

The Arte of English Poesie: The Case for Edward de Vere's Authorship¹

Richard M. Waugaman

Abstract

I challenge the traditional attribution of the 1589 *Arte of English Poesie* to George Puttenham. The psychological and methodological obstacles one must overcome in making such a case mirror those faced in challenging the traditional attribution of the works of William Shakespeare to Shakespeare of Stratford. After reviewing the evidence on which the traditional attribution of *The Arte* is based, I next examine bibliographical and historical evidence that point to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, as the author of this anonymous work. The trail of evidence links *The Arte* to the pseudonymous Elizabethan poet known as "Ignoto." I therefore present evidence to support J.T. Looney's claim that Ignoto was Edward de Vere.



Whigham and Rebhorn's recent edition of *The Arte of English Poesie* provides us with a much-needed opportunity to reexamine the authorship of this important anonymous work of 1589. Widely recognized as possibly the most important Elizabethan book on literary theory, *The Arte* is directed at courtiers, advising them not only on writing poetry, but on proper behavior and dress. Whigham and Rebhorn accept the conventional theory that George Puttenham (1529-1591) was the book's author. They note the book's central emphasis on the art of deception, yet they fail to consider the possibility that the book's author has successfully practiced this art on the readers of his book over the ensuing centuries. We do not in fact know with certainty who wrote this classic, and I suggest that the author was Edward de Vere

(1550-1604), who deliberately disguised his authorship of this book by planting false clues that scholars have accepted at face value. I hope to show that de Vere's claim to authorship is more compelling than that of Puttenham, the traditional author.

In making this case, I expect to encounter the entrenched resistance that always fights off any challenges to traditional authorship attributions. One major intellectual discovery of the early modern period was inductive reasoning, which minimizes preconceptions, and develops theories based on empirical evidence. Ironically, when it comes to authorship attribution studies, we often regress to Aristotelian logic, which begins with an unquestioned premise and reasons deductively from that initial premise. This gives the weight of tradition undue authority, and results in an irrational prejudice that traditional attributions must be accepted unless there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Scholars are often unaware that they filter out evidence that contradicts traditional beliefs before they have weighed it objectively. The bar for minimal evidence is thus set higher for subsequent authorship attribution than it is for establishing initial attributions. Consequently, the burden of proof is always placed on those who attempt to replace the traditional author with an alternative. The result of this reasoning is that, while it may protect us from false new attributions, it also leads us to cling to traditional but erroneous ones. The only way to avoid such cognitive distortions is to begin with a clean slate, and evaluate evidence for the traditional candidate (whether Shakespeare of Stratford; or Puttenham) with the same stringency to which we subject evidence for competing candidates.

Willcock and Walker,² in their edition of the *Arte*, acknowledged that "it is impossible to establish George Puttenham's claim to the authorship of the *Arte* with any finality."³ Steven May concluded that Puttenham's claim to authorship is "not indisputable," but that it "trumps that of any other candidate."⁴ May's strongest evidence is Harington's 1590 reference to the book's author as "Putnam," and Bolton's 1610 reference to "Puttenham" as the author (these claims will be explored below). May saw evidence of Puttenham's rhetorical skills in a 1571 legal case, and Puttenham's inventory of ninety books shows that he owned works on law, rhetoric, French history, politics, and Latin poetry. May felt that, as John Throckmorton was involved with Puttenham's affairs and is praised in the *Arte*, this is further suggestive evidence of Puttenham's authorship.

Despite the disclaimers of Willcock and Walker, as well as May, most scholars now treat Puttenham's authorship as definitively established, so it is important to enumerate its weaknesses.

Acknowledging them, May admits that “George Puttenham the fugitive excommunicant is not easily reconciled with Puttenham the author.”⁵ May further states that Puttenham’s translation of a fragment of Suetonius “bears faint witness to his literary interests;”⁶ his library inventory omits any reference to English poetry “such as... Tottel... or the works of George Gascoigne and George Turberville, all drawn on heavily in the *Arte*, and all in print by 1576,”⁷ the date of Puttenham’s inventory. The author claimed to have studied at Oxford and to have been brought up in foreign courts. May admits that neither was true of George Puttenham (nor of his brother Richard, a much weaker claimant). Yet scholars illogically still treat other autobiographical material in *The Arte* as though it must be taken at face value, and that it therefore invalidates de Vere’s authorship.

When the *Arte* was discussed in a seminar devoted to it at the 2009 Shakespeare Association of America, Whigham, Rebhorn, and May each acknowledged that there are many unanswered questions about it.⁸ May noted that early modern publishers made their profit on subsequent editions of books, as first printings were typically too small to recoup expenses. But *The Arte* was never re-printed. With its many woodcuts, May said it would have been an expensive book to print, and its publication may have been subsidized. May’s recent archival research failed to make a convincing case for Puttenham’s authorship.

The Arte was published anonymously, and most commentators have not speculated as to why Puttenham never claimed authorship of this well-regarded book. The legend that Puttenham wrote it started with John Harington’s 1590 written request to *The Arte*’s printer, Richard Field, that he publish Harington’s forthcoming book “in the same printe that Putnams book ys.”⁹ This feeble straw is the foundation on which attribution of *The Arte* to Puttenham has been built. Ironically, Harington himself subsequently offered much stronger evidence that the author was actually one “Ignoto”; I will show that this pseudonym in every instance probably alluded to de Vere, and that Harington knew it.

Edmund Bolton’s 1610 *Hypercritica* reports a rumor that “one Puttenham, gentleman pensioner to Queen Elizabeth, wrote the *Arte*.”¹⁰ However, May continues, “Neither George nor [his brother] Richard served as pensioners or in any other capacity under Elizabeth.” May then concludes, unpersuasively, “yet clearly [sic] someone named Puttenham wrote *The Arte*.” May exemplifies Marcy North’s central thesis that scholars abhor an authorship vacuum, and he thus fails to give adequate weight to the possibility that authorship of the *Arte* has never been conclusively established.

It is more parsimonious to conclude instead that, by 1610, there were two incompatible rumors about the identity of the author, both of which may have been false. It is possible that Edward de Vere himself helped spread the deliberate disinformation that “Putnam” wrote the book.¹¹ This possibility is consistent with de Vere concealing his later work behind Shaksper of Stratford, as well as his possibly concealing his commentary on Edmund Spenser’s *The Shepheardes Calender* behind Spenser’s friend Edmund Kirke (“E.K.”) in 1579. There may well be¹² a partial truth contained in the 1610 rumor— that *The Arte* did have everything to do with a royal pension. It is likely that some insiders knew this origin of *The Arte*. They would have known that de Vere was successful in winning a royal pension, in 1586, three years before the *Arte*’s publication.¹³

My hypothesis is that de Vere wrote an earlier draft of this book as a document addressed to the Queen alone, with the goal of obtaining the unprecedented 1,000 pound annuity that she granted him in June, 1586.¹⁴ He justified his petition with *The Arte*’s list of past monarchs who had rewarded their favorite poets.¹⁵ He told the story of Alexander the Great sleeping with a copy of Homer under his pillow. In fact, that passage uses a phrase that re-appears in the works of Shakespeare. *The Arte* states that the poems of Homer “were laid under his pillow and by day were carried in the rich jewel coffer of Darius.”¹⁶ The highlighted phrase occurs in Henry VI, Part 1, 1.5.25, as Charles is praising Joan of Arc—”In memory of her when she is dead,/ Her ashes, in an urn more precious/
Than the rich-jewell’d coffer of Darius.”¹⁷

Another example—“King Henry VIII, her Majesty’s father, for a few psalms of David turned into English meter by [Thomas] Sternhold, made him groom of his privy chamber, and gave him many other good gifts.”¹⁸ This metrical translation of the Psalms, finished by other poets, is bound at the end of de Vere’s Geneva Bible. Using the 20 psalms de Vere annotated (usually with ornate manicules, or pointing hands), I have found a wealth of previously unnoticed but pivotal sources for the works of Shakespeare.¹⁹ *The Sonnets*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Titus Andronicus*, and the history plays are especially rich in newly discovered echoes of the marked metrical psalms.²⁰

It seems likely that the Queen liked de Vere’s draft so much that she encouraged him to expand and publish it, in order to foster the flowering of English poetry that marked her reign. If this hypothesis is correct, it is an important instance of de Vere’s anonymous publication as early as 1589. Two poems published anonymously in the 1585 *Paradise of Daintie Devises*²¹ have been attributed to de Vere.²² De Vere apparently had written one of them in an eventually successful attempt to win the

Queen's permission to travel to the Continent. This hypothesis would establish an important precedent for de Vere's using his literary skill to win the Queen's favor. Chapter I:19 of *The Arte* may have been de Vere's brief eloquent pleading for the Queen's commission for his writing the pro-Tudor "Shakespeare" history plays. The chapter champions the persuasive power of "poesy historical," while emphasizing that it is all the more instructive if it is not slavishly factual. It cites Xenophon as a "well-trained courtier" who wrote a "feigned and untrue" history of a monarch, that was beneficial for posterity (and, importantly, beneficial for the monarch's future image).

The exuberant tone of *The Arte*, while taxing one early reader,²³ is consistent with de Vere's personality, as well as his role as leader of the euphuist movement. A central feature of the book is that it is written to the Queen. It is not dedicated to her (in fact, it is dedicated to Lord Burghley, de Vere's father-in-law and former guardian), but it is repeatedly addressed to her in the second person. These facts are consistent with my speculation about the circumstances of its composition.

The book evinces an irrepressible impulsivity of expression, including in its (Shakespearean) bawdiness. For example, the author teases the reader with the propriety of his explanation of the etymology of epithalamion. ("Here, if I shall say that which appertaineth to the art and disclose the mystery of the whole matter, I must and do with all humble reverence bespeak pardon of the chaste and honorable ears, lest I should either offend them with licentious speech, or leave them ignorant of the ancient guise in old times used at weddings, in my simple opinion nothing reprobable... the tunes of the songs were very loud and shrill, to the intent there might be no noise out of the bedchamber by the screaming and outcry of the young damsel feeling the first forces of her stiff and rigorous young man."²⁴ The author — implying he had seen them — even praises the Queen's breasts and nipples.²⁵

A contemporary, while attesting to de Vere's position as one of the Queen's favorites in 1571, when he was 21 years old, wrote, "If it were not for his fickle head, he would surpass all of them [other courtiers] shortly."²⁶ The *DNB* entry also notes that his "perverse humour" was a source of "grave embarrassment" for Lord Burghley. Whigham and Rebhorn perceive many traits in the author of *The Arte* that are consistent with de Vere's character. For instance, they note the centrality of deception and disguise in the book. Even figures of speech are defined as deceptions: "As figures be the instruments of ornament in every language, so be they also in a sort abuses, or rather trespasses, in speech, because they pass the ordinary limits of common utterance, and be occupied of purpose to deceive the ear and also the mind, drawing it

from plainness and simplicity to a certain doubleness, whereby our talk is the more guileful and abusing [deceiving].”²⁷ Further, Whigham and Rebhorn observe that “By aggressively calling attention to the courtier-poet’s duplicity, Puttenham creates a moral problem for him [the courtier-poet] (and for himself).”²⁸ De Vere’s exile from court in the early 1580s is consistent with their observation that “Puttenham’s authorial address... bespeaks his complex but abiding sense of disenfranchisement.”²⁹ The sharp ambivalence with which they characterize the author’s attitude toward court is consistent with de Vere’s likely bitterness about his recent public humiliation by the Queen. Whigham and Rebhorn note “the author’s own (partial and leaky) self-dissembling”³⁰—their observation is consistent with an attribution to de Vere.

Marcy North persuasively documents the prevalence of anonymous authorship in early modern England.³¹ In doing so, she inadvertently provides powerful arguments that support de Vere’s authorship of the *Arte*.³² She convincingly highlights the central importance of literary anonymity in *The Arte*, in the context of “a society that delighted in hidden names.”³³ She steers us away from any simplistic interpretation of the role of anonymous authorship in the Elizabethan period. She instead finds “perpetual changes, continuous tensions... between the dangers and benefits of making one’s name public.”³⁴ I will examine North’s arguments in light of de Vere’s possible authorship of the *Arte*.

If de Vere wrote under pseudonyms, the *Arte*’s exploration of anonymity may be crucial in assessing his possible authorship of Shakespeare’s works. The Elizabethans’ use of anonymity made it “an evocative but surprisingly indefinable convention...a silent request for acknowledgement within a circle of insiders.”³⁵ North elucidates its many subtle implications. For the courtier, literary anonymity offered a chance to enact Castiglione’s ideal of *sprezzatura*, or “nonchalance” about receiving credit for one’s poetic creations.³⁶ North shows compellingly that the author of *The Arte*, by remaining anonymous, added further layers of complexity to the contradictory advice he gave to the reader about literary anonymity.

North shows that concealment is a central theme in the *Arte*. Its advice about proper courtly conduct only seems explicit — she demonstrates that there is another level of “mystification” of “intricate social codes” beneath the surface. Referring to the author’s anagram on Queen Elizabeth’s name,³⁷ she says the author “suggests that identity functions like natural talent. Even when disguised or altered, an important name will shine through the veil to call attention to

itself. Puttenham's anagrams verge on the supernatural," in that the author implies that divine providence helped him create his anagram.³⁸ North concludes that the message is that "The noblest form of identity announces itself without the aid of a patron or friend....Puttenham's name games ...demonstrate how poets might have hoped their identities would emanate from their work even when their names were not attached."³⁹

There is a story about a man who reacted with great humility to any recognition he received. A friend rebuked him acerbically — "You're not important enough to be humble." Similarly, only courtiers who were "important enough" could succeed with the ploy of anonymous authorship. North writes of anonymity's "double-edged function as concealer and revealer, its potential to lead to fame or to obscurity," and she links it with "*The Arte's* ambiguous depiction of anonymity as a mark of social status, one that paradoxically must be visible in order to be effective."⁴⁰ She feels certain that the anonymous author of the *Arte* takes pleasure from the intricacies of the revelation of concealed names. He "works by the assumption that devices which alter or conceal a name say more about the historical person, not less....The disguising of the name points to an identity which is potentially more revealing than a proper name."⁴¹

North missed crucial opportunities to draw further plausible conclusions about the author of the *Arte*. She is artfully ambiguous in her only explicit reference to the authorship of this book-- "an author, now thought to be George Puttenham."⁴² Her tentativeness is a fitting acknowledgement that this commonly accepted attribution has never been definitively established. North's entire argument would be immeasurably enriched by the tantalizing possibility that de Vere has successfully concealed his authorship of this book for more than four centuries.

North believes that the author expressed "dismay that social protocol could persuade talented gentlemen to suppress their works and their names in order to retain the respect of the court."⁴³ She then quotes the well-known line about "many notable Gentlemen in the Court that have written commendably, and suppressed it agayne, or els suffred it to be publisht without their owne names."⁴⁴ A similar passage in the *Arte* lists de Vere as the first example of such Gentlemen.⁴⁵ Consider the further layers of complexity and irony if de Vere is commenting on his own anonymous works, including the *Arte* itself. It suggests that de Vere was saying for the record that he was publishing this book anonymously under duress.

North does not pursue further implications raised by *The Arte's* anonymity. Its inconclusive attribution to Puttenham rests partly on

shaky internal evidence, and partly on rumors from the decades after its publication. As we speculate about authorship, we are playing the very game the author describes, trying to establish ourselves as the insiders who can penetrate the author's disguise and successfully identify him. Previous scholars have often regarded the author's clues about his identity as reliable ones, left deliberately or through carelessness. They overlook the possibility that the author was serious about disguising his identity.⁴⁶ For example, many scholars now falsely assume that Puttenham was also the author of an anonymous collection of seventeen poems called the "Partheniades" that claimed to be a New Year's gift for Queen Elizabeth. These poems were not published until 1811. Attributing them to Puttenham betrays circular reasoning — there is no independent evidence for such an attribution. The author of *The Arte* has dragged some red herrings across his trail, and these have thrown scholars off his scent. In so doing, he put into practice some of the complex attitudes toward anonymity that North so perceptively describes.

How do we know what the author of *The Arte* was thinking in publishing his book anonymously? We usually put ourselves in the other person's shoes, and imagine why we might have acted as they did. Such implicit identifications are often helpful. But the anonymous author serves as a Rorschach card, whose ambiguity inevitably elicits projections of our own psychology. So we must be mindful of the cultural context in which the author lived. We now live in the age of plagiarism, which departs radically from former conventions of literary anonymity.⁴⁷ A frequent underlying premise in literary studies of anonymity is that the author had a predominant wish to be identified. This belief projects what North identifies as our abhorrence of the vacuum of anonymity. This may mislead us into a false assumption that the anonymous author surely provided us with reliable clues because he must have wanted us to unlock the mystery of his identity.⁴⁸

Was there in fact a "stigma of print" in the early modern period? May⁴⁹ shows that some noblemen did publish poetry under their own names in this period. But North cites with agreement J.W. Saunders' evidence in favor of the existence of such a stigma. North names de Vere as one of the Elizabethan poets whose attributed work is so scarce because of "the courtiers' fashion of limiting readership through close manuscript circulation."⁵⁰ She notes that "Whether poems are extant or common today is hardly an accurate measure of their effectiveness in early court circles."⁵¹ This conclusion is consistent with the high esteem in which de Vere's contemporaries held his poetry, plays and interludes,⁵² despite the paucity of the former and the absence of the latter in what has survived under his name.

If de Vere's contemporaries knew of his authorship, would they not have identified him in the historical record? North addresses this question indirectly in speculating that some Elizabethan compilers of anonymous poetry, such as John Lilliat, knew the identity of an anonymous poet, but chose to respect that anonymity rather than violate it.

North finds it "paradoxical" that *The Arte's* author names poets such as de Vere who wrote anonymously, but adds that "it conforms to the principle that a reader's revelation of the author is seemlier than self-naming" and it "completes a cycle of concealment and revelation."⁵³ "Paradoxical" is an understatement if de Vere himself wrote the *Arte*. The alternating layers of concealment and revelation are then like Russian dolls, toying with the reader's efforts to identify the author. This is consistent with Shakespeare's genius for creating and maintaining tension among various interpretations of motivation and meaning in his words, characters, and plots.

"Puttenham"'s inventiveness in introducing new words rivals Shakespeare's—further evidence of de Vere's authorship. In fact, it was "Puttenham" who coined the verb "coin" as meaning to create a new word. *The Arte* alone is the source of some 1,164 examples of word usage in the OED, compared with 1,370 for the complete works of Marlowe, 4,848 for Jonson, and 6,554 for Shakespeare. *The Arte* may well include more such examples than any other single early modern book. Many are English versions of Greek and Latin terms of rhetoric and of poetics, only some of which have endured. These include anaphoric, dactylic, and trochaic. Many more words that were coined remain in general usage, including anagram, baiting, beaked, climax, colon [as a punctuation mark], dramatic, emphasis, encomium, exemplary, exigence, grandiloquence, harmonically, impertinency, indecency, installment, major-domo, marching, and misbecoming. Many of the coined words echo Shakespeare's language. For example, David Crystal noted that Shakespeare coined 309 words beginning with "un."⁵⁴ According to the OED, *The Arte* coined *undecency*, *underchange*, *underlay*, *under-peer*, *unfloor*, *unleave*, and *unveritable*.

Willis⁵⁵ draws many connections between the *Arte* and the works of Shakespeare. Although I do not share his belief that Puttenham was the author of both, I agree with him that one person did write both. That hypothesis finds a range of support in the pages of *The Arte*. We read, for example, of someone (Philino) who hid "behind an arras cloth,"⁵⁶ reminiscent of the location where Polonius was killed by Hamlet. *The Arte* shows an intimate knowledge of stagecraft. It praises dramatists. Edward Ferrers is described as having "much more skill and magnificence in this

meter, and therefore wrote for the most part [for] the stage in tragedy and sometimes in comedy.”⁵⁷

Caroline Spurgeon⁵⁸ used an intriguing methodology to understand the mind of Shakespeare, by discerning what specific types of imagery occurred to him as he was writing—his typical patterns of visual association, as it were. Borrowing her assumptions, we can approach some details of *The Arte* in a similar way. For example, what number came to mind when *The Arte*’s author wanted to speak of the many rules that govern English poetry? “[T]wenty other curious points in that skill” (96; emphasis added). He also wrote of “twenty other ways that well-experienced lovers could recite”⁵⁹ and of “twenty manner of sweet kisses.”⁶⁰ When Shakespeare wanted to refer to a large number of things in a figurative rather than in a literal way, what number did he choose? Also twenty. With the exception of thousand, he used it far more often than dozen, thirty, forty, hundred, etc. In the works of Shakespeare, we find twenty swords,⁶¹ gashes,⁶² murders,⁶³ lies,⁶⁴ consciences,⁶⁵ husbands,⁶⁶ merchants,⁶⁷ messengers,⁶⁸ cooks,⁶⁹ orators,⁷⁰ Fallstuffs,⁷¹ angels,⁷² torches,⁷³ shadows,⁷⁴ kisses,⁷⁵ nose-gays,⁷⁶ glow-worms,⁷⁷ horses,⁷⁸ popish tricks,⁷⁹⁴¹ and [royal, not monetary] crowns⁸⁰ (to list only twenty examples).

Spurgeon noted Shakespeare’s fascination with the human body in motion—what she called “this marked delight in swift, nimble bodily movement”⁸¹ “Pictures drawn from the body and bodily actions form the largest single section of all Shakespeare’s images.”⁸² *The Arte* calls motion “the author of life.”⁸³ It uses an intriguing trope of human runners for various metrical feet in poetry— “[N]othing can better show the quality than these runners at common games, who, setting forth from the first goal, one giveth the start speedily and perhaps before he come halfway to the other goal, decayeth his pace as a man weary and fainting; another is slow at the start, but by amending his pace keeps even with his fellow or perchance gets before him...”⁸⁴

Spurgeon further observes that “one of the secrets of [Shakespeare’s] magical style” is his capacity to “endow inanimate and motionless objects with a sense of life.”⁸⁵ As Whigham and Rebhorn note, the *Arte* similarly personifies rhetorical terms—the author “transforms the vast majority of the tropes and schemes into characters... Sometimes the personifications seem to identify actual social types... Puttenham’s personifications essentially turn life into a continual allegory.”⁸⁶

Literary studies lack a fully reliable methodology for investigating authorship claims. Physicians are encouraged to consider a broad “differential diagnosis” before arriving at a single diagnostic hypothesis that best accounts for the patient’s history of illness, symptoms, physical

examination, and laboratory studies. The physician then prescribes a course of treatment. However, if the patient fails to respond favorably, or if symptoms arise that are inconsistent with the initial diagnosis, the physician is taught to go back to square one and question that diagnosis. A frequent cognitive error of physicians, nevertheless, is to place undue weight on those observations that are consistent with one diagnosis, and explain away those that are not. A related “confirmatory bias” is a well-recognized danger in all scientific research—the investigator should always be mindful of the danger of selectively attending to confirmatory data that support his or her hypothesis, while downplaying, ignoring, or explaining away contradictory evidence.

The field of literary studies has not yet come to terms with its own problems of methodology. As North puts it, we abhor the “vacuum” of anonymous authorship, so that once an author receives enough of a critical mass of support, we are in danger of engaging in circular reasoning to highlight favorable evidence, and downplay contradictory evidence. Once George Puttenham had won that critical mass of support, we entered such a phase. North is exceptional in challenging Puttenham’s claim to authorship.

Why did Harington write to the publisher Richard Field about “Putnam” as author of *The Arte*? We do not know. But we know that de Vere concealed his authorship of his best works behind another person. I believe that by 1591 Harington knew the truth about de Vere’s authorship. Perhaps a taboo arose against mentioning de Vere’s name in connection with his literary activities from the mid-1580s onward. Anonymous authorship may have been a condition for de Vere’s return to court from exile in 1583. Harington was Queen Elizabeth’s godson; his father’s first wife was reputedly an illegitimate daughter of Henry VIII. He had the reputation of being an “impudent gadfly” at court.⁸⁷ He was known for his satirical epigrams. “We can identify few of the objects of his satire by name... but doubtless the contemporary court readily would recognize them.”⁸⁸ Harington is on record as having exposed the identity of another literary figure. He violated the taboo against identifying Lady Rich as the “Stella” of Phillip Sidney’s sonnet sequence, *Astrophel and Stella*.⁸⁹

To this day, the theatrical community keeps alive what may be a displaced version of a Shakespearean name taboo in connection with one specific play — *Macbeth*. Many professional actors use the euphemism “the Scottish play” in the belief that saying “Macbeth” aloud will bring bad luck. This can be compared to the theory that the community of children have kept alive detailed “memories” of the medieval plague in the words of “Ring around the rosie” (referring to the red rings on the

skin, an early symptom of the plague); “Pocket full of posie” seemingly refers to the apotropaic use of posies of herbs; “Ashes, ashes all fall down” may allude to cremation after death.⁹⁰ The intergenerationally traumatic impact of the massive number of deaths from the plague would help explain the endurance of this nursery rhyme. There may have been one or more deaths in de Vere’s time that were believed to represent punishment of those who violated the taboo against publicly connecting de Vere with his literary works. Rumors of such deaths would have powerfully enforced the taboo against naming him in connection with his “Shakespearean” plays.

Harington’s 1591 preface to Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* contains strong evidence that, by then, he knew de Vere was the author of the *Arte*. Harington referred to the author of the *Arte* as “that unknown Godfather... our Ignoto.”⁹¹ “Ignoto” is Latin (and Italian) for “unknown.” (It does not merely mean “Anonymous,” as many seem to think.) This change from “Putnam” to “that unknown Godfather... our Ignoto” amplifies the mystery of the author’s pseudonymity. Given North’s finding that concealed authorship was common in early modern England, we might expect to find hundreds of poems subscribed “Ignoto.” Not so. “Ignoto” was first used as a pseudonym in 1590, below a commendatory poem in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*. It was subscribed to only twenty-six known Elizabethan poems, in print or in manuscript. Why so few?

The full story of Ignoto has never been told, but it is highly relevant to the authorship of *The Arte*. Before 1590, *Early English Books Online (EEBO)* lists its use in English exclusively in the phrase “Ignoto Deo,” from the book of Acts in the New Testament. St. Paul said the Athenians had statues dedicated to their various gods, with one statue dedicated instead “to the unknown God,” or “Ignoto Deo.” Harington was alluding to this origin of the pseudonym “Ignoto” by linking it with “that unknown Godfather.” In Exodus 3:14, God answered Moses’ question about God’s name by replying “I am that I am.” (In I Corinthians 15:10, St. Paul, who never lacked self-confidence, also wrote, “But by the grace of God, I am that I am.”) What Elizabethan author had the hubris to join St. Paul in quoting God’s “I am that I am” in a letter and in a sonnet? Edward de Vere — in his angry postscript to his October 30, 1584, letter to his father-in-law, Lord Burghley; and also in Sonnet 121. His grandiosity in so doing is consistent with his chutzpah in appropriating the pseudonym Ignoto from the phrase *Ignoto Deo*.

To return to Harington, his interest in *The Arte* increases the significance of his comments in his preface to his translation of Ariosto. On the first page of that preface, Harington writes:

I must arm myself with the best defensive weapons I can, and if I happen to give a blow now and then in mine own defense, and as good fencers use to ward and strike at once, I must crave pardon of course, seeing our law allows that it is done *se defendo*.⁹²

Why the fencing trope? I contend it was a transparent allusion to one of the most lurid of the many scandals that marked de Vere's life. While living as William Cecil's ward, de Vere, at the age of 17, killed an under-cook with his fencing sword. The coroner's inquest ruled that the servant "ran and fell upon the point of the Earl of Oxford's foil."⁹³ De Vere would have been executed for this offence if he had been found guilty. The future Lord Burghley assisted in de Vere's legal defense, which led to the coroner's exculpatory verdict. Burghley wrote in his journal that de Vere killed the servant "*se defendo*"—in self-defense.

"*Se defendo*" was not a common phrase in literary works. Harington's use of it in the above quotation is the first one cited in *EEBO*. And the phrase "*se offendendo*" in the discussion of Ophelia's death (5.1.9) has been linked by Oxfordians with the same story:

It must be "*se offendendo*," it cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act: and an act hath three branches: it is, to act, to do, to perform: argal, she drowned herself wittingly.

Here, as in the accusation against de Vere in 1567, the topic is a death, ostensibly by suicide (and its religious implications).

I believe Harington is making a snide reference to de Vere's past scandals, just before he compares *The Arte* unfavorably with Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poetry*. The fact that he favors Sidney over the *Arte* is consistent with Harington knowing de Vere wrote *The Arte*, as de Vere's longstanding feud with Sidney likely polarized their respective associates. Sidney's engagement to Burghley's daughter was broken when Burghley found a more promising match in his ward de Vere. Years later, Sidney and de Vere had their famous tennis court quarrel. (Perhaps Sidney's death in 1586 was yet another factor that motivated de Vere to write his competing work on literary theory.)

There may be a further allusion to de Vere near the end of Harington's preface, when he returns to *The Arte*'s having slighted the significance of translators: "Now for those who count it such a contemptible and trifling matter to translate, I will but say to them as M. Bartholomew Clarke an excellent learned man, and a right good

translator, saith in the matter of a prettie [clever] challenge, in his Preface (as I remember) upon the Courtier, which book he translated out of Italian into Latin."⁹⁴ Harington knew that de Vere not only wrote the preface to the Castiglione translation, but took the initiative to have the book published. So it may not have been coincidental that the translator Harington named was Clarke.

North cites Ruth Hughey's belief that Harington had "inside information about Oxford's authorship"⁹⁵ of one poem in the commonplace book of poems known as the Arundel Harington Manuscript. Did Harington similarly have inside information about de Vere's authorship of the *Arte*? I believe he did.

In Harington's 1596 *Apologie*, he again speaks of "this ignoto." We know that Harington kept the same Latin cognomen for a given person in his writings.⁹⁶ Two pages after mentioning "this ignoto," Harington mentions Richard III. Four pages after that, he cites "the rules of taming a shrew." Four pages later, he writes of riding "like a hotspurre."⁹⁷ Perhaps Harington is hinting that he knew about the Shakespearean plays that Ignoto was writing.

North comments that E.K.'s epistle in Spenser's 1579 *Shepherd's Calender* begins with the words "uncouth, unkissed." North does so in order to link these words with the "passive obscurity"⁹⁸ of anonymous authorship. As noted earlier, Shakespeare is credited with coining some 309 words that begin with "un." E.K.'s epistle coined the word "unstayed," eleven years before the first use noted in the *OED*. E.K. also coined "unheedie" in his gloss of a subsequent poem later in the book. In the epistle, E.K. coined two additional words: scholion and quidam. Such usages link E.K. with Shakespeare/de Vere. Mike Hyde recently reviewed previous evidence supporting the identification of E.K. as de Vere.

In 1590, Spenser's third dedicatory sonnet in *The Faerie Queene* was addressed to Oxford. It included a reference to "Envy's poisonous bite." (The Latin proverb "Virtutis comes invidia" taught that "Envy is the companion of excellence.") Similarly, one of the prior commendatory poems refers to "a mind with envy fraught" and to "free my mind from envy's touch." That was the poem signed "Ignoto." Again, this was the first use of the pseudonym Ignoto, one year before Harington referred to the author of *The Arte* as "our Ignoto."

Two poems signed "William Shakespeare" in the 1598 *Phoenix Nest* ("The unknowne Shepheards complaint" and "Another of the same Shepheards") were reattributed to "Ignoto" in the 1600 *England's Helicon*. Three poems later in the latter book is a poem signed "Earle of Oxenford." Two other poems in *England's Helicon* were initially attributed to Walter

Raleigh and Fulke Greville, respectively; but cancel slips were glued over each name, replacing them with “Ignoto.”

One noteworthy example from the short list of Elizabethan “Ignoto” poems is on p. 169 of the 1601 *Loves Martyr*. The 6-line poem “The first” is printed above the 8-line poem “The Burning.” Both are signed “Ignoto.” This is one of four pages in the book that feature printer’s headpieces and tailpieces. The other three pages are the first two pages of Chester’s dedicatory poem, and p. 172, which contains a poem titled “Threnos.” It is subscribed “William Shake-speare.” (It is not well known that “hyphenated surnames in English originated in the nineteenth century,”⁹⁹ only after a 19th-century law led wealthy men who lacked sons to require a prospective son-in-law to combine the latter’s surname with his wife’s, with a hyphen between. In the early modern period, by contrast, hyphenated surnames of the form verb-noun were transparent pseudonyms.) One can make a case for pp. 169-172 constituting a single poetic work.¹⁰⁰ The fact that “Let the bird of loudest lay” famously lacks a title is consistent with this hypothesis. The implication is, once again, that Ignoto and Shake-speare are the same person. If so, the many references to two becoming one in “Let the bird of loudest lay” would refer, among other things, to these two pseudonyms becoming one person: de Vere. There are some fourteen key words in these two Ignoto poems that are also used in the adjacent “Shake-speare” poem, further linking them together. This hypothesis is consistent with the 1598 “Shakespeare” poems that were attributed to “Ignoto” two years later. I speculate that the early modern “Ignoto” poet was de Vere in every or nearly every published case.¹⁰¹

J. Thomas Looney was the first to attribute the Ignoto poems in *England’s Helicon* to de Vere. The eminent scholar Hyder Rollins attributes four poems from the 1614 second edition of *England’s Helicon* to Ignoto. One of them, “The Shepherds Slumber,” has a direct connection with de Vere. It survives in the 1585-90 Harleian Manuscript, which has been called the most extensive surviving anthology of Elizabethan courtier verse. Harleian Manuscript 7392, folio 51, contains a 28-line earlier version of “The Shepherds Slumber” that is signed “L ox”— which, as Rollins acknowledges, refers to “Lord Oxford.” The fact that this poem has been attributed to “Ignoto” by Rollins, but was signed “L ox” in the Harleian Manuscript, further supports the hypothesis that Ignoto and de Vere were one and the same.

What difference does it make, after all, who wrote *The Arte*? The same question is often asked of those who doubt the traditional theory of the authorship of Shakespeare’s works. It would be of enormous interest if the same person wrote both *The Arte* and the works of

Shakespeare. We are depriving ourselves of significant opportunities for scholarly advances in our understanding of the works of Shakespeare by clinging to insubstantial if widely accepted evidence for the legendary author. This evidence erodes considerably if we take seriously the studies of North, Mullan and others on literary anonymity. We will then have to acknowledge that the case for the traditional author of Shakespeare's works is based largely on the questionable assumption that all contemporary references to this name were indisputably references to the (front) man from Stratford rather than to a pseudonym. I have attempted to reopen the related question as to who in fact wrote *The Arte of English Poesie*. Further attention should be devoted to the possibility that it was "our Ignoto" —Edward de Vere. If he did in fact write *The Arte*, it would give us further evidence that he published later literary works anonymously.



Endnotes

- ¹ An abbreviated version of this article was presented at Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn's Seminar on *The Arte of English Poesie* at the Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, April 9, 2009. I am grateful to Steven May for his helpful comments on this paper. All citations from the *Arte* in the present article, unless otherwise indicated, are from Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn, *The Art of English Poesy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).
- ² Willcock, Gladys Doidge and Alice Walker, *The Arte of English Poesie*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936).
- ³ Willcock and Walker, xxxi.
- ⁴ Online *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [ODNB] Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003 (no pagination).
- ⁵ Online ODNB entry on Puttenham (no pagination).
- ⁶ Online ODNB entry on Puttenham (no pagination).
- ⁷ Online ODNB entry on Puttenham (no pagination).
- ⁸ Whigham and Rebhorn placed special emphasis on the cart and court trope in the *Arte*. It is therefore noteworthy that the poem "In praise of a contented mind" that Steven May believes may be written by de Vere contains the line "The Court ne cart I like ne loath." The poem was first published in 1588, just a year before *The Arte*.
- ⁹ Quoted in Whigham and Rebhorn, 18.
- ¹⁰ Quoted in Whigham and Rebhorn, 19.
- ¹¹ De Vere's older half-sister Katherine married a relative of George Puttenham (his wife's stepson). See Willis (2003, 258).
- ¹² Yes, I am speculating—as do Schoenbaum, Greenblatt, and others.
- ¹³ Internal evidence suggests the *Arte* was written around 1586.
- ¹⁴ The annual budget of the Office of Revels was reduced by roughly 1,000 pounds around the same time; see W.R. Streitberger, "Chambers on the Revels Office and Elizabethan Theater History" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59:185-209, 2008.
- ¹⁵ In Book 1, chapter 8. Further examples are on 148f, 196f, 362, etc. (all page references are to Whigham and Rebhorn's edition). This

practice is burlesqued in *The Tempest* by Stephano, when he promises that “Wit shall not go unrewarded while I am king of this country” (4.1.241).

- ¹⁶ See Richard M. Waugaman, “The Sternhold and Hopkins Whole Book of Psalms Is a Major Source for the Works of Shakespeare,” *Notes & Queries* 56:595-604, 2009; “Echoes of the *Whole Book of Psalms* in *1 Henry VI*, *Richard II*, and *Edward III*,” *Notes & Queries* 57:359-364, 2010; and “An Oxfordian Quark, or a Quirky Oxfreudian? Psalm Evidence of de Vere’s Authorship of Shakespeare’s Works,” *Renaissance Papers*, in press. An excellent digitized version of de Vere’s Bible is now available on-line, on the Folger Shakespeare Library’s website. The manicules and other annotations are visible.
- ¹⁷ See also Hammond, Paul, “Sources for Shakespeare’s Sonnets 87 and 129 in *Tottel’s Miscellany* and Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesie*,” (*Notes & Queries* 150: 407-410, 2003).
- ¹⁸ Whigham and Reborn, 107.
- ¹⁹ Waugaman, Richard M., “The Discovery of a Major New Literary Source for Shakespeare’s Works in de Vere’s Bible,” forthcoming, *Brief Chronicles II* (2010).
- ²⁰ Although Roger Stritmatter (2001) did not find these psalm echoes in Shakespeare’s work, he did note the psalm manicules, and it was his work that led me to research de Vere’s Bible.
- ²¹ Cf. *The Arte*’s “the new devices are ever dainty” (244).
- ²² Waugaman, “A Wanderlust Poem, Newly Attributed to Edward de Vere,” *Shakespeare Matters* 7:1, 21-23, 2007; and “A Snail Poem, Newly Attributed to Edward de Vere,” *Shakespeare Matters* 7:1, 6-12, 32.
- ²³ The early owner of one first edition especially ridiculed the geometric poetic forms, writing in his copy [Folger STC 20519 (5)], “The puerile absurdity of mechanical versifying is fully displayed by Puttenham’s table of geometrical figures... [T]he author must have been seized by a poetic cramp.” Alastair Fowler, *Triumphal Forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), by contrast, argued that “These sections, often brushed aside as frivolous curiosities, should in some instances be seen as serious though fumbling attempts at a theory of numerical composition” (11). Fowler’s and Paula Blank’s *Shakespeare and the Mismeasurement of Renaissance Man*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006) includes discussion of the role of number and measurement in the *Arte* and in Shakespeare’s works. These are consistent with the great interest de Vere showed in Biblical passages dealing with numbers. The first Biblical passage that de Vere annotated in his Geneva Bible was Genesis 18: 26 — “And the Lord answered, If I finde in Sodom

fifty righteous within the citie, then will I spare all the place for their sakes." Richard M. Waugaman ("Shakespeare's Sonnet 6 and the First Marked Passage in de Vere's Bible," *Shakespeare Matters* [in press]) argues that this verse and its context are an important source for Sonnet 6. I Samuel, which de Vere annotated most densely, has eighteen different numbers among its marked verses. II Samuel has fourteen numbers among its marked verses. De Vere underlined only the phrase with numbers in I Kings 8: 63-- "And Solomon offred a sacrifice of peace offrings which he offred unto the Lord, to wit, two and twentie thousand beeves, and a hundreth and twentie thousand shepe: so the King and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord." He also wrote in the margin next to this verse, "Oxen 22000; shepe 1220000 [sic]."

²⁴ Whigham and Rebhorn, 139.

²⁵ In *Cymbeline*, Jachimo uses as evidence that he has been intimate with Imogen his description that "under her breast... lies a mole" (5.2.134-135). [I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer of this article for bringing that parallel to my attention.]

²⁶ *Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)*.

²⁷ Whigham and Rebhorn, 238.

²⁸ Whigham and Rebhorn, 55.

²⁹ Whigham and Rebhorn, 56.

³⁰ Whigham and Rebhorn, 56.

³¹ See my review of Marcy L. North's *The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor-Stuart England*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) in *Shakespeare Matters*, 8(3):20, 25, 26, 2009.

³² North, Marcy L., "Anonymity's revelations in *The Arte of English Poesie*." *Studies in English Literature* 39: 1-18, 1999.

³³ North, 1999, 2.

³⁴ North, 2003, 9.

³⁵ North, 1999, 5.

³⁶ Much of the *Arte* seems modeled on Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*, for which de Vere wrote a prefatory letter. Furthermore, *The Arte* competes with *The Defense of Poetry* by Philip Sidney, one of de Vere's arch-rivals at Court (d. 1586).

³⁷ In the eight unnumbered pages that intriguingly survive only in Ben Jonson's copy, perhaps because they include this anagram that called the Queen "aged." She was notoriously sensitive about her age. *The Arte*'s hostility toward the Queen is consistent with her exiling de Vere from court for two years in 1581. Ben Jonson's copy, by the way, had marginal manicules, according to Whigham and Rebhorn.

³⁸ North, 1999, 10.

- ³⁹ North, 1999, 10-11.
- ⁴⁰ North, 1999, 2.
- ⁴¹ North, 1999, 13.
- ⁴² North, 3; emphasis added. North did confirm that she doubts Puttenham was the author—"let *The Arte* work its magic anonymously" (personal communication, April 8, 2009).
- ⁴³ North, 1999, 5.
- ⁴⁴ North, 1999, 5.
- ⁴⁵ This sentence in Chap. 31, Book 1, ends with "that noble gentleman Edward Earle of Oxford." Edward Arber's 1906 reprint retained that full stop, whereas Whigham and Reborn apparently read the period as a typo and replaced it with a comma. However, the subsequent sentence is ungrammatical either way. I would argue that their comma inadvertently deprives de Vere of his rightful prominence in this section. Any injustice the comma does to de Vere, however, pales in comparison with Alan Nelson's prejudicial *ODNB* revision of the far more objective 1899 *DNB* biography of de Vere (for the latter, click on "DNB archive" in the left margin of the online *ODNB* entry).
- ⁴⁶ Cf. his quoting the maxim "Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare" ("He who cannot dissemble, cannot rule") (271).
- ⁴⁷ The internet, of course, is reviving authorial anonymity.
- ⁴⁸ Cf. John Mullan, *Anonymity: A Secret History of English Literature*. London: Faber and Faber, 2007.
- ⁴⁹ May, Steven, "Tudor aristocrats and the mythical 'stigma of print.'" *Renaissance Papers*. (Raleigh: Southeastern Renaissance Conference, 1981) 11-18.
- ⁵⁰ North, 2003, 8.
- ⁵¹ North, 2003, 8.
- ⁵² *The Arte's* author mentions his comedy *Ginecocratia* (218) and his interlude *Lusty London* (256).
- ⁵³ North, 1999, 7.
- ⁵⁴ Crystal, David, and Ben Crystal, *The Stories of English* (London: Penguin, 2004).
- ⁵⁵ Willis, Charles Murray, *Shakespeare and George Puttenham's Arte of English Poesie*. (East Sussex: UPSO, 2003).
- ⁵⁶ Whigham and Reborn, 218.
- ⁵⁷ Whigham and Reborn, 148.
- ⁵⁸ Spurgeon, Caroline, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935.
- ⁵⁹ Whigham and Reborn, 136.
- ⁶⁰ Whigham and Reborn, 141.
- ⁶¹ *Romeo and Juliet* 2.2.76.

- ⁶² *Macbeth* 3.4.30.
- ⁶³ *Macbeth* 3.4.95.
- ⁶⁴ *The Merchant of Venice* 3.4.76.
- ⁶⁵ *Tempest* 2.1.308.
- ⁶⁶ *The Merchant of Venice* 1.2.61.
- ⁶⁷ *The Merchant of Venice* 3.2.286.
- ⁶⁸ *Anthony and Cleopatra* 1.5.70.
- ⁶⁹ *Romeo and Juliet* 4.2.2.
- ⁷⁰ *Richard III* 4.2.41.
- ⁷¹ *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 1.1.2-3.
- ⁷² *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 2.2.68.
- ⁷³ *Julius Caesar* 1.3.17.
- ⁷⁴ *Richard II* 2.2.14.
- ⁷⁵ *Titus Andronicus* 5.1.22.
- ⁷⁶ *The Winter's Tale* 4.3.42.
- ⁷⁷ *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 5.5.77.
- ⁷⁸ *Timon of Athens* 1.1.267.
- ⁷⁹ *Titus Andronicus* 5.1.78.
- ⁸⁰ *3 Henry VI* 3.2.168.
- ⁸¹ Spurgeon, 1935, 50.
- ⁸² Spurgeon, 1935, 49.
- ⁸³ Whigham and Rebhorn, 187.
- ⁸⁴ Whigham and Rebhorn, 159.
- ⁸⁵ Spurgeon, 1935, 51.
- ⁸⁶ Whigham and Rebhorn, 59.
- ⁸⁷ Gotfried, Rudolph (ed.), *John Harington's Orlando Furioso*. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1963, xix).
- ⁸⁸ Gotfried, 1963, xx.
- ⁸⁹ Moore, Peter R., "The Stella Coverup." *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter* 29:12-17, 1993. Reprinted in *The Lame Storyteller, Poor and Despised*. (Germany: Verlag Uwe Laugwitz, 2009).
- ⁹⁰ Although folklorists are now skeptical of this explanation, their attempts to dismiss this theory as a false myth have generated lively and contentious debates on the discussion page of the relevant Wikipedia article. We should not forget that anthropologists were similarly dismissive of Plutarch's description of the intoxicating gases that caused trances for the priestesses of Apollo at Delphi, until John Hale's recent research vindicated Plutarch.
- ⁹¹ Harington, John, translator, *Lodovico Ariosto, Orlando Furioso* (London: Richard Field, 1591), folio iii, recto.
- ⁹² Harington, 1591, folio ii, recto.
- ⁹³ Mark Anderson, *Shakespeare by Another Name*. New York: Gotham

Books, 2005, 35.

⁹⁴ Harington, 1591, folio vii, recto.

⁹⁵ North, 1999, 178.

⁹⁶ McClure, Norman Egbert (ed.), *The Letters and Epigrams of Sir John Harington*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1930, 51.

⁹⁷ John Harington, *An Apologie* (London: Richard Field, 1596), folio Dd 2, recto.

⁹⁸ North, 2003, 52.

⁹⁹ Murray, Thomas E., "The overlooked and understudied onomastic hyphen." *Names: A Journal of Onomastics* 50:173-190, 2002 (180).

¹⁰⁰ Katherine Duncan-Jones hints subtly in *Shakespeare's Poems* (London: Arden, 2007) that she realizes Ignoto and Shake-speare may be the same poet—she reproduces in an appendix (p.169 of the 1602 first edition) a facsimile of "The first" and "The burning" so that readers can see that "Let the bird of loudest lay" seems to be a continuation of those poems. Even the "printers' flowers," used rarely in this volume, occur below the name "Ignoto," and later below the name "William Shake-speare." She also observes that "The burning" uses "quasi-theatrical language" (112).

¹⁰¹ There is a fascinating, bawdy Ignoto poem in Sir John Davies' *Epigrammes and Elegies* (Middleborough: n.p., 1599). Some modern editions misleadingly attribute it to Marlowe, but it has no subscription; 'Ignoto' appears at the top of the poem. It is cleverly ribald—e.g., "Faith (wench) I cannot court thy sprightly eyes,/ With the base Viall placed between my thighs." The "bass viol" puns on a base container of semen. This poem shows striking verbal and thematic parallels with Dark Lady Sonnets such as 130, 132, and 141. An Ignoto poem in Francis Davison's anthology *A Poetical Rapsodie* (London: V.S., 1602) is titled, "An Invective Against Women." It contains the phrase, "they will beguile ye." The only previous use of that phrase in EEBO is found in a 1530 edition of Sir John Oldcastle's 1413 "Endenture" (edited by William Thorpe in *The examinacion of the honorable knight syr Jhon Oldcastell, [Antwerp: J. van Hoochstraten]*) which records his trial for heresy. One is tempted to conclude that de Vere read that book and picked up that phrase, while researching the man who was transformed into Falstaff (I am grateful to Robert Detobel for bringing Davison's anthology to my attention).