

She Will Not Be a Mother: Evaluating the Seymour Prince Tudor Hypothesis

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Two theories, called the Prince Tudor hypotheses, have generated much debate in authorship discussions. The release of the film *Anonymous* in the fall of 2011 is likely to bring more attention to these questions. Of the two hypotheses, the one most often put forth holds that Queen Elizabeth had a son with the 17th Earl of Oxford. The child of this liaison was placed with the Southampton family to be raised as an Earl's son and educated in a privileged environment suitable to one who might ultimately become heir to the throne of England.¹ In the other theory, it is posited that Queen Elizabeth in her youth had a child with Thomas Seymour, the Lord Admiral of England. According to this hypothesis, the child was placed in the household of the 16th Earl of Oxford where he was raised as an Earl's son and received the benefits of a privileged upbringing befitting a royal prince.² In both of these theories, this proposed child would have royal parentage, thus they are known as "Prince Tudor" or PT theories.

There is some confusion in the nomenclature of the PT theories, heretofore known as PT I and PT II theories, and this confusion has worsened with the advent of something known as the "Double PT Theory" which combines both theories.³ For the purposes of clarity, in this paper the scenarios will be referred to as the "Seymour PT Theory" and the "Southampton PT Theory" respectively. This article will only discuss the "Seymour PT Theory."

In an article published in 2006 in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Richard Whalen cogently summarized the pros and cons of these two theories. Whalen noted that both theories contain the seductive elements of a good story, including "a possible love affair, potential adultery and bastardy, political intrigue, royal

succession, clandestine surrogate parents, changeling children.”⁴ Looking at these themes from the perspective of the Shakespeare authorship mystery brings a new depth to the interpretation of Shakespeare’s literary work, most especially the *Sonnets*, making this inquiry one that is well worth pursuing in spite of the dismay that it engenders in some quarters.

Though both the Seymour PT and Southampton PT hypotheses reflect curious historical circumstances that defy traditional explanations, the major weakness of both theories is that there is no direct biographical evidence to support either one. Moreover, there are two separate issues inherent in the Seymour PT theory. The purpose of this paper is to disentangle these two components: what are the historical facts of the Seymour incident that indicate that Elizabeth may or may not have borne a child; and what is the likelihood that this child, if there was one, might have been raised as the son of the 16th Earl of Oxford? In pursuing answers to these questions, the standard histories of the Tudor era have been consulted, but with the caveat that the obligatory interpretations are not always adhered to in this paper.

A Princess’ Child?

Soon after King Henry VIII’s death in January of 1547, Princess Elizabeth moved into Chelsea Manor, the country home that the King provided for Queen Katherine Parr, his sixth Queen and the one who was fortunate enough to become his surviving spouse.⁵ The Dowager Queen occupied Chelsea with her fourth husband Thomas Seymour, the attractive, swash-buckling Lothario⁶ whom she married within months of the King’s death. Thomas was the brother of Jane Seymour, Henry’s third Queen, and his close kinship with the young King Edward VI facilitated his ascendancy into the peerage as Baron Seymour of Sudeley and his promotion to the rank of Lord High Admiral, the most powerful military position in England.⁷

Known for his boundless ambition, Seymour had wanted to marry either Princess Mary or Princess Elizabeth but had settled for Henry’s Queen because she had been in love with him prior to her marriage to the King.⁸ As noted by Katherine’s biographer Susan James, “For Seymour, the queen-dowager would be a valuable asset in his quest for greater influence on the council. She was still in love with him and to his experienced eye, ripe for seduction.”⁹

To her credit, Queen Katherine had made a concerted effort to bring Henry’s three estranged children together as a family during her marriage to the King,¹⁰ and she established what appeared to be an especially warm and nurturing relationship with the young Princess Elizabeth.¹¹ It was understandable that the Queen wanted to keep the adolescent Princess under her wing after she remarried. However, once Elizabeth and the newly wedded Seymours were together at Chelsea,¹² life would prove problematic for the Tudor Princess. It has never been disputed that the Admiral made advances to the attractive teenage girl who lived in his house.¹³

Seymour’s character is a significant component of this narrative. He is described by historian Susan James as “an omnivorous lover whose taste in women

seems to have been thoroughly eclectic.” Tracy Borman states that “his name had been attached to various other ladies of standing at court.”¹⁴ Starkey, among others, concurs, remarking that Seymour was “irresistible to women.”¹⁵ John Strype reports in his *Ecclesiastical Memorials* that in 1543, a “lewd woman” is on record accusing him of debauchery, a quaint term for wicked behavior.¹⁶

Historians accept the reports that Seymour frequented Elizabeth’s bedchamber in his bedclothes.¹⁷ This was easy for him to do as he had pocketed a key to her quarters.¹⁸ He is reported to have “struck” or “patted” the young Princess “on the back or buttocks familiarly,” snatching kisses and embraces under the very nose of the Queen.¹⁹ Even on the surface, it doesn’t look good, and appearances were important in the royal family. By contrast, Elizabeth’s older sister Mary had been so carefully reared as to be kept away from the “company of men, lest she become attached to the male sex.”²⁰

But was an indecorous flirtation as far as it went? Generations of historians stoutly perpetuate the story that Elizabeth fended off the advances of the Admiral.²¹ Frederick Chamberlin notes that “the girl was never alone with Seymour upon any of these occasions, and that her attendants saw to it that there was no real danger for her.”²² Her governess Kate Ashley was responsible for protecting Elizabeth’s virtue, and historians accept the story that she gave the Admiral a stern dressing down for his behavior.²³ However, Ashley has also been criticized for failing to deal effectively with the situation.²⁴

An occurrence, often described as the incident in the garden,²⁵ sheds some light on the ménage a trois. As this story is received by historians, Queen Katherine is supposed to have held the Princess while Seymour cut off her clothes, taking a knife and ripping her dress into a hundred pieces. Then they both “tickled” Elizabeth. The event is accepted as a prank!²⁶ All in good fun.²⁷ In fact, it is reported that the Queen participated in two prior tickling sessions when she accompanied her husband to the Princess’ quarters earlier that spring.²⁸

Maybe the official story of Seymour’s morning visits to Elizabeth’s bedroom is true; it was an innocent though indecorous amusement. Maybe the nascent relationship between Elizabeth and the Admiral was not consummated. Maybe she was just lucky and did not get pregnant. But the scene in the garden carries another implication. Here’s another interpretation of the events. Although historians demur on exact dates, information is available from which a timeline can be developed. One helpful detail is the record of a visit of the Dowager Queen and her entourage to Seymour’s London house during the Christmas season of 1547, for it is here that the Admiral reportedly entered Elizabeth’s bedchamber without his pants on.²⁹ The garden scene occurred the following spring.

If Elizabeth had been seduced sometime in December of 1547 or early January of 1548 – quite possibly during the London visit – by the spring she would be about four months pregnant and starting to show. Queen Katherine had become pregnant in this same time frame, and her baby was due in early September.³⁰ Maybe Queen Katherine didn’t hear the gossip or was reluctant to believe it, but after a few months it became apparent that there might be something to the rumors that her

husband was involved with the young Princess. In an attempt to explain Katherine's collusion in the garden scene and the various tickling sessions, David Starkey suggests that the effects of her first pregnancy had "unbalanced her judgment."³¹ It's scant notice of the oddness of this behavior, particularly for a woman who had kept her cool during the turbulent years of her marriage to King Henry VIII.³² A better explanation is that she was disturbed by the rumors that something was going on between her husband and the Princess. Perhaps she was enraged.

If this is the case, then the official story may have a touch of spin. Looking at it from a different perspective, there's a problem with motive. Seymour had no motive to cut off Elizabeth's clothes; an angry Queen did. The circumstances suggest that it wasn't Seymour who was cutting off Elizabeth's clothes, aided and abetted by the Queen; instead, Queen Katherine was holding Elizabeth while one of her ladies was slicing off her clothes at her behest. Perhaps the earlier tickling sessions had been inconclusive, and Queen Katherine wanted to examine Elizabeth's body and see her condition for herself. Seymour arrived on the scene and stopped the assault. And no matter how you look at it, an assault it was. Cutting off the clothes of a Princess was not an everyday occurrence in a royal household.³³ It suggests that there was nothing playful about it. No one was "tickling" Elizabeth, either in the garden or during the reported visits to the Princess' bedchamber. The Queen wanted to know the truth: was Elizabeth pregnant?³⁴

Returning to Starkey's account for the rest of the story, by May of 1548, the slow-learning Queen "decided that things had gone too far" and sent the Princess away.³⁵ Elizabeth's removal, long overdue, was to the safe haven of Cheshunt, the country estate of Sir Anthony Denny. This brings up the obvious questions: who is Sir Anthony Denny? And under what circumstances did he provide shelter for Elizabeth? But before these two questions can be answered, a discussion of the dynastic imperatives that drove the life of a Tudor princess, or any Renaissance princess, is in order. From the vantage point of history, we know that Elizabeth became Queen of England, and was a great monarch as well. But in 1548, this prospect was not on the Tudor horizon. Henry VII, the first of the Tudor Kings, proved a master of international diplomacy-through-marriage with the unions of his offspring with royal dynasties outside of England.³⁶ With these marriages, he neutralized long-standing enemies of England, at least for a time. Following his father's lead, Henry VIII began diplomatic negotiations for his daughter Mary's marriage while she was still in the cradle. In 1518, he solemnized a proxy wedding between the two-year-old Mary and the son of the King of France.³⁷ Abrogating this agreement, he betrothed Mary, at age six, to Emperor Charles V as the two rulers made plans for the invasion of France.³⁸ The Emperor eventually tired of waiting for his child bride to grow up and broke off the engagement.³⁹

By the time Mary reached her mid teens and the proper age to marry, Henry was at the end of his patience with his first Queen, Katherine of Aragon. After the divorce, Mary's status as a Royal Princess became questionable, lessening her attraction to potential suitors.⁴⁰ Later, in his still greater fury with Anne Boleyn, he bastardized daughter Elizabeth.⁴¹

Six years after his third Queen, Jane Seymour, gave birth to the longed-for son and heir, Prince Edward, Henry brought his daughters back into the line of succession, though he never reinstated them as legitimate issue.⁴² Once upgraded back to a Princess of sorts, Mary resumed her accustomed position as a bargaining chip, but by this time she was twenty-eight years old.⁴³ With all the suitors for her hand that had come and gone, and two celebrated betrothals, it's odd that no marriage for her was actually forthcoming, a circumstance that needs an explanation.⁴⁴

If one thinks comparatively, the waning years of Henry's reign were a particularly dangerous time in the Tudor court. It was tacitly understood that the faction that controlled the young Prince Edward would control the religious direction of England.⁴⁵ Henry was a hard man to read, but Mary's elusive marriage may indicate the direction that Henry wanted his dynasty to take. If Mary remained unmarried, there would be no Catholic Tudor heirs. If Elizabeth married into a Protestant House, the Tudors would become an entirely Protestant Royal family. It is with this in mind that Elizabeth's destiny was mapped out for her. With her fairly good looks, excellent Renaissance education and, best of all, linguistic accomplishments, what a fine consort she would make for a continental Prince from a top tier Protestant House – though one might pity the poor bloke fated to take Elizabeth to wife. In fact, the founding of a European branch of the English royals was a dynastic niche that was filled two generations later by King James' daughter, another Elizabeth, and the current royal family is descended from this union.

Now back to Princess Elizabeth's savvy handler, Sir Anthony Denny. He was educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, a hotbed of the Reformation scholarship and intrigue.⁴⁶ After entering the King Henry's service in 1536, he became the King's most trusted Gentleman of the Bedchamber and an influential member of his Privy Council. Historian Robert Hutchinson characterizes Denny as "Henry's real 'fixer,' his man-about-court, trusted messenger and true confidant," and notes that the full import of Denny's role in the King's administration has only recently been "identified" by historians.⁴⁷ David Starkey concurs, describing Denny as "the smoothest operator of the era."⁴⁸ As was customary with the King's closest circle, Denny profited handsomely from the dissolution of the monasteries.⁴⁹ This being said, information about Denny's personal life is hard to come by, and details are conflicting or missing.⁵⁰ He is remembered for a rich endowment that he gave a school in Yorkshire that had formerly belonged to St John's College, Cambridge, yet accounts vary as to the number of children he had.⁵¹ Even the date of his death is uncertain. In a document dated August 8, 1549, none other than William Cecil wrote that "Sir Anthony Denny is dead, whereof none have greater loss than very honest [and virtuous] men."⁵² Cecil's announcement was premature. An addition to Denny's will was dated a month later on September 7, 1549, and his death is thought to have occurred on September 10.⁵³

But even though the exact date of his death is uncertain, there is no doubt that the discreet Sir Anthony was indispensable to his King. In addition to membership in the Privy Council, he was the Keeper of the Palace, and controlled the dry stamp, the

facsimile of the King's signature used often in the last years of the King's life. Denny was also the Keeper of the Privy Purse, an office in which he facilitated the King's personal expenditures.⁵⁴

With regard to Elizabeth, it's possible that the Denny had been overseeing her care for a long time, as his sister-in-law, Katherine Champernon, became her governess upon the birth of Prince Edward. When the time came for Katherine to marry, he found a suitable match in his friend John Ashley whom he knew from St. John's College, Cambridge.⁵⁵ It is this very Katherine Champernon who entered the history books as Elizabeth's beloved Kate (or Kat) Ashley, the woman whose devotion to Elizabeth would be sorely tested during the 1548 scandal.

Once removed to Sir Anthony Denny's country manor of Cheshunt, Elizabeth was in a safe haven from which she could deal with the ramifications of the events at Chelsea. She was sequestered at Denny's estate from May of 1548 – the time of her departure from the Queen Katherine's household – until December, when she was set up with her own household at Hatfield House. She made no public appearances during this almost seven months time. She did not return to attend Queen Katherine at the birth of the her baby in late August.⁵⁶ Besides missing an opportunity to show herself to the courtiers and servants surrounding the Queen – an act which would *immediately* have dispelled rumors about her own possible pregnancy – attendance on Katherine at this important time was a duty owed by a loving daughter to the woman who had been the only mother she had ever known.⁵⁷ It was a conspicuous absence.

Another indication of the breach between Elizabeth and the Queen was the fact that Katherine appointed the ten-year-old Lady Jane Grey to be the baby's godmother. To stand godparent, especially to a royal child, was a high honor in court circles, and, as Princess Elizabeth was the older and higher ranking royal, she would have been the more appropriate choice. This is a snub that figures in the equation.⁵⁸ Furthermore, historians concur that the Queen named her baby Mary in honor of Elizabeth's older sister, the Catholic Tudor Princess.⁵⁹ Although Queen Katherine and Princess Mary had been on good terms during Katherine's marriage to the King, Mary refused to endorse her marriage to the Admiral.⁶⁰ Furthermore, as the Protestant Katherine and Catholic Mary were firm in their opposing religious convictions, the choice of the Catholic Princess over the Protestant one is odd for the Queen to make.⁶¹

Next, Elizabeth missed out on the opportunity to make a public appearance at the Queen's funeral in September of 1548.⁶² The Queen died of puerperal fever on September 5, and, as she lay dying, she accused her husband of betrayal. The implication can be drawn that the Queen's misery was worsened by the prospect that her husband had his eye on another marriage after her passing, though historians usually give this interpretation short shrift and attribute her accusations to delirium resulting from her fever.⁶³ It would have behooved Elizabeth mightily had she attended the funeral and better yet if she had taken on the ceremonial duties of chief mourner, another prestigious appointment that again went to the Lady Jane Grey.⁶⁴

In a society where a woman's honor "rested solely with her sexual chastity," had Elizabeth succumbed to the advances of the Admiral, it was a dishonor to the

House of Tudor and everyone associated with it.⁶⁵ As Mary Hazard notes in her book *Elizabethan Silent Language*, the physical presence or absence from important occasions within the royal household was scrutinized in the 16th century. Absence indicated disgrace. Mary Hazard goes on to say that by the time Elizabeth became a Queen herself, she “had suffered first-hand some of the psychological and political manipulations of presence.”⁶⁶

In his book *Shakespeare’s Lost Kingdom*, Charles Beauclerk posits September of 1548 as the timeframe in which Elizabeth’s could have given birth.⁶⁷ Clearly, the May to December time out of public view provided an adequate window for her to bear a child. To support this proposition, Beauclerk quotes a report from the *Memoires of Jane Dormer*. As this gossipy account is taken from a narrative decades later and ultimately published in 1887, it lacks the credibility of spontaneity.⁶⁸ A more credible piece of correspondence is a letter written by Roger Asham. Dated July 8, 1548, Asham notes that a young woman came to Chelsea, and that if he had been there, he would have introduced this person to the “illustrious Lady,” who is certainly Princess Elizabeth. It has been suggested that Asham’s letter indicates that Elizabeth could not have been pregnant, as no visitors would have been allowed around her at that time. But the letter clearly states that the meeting with the “illustrious Lady” did not occur.⁶⁹

Whether Elizabeth was pregnant or not, the rumor mill had done its job. This is evident in the official biography of Elizabeth in the *DNB*, where it is admitted that this time of Elizabeth’s life was caught up in “hearsay stories, backstairs gossip, and all the vulgar tattle of waiting maids and lackeys.”⁷⁰ The dowager Queen’s household had probably numbered about 200 servants,⁷¹ and this, presumably, is where the rumors originated. But aside from the stories of waiting maids and lackeys, the most compelling – and damaging – testimony comes from Elizabeth herself. In her own correspondence, she acknowledges *her awareness* of the scandal as it gathered around her.

Although a mere public appearance would have quickly squelched the rumors, the clever fourteen-year-old Princess chose (from the safe confines of Cheshunt) to address the matter rhetorically. Three letters from Elizabeth are extant from the summer of 1548: two to Queen Katherine and an extraordinary letter to the Admiral. It appears that Elizabeth initiated the correspondence, though the date of the first letter is conjectural.

She writes to the Queen Dowager possibly at the end of June, 1548: “I weighed it more deeper when you said you would warn me of *all evils that you should hear of me ...*” and Elizabeth states that the Queen had “offered friendship to me that way, *that all men judge the contrary*” (emphasis mine).⁷² The phrases “all evils” indicates misconduct, and “all men” means that knowledge of Elizabeth’s indecorous conduct is widespread. In saying that “all men judge the contrary,” Elizabeth implies that Queen Katherine is taking her side in this contretemps, an interpretation that does not square with the Queen’s actions in sending Elizabeth away. This letter can be read in its entirety in the Marcus, Mueller and Rose edition of *Elizabeth I Collected Works*, and one can judge if this letter is an effort on Elizabeth’s part to cultivate the

Queen's goodwill.

The following letter to the Admiral is given here in full. It is not dated, but the content indicates that it is the second of the three letters of the summer of 1548.

My Lord,

You needed not to send *an excuse* to me, for I could *not mistrust* the *not* fulfilling of your promise to proceed for *want of goodwill*, *but only the opportunity serveth not*, wherefore I shall desire you to think that *a greater matter than this could not* make me impute any *unkindness* in you. For I am a friend *not won with trifles*, *nor lost with the like*. Thus I commit you and all your affairs in God's hand, who keep you from *all evil*. I pray you make my humble commendations to the queen's highness (emphasis mine).⁷³

Apparently, this letter is a reply to communication from the Admiral ("you need not send an excuse to me"). Strong emotion runs through these few lines. The negative tone is evident: the word "not" appears six times alongside other negative words, e. g. "not mistrust," "not fulfilling of your promise" (What promise?), "want of goodwill," "unkindness in you." Most striking is the line "I am a friend not won with trifles, nor lost with the like." Why does Elizabeth *need* or *expect* to be "won" or "lost" by her stepmother's husband? Granted, there are explanations that could account for the Princess' unenthusiastic response to the Admiral, but these words contain a familiarity that is out of place when compared to the effusive, complimentary language of courtly communication.⁷⁴ Last, why should they be corresponding at all? The reader can judge for himself, but it's hard to see this in this letter the flirtatious, lighthearted banter of an infatuated young girl.⁷⁵

Historians often quote from Elizabeth's third letter because it would appear that all is forgiven and she is communicating graciously with the Queen.⁷⁶ It begins well enough: "Although your highness letters be most joyful to me in absence," but no joyfulness is apparent in this stiff, laconic, repetitive letter.⁷⁷ It would be nice if the Queen's side of the correspondence had been preserved,⁷⁸ and nicer still if the rapprochement proposed by historians was supported by the Queen's subsequent appointments.⁷⁹ As we have seen, Katherine honored Princess Mary and Lady Jane Grey with recognition at her baby's birth.

By December of 1548, the Princess and her household had settled at Hatfield House. They may have thought the storm had passed. Now a widower, Seymour interrupted his mourning long enough to start the process for the hand of Elizabeth in marriage.⁸⁰ Using Elizabeth's cofferer Thomas Parry as a go between, Seymour gathered information about Elizabeth's landholdings, inquiring about their location, value, and condition: "if it were good lands or no;" "what state she had in the lands, for terme of life, or how;" and "whether she had out her letters patentes or no."⁸¹ The discussion of property was a usual preparation for marriage.⁸² Seymour also offered Elizabeth the use of his own house in London.⁸³ But Seymour's plans came

to a halt with his sudden arrest on January 17, 1549. Kate Ashley, Thomas Parry and others who were connected to either the Princess or the Admiral were arrested the next day.⁸⁴ Ashley and Parry were subsequently questioned, and as their depositions are the basis of the historical account of the relationship between Elizabeth and the Admiral, the circumstances surrounding these depositions deserve some consideration. While Elizabeth was grilled by Lord Tyrwhit at Hatfield in the early months of 1549, Ashley and Parry were questioned in London.

Interestingly, it appears that their depositions were taken by Sir Thomas Smith, the accomplished Cambridge University academic who, at this time, was serving as the clerk of the Privy Council.⁸⁵ They were in friendly hands with Smith.⁸⁶ The capable Sir Thomas was another Cambridge associate of Sir Anthony Denny's, and an adherent to the Protestant Reformation. The presence of Sir Thomas Smith suggests that the prisoners would be treated gently, and spared the full force of the brutality that might have been used against them.⁸⁷

Turning again to Elizabeth's own words as she explains herself, in a letter written to Lord Protector Somerset in January of 1549, she states that "Master Tyrwhit *and others* have told me that there goeth *rumors abroad* which be *greatly both against mine honor and honesty*..."⁸⁸ Then she addresses the "shameful slanders" "*that I am in the Tower and with child by my Lord Admiral*." Next, she "heartily" desires "*that I may come to the court after your first determination, that I may show myself there as I am*" (emphasis mine).⁸⁹ How interesting: Elizabeth had spent six months in confinement at Cheshunt the previous year with no public appearances. Had she turned up somewhere, *anywhere*, she could have ended the "shameful slanders" and restored her reputation. It would have gone a long way to mitigate the indignity that her behavior had caused the House of Tudor. Now, somewhat belatedly, "showing myself there as I am" has finally occurred to her. In this letter, the Princess floats a straw man argument. Tyrwhit was with her at Hatfield House and was reporting regularly to Lord Protector Somerset; of course the Lord Protector knew that she was not in the Tower. It suggests that Elizabeth is becoming what Alan Gordon Smith describes as "imperious of mood and with a mind already formed and hardened. Also she happened to be devoid of principles."⁹⁰

Next, let's look at the depositions of Elizabeth's two most trusted servants. Both Kate Ashley and Thomas Parry are questioned on the relationship of the Admiral and the Princess, and both concede that inappropriate sexual advances were made by the Admiral the previous summer.⁹¹ But neither Ashley nor Parry provide dates for these various notorious occurrences. In a jumble of statements, Parry attests that Elizabeth was discovered by the Queen in the arms of the Admiral and was thereupon sent away.⁹² He was not pressed for details. It's curious that he makes no comment about the dress cutting scene in the garden. Kate Ashley described the dress cutting as a joke, and this is the genesis of the prank explanation. It does not seem plausible that such an extraordinary episode in Elizabeth's life could be ignored by Parry or explained away so blithely by Ashley, yet the stories of the incidents at Chelsea, as related in these depositions, have been taken at face value by subsequent generations of historians.

Returning to the Admiral, he was in grave trouble. Thirty-three counts of treason were drawn up against him and passed unanimously by the Privy Council.⁹³ Some of the charges dealt with profiteering on the high seas and negotiating agreements with pirates -- something that he might have thought was in his job description as Lord Admiral. Other charges related to his take-over of the mint at Bristol to coin money, though he could argue that the money went to pay his men and supply his ships.⁹⁴ But it all added up to high treason if it passed the Parliament, and under the Act of Attainder the penalty for treason was death.⁹⁵

Straightaway, the House of Lords passed a guilty verdict, but the unruly Commons asked questions. Seems there were some members who thought that the charges were not commensurate with the Attainder that would result in Seymour's execution *without a trial*. The Commons were right to balk. Bishop Latimer noted that Seymour was known for his "moral profligacy,"⁹⁶ but this unwritten charge would only have been an issue of state if the Princess had been involved. In the end enough votes were mustered in the Commons to pass the Act of Attainder, though there were still a few hold-outs.⁹⁷ Thomas Seymour was executed on March 19, 1549 without a trial, which in turn denied him the opportunity to speak in his own defense.

In the two months that the Admiral was in the Tower awaiting his fate, Elizabeth, as we know, was questioned at Hatfield House by Tyrwhit who tried to use the depositions of Kate Ashley and Thomas Parry to entrap her. As it turns out, both of Elizabeth's servants steadfastly maintained that Elizabeth had staved off the advances of the Admiral.⁹⁸ It should not be thought that the purpose of these interrogations was to get Elizabeth to "confess" that she had had a child with the Admiral. What Tyrwhit was after from the Princess was an admission that she had entered into an *agreement to marry* Thomas Seymour after he became a widower.⁹⁹ Elizabeth's troubles at this juncture stemmed from the fact that she was forbidden to marry without the consent of the Privy Council. The object was to build the case against the Admiral and execute him through the Attainder. The possibility that Elizabeth might have borne a child out of wedlock made a secret marriage agreement between them more likely as a marriage would legitimize a previous, illicit relationship. However, to establish the guilt of the Admiral without pulling Elizabeth into the undertow was a fine line to walk.¹⁰⁰

Happily for Elizabeth, by early March, it appears that the Council had lost interest in interrogating her further. Two things support this interpretation. In a letter dated March 7, 1549, Elizabeth gives the Council her "most humble thanks" for a proclamation against rumor-mongering.¹⁰¹ This is an effort by the Council to suppress gossip. Then in May, she sent her "picture" to her brother the King as a gift. That she was allowed to approach her brother with a gift sends a clear signal that the rehabilitation process was underway. It is possible that this "gift" is the portrait in which Elizabeth is depicted as the quintessence of maidenly virtue.¹⁰² The letter that accompanied the portrait was dated May 15, 1549, and it ended with a quote from Horace: "feras non culpes quod vitari." One might wonder what the Princess was thinking when she wrote this, as it translates "what cannot be cured must be endured."¹⁰³

All things considered, it was a disastrous chapter in Elizabeth's life. Her mentor, the ubiquitous Sir Anthony Denny, fades from the scene sometime in 1549, and his departure coincides with the entrance of a new advisor. His name was William Cecil.¹⁰⁴

Was this child the 17th Earl of Oxford?

After the historical circumstances are examined, the vexing question remains: what happened to this child – if there was one? In exploring this query in the cultural context of the 16th century, an examination of the structure of Tudor society is in order. If the idea was to salvage Elizabeth's future as a marriageable Tudor Princess, how wise would it have been to place this child in a highly visible position as the heir of an Earl? As Elizabeth herself indicated in her letter to Somerset in January of 1549,¹⁰⁵ the word was out that she had been “with child,” and up and down the social ladder, people would have had their eyes open for anomalies surrounding newborns in high places.¹⁰⁶

In the 16th century, the nobility, as well as royalty, did not have the same expectations of privacy that we do today. In the *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, Lawrence Stone notes that a nobleman was “obligated to live in a style commensurate with his dignity.” Put quite simply, the peerage “lived in a crowd.”¹⁰⁷ Stone details the life of the great magnate who was “expected to have one principal and two subsidiary country seats, a house in London and a staff of 60 to 100 to run them. Moreover, he had to keep a generous table freely open to visitors, and a plentiful supply of horses for transport and communications.”¹⁰⁸ Thus the great houses were a cauldron for rumor and scandal, and would not necessarily provide a safe harbor for a matter that required careful, discrete handling.¹⁰⁹

However, an even greater difficulty came with the obligation put on the propertied class by the Court of Wards to show “proof of age,” i.e. provide testimony or documentation to substantiate the heir's date of birth in the event the father died before the heir's majority. This burden of proof could be quite onerous. Servants and wet-nurses as well as godparents could be called upon to give their recollections of the heir's birth and baptism.¹¹⁰

With large numbers of people in the loop and the possibility that someday the family and witnesses could be pressed to confirm the child's birthday, the scenario of the 17th Earl of Oxford as a changeling for the child born to Elizabeth does not make for sound strategic policy. It would be dangerous even if the dates were somewhat in synch – but they are not. The marriage of John de Vere and Margery Golding was recorded in the Parish Register on August 1, 1548, and Edward, their first child, was born on April 12, 1550, a date corroborated by the recognition of the Privy Council with a gift of a baptismal cup.¹¹¹

The idea of a changeling carries some romantic mystique generations later, but exchanging a child born in the fall of 1548 for a child reportedly born to the 16th Earl of Oxford in April of 1550 has some practical considerations. Are the 16th Earl and his Countess going to explain to their friends, neighbors and household that

they simply *forgot* to inform them of the birth of their son and heir eighteen months earlier? Or did they just expect that servants and others would not be able to tell the difference between an infant and an eighteen-month-old toddler?

In his book promoting the Seymour PT theory, Paul Streitz comments: “An older child appearing in the midst of an aristocratic household would create suspicions. Therefore, it would be likely that those hiding Elizabeth’s baby might go further to create a false identity for the child.” He further notes that the Privy Council’s gift of the baptismal cup “gives a *de facto* legitimacy to the birth of a son to John de Vere.”¹¹² This explanation does not take into account the physiological difference that eighteen months makes in a child’s growth, and this discrepancy could be difficult to work around.¹¹³

The Privy Council’s gift of the baptismal cup, as noted above, shows that the birth of a nobleman’s son was an event of import. Another contemporaneous notice of John de Vere and his son appears in the Calendar State Papers Foreign.¹¹⁴ Dated August 18, 1562, the letter is calendared from Somers to Throckmorton. At this time, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton was the ambassador to France, and John Somers was his London correspondent.¹¹⁵ The letter is both informational and gossipy.¹¹⁶ After a lengthy paragraph reporting recent court events, he notes that “The Earl of Oxford has departed to God, leaving a son about twelve years old.” Obviously, the death of a peer and the age of his son are newsworthy. John de Vere died on August 3, 1562, so by August 18th – the date of this letter – the word is getting around. Viewed in context, this is the kind of spontaneous chatter that the death of a grandee should generate. An opposing position might hold that the twelve year age of the future 17th Earl was adhered to just on general principles, but at a minimum, this letter supports the view that the information was noticed.¹¹⁷

The circumstances of the 16th Earl of Oxford’s home life are another matter that should be taken into account.¹¹⁸ His personal life had been chaotic, and in 1548, he was in the midst of a bizarre extortion involving much of his property.¹¹⁹ Besides the possible loss of his estates, the litany of issues surrounding the Earl included an unhappy first marriage that put him in an adversarial position with his first wife’s influential relatives, a scandalous love affair that ended violently, and accusations of bigamy that followed in the wake of his remarriage.¹²⁰ Though the details are beyond the scope of this paper, he was hardly running a tight ship along the lines of Sir Anthony Denny at Cheshunt. If Elizabeth’s astute advisors wanted a secure place to foster off the child, it’s hard to see how the 16th Earl of Oxford’s household could even make the short list.

Still another historical circumstance serves as an indicator that Edward de Vere was *not* a royal changeling. After Elizabeth’s ascendancy, she never took him into the Royal Order of the Garter. Then as now, membership in the Garter was highly coveted. A candidate would be voted upon by the members, but the final selection was made by the monarch. Peter Moore examined the Garter records to ascertain where the 17th Earl of Oxford fits into this picture. He found that Elizabeth was partial to her favorites over the years, selecting the Earl of Leicester, the Earl of Essex and Sir Christopher Hatton for membership. In the Garter voting of 1572, the

17th Earl of Oxford had adequate votes for admission, and this was the timeframe in which he was considered a court favorite.¹²¹ It is puzzling that she passed him over for two peers of lower rank.¹²² It seems that she would have chosen him for membership if he had been her son or if she had been romantically involved with him.¹²³

Most telling of all is Edward de Vere's financial position after the death of his father. In her paper "The Fall of the House of Oxford," Nina Green gives a detailed account of the surprising destruction of Oxford's inheritance that was facilitated by the Queen herself after the young de Vere became her royal ward in 1562.¹²⁴ At this time, Elizabeth began a series of legal maneuvers that led to his financial ruin. It is evident that the Queen enhanced the stature of her favorite, Robert Dudley with *de facto* control over the young 17th Earl's patrimony, and this "propelled his [Dudley's] spectacular rise to fortune."¹²⁵ According to Green, "the Queen's grant to him [Dudley] of the core de Vere lands in East Anglia laid the foundation for de Vere's eventual financial downfall."¹²⁶ The Queen's actions, as documented by Green, are nonsensical if the young 17th Earl were her own changeling son.¹²⁷

The Queen's mismanagement of de Vere's lands during his wardship did not augur well for his future as a courtier in her royal administration. Indeed, she ran true to form, consistently denying his suits for preferment.¹²⁸ She refused his requests for the governorship of the Isle of Jersey, the Presidency of Wales, the monopoly on wools, fruits, and oils, and the monopoly of tin in Cornwall.¹²⁹ She ignored his pleas to return to him the keepership of the de Vere lands of Waltham Forest, property that had belonged to the Oxford earldom since the time of William the Conqueror.¹³⁰

In addition to these issues, there are statistical considerations in the scenario that Edward de Vere was the Queen's son. For one thing, a child born to Princess Elizabeth could just as well have been a girl. Far more significant, however, are the infant and childhood mortality rates of the 16th century which show that the very survival of a child was problematic.¹³¹ If there was a male child and this child survived, placing the child in a nobleman's house would be an unnecessary risk when it was vital to restore Elizabeth's reputation and usefulness as a Protestant princess. A safer course would have been to foster the child into a country squire's home, removed from the Argus eyes of court followers, and then marry this child into the nobility when he or she grew up.

Conclusion

As aficionados of television crime shows are aware, it takes three components to make a circumstantial case: motive, means and opportunity. With respect to the question of Princess Elizabeth's alleged pregnancy, these three elements are found here in abundance, and add up to a compelling circumstantial case that Elizabeth had a child with the Admiral. She was living in Seymour's house for approximately a year, providing him with ample opportunity for the seduction. Seymour's sexual

interest in her is historically documented in letters, depositions and state papers. The Dowager Queen Katherine Parr ultimately grasped the situation and sent the Princess Elizabeth to live elsewhere.

Additional circumstances support the proposal that something was very wrong in the Queen Dowager's household. The explanation that the Queen and the Admiral were tickling Elizabeth in her bedroom, as well as the tickling prank in the garden, seems like damage control by the Protestant faction surrounding the Princess. After the birth of her child, the Queen chose the nine-year-old Lady Jane Grey to be the godmother and named the baby for Princess Mary. Both of these prestigious appointments are outward signs of honor and respect that could have gone to Elizabeth, and are further indications that she departed in disgrace from her stepmother's household.

After her dismissal, Elizabeth was cloistered at Cheshunt where she was out of public view from May through December, providing ample time for a pregnancy. Had she made a public appearance *anywhere* during this time, the rumors of her own possible pregnancy would have vanished. Moreover, she was sheltered at Cheshunt by Sir Anthony Denny, one of the most loyal and capable of the Tudor counselors. These circumstances provide the means with which the pregnancy was contained within the Protestant inner circle. The matter was further contained by the beheading of the Admiral in accordance with the Act of Attainder, an act that could be seen as retribution for what was a treasonable offense against the House of Tudor. If Elizabeth did not have a child, then there is inadequate motive for her six month confinement at Cheshunt and the Admiral's execution.¹³²

However, a scenario in which this putative child might have been placed as a changeling into the Oxford household presents insuperable obstacles. Although substituting a royal child for a noble one may seem plausible centuries later, it was problematic in the 16th century when the birth of an heir in a grandee family would be examined by the Inquisition Post Mortem at the time of the nobleman's death. It defies common sense to expect an eighteen month old toddler to pass muster for a newborn. Furthermore, the 16th Earl's personal life was chaotic, and his estates were caught up in a bizarre extortion, leaving the earldom itself vulnerable and unstable. Last of all, Queen Elizabeth's deliberate and systematic destruction of de Vere's patrimony during his wardship is hardly consistent with the idea that he was set up as her changeling son to prosper in a nobleman's house.

Historical events can be easily conflated when viewed retrospectively, but when the facts are looked at systematically, there is a compelling circumstantial case for the likelihood that the Princess had a child as a result of the Seymour affair; yet there are equally compelling reasons to conclude that this child was *not* the 17th Earl of Oxford.

In closing, Sir Anthony Denny is the lynchpin of the story, though it is a story not fully told in this paper, nor has it been fully explored by historians.¹³³ Initially, Denny played a crucial role in rescuing Elizabeth from the Seymour debacle. However, Denny died within the year, and it may well have been the ameliorating

presence of a new man in the Tudor court who brought the Seymour matter to a close. This new man was William Cecil, and he was every bit as discreet and capable as Sir Anthony. After Elizabeth became Queen, Cecil provided his royal mistress with invaluable service in numerous posts including that of her Principal Secretary and her Lord Treasurer. The power that he wielded behind the scenes as Master of the Royal Wards also remains to be fully recognized by orthodox historians.¹³⁴ Had there been any changelings, Cecil would be the one to know. Thus it is instructive to look at one of his last letters to his son, Robert Cecil. Written in his own hand, he describes a recent visit from the Queen:

....though *she will not be a mother*, yet she showed herself by feeding me with her own princely hand, as a careful nurse.¹³⁵

This comment is curious, as the aging Queen's childbearing years were long past. However the events of 1548 are interpreted – and whether or not she was a mother – one thing is certain: the “careful nurse” was not the Queen. The careful nurse was William Cecil, Lord Burghley.

Endnotes

- ¹ Hank Whittemore, *The Monument* (Massachusetts: Meadow Geese Press, 2005). Whalen notes that Whittemore's book provides by far the most comprehensive explication of the Sonnets supporting the PT Theory of Southampton's birth. Helen Heightsman Gordon concurs in *The Secret Love Story in Shakespeare's Sonnets*. The Southampton Prince Tudor hypothesis had been proposed by Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn in *This Star of England* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1952. 812-938).
- ² Paul Streitz, *Oxford, Son of Queen Elizabeth I* (USA: Oxford Institute Press, 2001). More information on the Seymour PT Theory can be found on Nina Green's website at <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/documents.html>. It was offered in a manuscript circa 1950 by Walter Freeman, and published in 1991 by Dr. Peter Sammartino as Vol. XIX of the Fairleigh Dickinson University Archival Series.
- ³ Charles Beauclerk, *Shakespeare Lost Kingdom* (New York: Grove Press, 2010). The film *Anonymous* incorporates both theories as they are put forth by Beauclerk in this book.
- ⁴ Richard Whalen, "The 'Prince Tudor' Hypothesis: A Brief Survey of the Pros and Cons," *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*, Spring, 2006.
- ⁵ Henry VIII's fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, was the last of his six wives to die, but she and the King were divorced.
- ⁶ Susan E James, *Kateryn Parr The Making of a Queen* (England: Ashgate, 1999), 91-94. Alison Weir, *The Life of Elizabeth I* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 14-15. Carolly Erickson, *The First Elizabeth* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 65.
- ⁷ David Starkey, *Elizabeth: The Struggle for the Throne* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 66.
- ⁸ Antonia Fraser, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 397 - 405. Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 67.
- ⁹ James, 298.

- ¹⁰ Starkey, *Elizabeth*. 42-46.
- ¹¹ Leah S. Marcus, Leah S. Janel Mueller, Mary Beth Rose, eds. *Elizabeth I Collected Works*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 6-7, 10-13. This relationship manifested itself in the Queen's encouragement of Elizabeth's literary activities. Marcus, et al publish in full the two dedicatory letters that accompany the translations that the young Princess gave as New Year's gifts to her stepmother. The letters are dated December 31, 1544, and December 30, 1545, respectively. The earlier letter is published by Frank A. Mumby in his book *The Girlhood of Elizabeth*. (London: Constable & Company, LTD, 1909), 24-25. Starkey provides a discussion, 47-49.
- ¹² Starkey, *Elizabeth*. 65, 335. As per Rymer's *Foedera XV*, p. 116, Queen Katherine was well provided for under Henry's will with money and property. Of her two principal country seats Hanworth and Chelsea, the latter was her favorite.
- ¹³ The major source of the historical narrative is Samuel Haynes *A Collection of State Papers Left by William Cecil, Lord Burghley*, (London, 1940), 95-101. It should be noted that Lord Burghley was hardly a nonpartisan observer, and was highly sensitive to what was reported in the public record. His son Robert Cecil shared his father's vigilant eye. In addition, it should be factored in that Elizabeth enjoyed a forty-five year reign in which she (and her great counselor) controlled the primary records of the era. These circumstances suggest that the Burghley papers (edited nearly two hundred years later by Haynes) are highly sanitized and should be evaluated with caution.
- ¹⁴ Tracy Borman, *Elizabeth's Women* (United Kingdom: Vintage, 2009), 108.
- ¹⁵ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 66. Further elaborating on the Admiral's attraction to women, Starkey notes "*devote, bluestocking or politique, they gladly gave up religion learning and prudence at his beck and call.*"
- ¹⁶ James, 298. Strype's report, as presented by James, is in his *Ecclesiastical Memorials*. The accusation of the Admiral's misconduct was made shortly before Kateryn became Queen (c. 1543). The unfortunate "lewd woman" was executed. For further information: John Strype, *Ecclesiastical memorials, relating chiefly to religion, and the reformation of it, and the emergencies of the Church of England, under King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Mary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1821), 197.
- ¹⁷ Starkey, 69. The source for these reports is Haynes' *A Collection of State Papers ... Left by William Cecil, Lord Burghley*, 99-100. See below for further discussion.
- ¹⁸ Starkey, 69.
- ¹⁹ Starkey, 69.
- ²⁰ Carolly Erickson, *Bloody Mary* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1978), 42-43. Queen Katherine of Aragon consulted the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives to design a strict plan of study for Mary. Vives regarded women as inherently sinful and in dire need of protection. As Erickson states, this protection was

to guard “more securely and safely Mary’s virginity.” Erasmus concurred that the preservation of modesty was paramount, and that the primary value of education for girls was to impart the understanding that their chastity was “an inestimable treasure.”

- ²¹ Mandell Creighton, *Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Thomas Y Crowell Company, 1899), 5-11. Although hailed as an account of the Queen’s life that supposedly ushered in a more objective outlook on her reign, Creighton glosses over the scandalous events at Chelsea. He mentions briefly the “familiarity” that led to Elizabeth’s dismissal from her stepmother’s home. He further notes that after she moved to Cheshunt, “everything was done to repair past indiscretion and let it sink into oblivion.” He doesn’t give details of what “everything” might have been. If this represents a progressive trend among Elizabethan biographers, it was quickly dashed several years later, with Jacob Abbott’s rendition, also titled *Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1900). Calling up more sycophantic language, Abbott writes that “mysterious circumstances produced a somewhat unfavorable impression in regard to Elizabeth, and there were some instances, it was said, of light and trifling behavior between Elizabeth and Seymour, while she was in his house during the lifetime of his wife.” He notes that they “got into frolics.” 55.
- ²² Frederick Chamberlin, *The Private Character of Queen Elizabeth* (NY: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1922), 3. By Chamberlin’s account, the Queen “saw no harm in the proceedings,” but after the situation was called to her attention, presumably by Elizabeth’s governess Kat Ashley, the Queen “thereafter accompanied her spouse upon these pleasant visits, except upon one occasion where she appears to have been too tardy, for by the time she reached Elizabeth’s apartment, Katherine, to quote her own words, found her husband “having her [Elizabeth] in his arms.” Chamberlin is quick to point out that “there was, however, no greater guilt than these words exactly state...”
- ²³ Marcus et al, 28. The source of this story is the deposition of Kate Ashley herself, and her statement is not corroborated by accounts of other witnesses. In his book *The Girlhood of Elizabeth*, Mumby reiterates the relevant parts of Ashley’s deposition without comment. 34-35. Agnes Strickland notes that Ashley “remonstrated with the Admiral” in her 1904 book *The Life of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Hutchinson & Co.), 14. Chamberlin, 3.
- ²⁴ Creighton, 7. Creighton puts forth the harsh accusation that Ashley was an accomplice, noting that the governess “discussed with Elizabeth the attentions of her admirer, and connived at water-parties by night on the Thames.” This interpretation appears to be an effort to transfer blame from Elizabeth for her actions, to Ashley for dereliction of duty.
- ²⁵ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 69. Starkey supplies all of the citations from the Burghley Papers, p. 335. Additional authorities for the same information are Frank Mumby, Agnes Strickland, and, more recently, the *Collected works of Elizabeth I*

edited by Marcus, et al, previously cited.

- ²⁶ Weir, 14-15. Starkey concurs with the assessment that the occurrence was an innocent prank. 69.
- ²⁷ Fraser, 404. Historians acknowledge that Queen Catherine accompanied the Admiral on his visits to Elizabeth's bedchamber and participated in other "tickling" incidents. Fraser calls these reports "sexy horseplay."
- ²⁸ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 69. These are the "pleasant visits" mentioned by Chamberlin, cited above. 3.
- ²⁹ Starkey, 69.
- ³⁰ Some authorities place the date of the child's birth on September 1, 1548. It is given as August 30, 1548, in the *DNB*. Starkey and Fraser concur with the latter date. This minor variance is of no import in placing the time frame of the Queen's conception in late November or early December, 1547.
- ³¹ Starkey, 70. Borman agrees with this assessment in her book *Elizabeth's Women*, suggesting that "perhaps the hormonal disruption had clouded her accustomed judgment." 116.
- ³² David Loades, *The Politics of Marriage: Henry VIII and His Queens* (United Kingdom: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1994), 140, 136-137. Loades characterizes Queen Katherine as "a benign presence rather than a power" in King Henry's court. In his thoughtful and well informed chapter on her, Loades further notes that "it may well have been her dignity and self-possessed calm which first aroused his interest."
- ³³ Elizabeth Jenkins, *Elizabeth the Great* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc, 1959). 26-27. Jenkins' account of the "romps" follows the story and timeline that is accepted by the historical consensus. She calls the scene in the garden "startling horseplay," and notes that "Seymour indulged in a practice often heard of in police courts." Jenkins does not give a citation for this statement, which is a "startling" comment in and of itself.
- ³⁴ Marcus, 28. Posterity knows about the dress cutting incident through Kate Ashley's deposition taken in February of 1549 when the Admiral's trial was in the offing. The deposition is in Ashley's own hand, and she states that the incident occurred at the Queen's manor house of Hanworth.
- ³⁵ Starkey, 70.
- ³⁶ P. S. Crowson, *Tudor Foreign Policy* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1973), 64-66, 78, 89-91. The marriage of Arthur and the daughter of King Ferdinand and Isabella was a result of ten years of diplomacy. Henry VII's older daughter Margaret married the King of Scotland. In 1514, his son Henry VIII married off his younger sister Mary to the King of France.
- ³⁷ Carolly Erickson, *Bloody Mary* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1978), 30-33. Styling this marriage as "an alternative to war" with France, a treaty

accompanied the marriage vows in the proxy wedding. The plan was to consummate the match when the Dauphin turned fourteen. “Through her betrothal to the dauphin Mary had become the living embodiment of peace between England and France.” 35.

- ³⁸ Erickson, 52-55. The marriage was scheduled to take place when Mary turned twelve, but after five years, the Emperor chose to endure the obligatory diplomatic wrangling with Cardinal Wolsey and broke the engagement. For Charles, the marriage had been “a minor detail of a diplomatic alliance.”
- ³⁹ Erickson, 67-72. It was not long after the broken engagement with Charles V that Henry and Wolsey were negotiating another marriage for Mary. This time the proposed groom was the French King Francis I, rather than his son.
- ⁴⁰ Erickson, 193-94. Even though he bastardized daughter Mary, Henry VIII continued to use her as a tool in his foreign policy. “From Henry’s point of view, the diplomatic rivalries generated by Mary’s availability were far more important than any betrothal that might be concluded.” 194-95. After Mary became Queen, she legitimized herself in her first Parliament, in which it was declared that she had been born “in a most just and lawfull matrimony.” *DNB*, 1228.
- ⁴¹ Eric Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 83. In spite of the loss of legitimate status, Mary retained a more desirable position as an available princess than Elizabeth did, as in the eyes of the Catholic church, the offspring was legitimate if the marriage was entered into in good faith (*bona fide*). The marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon passed the test of good faith, certainly on Catherine’s part.
- ⁴² Starkey, 30-33.
- ⁴³ Loades, 141. Mary herself lamented that no husband had been found for her, saying that she would be “only the Lady Mary, and the most unhappy lady in Christendom.” Loades cites *The Lisle Letters*, p. 169.
- ⁴⁴ Erickson, 224-232. Erickson provides a good discussion of the intrigue surrounding the last years of Henry’s reign. In these last years, Mary was treated well by her father, though he still made no progress in procuring a marriage for her. She turned thirty-one just after his death in January, 1547.
- ⁴⁵ Hutchinson, Robert. *The Last Days of Henry VIII*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005. 96-97.
- ⁴⁶ It is noteworthy how many of the men who surrounded Princess Elizabeth had matriculated to St. John’s College, Cambridge, where, according to the *DNB*, “many of the fellows in Cardinal Wolsey’s time privately studied the scriptures and the works of Luther.” (Vol IV, 178). In addition to Sir Anthony Denny, its fellows included the influential educators Roger Asham, William Grindal, and Sir John Cheke, and the latter counted among his students Sir William Cecil and William Bill (whose brother Dr. Thomas Bill was a physician to King Edward VI).

- ⁴⁷ Robert Hutchinson, 152-159. Though Denny officially entered the King Henry's service in 1536, he garnered the King's endorsement for election to Parliament the year before. By 1538, he had replaced his own mentor, Sir Francis Bryan, and was "privy to Henry's innermost thoughts and changing moods" (151).
- ⁴⁸ Starkey, 78.
- ⁴⁹ Hutchinson, 154.
- ⁵⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004. A comparison of Denny's biography as it appears in the new *ODNB* with that of a century ago (*Dictionary of National Biography, Volume V*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1968. 823-824) reveals that some of the gaps have been filled in, yet the sources for the later version are not impressive. These sources include several PhD dissertations and articles in esoteric journals. The *ODNB* provides more details on Denny's accumulation of wealth and his ascendancy in King Henry's court, yet no mention is made of his sister-in-law Katherine Champernon Ashley, a connection that is difficult to overlook. In the earlier version of Denny's biography, he is described as an "excellent scholar" at St. John's College, Cambridge, and a "zealous promoter of the Reformation." He mellowed a bit in the century between biographies and is described as a "moderate in the expression of his religious views." The endowment of the Sedbergh school in Yorkshire is an important achievement acknowledged in both biographies. In addition to financing the rebuilding of the school, he made monetary arrangements to ensure that the school had a stable future. The earlier *DNB* relates that the date of death has been put at 1551, 1550 and 1549, though the last date is supported by compelling circumstances. It states that "it appears that he was buried at Cheshunt."
- ⁵¹ The *ODNB* biography notes that he provided for nine children in his will. The earlier version states that he and his wife Joan had six children. Robert Hutchinson reports twelve children in his book *The Last Days of Henry VIII*, 154. If this report were true, then Mrs. Denny would have borne twelve children in their eleven year marriage. The *ODNB* gives the date of their marriage as February 9, 1539, and Denny's death on September 10, 1549. Bearing nine surviving children in this timeframe is asking a lot, and the accomplished Joan Denny even had time to participate in Queen Katherine Parr's religious studies at court and befriend Anne Askew, a notable Protestant martyr.
- ⁵² Hutchinson, 152. This remarkable document is from the archives at Longleat House; Hutchinson provides the citation on page 297.
- ⁵³ The entry in the earlier *DNB* notes that the date of Denny's death has been variously reported as occurring in 1551, 1550 and 1549, though the last date is supported by compelling circumstances.; most notably, Mrs. Denny took reversionary possession of his Westminster property at this time, an action that would indicate that his Last Will and Testament had gone through probate. As to his burial, it is stated in the *DNB*, again somewhat equivocally, that "it

appears that he was buried at Cheshunt.”

- ⁵⁴ Hutchinson, 154-156. Alison Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and His Court*, New York: Ballantine Books, 467.
- ⁵⁵ Erickson, 42. The well connected John Ashley was a cousin of the Boleyns, and Elizabeth made him Master of the Jewel House upon her ascendancy in 1558. Weir, 24.
- ⁵⁶ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume III*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1220-1221. In July, Queen Katherine removed her household to Sudeley Castle for her “lying in,” and a room there is known to this day as “Queen Catherine’s nursery.” As Sudeley was a considerable distance from Cheshunt – and a far greater journey than Chelsea -- it could be argued that Sudeley was too far a distance for the Princess to travel.
- ⁵⁷ *DNB*, 1218, In her official biography, Queen Katherine is credited with procuring the restoration of both Henry’s daughters Mary and Elizabeth from the bastardy into which they had been put by the King. The Queen obtained a pardon for Elizabeth for which she composed “a very grateful epistle” to her step mother.
- ⁵⁸ Failing in his accustomed thoroughness, Starkey does not mention the fact that Lady Jane Grey stood godmother to the Queen’s child in either his account of the Elizabeth’s early life or in his *Six Wives*. Wier and Erickson also take no note of it, but Fraser mentions it on page 406.
- ⁵⁹ Borman, 121. Fraser, 406. James, 330.
- ⁶⁰ James, 309-312. Both the Dowager Queen and Seymour conducted a letter-writing campaign to obtain the approval of the royal court for their union. Mary resisted the pressure, responding to the Admiral’s solicitation (at Katherine’s behest) that “my letters shall do you but small pleasure...” and noting that she was “not to be a meddler in this matter.” Mary’s refusal should have been a disappointment to Katherine. Her endorsement would have been helpful, as the marriage was not well received, but publicly greeted with “surprise, disgust and anger.” In the most recent biography of the Dowager Queen, Linda Porter describes Mary’s “clinical detachment” and her response to Seymour as a “carefully implied reprimand.” Porter, Linda. *Katherine the Queen: The Remarkable Life of Katherine Parr, the Last Wife of Henry VIII*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2010. 291-292, 301.
- ⁶¹ If the Queen had just wanted to pass over Elizabeth without the added snub of naming her baby for Elizabeth’s older sister, she might have considered Katherine (her own name) as well as that of her good friend Katherine Willoughby, the Duchess of Suffolk, who shared her Protestant Reformist faith.
- ⁶² James, 332. In her comprehensive biography of Queen Katherine, James does not give the exact date of the funeral but notes that the Admiral departed Sudeley immediately after she died, thereby leaving the funeral preparations to others.

That it took place soon after her death may be extrapolated from the fact that the Queen's body was located in 1782 and her skin (which had been properly wrapped in layers of cerecloths and incased in lead) was still "white and moist," indicating she was prepared for interment with alacrity. *DNB*,1221.

- ⁶³ Starkey, David. *Six Wives The Queens of Henry VIII*. New York: Perennial, 2004. 765. Starkey indicates that the dying Queen Dowager, in her delirium, "sometimes railed against Seymour and his betrayal of her with Elizabeth." Not all historians go quite this far as Elizabeth is not named in Lady Tyrwhit's statement regarding Katherine's accusations as she lay dying in the days following the birth of her daughter. However, Queen Katherine made various accusations against her husband, most notably an implication that he poisoned her. Though reported somewhat vaguely in the testimony of Lady Tyrwhit, it is implied that the Queen realized that her death would leave Seymour free to pursue Elizabeth. Lady Tyrwhit's Confession, as it is called, is reported in the *Haynes State Papers*, 103-104. Frazer, 407. James, 331. Porter, 321-322. As Porter comments, "Her [Katherine's] reproofs also suggest strongly how devastated she had been by his behavior with Elizabeth." 322.
- ⁶⁴ Erickson. 79. Lady Jane Grey was the chief mourner at Queen Catherine's funeral held at Sudeley. The conscientiousness of the 10 year old Jane is noteworthy as she watched "hour after hour beside the candlelit bier" and made "the traditional offerings of money to the alms box at the funeral." James includes this information without comment. 332. Eric Ives follows James in his recent biography of Jane Grey: *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*. (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) 45.
- ⁶⁵ Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*. London: Longman1999. 32-33, 77.
- ⁶⁶ Hazard, Mary E. *Elizabethan Silent Language*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. 231-235. In her intriguing chapter on Absent/Present, Present/Absence, the author examines the rules and conventions that governed public appearances. "From the earliest moments of her reign, Elizabeth dramatized her appearances so as to render them both politically useful and historically memorable."
- ⁶⁷ Charles Beauclerk, *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom*. New York: Grove Press, 2010. 39. In endorsing both Prince Tudor theories, Beauclerk believes "if Elizabeth did give birth, it most likely was in September of the previous year, [1548] just before she left her seclusion at Cheshunt to go to Hatfield, and could easily have been hushed up among her inner circle." Although Beauclerk does not spell it out, the May to December window is adequate for a pregnancy. If Elizabeth were four months pregnant in May, she would have given birth in late September or early October. Even factoring in a margin of error of a month or so, there is time for her recovery and for arrangements to be made to set her up with her own household at Hatfield House by December.

- ⁶⁸ *The Memoires of Jane Dormer, the Duchess of Feria* (1538-1612) can be accessed on the internet. She was the wife of Court de Feria and spent her adult life in Spain. As she was a partisan of Queen Mary, the objectivity of her memoirs with regards to Queen Elizabeth's reign might be questioned.
- ⁶⁹ Christopher Paul, "The 'Prince Tudor' Dilemma: Hip Thesis, Hypothesis, or Old Wives Tale?" *The Oxfordian*, Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, editor. Volume V, October 2002. 51. A letter from Roger Asham to William Ireland, dated July 8, 1548, has drawn some comment. This correspondence has import as it deals with the Princess during the time of her possible pregnancy. According to Starkey, Asham became Elizabeth's tutor upon the death of William Grindal "in early 1548." 82. The *DNB* puts Grindal's death from the plague in the summer of 1548. (VIII, 708). If this is the case, then Asham may not have been with Elizabeth at Chelsea, Grindal was. This means that Asham's account is not first hand. Starkey puts him in Elizabeth's service "immediately" after Grindal's death, but exactly when this was is lost in the vagaries between "early" 1548 and the "summer" of 1548. It is possible that Grindal went with her to Cheshunt in May, though perhaps he took a hiatus from her service. Perhaps Asham came and went at Chelsea as well as Cheshunt. The record does not say. Moreover, Asham cannot be looked upon as a disinterested observer. As another graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge, he had earned his stripes in the inner circle of Denny's Protestant Reformation group. There should be no doubt of his loyalty to the Protestant cause, the House of Tudor, and most of all, to the Princess whom he served. In this letter he mentions one "Katherine R," a "most charming and honorable girl" who "has been with me." He also notes that "I was at court on the day when she came to Chelsea, but if I hadn't been, I would have taken her to my most illustrious Lady." This sentence is put forth as an indicator that Elizabeth could not have been pregnant, as Asham would not have invited a guest to an audience with her under those circumstances. There are several things to consider: 1. The "illustrious Lady" is Princess Elizabeth, but the charming (and unidentified) Katherine R. came to Chelsea, not Cheshunt (unless this is a mistake in the transcription of Asham's handwriting). 2. Asham is writing retrospectively in July of something that took place earlier. 3. He wasn't at Chelsea but at court at the time that Katherine R. came to Chelsea. 4. The meeting with the "illustrious Lady" did not occur. Asham may have been making a deliberate effort to create the impression that a normal ebb and flow of people and events had surrounded the Princess while at Chelsea.
- ⁷⁰ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume VI*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1968. 623. The rumors ultimately played a part in the "examinations and confessions" of Elizabeth's principal servants.
- ⁷¹ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume III*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1968. 1221. Queen Katherine's household is reported to have numbered 120 gentlemen. Assuming that the number of women servants was on a par with this, the Queen could easily have had 200 or so people with "argus eyes"

witnessing the events of the household.

- ⁷² Marcus, et.al. 17-18. The editors have dated this letter to June, 1548, though it has been incorrectly given as December, 1547 in the PRO Calendar. Mumby dates it to June of 1547. It is clearly written after Elizabeth's departure from the Queen in May of 1548 as it notes that the Queen is "undoubtful of health," a reference to her pregnancy. Mumby, 35-36.
- ⁷³ Marcus, 19. The letter is in Elizabeth's hand, but the date is conjectural. She is ostensibly responding to correspondence from the Admiral. It appears that the Admiral was trying to patch things up between them. But the extraordinary negativity in Elizabeth's reply indicates deep hurt, and her "commendations" to the Queen his wife carry a veiled reprimand. The letter is now archived in The Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.
- ⁷⁴ Mumby, 26-28. Examples of polite contemporaneous correspondence are Prince Edward's letter to Elizabeth December of 1546, (the prince was eleven years old); and Roger Ascham's undated letter to Mrs. Ashley. In Appendix I to her biography of Queen Katherine, Susan James has published all of love letters between Katherine and Seymour. 403-412.
- ⁷⁵ Marcus, 21-22. Two additional letters from the aftermath of this timeframe shed light on Elizabeth. Both are dated conjecturally but clearly are from the fall of 1548. In writing to her brother the King, she claims illness. "For an affliction of my head and eyes has come upon me, which has so sorely troubled me since my coming to this house that, although I have often tried to write to your majesty, I have until this day ever been restrained from my intention and undertaking. The which condition, having somewhat abated..." Now really! She had been at Cheshunt for at least four months (from the end of May to the end of September). One would think this sufficient time to get off a paragraph or two to her brother. The second letter is to the Lord Protector Somerset (Edward Seymour). She thanks him for being "careful for my health, and sending unto me not only your comfortable letters but also physicians as Doctor Bill, whose diligence and pain has been a great part of my recovery." It can be readily extrapolated that Elizabeth's condition was known at court, and a trusted court doctor (or doctors as Elizabeth uses the plural) were sent to ascertain the state of her health and speed her "recovery" from her headaches. The "Dr. Bill" to whom Elizabeth refers is Dr. Thomas Bill, physician to both King Henry VIII and Edward VI. His brother was the eminent Dr. William Bill, dean of Westminster and graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge. At Cambridge, he had been a student of both John Cheke and Sir Thomas Smith.
- ⁷⁶ Fraser, 404-408. In her account of Queen Katherine, Fraser endorses the interpretation that these letters are a show of affection, and that the Queen sent Elizabeth away to preserve decorum. Chamberlin notes that "she and her former hostess remained *upon the best of terms* until the death of the latter, three months later." 3.

- ⁷⁷ Marcus, 5-7, 10-13. Compare this to the three letters to her step mother written when Elizabeth was about 10 years old, at which time she could affect a fluid style with lengthy praise.
- ⁷⁸ Marcus, 20. This last piece of correspondence between Elizabeth and Katherine was archived in the Cottonian collection at the British Library, and “shows damage from the 1742 fire.” (BL, MS Cotton Otho C.X., fol.236v)
- ⁷⁹ Borman, 120-121.
- ⁸⁰ Maclean, John. *The Life of Sir Thomas Seymour, Knight*. London: John Camden Hotten, 1869. 72-76.
- ⁸¹ Bernard, G. W. *Power and Politics in Tudor England*. Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000. 138.
- ⁸² Bernard, 138. That Seymour planned to propose marriage to Elizabeth is indicated by “a complex serried of letters and messages between Elizabeth, Seymour, Ashley and Thomas Parry,” as well as boasts that Seymour is supposed to have made to Lord Russell.
- ⁸³ Bernard, 138, 155 The Admiral’s interest in Elizabeth’s property and his offer of his London house for her use is reported in Haynes’ *State Papers*.
- ⁸⁴ Maclean, 75. Starkey, 78, 336. Starkey reports that the Parry and Ashley were arrested by Sir Anthony Denny and William Paulet, Lord St. John. The circumstances of the “arrest” are of interest. After arriving “unexpectedly” at Hatfield, first they dined. After dinner, they arrested Parry and Ashley, who “were able to agree on tactics to cope with their forthcoming ordeal.” Starkey cites A. Jefferies Collins’ *Jewels and Plate of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1955, 202-203.)
- ⁸⁵ Marcus, 28 – 30. One of the most capable of the Protestant scholars at Cambridge, Smith’s services were invaluable to the Royal Court of Edward VI.
- ⁸⁶ Marcus, 25, 26, 28, 29. Marcus provides information identifying the handwriting and additional notes about the people who are referenced in the depositions.
- ⁸⁷ Starkey, 79. As noted above, Sir Anthony Denny was one of the two councilors who came to Hatfield to take Ashley and Parry into custody; his presence suggests he continued to oversee the situation.
- ⁸⁸ Foyster, 32-33. Elizabeth is referring to her sexual behavior; a woman’s “honour” depended exclusively on her sexual chastity.
- ⁸⁹ Marcus, 23-24.
- ⁹⁰ Smith, Alan Gordon. *William Cecil : The Power Behind Elizabeth*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1934, 47.
- ⁹¹ Marcus, 25-30. The editors provide Kat Ashley’s depositions in full with illuminating details on the handwriting.
- ⁹² Mumby, 45-49. The deposition of Thomas Parry is not included in the letters published by Marcus, et al. The source of this deposition, which appears to

be given in full by Mumby, is the Haynes edition of the *Burghley State Papers*. Parry's deposition deserves careful study. Dated February of 1549, Parry recalls "I do remember also she told me that the Admiral loved her but too well, and had done so a good while: and that the Queen was jealous of her and him in so much that one time the Queen, suspecting the often access of the Admiral to the Lady Elizabeth Grace, came suddenly upon them, where they were all alone (he having her in his arms); wherefore the Queen fell out, both with the Lord Admiral, and with her Grace also." The gravity of the situation is apparent as Parry reports "and likewise, in bidding me to do her [Ashley's] commendations and good will to the Admiral, she required me great secrecy. And I did likewise promise her, and said I had rather be pulled with horses, or such like words, than I would tell it to any."

⁹³ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume XVII*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1968. 1270

⁹⁴ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume XVII*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1968. 1337-1338. Seymour's partner in crime was Sir William Sharington, vice-treasurer of the mint at Bristol, who was attainted along with the Admiral. Although Sharington used his position at the mint to perpetrate extensive frauds as well as support the Admiral's misdeeds, he was pardoned within a year and re-purchased his forfeited estates. The restoration of Sharington's status and fortune further suggests that something more serious was behind the charges against Seymour.

⁹⁵ Porter, 336.

⁹⁶ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume XVII*. 1270.

⁹⁷ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume XVII*. 1270.

⁹⁸ Mumby, 50-51. It is at this juncture that Tyrwhit famously reported to Lord Protector Somerset that they "all sing one song, and so I think they would not do unless they had set the note before, for surely they would confess or else they could not so well agree."

⁹⁹ Creighton. 8. Creighton states that Tyrwhit "was charged by the Council to examine her and discover evidence against Seymour." Elizabeth demonstrates her understanding of the issues in her letter to the Lord Protector Somerset dated January 28, 1549. This crucial letter, republished by Marcus, is in Elizabeth's hand; and the editors note that Elizabeth "chose to make her own representation in so delicate and dangerous a matter directly to the lord protector." 22-24.

¹⁰⁰ Bernard, 151-152. The men of the Privy Council were, as always, in the power struggle for dominance. The faction led by John Dudley, the Earl of Warwick, sought to rid the Council of both Seymour brothers, not just the Admiral. He accomplished this within a year.

¹⁰¹ Marcus, 33. The editors note that no proclamation from early March is extant,

but a local order may have gone out to this effect. On October 30, 1549, the Council did issue a declaration against rumors.

¹⁰² Marcus, 35-36. In his book *The Elizabethan Icon: Elizabethan & Jacobean Portraiture*, (Great Britain: Paul Mellon Foundation for British Art, 1969) Roy Strong dates the portrait of Elizabeth's girlhood to 1546. 74. It is thought to have been painted by William Scrots, the successor to Hans Holbein, but other versions of it were done. Moreover, in 1546, Elizabeth was only ten years old, and the sitter appears to be several years older in the iconic portrait, consistent with a 1549 date.

¹⁰³ Marcus, 36.

¹⁰⁴ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume V*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1968. 824. As previously mentioned, reports vary on the exact date of Sir Anthony Denny's passing. Exactly when William Cecil entered the Princess' service is unknown. At this time he was still secretary to Lord Protector Somerset, though Somerset's days were numbered. It can be extrapolated that Cecil, quite possibly, filled the vacuum created by Denny's death as an advisor to the Princess.

¹⁰⁵ Marcus, 22. The dating of this letter is conjectural.

¹⁰⁶ Lawrence Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*. Unabridged edition. Great Britain: Clarendon Press, 1965. 568. The upper strata of society was addicted to gambling, and even the birth of noble children could be the object of a bet. "There seemed to have been no form of human activity which the nobility did not contrive to turn into the subject of financial speculation." In his *Last Days of Henry VIII*, Robert Hutchinson tells of a report from Antwerp that wagers were afoot on whether Henry "would have another wife." 167.

¹⁰⁷ Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*. Abridged edition. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1967. 253.

¹⁰⁸ Stone, 249.

¹⁰⁹ It should be noted that Sir Anthony's Denny's Cheshunt seems to be an exception. Such silence surrounds the discreet Sir Anthony that, as previously mentioned, even the exact date of his death and place of burial are uncertain.

¹¹⁰ Joel Hurstfield, *The Queen's Wards Wardship and Marriage under Elizabeth I*. London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1958. 158- 170.

¹¹¹ Paul, Christopher. "The 'Prince Tudor' Dilemma: Hip Thesis, Hypothesis, or Old Wives' Tale?" *The Oxfordian, Volume 5*, October 2002. 61. The Privy Council's gift to the 16th Earl of Oxford on April 17, 1550 in recognition of the birth of "Edw, Co. Oxon natus" is found in SP 13.142.

¹¹² Streitz, 63-65.

¹¹³ Beauclerk, 39. Beauclerk provides no historical information to support his use of the Seymour PT theory, preferring to use literary allusions to illegitimacy and bastard children in the Shakespeare Canon.

¹¹⁴ I am indebted to Martin Hyatt for calling my attention to this notice in the Calendar State Papers Foreign.

115 *DNB, Volume XIX*, 810- 814.

116 From the internet: Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth, Volume 5: 1562 (1867), pp. 240-258. URL:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=71925>

Abstract as it appears in the CSP: “Has forwarded his letters to Randolph M. De Vielleville has been thrice at the Court and very well received, and the second time dined there, the same being purposely prepared for him, accompanied with divers Lords and counselors. Lord Robert, Lord Hunsdon, and Mr. Secretary accompanied him one day into St. James park, where they hunted, and he killed a fat buck with a crossbow from a standing, but it was at two shots. Lord Chandos accompanied him to Gravesend. Sir Thomas Smith is willed to be ready. All the members appointed are ready and in good order, Master Woodhouse has gone to the sea with five great ships attending the Queen’s pleasure. Mr. Henry Knolles has gone to Almain to know the intents of the Princes Protestants. The Queen and all the Lords of the Council are in good health. The Earl of Oxford has departed to God, leaving a son about twelve years old. Greenwich, 18 Aug. 1562.”

¹¹⁷ Arthur Golding’s son, Percival Golding, wrote an encomium about his noble relative in which he gives Oxford’s date of birth as April 12, 1550. He also notes that Oxford’s death is in June of 1604, oddly leaving out the day. Archived in the Harleian, Golding’s notice is helpful, but neither contemporaneous nor spontaneous.

¹¹⁸ Ward, B.M. *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*. London: John Murray, 1928. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, 1979. 7-9.

¹¹⁹ Nina Green, “The Fall of the House of Oxford.” *Brief Chronicles, Volume I, 2009*. 41-48.

¹²⁰ Louis Thorn Golding, *An Elizabethan Puritan*. New York: Richard R. Smith, 1937. 2,6,23,32, 37-46. Golding provides a detailed and well documented discussion of the “bitter family quarrel” between the descendents of the 16th Earl’s two marriages.

¹²¹ Ward, 56-60. William Segar’s *Book of Honour* provides an account of Oxford’s tournament success. Contemporaneous correspondence from Georges Delves to the Earl of Rutland, dated May 14 and June 24, 1571, reports that “Lord Oxford has performed his challenge at tilt, tournay, and barriers, far above expectation of the world...;” and “There is no man of life and agility in every respect in the Court but the Earl of Oxford.” 61. Next, the oft quoted letter from Lord St. John that the Earl of Oxford hath gotten him a wife – or at least a wife has caught him....” is indicative of his stature at court as it speaks of the “great weeping, wailing, and sorrowful cheer of those that had hoped to have

that golden day.” 78. Most informative of Oxford’s status with the Queen is Gilbert Talbot’s letter to his father, dated May of 1572, in which he writes that “the Queen’s Majesty delighteth more in his personage and his dancing and his valiantness than any other.” It’s well known that the letter goes on to comment on his “fickle head,” but this minor drawback did not deter William Cecil from matching Oxford and his daughter Ann..

¹²² Peter R. Moore, “Oxford and the Order of the Garter.” *Report My Cause Aright: Fiftieth Anniversary Anthology, The Shakespeare Oxford Society 1957-2007*. USA: The Shakespeare Oxford Society, 2007. 24 - 25. This article is also published in *The Lame Storyteller, Poor and Despised* by Peter R. Moore. Germany: Verlag Uwe Laugwitz, 2009. 263-274. As Moore reveals in his comprehensive article, the final selection for membership after the votes were cast rested with Queen Elizabeth, and she could be capricious in her choice. She was influenced by family, status, and service to the crown. “Mere rank was not enough,” and “family connections helped.” Her choices included her favorites the Earls of Leicester, Earl of Essex, and Sir Christopher Hatton. In 1572, both the Earl of Oxford and Lord Grey of Wilton each received seven votes. The Queen chose Lord Grey and Viscount Hereford (who only had four votes) to fill two of the three the vacancies. The additional place, understandably, went to Lord Burghley. Oxford had family history of Garter membership: both the 15th and 13th Earls of Oxford were K.G.

¹²³ Moore, 24. It could be argued that Viscount Hereford and Lord Grey had provided the crown with more “service,” but the Queen controlled the opportunities for royal service as well.

¹²⁴ Green, 67-71. As described by Green in this well documented paper, “The cavalier manner in which the Queen abrogated her responsibilities, and even prevented de Vere’s own mother and friends from at least partially protecting him from financial disaster, is shocking.” 73.

¹²⁵ Green, 67. “The grant [of the core de Vere lands] had given him the stature which was the prerequisite enabling the Queen to bestow further largesse on him.”

¹²⁶ Green, 68. Green provides documentation from wardship records for this shocking explication of events.

¹²⁷ These issues include the seizure of more than the one-third interest to which the Queen was legally entitled in the de Vere lands, a grant of the core de Vere lands to Sir Robert Dudley, lawsuits against de Vere for the remainder of the revenue from the lands which has constituted his mother’s jointure, a 2,000 pound fine against de Vere in the Court of Wards, the Queen’s failure to adhere to the clause in the 16th Earl’s will which would have provided sufficient funds for his son to pay the fine for his livery when he came of age, and several additional irregularities which were not beneficial to the financial or future well being of Edward de Vere.

¹²⁸ Ward, 355-358. Though Ward’s book was published in 1928, it still contains one of the best discussions of the thousand pound annuity that the Queen granted

to Oxford on June 26, 1586. That Elizabeth denied him preferments that routinely went to her favored courtiers, and withheld property from him that was rightfully his by ancient entails, *and then* granted him an unusually large annuity for no apparent reason, presents a financial schema that has yet to be adequately examined by established historians or explained by Oxfordians. It should be remarked that the annuity, though quite large, was not adequate to support his position as a nobleman in her court, but a preferment, had she chosen to distribute one to him, would have sufficed.

- ¹²⁹ Alan H. Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003. 394, 397, 337. 355-356. Nelson provides transcripts of the many letters in which Oxford beseeched her Majesty for various offices and sinecures that would have provided him with financial relief.
- ¹³⁰ Nelson, 420-421, 423. The story of the Essex forest lands is a long and involved one. The property had been “taken” from the 16th Earl of Oxford by King Henry VIII with the understanding it would be returned, though Elizabeth refused the 17th Earl’s pleadings for the return of his ancestral property. The situation was remedied by King James.
- ¹³¹ E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield. *The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981. 248-250. This monumental study relies heavily on parish registers to provide information and trends in fertility and mortality. According to the authors, “England is exceptionally fortunate in having several thousand parish registers that begin before 1600.” 2-4. Using reconstitution data from twelve parish registers that are sufficiently complete, it appears that childhood mortality (death before age nine) was approximately 40% in the period of 1550 – 1599. As baptismal records are a major source of information, this percentage does not include stillbirths or unrecorded births of infants who died within days.
- ¹³² Bernard, 134-160. In his essay “The Downfall of Sir Thomas Seymour,” historian Bernard makes the case that the Admiral’s execution was based on his “activities and ambitions” in seeking to accumulate men, arms and wealth, which in turn provoked jealousy and “fratricidal bitterness.” 152.
- ¹³³ Hutchinson, 152. “Denny became a discreet sounding board” [for King Henry], and “rapidly became the true authority lurking behind the throne, a role only recently identified by historians.”
- ¹³⁴ Hurstfield, 241, In summing up Burghley’s service as wardship Master, Hurstfield notes that “the Mastership was also an office of power, which bestowed upon its holder immense reserve of patronage – and therefore political influence – throughout the realm. It was also an office of profit, potentially vast profit, to a Master who knew how to exploit the opportunities at his disposal.”
- ¹³⁵ Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth*. London: Jonathan Cape 1965. 545. The letter dates from July, 1598. Lord Burghley died the following month on August 4th.