

***Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom:  
The True History of Shakespeare and Elizabeth.***

**NY: Grove Press, 2010, 430 pp., \$26.00**

**By Charles Beauclerk**

**Reviewed by Christopher Paul**

After briefly reviewing William Shaksper's literary disqualifications in the preface to *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom (SLK)*,<sup>1</sup> Charles Beauclerk writes that "[f]or those at court, [Oxford/Shakespeare's]<sup>2</sup> identity was an open secret" (xv), as was his "true history." Elaborating on the reason for continued secrecy after 1623, Beauclerk drops the first hint of his central thesis: "Not only were the offspring of statesmen lampooned in Shakespeare's plays now in positions of power and influence, but the works gave notice of Tudor heirs yet living" (xv). What Beauclerk asks of his readers at the Preface's end is to "allow Shakespeare to reveal himself to us through his principal themes [e.g., obsession with royal succession, crises of identity mistaken, concealed and lost, etc.], which build up a picture of his psychology" (xviii).

The underlying theme of Beauclerk's book is based upon two separate Prince Tudor (PT) theories, over which Oxfordians are deeply divided. PT1 posits that the 3rd Earl of Southampton was a changeling begotten by the 17th Earl of Oxford and Queen Elizabeth. PT2 posits that Oxford was a changeling begotten by Princess Elizabeth and Lord Thomas Seymour and incorporates PT1, thereby postulating ... well, you do the math. Some PT theorists only believe PT1, others PT2.<sup>3</sup> Still others are adamant that neither theory is correct, and the contention has created a rift that has alienated Oxfordians into opposing camps.

Beauclerk would seem to be more than aptly suited to tell *The True History of Shakespeare and Elizabeth*, being the Earl of Burford, heir to the dukedom of St Albans, and in particular, "[a] descendant of Edward de Vere." The latter claim, however, stated in the author's dust jacket blurb, should be qualified.<sup>4</sup> It is unfortunate that, knowing his history only too well, he plays it so fast and loose. Few of his readers will be deeply knowledgeable about the Tudor era, and those not repulsed with the premise of Oedipal incest are likely to be lured in, ignorant of the devils in the details, and readily possessed by the skillfully written (notwithstanding purple-patched) PT2 narrative.

No matter how many thought-provoking insights Beauclerk offers into some aspects of Shakespeare's plays and poems, his rendition of Tudor history is reckless, albeit masterfully woven together, presenting a sometimes mesmerizing tapestry—but fundamentally flawed by its inexorable bias<sup>5</sup> hence always exasperating. *SLK* is a literary biography parading as a historical one, the warped interlacing of which begins to unravel upon pulling the first thread.

Although I appreciate several of Beauclerk's striking literary visions that can stand independent of PT, *SLK* is mostly his personal and highly subjective psycho-analyses of Oxford, Elizabeth and her Court, channeled through Shakespeare's works via a Prince Tudor lens. From my perspective, I grant that to some extent PT theories encompass and integrate various literary aspects of Shakespeare's works, as well as certain singular historical circumstances that challenge conventional or unsatisfactory explanations. Yet they cannot be sustained, being defied as they are by their inherently insurmountable flaws, viz., the lack of any undeviating positive evidence, too dubious circumstantial evidence, and too much prima facie counter evidence. Nevertheless, due to my conflictive viewpoints with regard to literary interpretation and the historical record, unequivocally allowing my foremost consideration to the latter, my investigation for documentary evidence remains ongoing.

Indeed, if Beauclerk expects to convince more than a handful of true believers, he must build his case on stronger evidence than suspicious circumstances and innuendo. For the record, readers are getting half a review, for comments in this critique will be restricted mainly to challenging some of Beauclerk's assertions regarding documentary evidence, no mean feat since all historical documents not serving his purpose are disregarded. Beauclerk writes, "It is not enough to study the historical records as they've been handed down to us by the Poloniuses of this world, for they represent a skewed perspective—if not of a single man, then of a powerful family or faction" (5-6). In dismissing documentary evidence inconvenient to his thesis, Beauclerk gives himself free reign to fabricate historical events upon nonexistent documentation, e.g., "The records, carefully weeded by Burghley, do not reveal what kind of intimacy existed between Oxford and Southampton" (339), or "the Cecils made it their business to destroy so many of Oxford's letters, not just to themselves, but to his literary friends" (354).

It is ultimately the Shakespeare canon itself upon which Beauclerk relies, equating literature with historical documents (although the former over and above the latter). Yet what "is not enough" is building and resting one's case upon the alleged effacement of any and all documentary evidence of Oxfordian PT theories when there is so much documentary evidence that specifically precludes the same. It's true that even historical documents are subject to various degrees of interpretation, but PT proponents (among other detracting factors) are faced with a veritable wall of documents that straightforwardly oppose their theories, to which the attempted answers have been tortuously convoluted rationalizations.

As a result of his methodology, much of Beauclerk's speculative historicizing is sensational, self-contradicting, and plainly incorrect. Various inaccuracies and debatable points populate nearly every page of *SLK*, although only a small portion can be

reviewed here. Some representative illustrations must serve to give readers alternative points of view not offered, withheld, or distorted by Beauclerk. These illustrations of casual disregard for rigorous scholarship should wave a red flag over Beauclerk's general trustworthiness, and call into serious question whether he is a teller of truth or tall tales.<sup>6</sup>

Because Elizabeth's parents were an incestuous match (Anne Boleyn was Henry 8th's daughter and wife, 31, 235), and her step-parents were an incestuous match (Catherine Parr being Henry 8th's widow; Seymour his brother-in-law), Parr "was in effect marrying her brother ... [i.e.,] ... Seymour was marrying his sister's husband's wife"—so also, Seymour being Elizabeth's uncle and stepfather, "both Elizabeth's parents and her step-parents were incestuous, making her a child of incest twice over" (36). Dizzying as that is, Elizabeth has reverted from "a fully sexual adult" to a "child" on the same page.

Following Beauclerk's chronology, Elizabeth conceived Oxford sometime between December 1547 and January 1548 (approximately three to four months after Elizabeth's fourteenth birthday), while Parr's conception occurred in late November or early December,<sup>7</sup> putting Elizabeth approximately a month behind Parr in their terms.

Around May 1548, Elizabeth transferred from Chelsea to Cheshunt after Parr, six months pregnant, found Elizabeth, ostensibly five months pregnant, in Seymour's arms (37). I interject here two letters that Elizabeth wrote to Parr in June (when she was seven months along, and Elizabeth six months), and then July.

To the queen's highness.

Although I could not be plentiful in giving thanks for the manifold kindness receive[d] at your highness' hand at my departure, yet I am something to be borne withal, for truly I was replete with sorrow to depart from your highness, especially leaving you undoubtful of health. And albeit I answered little, I weighed it more deeper when you said you would warn me of all evils that you should hear of me; for if your grace had not a good opinion of me, you would not have offered friendship to me that way that all men judge the contrary. But what may I more say but thank God for providing such friends to me, desiring God to enrich me with their long life, and [give] me grace to be in heart no less thankful to receive it that I now am glad in writing to show it. And although I have plenty of matter, here I will stay for I know you are not quiet to read. From Cheston [=Cheshunt] this present Saturday.

Your highness' humble daughter, Elizabeth.<sup>8</sup>

On July 31, 1548, Elizabeth, supposedly seven months pregnant, wrote again to Parr:

Although your highness' letters be most joyful to me in absence, yet consider-

ing what pain it is to you to write, your grace being so great with child and so sickly, your commendation were enough in my lord's letter. I much rejoice at your health with the well-liking of the country, with my humble thanks that your grace wished me with you till I were weary of that country.<sup>9</sup> Your highness were like to be cumbered if I should not depart till I were weary being with you: although it were in the worst soil in the world, your presence would make it pleasant. I cannot reprove my lord for not doing your commendations in his letter, for he did it. And although he had not, yet I will not complain on him, for that he shall be diligent to give me knowledge from time to time how his busy child doth, and if I were at his birth no doubt I would see him beaten for the trouble he has put you to. Master Denny and my lady with humble thanks prayeth most entirely for your grace, praying the almighty God to send you a lucky deliverance. And my mistress<sup>10</sup> wisheth no less, giving your highness most humble thanks for her commendations. Written with very little leisure this last day of July.

Your humble daughter, Elizabeth.<sup>11</sup>

The foregoing letters require studious contemplation; they are offered for you to judge whether these sentiments could or would have come from a fourteen-year-old princess three and then two months shy of delivering her own child, intended for a beloved Dowager Queen stepmother struggling through a difficult third trimester.

One month later, on August 30, 1548, Parr delivered a daughter, Mary Seymour, contracted puerperal fever, and died on September 5.<sup>12</sup> Beauclerk volunteers little detail of Elizabeth's delivery of Oxford, merely telling us that it most likely was in September or possibly October of 1548 (39, 57). We hear nothing more of Mary Seymour's fate until she unaccountably appears reincarnated as Mary de Vere, Oxford's "putative" sister, when Beauclerk informs us that the "two quasi-royal children had been placed cuckoo-like in [John de Vere's] ancestral nest for the purpose of concealing their true parentage. Now that he had served his purpose as surrogate father, it was clearly thought prudent to dispose of him" (72). At least something is clear to someone; otherwise, *SLK* is so dense with similarly precarious flights of unsubstantiated fancy based upon nothing more tangible than imagination, that it descends ever deeper into an interminable Grand Guignol.<sup>13</sup>

We're told that "Elizabeth herself had been sick from around midsummer [1548] through October, when she wrote to thank the lord protector for sending his physician Dr. Bill to tend her" (37). Beauclerk doesn't quote from the letter itself, written around September, the month she allegedly delivered Oxford, wherein Elizabeth thanked Somerset for being "careful for my health, and sending unto me ... physicians as Doctor Bill, whose diligence and pain has been a great part of my recovery ... who can ascertain you of mine estate of health."<sup>14</sup> Beauclerk does, however, cite the following from a letter written by Elizabeth to Somerset in January, 1549, after rumors were circulating she'd had a child by Seymour: "My Lord," she complained, "these are shameful slanders, for the which, besides the great desire I have to see the king's majesty, I shall most heartily desire your Lordship that I may come to the

Court after your first determination, that I may show myself there as I am” (38).

Ordinarily, one would question Dr. Bill’s motive for withholding news of Elizabeth’s pregnancy from Somerset, but it’s a non-issue since, according to Beauclerk, Somerset was fully cognizant of the covert birth and complicit in its cover-up. Yet it seems not to have occurred to Beauclerk how that renders nonsensical Elizabeth’s later indignant denials to Somerset of the rumors of her pregnancy as “shameful slanders.” *SLK* abounds with glaring instances of this kind of contradiction.

Beauclerk says that “Bastard or no bastard, [Oxford] was a Protestant, who would have been seen as a possible successor to the sickly King Edward. (Somerset, in particular, would have been keen to control the destiny of this other Edward, who was, after all, his nephew.)” (39); and further along: “On April 17, 1550 ... the Privy Council, under the leadership of Lord Protector Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, authorized the gift of a baptismal cup for the christening of ‘our very good Lord the Earl of Oxford’s son.’ This is not proof of a birthdate [on] April [12,] 1550, for ... an official baptism could have been arranged at any time” (56).

It’s immaterial to ask why the then internally factious council would concur to foist a secret royal bastard onto the ancient House of Vere (=Truth),<sup>15</sup> since they were not under the leadership of Somerset, but John Dudley, then Earl of Warwick, who had assumed the title of lord president of the privy council in February 1550. The fallen Somerset had relinquished his protectorship on October 13, 1549, and was lodged in the Tower the next day. It took nearly six months to fully regain his freedom, and although he was readmitted to the council on April 10th, he didn’t resume attendance until April 24.<sup>16</sup> Hence, the politically maimed Somerset wasn’t even present in council on April 17, 1550, five days after Oxford’s received date of birth, when the golden baptismal cup was “to be delyuered as the kinges maiestes guyft at the Christening of our very goode Lorde the Erle of Oxfordes Sonne.”<sup>17</sup>

Among so many other crucial points never considered by Beauclerk, yet vitally relevant, are the dozens of legally binding documents on which rights of inheritance depended, not just of Oxford but purchasers of his lands, where he is routinely described as the 16th Earl’s son, many involving the Queen herself, e.g., Oxford’s license to enter on his lands,<sup>18</sup> which begins:

The Queen to whom etc. greeting. Know that we, of our special grace and of our certain knowledge & mere motion, have granted & given licence, and by these presents do grant & give licence for us, our heirs & successors, by how much [+is] in us to our wellbeloved and faithful subject Edward de Vere, now Earl of Oxenford, son & next heir & elder male issue of the body of the right honourable John de Vere, late Earl of Oxenford, deceased...

Another historical document, *prima facie* evidence that refutes PT1, again not considered by Beauclerk, is Oxford’s indenture of January 30, 1575, prior to his departure on his continental tour, in which Oxford arranges for the descent of his lands “considering that at this present he hath not any issue of his body yet born.”<sup>19</sup>

Beauclerk bypasses all such obstacles as these, along with many other consid-

erations. So grounded is his text in the Oedipus complex and interminably expanding and convoluted mysticism, mythology, and mythos, that no more conventional explanations for diverse phenomenon are permitted. It's probable that some form of love/hate and mother/son relationship existed between Oxford and Elizabeth, but this could be explained by the fact that she was his legal "mother" from age 12 until he was released from wardship on May 30, 1572. She literally held the purse strings, told him what he could and couldn't do, etc., not just as his sovereign, but in loco parentis.<sup>20</sup>

Of Oxford's historical birth mother, Beauclerk writes: "Margery [née Golding] herself had very little to do with Edward after the earl's death, and her letters to Cecil betray a deeper concern for the estate of her late husband than for the fate of her supposed son. If she did feel maternal affection toward him, it is not expressed" (72).

This claim is directly refuted in a letter that the Dowager Countess of Oxford wrote to Cecil on May 7, 1565, presciently (but futilely) desiring that part of Oxford's inheritance be set apart for his maintenance after his minority, beginning:

[W]hereas my Lord of Oxenford my son, now the Queen's Majesty's ward, is by law entitled to have a certain portion of his inheritance from the death of my late Lord and husband, his father, and presently to his use to be received ... when he shall come to his full age he shall not be able either to furnish his house with stuff or other provision meet for one of his calling, neither be able to bear the charges of the suit of his livery, which charges were foreseen and provided for by my said late Lord and husband ... that his said son should thus be entitled to a portion of his inheritance during his minority. And if the same portion should remain in the hands of my Lord now in his minority, and not committed to some such persons as should be bound to answer him the same at his full age, the care which my said Lord, his father, and his counsel learned had for the aid and relief of him at his full age might come to small effect, which matter moveth me earnestly to become a suitor to you in this behalf. And in case it might please you to think me, being his natural mother, meet to be one to have the order, receipt and government of the said portion ... for the true answering of the mean profits of the same to my Lord at his full age, I would willingly travail to procure such persons to join with me in it as shall be to your contentation.<sup>21</sup>

The foregoing sentiments earnestly looking out for Oxford's welfare hardly betray more concern for her late husband's estate than the fate of her son, and could certainly be interpreted as expressing some form of maternal affection toward him. But most importantly, here we find what should be taken as a dagger in the heart of PT2. All other phrases of familial consanguinity in the letter aside, there can be no hedging when Countess Margery refers to herself as Oxford's "natural mother," because there is only one possible definition, which is: "Of children: Actually begotten by one (in contrast to adopted, etc.), and especially in lawful wedlock; hence, freq. = legitimate... Similarly of other relationships (esp. natural father or brother) in which there is actual consanguinity or kinship by descent."<sup>22</sup>

Upon segueing into the Southampton aspect of the PT theories, Beauclerk writes: "Some historians have suggested that Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Oxford, at the height of their amorous involvement, pledged themselves to each other on the most senior priest in the land, Elizabeth's old friend and mentor Archbishop Matthew Parker" (103). What he doesn't say here and elsewhere is that these "historians" were (and are) all Oxfordian PT theorists. Breaking no new ground, but sticking by his predecessors, Beauclerk unswervingly claims that little is known of the Queen's movements from Autumn 1573 to the end of her summer progress in 1574, that "some weighty causes of state" proposed for her "melancholy" during this period "are not named," and that in May/June 1574 she stayed with Oxford at Havering-atte-Bower to give birth to Southampton (104). On the contrary, Elizabeth's "movements" during this period are very well documented, but addressing them is not on Beauclerk's agenda.<sup>23</sup>

Regarding Southampton's birth:

...the child was placed with the Southamptons. Mary Browne, the Countess of Southampton, had given birth to a son on October 6, 1573, but there is no record of a baptism for the baby, who may have died in infancy or been placed with another family in preparation for the adoption of the queen's son. Either way, her child was probably illegitimate and not a Wriothesley at all, for the earl, her husband, was in the Tower when the child was conceived, and she was rumored to be having an affair with 'a common person' by the name of Donesame, pretext enough in those days for the removal of the baby. Moreover, although the child was the 2nd Earl's first son, the boy who stepped into his shoes, Henry Tudor-Wriothesley, later 3rd Earl of Southampton, is frequently referred to as "the second son," again suggesting that the child born on October 1573 either died or was farmed out. (106)<sup>24</sup>

Beauclerk is surely aware that Sidney Lee birthed this "second son" in his 1900 *DNB* entry: "[Southampton] was born ... on 6 Oct. 1573. His father died two days before his eighth birthday. The elder brother was already dead. Thus on 4 Oct. 1581 he became third earl of Southampton."<sup>25</sup> In all likelihood, the "elder brother" was somehow concocted from Lee confusing the Christian names of father and son, both being Henry, an odd but comprehensible mistake. Charlotte Stopes compounded Lee's error in her 1922 biography of Southampton, claiming, "[i]t has always been said he was 'the second son,' but there is no authority for that. The error must have begun in confusing the second with the first Henry."<sup>26</sup> There was no authority for it because Lee had none to give. Promulgating Lee's gaffe was careless, Stopes' phrasing that "[i]t has always been said" worse still. There are no contemporaneous accounts of it and one must assume that Lee did indeed confuse the second with the first Henry, for he gave no indication of a source for his claim that the "elder brother was already dead," nor has any ever been found.

Ironically, Beauclerk thrice mistakes the father's given name (Henry, 2nd Earl

of Southampton) for the grandfather's (Thomas, 1st Earl): "Burghley seems to have struck a deal whereby Oxford would reconcile with his wife, Anne, and acknowledge their five-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, in return for permission to see his seven-year-old son, Henry Wriothesley, who with the death of his foster father, Thomas, 2nd Earl of Southampton, was made a royal ward of court and moved to Cecil House" (257).

Quoting Charlotte Stopes: "[Southampton] was not appointed [Knight of the Garter (KG) in 1592], but the fact of his name having been proposed was in itself an honour as great at his early age that it had never before been paid to any one not of Royal Blood" (363). Beauclerk's note 166, attached to this passage, asserts: "It is surely noteworthy, too, that in the *History of the Order of the Garter* under "Third Earl of Southampton" is written the phrase "Comme son Beau Père" (i.e., like his stepfather), referring to Thomas Wriothesley, the Second Earl of Southampton, suggesting some sort of adoptive relationship" (402). In both of the former instances, Beauclerk of course meant to write the name "Henry" rather than "Thomas" for the 2nd Earl, a mistake repeated in the Index as well. Paradoxically, the full phrase under the 396th KG—Henry, 3rd Earl of Southampton—is "Comme son Beau Pere, No. 317" i.e., like his grandfather Thomas, 1st Earl of Southampton, the 317th KG, not his father Henry, the 2nd Earl, who was never a KG.<sup>27</sup>

Several pages are devoted to the hypothesis that Anne Cecil's first pregnancy was the result of an incestuous liaison with Burghley after Oxford's departure on his continental tour, filtered through his interpretation of Hamlet: "Given the barrage of references to incest and unnatural conception leading up to Ophelia's suicide at the end of Act IV, and the confusion of father and lover in her 'mad' songs, it is not outrageous to suggest that she kills herself because she is pregnant with her father's child" (113). But the premise is a non-starter, beginning with the machination: "News of her delivery, however, coming as it did so long after the fact, was acknowledged but coolly by [Oxford], toward the end of his letter to Burghley dated September 24, 1575. The child Elizabeth, who was baptized at the end of September and named for the queen, had most likely been born earlier that month; if so, Oxford could not be the father—hence Burghley's fabricated birth date of July 2....The picture is made more confusing by the ramblings committed to paper by Burghley" (112).

The confusion emanates from Beauclerk, who, despite having read Alan Nelson, ignores a letter written to Burghley from Sir Walter Mildmay on July 3, 1575, the day after Elizabeth Vere was born, which begins, "my veary good Lord. I thanke God hartelie with your Lordship for the good delyvery it hath pleased hym to geve my Lady of Oxford." Additionally, Elizabeth was baptized on July 10th, not "at the end of September."<sup>28</sup>

Upon introducing Oxford's distinctive so-called crown signature, Beauclerk comments that it "sported a coronet or crown above the name 'Edward Oxenford' and a line with seven dashes beneath it. Moreover, the whole signature, which is unique in the annals of the Elizabethan age, was shaped like a crown .... to those who were in the know, like William Cecil, it proclaimed a royal title, that of 'King Edward VII'" (86-87). Beauclerk's claim that Oxford's signature was "unique in the annals of the Elizabethan age" is overblown. Similarly flourished signatures among lettered men were commonplace (see Fig. 1).<sup>29</sup>



Fig. 1. Ornately embellished signatures were commonplace among lettered men. Two representative examples ranging from 1583 to 1604 are offered here for comparative purposes with Oxford's so-called "crown signature."<sup>30</sup>

The critical failings in *SLK* lie in Beauclerk's unreasonable methodology, of which a microcosm has been offered here. I would mostly concur with his contention that, "The official records, which are often little more than propaganda, have to be studied in conjunction with the literature of the time" (6), with the exception that Beauclerk's concept of what constitutes the "official records" is overreaching, and should certainly exclude private letters such as the one from Oxford's historical mother cited above, to name but one.

Beauclerk writes, "Whatever the truth, we are left to tie together the threads as best we can from the literature of the time, which was 'of purpose ... written darkly'" (103). But this misapplied apology for poetry lies far from the truth, whatever that may be, for we are left with so much more to work with alongside the "literature of the time," evidence that Beauclerk either misrepresents or rejects out of hand, and by deeming them unworthy of mention, he is performing his own brand of sanitizing the records. He complains, not entirely without justification, that the historical re-

ords handed down to us by the Poloniuses of this world represent a skewed perspective, yet he is every bit as accountable here as the Poloniuses preceding him.

But if there is no concrete evidence or witness for PT other than the literature of Shakespeare, is Beauclerk, and by association, PT theorists, guilty of exploitation, of special pleading, of distortion of received facts, of manipulation of contradictory evidence, of forcing square pegs through round holes? Or is “guilty” the wrong word and “visionary” the correct word? That depends on one’s point of view.

In summary, Beauclerk’s interpretation of the Shakespeare canon is often tantalizing but lacks credibility. It’s disconcerting that he harnesses no concerted effort to refrain from twisting historical documents out of context to fit his interpretations, while simultaneously bypassing others that run counter to his course. With this work, Beauclerk is neither biographer nor historian, but mythopoeist. What he offers is not the “True History of Oxford/Shakespeare and Elizabeth,” but a mythistory. Because his literary interpretations are based upon unfounded historical conclusions, Shakespeare’s lost kingdom remains to be found.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Any parenthetical initials following the introduction of a title or phrase indicates the form it will take thereafter.
- <sup>2</sup> All text appearing in [square brackets] are my insertions.
- <sup>3</sup> As far as I am aware there are no stand-alone PT2 theorists; PT2 always subsumes PT1. They will be thus abbreviated where differentiation is necessary. For an earlier book review examining different details of this same topic see Christopher Paul, "The 'Prince Tudor' Dilemma: Hip Thesis, Hypothesis, or Old Wives' Tale?" *The Oxfordian* 5 (2002), 47-69, available online at [http://shakespeare-oxford.com/wp-content/oxfordian/Paul\\_PT\\_Dilemma.pdf](http://shakespeare-oxford.com/wp-content/oxfordian/Paul_PT_Dilemma.pdf). Two other critical examinations of PT theories are: Diana Price, "Rough winds do shake: A Fresh Look at the Tudor Rose Theory," *The Elizabethan Review*, 4:2 (Autumn 1996), 4-23; and Roger Nyle Parisious, "Occultist Influence on the Authorship Controversy," *The Elizabethan Review*, 6:1 (Spring 1998), 9-43; both available online at <http://www.elizabethanreview.com/tudor.html>. See also OXMYTHS at <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/documents.html>.
- <sup>4</sup> Beauclerk is a remote collateral descendant of Oxford via the illegitimate offspring of Charles II and Nell Gwyn, whose son married Lady Diana Vere, heiress of the 20th and last Earl of Oxford (see Peter Beauclerk-Dewar and Roger Powel, *Royal Bastards: Illegitimate Children of the British Royal Family*, The History Press, Gloucestershire [2008], 75-83). However, Beauclerk has no lineal connection whatsoever with Oxford if, according to his central argument, Oxford was not really a Vere, but a Tudor. This dust jacket blurb is reiterated in Beauclerk's Acknowledgements, whose "first thanks go to [my grandfather, Charles St. Albans], for providing a link, in blood and spirit, to our exceptional forebear" (389). This contradiction in terms is not a little ironic, and reflects upon Beauclerk's claim as a "historian" in the same dust jacket blurb.
- <sup>5</sup> Bias, as applied here, is defined by Webster's as: "systematic error introduced into sampling or testing by selecting or encouraging one outcome or answer over others."
- <sup>6</sup> My point is not to debate whether or not the Virgin Queen was literally a virgin, whether she did or did not have lovers, or whether she did or did not have an illegitimate child or children at some or various points in her lifetime. There is undeniably extant documentary evidence of myriad rumors and a variety of circumstances indicative of her having had lovers and possibly secret bastards. The insuperable problem for PT advocates is that while many of the foregoing are unambiguous as to timeframes and identification of fathers (usually Leicester) and offspring (e.g., Arthur Dudley, Miles Fry, alias "Emanuel Plantagenet," et al), not a single one points anywhere toward Oxford or Southampton either by name or Oxfordian PT chronology. Beauclerk writes, "But why should Oxford have been so popular, unless it was at least suspected that he was the queen's son?" (99) If such were suspected, it is not unreasonable to expect at least one

documentary scrap of evidence pointing toward Oxford or Southampton when there is so much extant documentation of such pregnancies and secret royal bastards never coming within their vicinity. The argument is apparently that the Cecilians were only interested in razing all record of Elizabeth having borne Oxford and or Southampton, and didn't give a fig for any of the other claims being left to posterity.

<sup>7</sup> Assuming full term pregnancies.

<sup>8</sup> Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, eds. *Elizabeth I, Collected Works* (Chicago: UCP, 2000), 17-19.

<sup>9</sup> Parr had removed to Seymour's principal estate in Sudeley, Gloucestershire, in mid-June to await confinement.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth's "mistress" refers to her long-time governess, Katherine Ashley. "Master Denny and my lady" refer to Sir Anthony Denny and his wife, Joan. Denny held several positions of considerable importance in the reigns of Henry and then Edward; among others: gentleman of the privy chamber, privy councilor, one of Edward's tutors, and one of Protector Somerset's leading associates. Serving in the capacity as Elizabeth's guardian at Cheshunt naturally begs the question why he would have withheld his charge's pregnancy from Somerset.

<sup>11</sup> Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 20.

<sup>12</sup> Beauclerk mistakenly writes that Parr died on September 7 (Elizabeth's fifteenth birthday) (37).

<sup>13</sup> By turns of pages we discover how Elizabeth spent time alone with Oxford at Havering-atte-Bower during the summer of 1568 with the intention of coming clean about his parentage, only to end up seducing him instead, as that was her habitual way of controlling men she felt threatened by (Oxford was unruly and ambitious), and didn't think twice about using her sexual charms to subdue her own son out of concern that he might someday make a bid for the throne (85), a concern well founded, since one moment Oxford saw himself an outcast, debarred from the throne by his bastardy, the next as rightful king or chosen one (221), as well he might, since the queen, as was her wont, did and said just enough to feed his dreams of royal success (237), but too bad, so sad, because by the start of the 1590s Oxford realized he didn't stand a chance of inheriting his mother's throne, yet with hope eVer springing eternal, by plowing his efforts into glorifying his son/brother Southampton's claim, his dream of a new royalty—"beauty's rose"—could live on (341), thereby making the Fair Youth the refuge and glory of his art (363), but Southampton nipped that dream in the bud by turning his back on the political advice that had been urged upon him by his father/brother Oxford, which was to secure the throne by aligning himself with the Cecils by marrying (first Burghley's, now Oxford's?) daughter Elizabeth Vere, but electing instead to abjure the match because he would have been committing incest (364, 366), preferring instead to stick by his elder half brother as the only path to the throne—the Earl of Essex (369), who also turns out to be one of Elizabeth's sons and hidden heirs, with no elaboration of the circumstances of his birth even attempted (46, 161, 299, 374, 379), while somewhere

along the way Southampton, “beauty’s rose,” had magically transformed from a secret royal bastard into “a legitimate heir” (299), and thus goes the shenanigans in this lost kingdom.

- <sup>14</sup> Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 22. Dr. Bill was court physician to Henry 8 and Edward 6.
- <sup>15</sup> We may nowhere get a better taste of Beauclerk’s prefatory reference to the Elizabethans’ “love of the grotesque and paradoxical” (xi) than where he writes, “[Oxford] had been given the name of “Truth” (“Vere”), and discovering and bearing witness to the truth would be his self-appointed task in life” (68).
- <sup>16</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition.
- <sup>17</sup> Alan H. Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary: The life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford* (Liverpool: at the UP, 2003), 20.
- <sup>18</sup> TNA C 66/1090, mm. 29-30. Modern spelling transcription by Nina Green. Available on her website at <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/documents.html>.
- <sup>19</sup> ERO D/DRg2/25; Green, available online.
- <sup>20</sup> With the exception of the consanguineous reference, Beauclerk skirts this conclusion: “It is certainly to be expected that Elizabeth, who was the keeper of his identity, the wellspring of his blood, and the most powerful woman in England, should dominate his thoughts and affections” (101).
- <sup>21</sup> TNA, PRO: SP 12/36/47; Green, available online, bold italics mine.
- <sup>22</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, compact ed. (NYC: Oxford UP, 1986), 1:37/1899. Note that the term “natural,” when applied to a son or daughter, could take just the opposite meaning, i.e., illegitimate, but always meant legitimate, i.e., lawfully consanguineous, when applied to either parent. There is not a single extant example of it having had any other application.
- <sup>23</sup> For a thorough list of this documentation, see Diana Price’s article available online, (referenced in endnote 3 above).
- <sup>24</sup> It’s difficult to distinguish whether Beauclerk’s shift to present tense when asserting Southampton “is frequently referred to as ‘the second son,’” is disingenuous or unintentional, since its source is modern and PTERS are the only ones promulgating it. Beauclerk further misleads when he implies that the countess “was rumored to be having an affair with ‘a common person’ by the name of Donesame” prior to her husband’s release from the Tower in May 1573, when this alleged infidelity was unknown to have begun earlier than 1577 (see C. P. V. Akrigg, *Shakespeare & the Earl of Southampton* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1968), 13). On the same page, Beauclerk writes: “Oxford, it seems, wanted his royal son to be brought up in his household rather than being placed with the earl of Southampton, where he would be under the control of Burghley’s henchman Thomas Dymoke, who dominated the Wriothlesley household.” Dymoke was never Burghley’s henchman; he served the Earls of Southampton from start to finish.
- <sup>25</sup> *The Dictionary of National Biography*, 63 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1900), 63:140.
- <sup>26</sup> Charlotte Stopes, *The Life of Henry, Third Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare’s Patron*

(London: Cambridge UP, 1922), 2n2.

- <sup>27</sup> Beauclerk's source, whether at first hand or second, was most certainly Elias Ashmole's *History of the Order of the Garter* (1715 ed., originally published in 1672 as *The institution, laws & ceremonies of the most noble Order of the Garter*), listing for KG No. 396 under Knights elected in the Reign of King James I: "Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. Comme son Beau Pere, No. 317" (531). KG 317 harkens back to *Knights elected in the Reign of King Henry VIII*: "No. 317. Thomas Wriothesley, Lord Wriothesley, after Earl of Southampton. Azure a Cross Or between four Falcons Argent" (526). If any KG's father had also been KG, his name would be followed by "Comme son Pere" (i.e., like his father) and the referring KG number. If any former generation other than the father had been KG, he was so listed as "Comme son Beau Pere" (applied in the general sense, "like his ancestor") and the referring KG number. It was all quite precise, whereas Beauclerk's historicity leaves much to be desired.
- <sup>28</sup> Nelson, 127, adding that "Burghley's chronology assigns Elizabeth's baptism to Sunday 10 July: Elizabeth daughter of Anne Countess of Oxford baptized at Theobalds," with the endnote citing: "CP, v, p. 70 (140/14v) eadem Elizabetha filia Anne Comitisse Oxon' baptizata apud Theobald'" (460). Beauclerk would doubtless rationalize this baptism as a fabrication, just as he did Oxford's.
- <sup>29</sup> The historical fact that Oxford did cease using this nearly life-long signature so soon after Queen Elizabeth's death is a legitimate puzzle, no pun intended.
- <sup>30</sup> Oxford's signature from letter to Robert Cecil, Oct. 7, 1601 (CP 88/101); Ron Halley signing himself owner of Barnabe Riche's 1604 *A Soldier's Wish* (STC 21000, sig. A4v); King's College, Cambridge official Matthew Stokys, signed 'Mattheus Stokys, No[ta]rius pub[li]cus[is],' Oct. 2, 1583 (Lansdowne 39/6).