

# *The Rival Poet*

## in Shakespeare's Sonnets

by Hank Whittemore

The identity of the Rival Poet of the Shakespeare sonnets, who appears within the span of verses numbered 78 to 86, has seemed to elude Stratfordians and Oxfordians alike. The orthodox model has allowed us to view this series in just one way – that among the other poets there is one flesh-and-blood figure, towering above them all, who is stealing the attentions and affections of the Fair Youth,<sup>1</sup> who is generally regarded as Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton.<sup>2</sup>

When J. Thomas Looney expresses his agreement in *"Shakespeare" Identified* that the beloved younger man was Southampton, he points to the rival series (sonnets 78 to 86) as powerful evidence. First, he cites Sonnet 81: "Your name from hence immortal life shall have" and notes that this immortality would be achieved by means of the younger earl's unique association with William Shakespeare. Second, Looney cites the companion verse, Sonnet 82: "The dedicated words which writers use/ Of their fair subject, blessing every book" and notes that Oxford was referring to his own public dedications to Southampton of *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594) as by William Shakespeare (Looney, 440).

Given the premise that Southampton is the friend or fair youth, Stratfordians have postulated many rivals – Barnes, Chapman, Chaucer, Daniel, Davies, Davison, Drayton, Florio, Golding, Greene, Griffin, Harvey, Jonson, Kyd, Lyly, Markham, Marlowe, Marston, Nashe, Peele, Spenser, the Italian Tasso, and Watson. Oxfordians have come up with some overlaps, such as Chapman and Marlowe, while adding the likes of Raleigh and the Earl of Essex. In 1952, Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn Sr. thought the *rival*, a word never used in the Sonnets, was both Chapman and Marlowe (893-94). In 1984, their son Charlton Ogburn Jr. merely referred to "one other poet, whose identity I must leave to the contention of more confident minds" (328).

The late Peter Moore made a well-researched and detailed Oxfordian case for Essex, summing it up this way: "*Shakespeare's Sonnets* describes a rival who was Southampton's friend, a poet, learned, tall, proud, probably a sailor, who had an affable familiar ghost who dealt in intelligence, who received assistance in his writing from friends, who was associated with the word *virtue* and with cosmetics, and who boosted Southampton's fame while being in his debt. This is quite a detailed portrait, and Essex matches it perfectly" (Moore 10).

The Stratfordian view has required the rival poet to be some other individual who wrote poetry and publicly used Southampton's name. From the vantage point of the Oxfordian view, however, I have come to a much different – and even radical – solution to the other writer's identity.

To begin, the Oxfordian model opens the door to an entirely new way of looking at the nine sonnets in the rival series, resulting in the possibility that the rival poet was none of those individuals. In fact, this paper argues that the rival was not a *person* at all, but a *persona*. In other words, the rival series contains Oxford's own testimony about the authorship – a grand, poetic, profoundly emotional statement of his identity as the author being erased for all time and replaced by the printed name known since 1593 as William Shakespeare. In this context, the sonnets about a so-called rival refer not to Oxford's original use of the pseudonym in 1593, but rather to the need several years later for his real name – his authorship – to be permanently *buried* (Sonnet 72, line 11). In this, we don't need to be overly concerned about the nature of the relationship between de Vere and Wriothesley.<sup>3</sup>

The Stratfordian view provides no reason or motive to look for any kind of authorship statement anywhere, much less in the rival series. Oxfordians contend precisely that Oxford has split himself (metaphorically) into two separate entities. On the one hand, he's Edward de Vere, writing privately or secretly in the sonnets. On the other hand, he's Shakespeare, the name on the page.<sup>4</sup> According to the theory of Oxford as the author, he is pictured as deciding early on to write anonymously or under different names – that is, to hide behind fictitious names or the names of real persons. Meanwhile Oxfordians too, have been led by tradition to take it for granted that the rival must be some real individual. From Looney onward, supporters of the earl's authorship have pictured him as having created his own rival – of a quite different sort – in the form of a new pseudonym, on the 1593-94 dedications of *Venus and Adonis*

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and *Lucrece* to Southampton.

In the minds of Stratfordians, or readers with no knowledge or suspicion of a hidden author, that pen name can only take the form of a real person – as it certainly has over the past centuries. But is that necessary, or is it even logical, as part of the Oxfordian theory?

If not for automatically carrying old Stratfordian baggage, would Oxfordians postulate a flesh-and-blood rival within the Sonnets? If not pulled by the weight and force of tradition, would we not realize, or at least suspect, that the earl is referring to his secret identity as Shakespeare? After all, that's the name on those dedications to Southampton, which continued to appear in new editions of the narrative poems. It was the word *Shakespeare* that became publicly identified with Southampton, and, therefore, it was the name that received all public credit for making such a remarkable pledge to the young earl: "The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end ... What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours, being part in all I have, devoted yours."<sup>5</sup>

## The Monument

My take on the so-called rival began with Edward de Vere's authorship combined with the chronological context offered in my book *The Monument* (2005), which describes a macro theory of the language and structure of the 154 consecutively numbered sonnets as printed in 1609. The theory began with the premise that the entire sequence comprises a single, unified masterwork of related parts, each contributing to the whole "monument" of verse intended for posterity. The author tells Southampton in Sonnet 81, lines 9 and 10: "Your monument shall be my gentle verse / Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read." In Sonnet 107, in lines 13 and 14, he uses this image again: "And thou in this shalt find thy monument / When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent."

*Shake-speare's Sonnets* contains one hundred centrally-positioned sonnets – a century from #27 to #126 – that correspond with circumstances during 1601-03. Of those hundred, eighty sonnets (#27 to #106) were written about Southampton's imprisonment for his leadership role in the Essex Rebellion of February 8, 1601. There are also twenty sonnets (#107 to #126) that address Southampton. The first nineteen cover the nineteen days from his release on April 10, 1603 (#107) to Elizabeth's funeral procession on April 28, 1603 (#125). Finally, the twentieth sonnet (#126) serves as an envoi of farewell.

"The most startling aspect of the new picture," I wrote, "was the emergence of exactly eighty chronological sonnets – more than half the collection – addressed to Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton during the more than two years (1601-1603) he spent imprisoned in the Tower of London as a condemned traitor,

after which, following the death of Queen Elizabeth, he was inexplicably released by the new monarch, James I of England” (Whittemore, xi).

In this context, Oxford agreed to sacrifice his identity as Shakespeare on a permanent basis in 1601, after Southampton was found guilty of high treason and sentenced to death. The younger earl’s key role in the rebellion was his *crime* to which Oxford refers in sonnet 58: “. . .to you it doth belong / Yourself to pardon of self-doing crime” (11-12) and in sonnet 120: “To weigh how once I suffered in your crime” (8).

At some point in the development of the Monument theory, prior to publication, I realized that no contemporary writer was publicly addressing, much less praising, Southampton while he was legally “the late Earl” in the Tower.<sup>6</sup> It finally dawned on me that, during the two years and two months while he was facing, at first, execution and then, perpetual confinement, no rival poet could have been competing for his attention or affections. In the context of this chronology, there was no flesh-and-blood rival.

At the same time, however, the Shakespeare of those dedications was still prominently pledging his endless love and support for Southampton. Paradoxically, Oxford had created his own rival to be the poet known for his commitment to Southampton.

## The Sacrifice

The testimony of Sonnets 78-86 is that Oxford’s hope for being identified even posthumously as the one behind Shakespeare is fading away and that, once Oxford disappears “to all the world,” he will also be replaced as the author permanently (so far as can be predicted) by the persona of Shakespeare.<sup>7</sup> In Sonnets 78 to 86 he is primarily speaking of his own invention or creation in the form of a pen name. By the end of this series, the writer de Vere is supplanted for all time by a “character” who writes and is published. The creation of such an *alter ego* would certainly be within the abilities of a dramatist who populated his plays with characters for the stage, as a matter of course.

In the sonnets immediately preceding the rival series, he appears to link the disappearance of his name to Southampton. In Sonnet 71, he pleads with the younger earl:

When I perhaps compounded am with clay,  
Do not so much as *my poor name* rehearse.  
(10-11, emphasis added)

In Sonnet 72, he speaks of the death of his name and hints at its connection to Southampton:

*My name* be buried where my body is,  
And live no more to shame nor me nor you.

(11-12, emphasis added)

When the rival series begins with Sonnet 78, he appears to glance at other contemporary writers in lines 3-4: “As every *Alien* pen hath got my use / And under thee their poesy doth disperse.”<sup>8</sup> *Every* in the first line above may represent Oxford identifying himself as *E. Ver.* The phrase *Alien pen* seems to refer to those other poets who have praised Southampton, such as Thomas Nashe, who dedicated his book *The Unfortunate Traveller, or the Life of Jack Wilton* to Wriothesley in 1593. But it is *E. Ver.*'s pen name (Shakespeare) that is alien, in the sense that it's not his real name. Of course, Oxford's secret identity or alter ego must have been very much part of his being, so it could not have been very much *alien* to him.

In the next sonnet he begins to lament his figurative loss of power. Anything written under his own identity is *decayed* and *sick* as it stands aside to make way for Shakespeare. In the process he is fainting and becoming tongue-tied.

But now my gracious numbers are decayed,  
And my sick Muse doth give an other place.

Sonnet 79, 3-4<sup>9</sup>

O how I faint when I of you do write,  
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,  
And in the praise thereof spends all his might  
To make me tongue-tied speaking of your fame.

Sonnet 80, 1-4

In my view his *faint* in Sonnet 80 is a metaphor that describes the fading of de Vere's identity behind the new identity of Shakespeare, who has given Southampton fame by dedicating his work to him – and whose popularity serves to continue promoting the younger earl. Oxford is also feinting, or deceiving – and exercising the feint of a skilled fencer – by assuming an appearance or making a feint to conceal his real identity. He faints by becoming figuratively weaker, feebler – in other words – less visible, while Shakespeare takes his place. In fact, the final two words of sonnet 80 are *my decay*. Although this has nothing to do with losing his powers as a writer, it could be that the pen name gave him a renewed sense of power with the pen. As for calling his pen name *a better spirit*, I believe he's referring to his own mental and creative powers, which are being used – ghostlike – in the service of the Shakespeare works.

Back in Sonnet 66, at line 9 his art has been “made tongue-tied by authority.” His work was being censored, suppressed, in the sense that he could not write openly and directly, as himself. The force keeping him silent is authority or officialdom, the

government, as when he writes in *King John* of the monarch's "sovereign greatness and authority" (5.1.4). In Sonnet 80, he extends the same thought; it is the rival poet or Shakespeare that makes him "tongue-tied speaking of your fame." So Oxford's own pen name is now the unwilling agent of *authority* – the means by which he, the true author, is being silenced – not as a poet or dramatist per se, but in terms of his ability to write the truth directly.

This censorship would now obstruct his ability to tell what happened as a result of the failed rebellion in February 1601. In my view, he is aware that those who won the political struggle to control the succession and who will deliver the throne of England to a foreign king, will also get to write their version of history.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, he is attempting to tell some of his side of the story in the *Sonnets*, which will be attributed to "Shake-speare" on the title page.

### "I, once gone, to all the world must die."

Here the door starts opening to a larger and more important story than merely Oxford disappearing forever – and doing so for no apparent reason. Again, back in Sonnet 66, Oxford cited "strength by limping sway disabled." The government, in the person of the figure who may be identified as limping, swaying – Robert Cecil, a hunchback – is using Oxford's pen name or persona Shakespeare as a weapon against him (Wilson 171).<sup>11</sup>

Oxford also comments in Sonnet 80, lines 7-8: "My saucy bark, inferior far to his / On your broad main doth willfully appear." Steven Booth writes that *willfully* "may have been chosen for its pun on the poet's name: the saucy bark is full of Will" (Booth, 274). It could just as easily be a pun on the poet's *pen* name. Now in Sonnet 81 come those two lines which for Oxfordians comprise clear evidence of an authorship question: "Your name from hence immortal life shall have / Though I (once gone) to all the world must die." Within the context suggested here, it's no accident that these lines appear within the rival poet sequence. Southampton's name will achieve immortal life, presumably because of the public dedications, which are the only such epistles the great author will ever offer to anyone. By the same token, also because of the pen name, the author's real name or identity will disappear from *all the world* for the foreseeable future.

In the next sonnet, number 82, Oxford makes apparent reference to the public dedications that Looney had identified:

I grant thou wert not married to my Muse,  
And therefore mayst without attaint o'erlook  
The *dedicated words* which writers use  
Of their *fair subject*, blessing every *book*.

(emphasis added)

My interpretation of the last two lines is: they refer to “the dedications I wrote under the Shakespeare name about the fair youth, Southampton, which are *blessing* the books *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*.” Sonnet 82 also contains a remarkable pair of lines in which Oxford appears to be playing upon his motto *Nothing Truer than Truth*, as if still insisting upon his own identity before any chance of it ever being revealed disappears completely:<sup>12</sup> “Thou truly fair wert truly sympathized / In true-plain words by thy true-telling friend.”

By calling the younger man *fair*, he appears to link him to the *fair subject* of the dedications mentioned earlier in the same sonnet, and since we know for a fact that Southampton was the subject of those public epistles, we now have what appears to be strong confirmation within these lines that the younger earl is also the subject of the *Sonnets*. Oxford is *dumb* or *mute* in Sonnet 83, because he is unable to speak in public: “Which shall be most my glory, being *dumb* / For I impair not beauty, being *mute*” (emphasis added). As he ends sonnet 83, he refers to *both* poets writing to Southampton, that is, both himself and his pen name: “There lives more life in one of your fair eyes / Than both your poets can in praise devise.”

In sonnet 84, he addresses the younger earl and appears to turn his alter ego (Shakespeare) into a fictional character by explaining how this other poet should write about him:

Let him but copy what in you is writ,  
Not making worse what nature made so clear,  
And such a counterpart shall fame his wit,  
Making his style admired everywhere.

In sonnet 85 we read a further allusion to his personal silence: “Then others, for the breath of words respect / Me for my dumb thoughts, speaking in effect.”

Sonnet 86, the final poem in the rival poet series, and therefore the most potentially important of them all, tells the whole story, beginning with the first quatrain:

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,<sup>13</sup>  
Bound for the prize of (all too precious) you,  
That did *my* ripe thoughts in *my* brain inhearse,  
Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?  
(emphasis added)

Clearly Oxford was well aware of the power and the popularity of the writing he had published under his pen name. “Bound for the prize of (all too precious) you” seems to be directed at Southampton, but the pen name is the means by which his own identity will be obliterated and his future public recognition denied. On the other hand, his real thoughts and feelings still live within these private sonnets, in which he

refers to “my ripe thoughts in my brain.”

In some sense the name Shakespeare conceals a disembodied “spirit” that might refer to Oxford’s own creativity and genius, which infuses the literary and dramatic works with their extraordinary range of information, ideas and emotions. Again, in lines 5 and 6 of sonnet 86, the final one in the rival series:

Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write  
Above a mortal pitch, that struck *me* dead?  
(emphasis added)

Oxford knows his works soar above those of *mortal* poets and playwrights, and while “struck me dead” might sound like a reference to the killing of Christopher Marlowe in May 1593,<sup>14</sup> in this context it becomes a metaphorical death – a description of relinquishing any and all future claim to the authorship of his works. His only escape hatch, if you will, is that the Shakespeare works, because of the dedications, will always be linked uniquely to Southampton. Lines 7 through 12 of sonnet 86 seem to allude to both the Shakespeare name and Oxford’s political enemies:

No, neither he, nor his compeers by night  
Giving him aid, my verse astonished.  
He, nor that affable familiar ghost  
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,  
As victors of my silence cannot boast;  
I was not sick of any fear from thence.

The “affable familiar ghost” is once again Oxford’s own creative force and spirit, which “nightly” or secretly (as though in darkness, invisibly) crams “Shakespeare” with his substance, or perhaps literally with “intelligence,” which sounds like the kind of information gathered by the secret service. It may also refer to sensitive information that Oxford is inserting within the lines of his plays as well. To “gull” is to cram full. Sonnet 86 ends thus: “But when your countenance filled up his line / Then lacked I matter, that enfeebled mine.” The final couplet can be viewed as another statement of the authorship problem: as the pen name Shakespeare continues to gain fame in connection with Southampton, so Oxford fades away – as Touchstone in *As You Like It* tells William the country fellow: “Drink, being poured out of a cup into a glass, by filling the one doth empty the other” (5.1.41-43).

The rival series should be viewed as a separate piece within the larger structure of the 100-sonnet century. The central message of Sonnets 78-86 can perhaps be expressed in a line or two, but the sequence can also be seen as a much longer and more drawn-out pledge by Oxford to sacrifice himself for Southampton’s life – that is, freedom from execution – and ultimate liberation from the Tower (if Robert Cecil succeeds in bringing James of Scotland to the throne).



The element of sacrifice had begun much earlier, for example in Sonnet 34:

Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss;  
 The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief  
 To him that bears the strong offence's *loss*  
   [emphasis added, usually emended to *cross*]<sup>15</sup>

Sacrifice is a theme in sonnet 36 as well: "So shall those blots that do with me remain / Without thy help, by me be borne alone." It appears in the Christian imagery of sonnet 42: "Lay on me this cross."

When the rival series begins with Sonnet 78, Oxford appears to confirm that he is attempting to "compile" the sonnets in a deliberate fashion, and in the same breath, he assures the younger man that the effort is all because of him (regardless of what their relationship has been or continues to be): "Yet be most proud of that which I compile / Whose influence is thine, and born of thee" (9-10).

I came to this view of the rival poet by first hypothesizing that the fair youth sonnets are in fact chronologically arranged from 1 to 126 – and that they lead up to and away from Sonnet 107, when Southampton is released from the Tower in April 1603 after having been "supposed as forfeit to a confined doom" (107, 4). That sonnet involves not only the liberation of Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton, but also the death of Queen Elizabeth, the succession of King James, and the end of the Tudor dynasty.<sup>16</sup> If the other sonnets have no relationship to that enormously serious, political subject matter, then Sonnet 107 must be one huge anomaly.

A simple question therefore becomes obvious. Given that Shakespeare is a masterful storyteller, and given that the high point of this story involves Southampton getting out of the Tower, it stands to reason that he must have marked the time when Southampton went into the Tower. Otherwise there is no chronological story at all and his liberation comes out of the blue, *apropos* of nothing. I moved back down the numbers from 107 and came to Sonnet 27 as marking that time on the night of February 8, 1601 when Southampton had entered the Tower expecting execution and being pictured by the author as languishing in the prison fortress (perhaps imagined or viewed from below, through a window) like "a Jewel hung in ghastly night." I tracked the sonnets that reflect those crucial days after the failed Essex rebellion until the moment of Southampton's reprieve from execution in March 1601. The rival series also corresponds with the younger earl's imprisonment – a time when, as already mentioned, no other poets could have been publicly praising him.

Also in this context it seems clear that Oxford made a deal with Robert Cecil involving a complete severance of the relationship between himself and Southampton, which he recorded for posterity in Sonnet 36 by telling the younger man: "I may not ever-more acknowledge thee." After coming to its conclusion with Sonnet 86, the

rival series is followed immediately by Sonnet 87's first four lines, a declaration that their connection to each other has been severed:

Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing  
 And like enough thou knowst thy estimate  
 The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing  
 My bonds in thee are all determinate.

The word *releasing* (above) may have multiple meanings, but it may also reflect the final stage of a deal to guarantee Southampton's release from prison, if James eventually succeeds Elizabeth. Adopting the pen name in 1593 had been Oxford's way of calling public attention to Southampton and, we can infer, of lending public support to him and his political-military future as a peer and rising star of the realm. At that point, Oxford probably expected posthumous recognition of his authorship of the Shakespeare works (as in the case of Philip Sidney and his writings). But now, eight years later in 1601, it appears that – to save the younger earl's life, and to gain his eventual freedom – he agreed to allow the pen name to become permanent. It was a trade-off and from that point on, even four centuries after his death, the rest is silence.

In conclusion, Oxford's statement in Sonnet 81 that "I (once gone) to all the world must die" within the rival poet series rather brazenly advertises the presence of a Shakespeare authorship problem. That is, we should observe the presence of a writer with a divided self. For the traditionally-perceived author to claim that upon his death he would have to disappear to all the world was quite obviously untrue, given the popularity of the Shakespearean works in his own time. The only way such a claim makes any sense is if the "I" of the Sonnets, the true author, was hiding behind a pen name. He could write those apparently heartfelt words of Sonnet 81 only if he knew the identity standing behind Shakespeare was never going to be revealed.

*Shake-speare's Sonnets* became the vehicle by which Edward de Vere chose to communicate this knowledge – concealing yet simultaneously revealing himself, within the lines of magnificent poetry capable of communicating on different levels – to those of us living in the future. As he testifies with utter confidence in the power of his lines to endure: "Not marble nor the gilded monuments/ Of Princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme" (55, 1-2). Here in the *monument* of the *Sonnets*, we have always had the answer to the authorship question, straight from the pen of the author himself.

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## *Notes*

- 1 For example, Katherine Duncan-Jones, p. 270. Re: Sonnet 80, line 2. Duncan-Jones writes of “a better spirit doth use your name” – that it suggests “both a superior being and a more inspired writer” than the author.
- 2 Southampton was identified first in 1817 by Nathan Drake in *Shakespeare and His Times*; since then many scholars have followed, for example, Rowse, xiv: “The Sonnets were written to and for the obvious person, Shakespeare’s patron, the young Earl of Southampton...”
- 3 The continuing controversy among Oxfordians over the connection between Oxford and Southampton has tended to obscure my conviction (and evidence) that the proposed time frame and circumstances of the central 100 sonnets is correct no matter what the nature of their relationship was. Although I continue to believe the so-called Prince Tudor theory that Southampton was Oxford’s natural son by the queen, that theory is not necessary in order to see the structure and chronology proposed for Sonnets 27-126, which are placed between two smaller sequences of twenty-six sonnets apiece.
- 4 On the first page of *Life of Shakespeare* (1923), J.Q. Adams indicates that “Shakespeare” evoked “the shaking of the spear,” referring to warrior-like chivalry.
- 5 Those words are part of the dedication of *Lucrece* in 1594. I have been baffled by attempts to view any statements in the public dedications as less than genuine, that is, to see them as fatuous or insincere in some other way. I take Oxford at his word when, as “Shakespeare,” he tells Southampton that his love for him is “without end” and that “what I have to do is yours.” Those are huge, straightforward commitments, made for all the world to witness and the younger earl’s predicament in the Tower occurred just seven years later.
- 6 Rowse, in *Shakespeare’s Southampton*: “...so long as the Queen lived, Southampton remained a close prisoner in the Tower. He was a condemned man, a dead man in the law – the documents refer to him as ‘the late Earl’ ” (164).
- 7 In this essay, I do not refer to the man from Stratford-upon-Avon, because it has not been established just when that individual became attached to the name of the poet-dramatist William Shakespeare. I see no record of that linkage during his lifetime. (Nor do I see any possible way that he could have been accepted by anyone, during his lifetime, as the great author.)
- 8 To date there has been no coherent theory as to why various words of the 1609 *Sonnets* are capitalized and/or italicized and I have no explanation for either ele-

ment of formatting in the case of *Alien*.

- 9 In the Quarto of 1609 the word “another” is printed as “an other,” making it more specific. The “other” would be a reference to the pseudonym, which will take his place from here on.
- 10 The victor was clearly Robert Cecil, who had the queen’s confidence while simultaneously, behind her back, he conducted a secret correspondence with James VI of Scotland about how to ensure his succession upon her death. The cruel irony is that Oxford, to gain Southampton’s eventual liberation with a royal pardon, must go along in support of this secret communication, in which he may be the unidentified “40” who works with “10” or Cecil.
- 11 Wilson also comments on sonnet 66, line 9: “It is tempting to suspect a glance at the control of the State, including vigorous military men like Raleigh and Essex, by the limping Robert Cecil.”
- 12 In 1593, when Oxford adopted the Shakespeare name under which to publish his revised works, he expected to be recognized posthumously. But during 1601-03, he agreed to allow that recognition to be prevented – and, eventually, if need be, given falsely to some other real individual.
- 13 Let no one say de Vere didn’t have an ego he could access whenever he wanted to.
- 14 Commentators have often cited Touchstone’s comment in (3.3) of *As You Like It* as a reference to Marlowe’s death: “When a man’s verses cannot be understood, nor a man’s good wit seconded with the forward child understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room.” There is no proof of this, however, and it may not refer to that event in any way.
- 15 Booth inserts *cross* in his modern-English text alongside the 1609 reprint (page 32). In his commentary for line 12 of Sonnet 34 on p. 188, he writes that *cross* is “the almost universally accepted emendation for Q’s *losse*,” adding that *bears* suggests bearing the cross. He also notes that “in a Christ-like manner” is implied.
- 16 In his Southampton biography, Akrigg (254) cites “the mass of evidence which has firmly established the dating of this sonnet [107]” as the spring of 1603, following Southampton’s release from the Tower by King James in April 1603. Sonnet 107 “is what Shakespeare had to say to Southampton upon his release from imprisonment.”

