was not telling the truth about his age.[15] On the other hand, it may be that Oxford did not know the man's age but was merely guessing; and it suited him to have it twenty-five, because he himself was now an "old gentleman,"—certainly so far as the plays were concerned—and he wished to make it clear that this youth could not possibly have written plays by now familiar to the public. By the close of 1590, all of them except *Henry VIII* had been written. Thus Touchstone's comment is slightly sarcastic:

> *A ripe age.* Is thy name William?
> *William.* William, sir.

[15] Of course, it is possible that Shaksper was in London in 1589, but no evidence of this has been presented.

*Touchstone.* A fair name. Wast born i' the forest here?
*William.* Ay, sir, I thank God.
*Touchstone.* 'Thank God'; a good answer. Art rich?
*William.* Faith, sir, so so.
*Touchstone.* 'So so' is good. . . . Art thou wise?
*William.* Ay, sir, *I have a pretty wit.*
*Touchstone.* Why, thou sayest well. I do now remember a saying, 'The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.'—

A proverb which certainly applied here, for it was the "wise" man who was playing the part of the Fool, Touchstone, and the "fool," William, who, having "a pretty wit," thought he could palm himself off as wise enough to have written the plays.

The ensuing symbol of the heathen philosopher and the grape is obscure to us: it may have had a special contemporary significance, or some recondite classical one. Touchstone continues:

You do love this maid?
*William.* I do, sir.
*Touchstone.* Give me thy hand. Art thou *learned?*
*William.* No, sir.
*Touchstone.* Then learn this of me: *to have is to have;* for it is a figure in rhetoric that drink, being poured out of a cup into a glass, by filling the one doth empty the other; [16] for *all your writers do consent that ipse is he:* now, *you are not ipse, for I am he.*
*William.* Which he, sir?
*Touchstone. He, sir, that must marry this woman.* Therefore, *you clown, abandon,*—which is in the vulgar, *leave,*—the society,—which in the boorish is, company,—*of this female,*—which in the common is, woman; which together is, abandon the society of this female, *or, clown, thou perishest;* or, *to thy better understanding, diest;* or, to wit, I kill thee, make thee away, translate thy life into death, thy liberty into bondage. I will deal in poison with thee, or in bastinado, or in steel; *I will bandy with thee in faction; I will o'errun thee with policy; I will kill thee a hundred and fifty ways: therefore tremble, and depart.*
*Audrey.* Do, good William.
*William.* God rest you merry, sir.

*How can a man speak more plainly than this?* Oxford—or William Shakespeare—tells Shaksper, another William, to abandon all pretensions to the plays and clear out, forthwith. "You are not ipse, for I am he." All the "writers"—Jonson, Marston, Dekker, Peele, *et al.*—know this, "do consent" to it. What other possible interpretation can be put upon these candid lines? He translates his threats into the "vulgar" language of the "boorish" and "common" provincial, so that he shall be thoroughly understood. He has had enough. "Therefore tremble, and depart."

[16] I.e., if you take the plays unto yourself, you take them away from me. Plato uses this figure in the *Symposium.*



When Puntarvolo in *Every Man Out* suspects Shift of having made way with his dog, he says:

My dog, villain, or *I will hang thee;* thou hast confest *robberies,* and other felonious acts, to this gentleman, thy Countenance [i.e., Sogliardo] . . . And without my dog, *I will hang thee,* for them.
*Shift (kneels).* Pardon me, good sir; God is my witness, I never did *robbery* in my life.

How can a man speak more plainly? But Touchstone-Oxford has spoken more plainly still. We shall fail him miserably if we do not use "the forward child Understanding" and apprehend his full meaning. He has chosen his words deliberately, he is not just *talking.*

. . . abandon the society of this female, or, clown, thou perishest; . . . or, to wit, *I kill thee, make thee away; . . . I will bandy with thee in faction; I will o'errun thee with policy; I will kill thee a hundred and fifty ways.*

He means he will get rid of this upstart claimant; he will arouse his colleagues into a "faction" to put him down; he will use his political influence to refute him by "policy"; finally—and this is what he so brilliantly and subtly did—he, Oxford-Touchstone, will plant "a hundred and fifty" clues throughout the plays, such as this one is, and all the others, to show audiences and readers that Shaksper is *a clown never, under any circumstances, to be confused with Shakespeare, ipse, the true author.*

Touchstone's threats, though dire, must have been made in a humorous tone, for William leaves cheerfully enough, with a "God rest you merry, sir." But they understand each other.

Not to be forgotten is Prospero's firm dealing with Stephano, who plans to cut his "weezand" and usurp his place as ruler of the magic island. And of course in *Measure for Measure,* Oxford, as the disguised Duke, has expressed himself clearly and unmistakably regarding his anonymity.

Still another William appears in *The Merry Wives* (IV.1.) He too has no integral connection with the play; the scene is patently interpolated, and, it must be, for a purpose. In regard to this William, we find no inferences whatever pointing to his identity as Shaksper. He is neither a clown nor a grown man: he is a young boy who, because it is a "playing-day," sulks at having to give an account of himself in Latin.

*Evans.* Come hither, William; *hold up your head;* come. (17.)

Mrs. Page repeats the injunction. She has told us that Sir Hugh Evans, the Welshman, is his master (8-12):

Look where his *master* comes; 'tis a *playing-day,* I see. How now, Sir Hugh! *no school today?*
*Evans.* No; Master Slender is get the boys leave to *play.*

Henry Evans, a Welshman like Sir Hugh, was a "servant," as they said, of Lord Oxford's who trained the boy-actors of his, and probably of the Queen's, company. The name is not even disguised here, except that Henry is changed to Hugh. The "playing-day" referred to is apparently not a holiday, but an acting-day, a day for a performance at court. We strongly suspect that, while Slender was partly Philip Sidney in the early version, he is partly John Lyly now, who, as Oxford's secretary-manager, worked with Evans. Not enough is known about his personality to characterize him here, but it seems likely.

This scene may not have been written by Oxford himself. It did not appear in the quarto. Quickly remarks:

> Hang hog is Latin for Bacon. (49.)

There is, whoever wrote it, a great deal of *sous-entendu* in this scene, some of it pointed. To begin with, Mistress Page requests Evans to question William in his "accidence." And Evans asks William "how many numbers is in nouns." Since a *noun* is a *name,* he may mean name: how many are there of his name? The boy rightly says two, but Quickly protests that there is one more.

> *Evans.* . . . What is 'fair,' William?

The Fair Youth is fair, of course.

> *Evans.* . . . What is 'lapis,' William?

Evidently this is a reference corresponding to Nashe's "Master Apis Lapis." The word Lapis is capitalized in the Folio, as it should be here.

There follow questions about the "nominativo"—or name; "genitivo," birth or derivation; and "accusativo." (Apparently Quickly accuses Bacon. Does it mean of writing this scene?) Then comes the "vocative," and William promptly comes out with,

> *O vocativo, O.*
> *Evans.* Remember, William, focative is *caret.*

Quickly takes him to mean "carrot," which she says is a "good root." But he said "caret"; and a caret is "a mark placed to show an omission" (Oxford Dictionary), which omission—of a name—is suggestive here, as of course a "good root" is also.

When the quiz is over—they never take up the dative and ablative cases, we note, for it is only the *name,* the *generation* (of William), the *accused* and the *vocative O* which concern them—Evans says:

> Go your ways and play; go,



as Leontes had said to the young Mamilius,

> Go play, boy, play.
>
> *Mrs. Page.* He is a better scholar than I thought he was.
> *Evans.* He is a good sprag memory . . .

A "sprag"—or a quick, sharp—"memory" is the kind an actor needs.

This is obviously a William of a different color; not William Shaksper, the "clown," the man called "Sly," the "tinker"-with-another-man's-plays, who—having hit upon what we should nowadays call a good racket—buys the right to call himself "a gentleman."