

# *What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?*

by Bruce Johnston

In 1920 John Thomas Looney revealed the profound literary and personal enmity between Philip Sidney and Edward de Vere (Looney, ed. Warren, 122, 145, 180, 212–13, 242–52). Over the next century dozens of Oxfordian scholars further documented the breadth, depth and details of that conflict. This essay integrates that extensive scholarship and shows the Herbert family’s motives for continuing de Vere’s anonymity as Shakespeare after his death in 1604, while covering up and misattributing the authorship of the Shakespeare canon in their 1623 play collection known as the First Folio.

## **Edward de Vere vs. Robert Dudley and Philip Sidney**

Edward de Vere’s enmity for Philip Sidney had deep roots, for it began with wounds inflicted by Sidney’s uncle—Robert Dudley—on de Vere when he was twelve years old.

In 1562 a financially destitute Robert Dudley was listed as a supervisor in the last will of Edward’s father, John de Vere, 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, just months before the Earl’s sudden, unexpected death (Green 41–95). Enabled by Queen Elizabeth and William Cecil, Master of the Court of Wards, the Court farmed out the fruits of Edward’s encumbered properties to Dudley (Cutting 105–118). These actions triggered what Roger Stritmatter called “perhaps the greatest, potentially most destructive schism within the English aristocracy”



*Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, c. 1564. In the background are the devices of the Order of Saint Michael and the Order of the Garter.*

(“Spenser’s ‘Perfect Pattern’ 12). In short, Dudley enriched himself from the execution of de Vere’s father’s will. Nina Green concludes her analysis of the situation thus: “The primary beneficiary—in fact almost the only real beneficiary—of the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl’s death was Sir Robert Dudley” (53). Thus Dudley, the earliest spoiler of de Vere’s wealth, became in the latter’s imagination the Machiavellian Claudius to de Vere’s Hamlet.

In Elizabeth’s court de Vere was befriended and mentored by Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, who became a surrogate father to him (Anderson 42–3; Ogburn 469). Sussex had a pre-existing “long and bitter feud” with Dudley, a “war to the knife” that fed Vere’s animus toward Dudley and his nephew

Philip (Ward 48). Andrew Gurr cites Dudley’s company as receiving “a patent of May 10, 1574 (*Shakespearian Stage* 30). This was the first royal patent for a company of adult players.” Today such a grant would more accurately be called a license. The Leicester and Oxford theater companies soon competed, using Christmas court festivities as “emblems of their own power” (Gurr 28).

The de Vere and Dudley-Sidney factions also quarreled over the Queen’s proposed marriage to the French Duke d’Alençon in 1579. Philip Sidney brashly opposed the French marriage in a letter to the Queen that became public (Jiménez 90–91). Elizabeth’s subsequent anger compelled Sidney to withdraw from court to Wilton House and his sister Mary. Rusticated from court, Sidney honed his literary skills by converting *Psalms* into rhyming English; prescribing stage and poetry rules; and composing a prose pastoral romance, a masque and a Petrarchan sonnet cycle.

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On a personal level, Sidney took offense easily and often and challenges ensued. Aside from Sidney's tennis court quarrel with de Vere, also in 1579, Sidney also sought but was denied duels with: (i) his father's startled secretary; (ii) Sir Thomas Butler, a court ally of both de Vere and the Earl of Sussex; and (iii) the author of the book *Leicester's Commonwealth*.

In 1584–5 the *Leicester's Commonwealth* libel alleged scores of poisonings, property theft, duplicities and treasonous plots by Dudley. From nearly 200 pages of anonymous text, Sidney indignantly answered a trivial item. As Sidney tediously explicated Dudley's lineage, he added a gratuitous, albeit factual, insult to one of Oxford's ancestors. Sidney addressed none of the topical accusations against Dudley, but called the libel's author a liar and demanded an answer and a duel. Nina Green concluded that *Leicester's Commonwealth* and related documents share content and stylistic features with Oxford's writings (<http://www.oxfordshakespeare.com/leicester.html>). Richard Whalen also sees de Vere as a plausible *Commonwealth* author (26).

In 1585 Dudley recalled de Vere from his Lowlands military assignment, replacing him with nephew Philip as Master of Horse. An impatient Sidney sought to carry war "into the bowels of Spain" (Duncan-Jones, *Courtier Poet*, 280). Before his death Sidney variously engaged Elizabeth, Sir Francis Walsingham and Dudley in foreign policy disputes (272, 280–93). After arming himself fashionably but foolishly for the Zutphen battlefield, Sidney later lost his horse and took a musket ball in his unarmored thigh, from which he died of gangrene. He quickly became a Protestant martyr and war hero. Indeed, Sidney's unprecedented London public funeral was delayed nearly three months, allegedly to arrange and finance the spectacle.<sup>1</sup>

De Vere and Dudley sparred again as England awaited the Spanish Armada in July 1588, when Oxford refused a post under Leicester's command and returned to London (Ward 288–93). Dudley died soon thereafter and was succeeded by Robert Sidney, younger brother of Philip, as Earl of Leicester. After Dudley died, Mary Sidney Herbert became the guardian of brother



*Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586).*

Philip's writings and legacy. With her personal mission and Herbert-Pembroke wealth, she attracted writers who admired Philip and advanced his ideas. She fought those who tarnished her brother's legacy with pirate publications or literary "barbarism" (Hannay *Phoenix*, 121).

After the passing of Sidney and Dudley, Oxford wrote and revised plays for another 16 years, which displayed his formidable will and skill to take revenge, on stage and page, against Philip Sidney and Robert Dudley.



*Mary Herbert née Sidney (1561–1621), by Nicholas Hilliard, c. 1590*

## De Vere's Fury of Revenge

Oxford's volatility and quick temper were legendary and even found their way into his poetry (Ogburn 598; Anderson 226). Looney cited de Vere's "fury of revenge" in the poem below as noteworthy (*Poems*, Miller 582). Sidney biographer Duncan-Jones ranks de Vere's poem below as "an expression of murderous rage...unique in the period" (Duncan-Jones, *Courtier Poet*, 166–7).

Fain would I sing, but fury makes me fret,  
And rage hath sworn to seek revenge of wrong.  
My mazed mind to malice so is set  
As death shall daunt my deadly dolours long;  
    Patience perforce is such a pinching pain  
    As die I will, or [before I] suffer wrong again.  
I am no sot, to suffer such abuse  
As doth bereave my heart of his delight,  
Nor will I feign myself to such a use  
With calm content to suffer such despite.  
    No quiet sleep shall once possess mine eye  
    Till wit have wrought his will on injury.  
My heart shall fail, and hand shall lose his force,  
But some device shall pay despite his due;  
And fury shall consume my careful corse  
Or raze the ground whereon my sorrow grew.  
    Lo, thus in rage of ruthful mind refused,  
    I rest revenged of whom I am abused.

Whether Vere's intensity sprang from authorial genius or something more primal, shielded by the protective mask of anonymity, is a fair question.

Looney observed (*The Oxfordian* 19, 156):

Truly great dramatic literature can only come from the pens of writers who are accustomed to look closely into their own souls and make free use of their secret experiences; it may be doubted whether a single line of living literature ever came from pure imagination or mere dramatic pose.

More evidence of Vere's volatility is revealed in the 1595 poetic reference to "Tilting under [the Black] Frieries" liberties. This alluded to brawling street fights between the servants of de Vere (Romeo) and his Knyvet-Howard-Arundel (Capulet) enemies in London during the 1580s. (Sir Thomas Knyvet was the uncle of Anne Vavasour, Oxford's mistress and mother of his illegitimate son, Edward.) The 1582–85 fights caused several deaths and the permanent laming of de Vere (Stritmatter, *Cabiers Élisabéthains*, 37–40). With his tournament and dancing revels thereby curtailed, de Vere had the time and motive to craft dramatic revenge. Further, Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* provided Vere with fresh, pointed "abuses" to counter.

### Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy*

Philip Sidney wrote *The Defence of Poesy* circa 1581, which circulated in manuscript before his sister Mary printed it in 1595.<sup>2</sup> In it, Sidney savaged the forms and contents of Oxford's court stagecraft.

He favored didactic poetry, prose and plays that advanced virtue and virtuous behavior; his goal was "to teach and delight" (*Major Works* 221–2). Sidney also demanded neoclassical unities of time, place and plot on stage; he belittled the genre mixing of de Vere's court plays, e.g., comedy in tragedies. Sidney labeled mixed genres as "gross absurdities" and "doltishness" (244). Sidney also disparaged these features of de Vere's plays: rhyming, mixing prose and verse and placing clowns on stage with kings (Jiménez 90–104).

De Vere's earliest court plays appealed to Elizabeth's love of comedy. But Sidney (245) disliked laughter that lacked "delightful teaching," "laughter at sinful things," and "to jest at strangers because they speak not English so well as we do." Oxford's proteges John Lyly and Robert Greene reveled in Euphuism, but Sidney labeled Euphuist texts "absurd" and "tedious prattling" (247); he derided being "rhymed to death" (250).

Moreover, Sidney in *Defence* skewered writers of histories, claiming that they wrote of "passions...and the many particulars of battles of which no man could affirm" and put "long orations...in the mouths of great kings and captains, which it is certain they never pronounced" (*Defence* 214). Measured by the quartos printed in his lifetime Oxford wrote mostly histories—over 20 in

## What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?

total. Elizabeth's £1,000 annuity to Oxford, initiated in 1586 and lasting 18 years, may have included tacit remuneration for writing and revising patriotic histories that steeled England for its inevitable hostilities with Spain (Cutting 83–103; Goldstein 77–113; Whittemore 114–117).

Focusing on contemporary English poetry, Sidney expressly criticized *Hekatompathia* by Thomas Watson. The sonnet collection, published in 1582 and dedicated to de Vere, contained explanatory notes likely written by de Vere (Whittemore 94–6). By criticizing *Hekatompathia*, Sidney thereby panned de Vere.

In *Defence of Poesy*, Sidney prescribed what he thought “poesy” should be, whether in plays, poems, prose, fiction, or songs. What enduring literature did Philip himself create in his short lifetime? Sidney's only stage work (the *Lady of May* masque) and his rhymed, versified *Psalms* (created mostly by sister Mary) quickly were lost to obscurity. Aside from miscellaneous poems, Sidney's two enduring creations were his *Astrophel and Stella* sonnets and *Arcadia* prose romance; both were pirated, published prematurely and later edited and republished by sister Mary.

## Sidney's Pirated Publications

The first printed quartos of Sidney's prose romance *Arcadia* (1590) and the *Astrophel and Stella* sonnets (1591) were unauthorized. Both pirated publications occurred without editing and approval from Mary Sidney Herbert—who viewed both *Arcadia* and *Astrophel* as her property. I think those two publications represented explosive warnings of the Herbert family's vulnerability to myriad manuscripts held by an unknowable array of friends, enemies, poets, and publishers. The capture and control of texts and publishing rights would be executed methodically and masterfully by Mary's two sons before they rebranded Oxford's play canon to a provincial actor from Stratford-on-Avon.

The Thomas Nashe preface to the 1591 *Astrophel* pirate edition contained fawning hyperbole of the Sidney-Herbert family along with off-color metaphors. The quarto concluded with poems by Thomas Campion, Samuel Daniel and Oxford himself. This *Astrophel* edition was soon withdrawn and replaced by publisher Newman with revisions that excluded Nashe's preface and the poems of others (Hannay, *Phoenix* 69; Brennan 56).

In his Petrarchan sonnet cycle *Astrophel* Sidney idolized a married woman named Penelope Devereux Rich, whose father was the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Essex. Her sexual and marital scandals soon became looming embarrassments for the Sidney, Herbert, Devereux and Walsingham families (Moore, “Stella Coverup”). In several plays, Oxford ridicules histrionic sonnet writing by

self-absorbed males. In *Henry V* the haughty, preening Dauphin (another likely satire of Sidney) considers writing a sonnet to his horse before the imminent carnage of Agincourt. His stunned French military officers view this horse-sonnet musing as “effeminate” narcissism (Jiménez 100). When Oxford revised *Love’s Labour’s Lost* he again satirized courtiers who wrote overwrought sonnets, with Berowne likening lovesick courtiers to “minstrels” and jugglers (IV. 3.156).

In 1898 the renowned Shakespeare scholar Sir Sidney Lee wrote that for Philip Sidney: “Petrarch, Ronsard and Desportes inspired the majority of Sidney’s efforts, and his addresses to abstractions like sleep, the moon, his muse, grief or lust are almost verbatim translations from the French” (444). Oxford’s 1609 *Sonnets* differs starkly from Sidney’s. Indeed, the 1997 Arden edition states that Shakespeare’s sonnets are “in important respects both anti-Petrarchan and anti-Sidneian” (*Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, ed. Duncan-Jones, 46).<sup>3</sup>

### *Venus and Adonis and Lucrece*

Only anonymously or behind a pseudonym could de Vere deflect Sidney’s pointed, personal insults that circulated in manuscript and advanced to public print in Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy*. Thus came the two narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), employing for the first time de Vere’s invented verb-noun pseudonym—“Shakespeare.”

Richard Lester shows how de Vere’s dedication of *Venus* to Henry Wriothesley alluded to Sidney’s “old” *Arcadia* dedication to his sister Mary and followed Oxford’s prior confrontations with Sidney (67–72).

Oxford’s poem mocked Sidney personally, first by reversing the personalities of Sidney’s *Astrophel* principals. Instead of the frustrated, pining Astrophel male pursuing a retreating Stella, de Vere portrays Venus as a sexually aggressive goddess who is refused repeatedly by an immature, androgynous Adonis. Rejecting the urgent entreaties for sex and love from Venus, the narcissist “boy” prefers hunting and horses. Although Sir Philip eschewed harming animals, he yearned to hunt and do battle with Spain’s Lowlands forces. While Adonis lives he is called “boy” as often (nine times) as he is by name. The word “boy” obviously evokes *Boyet*—the Sidney character in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. The bonneted boy’s rutting horse makes wiser career decisions than does Adonis. Moreover, the ignored procreation pleas of Venus echo Oxford’s entreaties to the Earl of Southampton in his sonnets.

Adding poetic injury to insult, de Vere also ridiculed Sidney’s odd simile in *Defence* where Philip compared good poetry to fine horses and horsemanship. Adonis loses his horse, as did Sidney before his mortal battlefield wound.

## What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?

Oxford's 11-stanza equine subplot in *V&A* is elegant and knowledgeable about horses (*Poems* 1.258–324). Between lines 289–94 Vere also alludes to Sidney's notion in *Defence* that poets should exceed Nature, a concept that Hamlet disputes.

A wild boar, dominant in Oxford's heraldry, slays Adonis. The imagery of the feral beast “nuzzling” in the flank of Adonis while “sheath[ing] unaware the tusk in his soft groin” is unforgettable (l. 1105–16). Oxford ironically describes here the literary wound he is administering to Sidney. The seasonal purple flower honoring Adonis—a piteous bequest from the mournful Venus—suggests the robe of nobility and immortality that was bestowed on Sidney in his dramatic, expensive funeral in London. Edmund Spenser's eulogy for Sidney (not printed until 1595) likely influenced de Vere's poem. Spenser describes Sidney as wounded by a Beast, mourned by his Love (which in Spenser represents Stella/Penelope Rich instead of Philip's wife, Frances Walsingham) and finally is transformed into a flower that changes from red to blue—thus traversing the color spectrum of purple.

The Sidney-Herbert camp surely understood *V&A*'s many implied ties to Sir Philip. Oxford's complex overlay of allegory counterpoint, like the musical polyphony of William Byrd and Thomas Tallis, pervades his poetry and his plays. Roger Stritmatter shows how *Venus and Adonis* also evokes Elizabeth and de Vere, respectively, in his paper “Case in Verse” (171–219).<sup>4</sup>

*Venus and Adonis* remains a riveting poetic achievement in which Vere advanced the following arguments: (i) he urged Southampton to behave and choose in life the opposite of the narcissists Adonis/Sidney/Essex; (ii) he set his own rules for dramatic allegorical poetry spiced with Renaissance pornography; (iii) he wrote a classically inspired narrative poem that was a dish of cold, vengeful poetry that overwhelmed Sidney's “idle” toys; (iv) he launched his topical “Shakespeare” pseudonym that alluded to public praise from Sidney acolyte Gabriel Harvey.<sup>5</sup> But with that pseudonym de Vere miscalculated, for *Willobie His Avis* turned de Vere's visor as transparent as the failed disguises of his Muscovites in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

The *Rape of Lucrece* in 1594 offered another intimate dedication to Southampton by “Shakespeare.” What's more, de Vere's unmistakable literary fingerprints in *Lucrece* included source material from Ovid (*Fasti*); rapacious imagery and allusions to sex, body parts, licentious appetites, the seizing of Troy and predators stalking their prey; and literary ties to the rapes and revenges of Lavinia and Philomena in *Titus Andronicus* and *Metamorphoses*.

The prose argument of *Lucrece* describes how avarice and pillage by Tarquin generated political anarchy and thus toppled a monarchy. De Vere's graver lesson in *Lucrece* (for Southampton but also for Elizabeth and the Cecils) was



that usurpers of humans, property and public honor could shred the hierarchies of order and degree, thereby handing the empire to its consuls and commoners.

In *Lucrece* a Machiavellian miscreant calculates, stalks, and rapes a married woman, then steals away. Which prideful, scheming Elizabethan had a reputation for intimidation and seizing the wealth of others? Two prime suspects were relatives of Philip Sidney, the first being his uncle, Robert Dudley. A second Tarquin prospect was Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex—Dudley’s stepson. Devereux inherited Philip’s Zutphen sword and soon thereafter married Sidney’s widow. Devereux also became Southampton’s political mentor at court. Tarquin’s excessive pride gave him the nickname *Superbus*—super ego—a trait in Elizabeth’s court ascribed to both Dudley and Essex. Tarquin also shared with Dudley (“*Lucrece*,” *Poems*, l. 530) an alleged expertise in poisons and how to mask them. The Achilles reference (l. 1424) evokes the Achilles/Dudley parallel that de Vere embedded in his *Troilus and Cressida* allegory. Insofar as the “super ego” villain of *Lucrece* reminded readers of Dudley or Devereux (and his sister Penelope) those connections would cause public embarrassment to the Sidney-Herberts.

In his two narrative poems Oxford violated the constraints of Sidney’s *Defence* precepts in ways that tarnished the hagiography of Philip that Mary Sidney Herbert devotedly toiled to promote. *Willobie His Avis*a would soon make her task even more difficult.

### *Willobie His Avis*a

In 1594 a salacious allegorical poem entitled *Willobie His Avis*a was published. It provided the social context necessary for leading readers directly to Edward de Vere, the pseudonymous author “William Shakespeare.”

Two prominent Elizabethans were exposed in *Avis*a. Oxfordian scholars identify the two males in *Avis*a’s lurid love triangle as: (i) de Vere/Shakespeare—an older, married “actor” with the initials W.S.; and (ii) Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton—a youth tutored by W.S. to woo the now-married former mistress of W.S. This *Avis*a scenario resembled the lurid triangle in de Vere’s *Sonnets* that were circulating in manuscript during the 1590s and printed in 1609.

By hyphenating “Shake-speare,” the 1594 *Avis*a text signaled to the general public that this name was a pseudonym. *Avis*a thus poisoned the “William Shakespeare” name for Oxford, and also signaled to rogue publishers, printers and plagiarists that they might pirate the plays and poetry of de Vere and perhaps face manageable risks.

## What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?

*Avisa* may have been published by design to injure de Vere and Southampton (Chiljan, *Suppressed*, 233–41; Prechter, 135–67; Hamill, 130–147). Whoever the poem's actual author, the collateral damage from *Avisa* potentially would be significant for many patricians, from the Cecils and Herberts to Queen Elizabeth herself.<sup>6</sup> *Avisa* was banned by the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of London in 1599.

How might the Sidney-Herberts counter this exposure of Oxford as Shakespeare? One remedy would be the complete decontextualization of de Vere's canon, a goal that required access to and control of both the unpublished manuscripts and already published texts of Oxford's plays. For the Herberts that quest perhaps began in 1597 and advanced materially in 1604, when Mary Herbert's son Philip wed de Vere's daughter Susan, thereby opening a future path to play text control.

### Problem Plays for the Sidney-Dudley-Herberts

More than 30 quartos of Oxford's canonic and apocryphal plays had been published by the time of his death in 1604 (Gilvary 490), yet few if any of them had been authorized by de Vere (Chiljan, *Suppressed*, Chapter 2). The troubling content of these printed quartos for the Sidney-Herberts, and the added risks of de Vere's unpublished play texts are illustrated among the problem plays discussed below. Such plays variously contain: (i) disturbing portrayals of Philip Sidney or his uncle Robert Dudley; (ii) injustice and political chaos caused by duplicitous seizures of estates or crowns; (iii) gross violations of Sidney's *Defence* precepts; and (iv) related dangers for the Herberts, Cecils or the Elizabethan Court.

The problem plays described below are illustrative, not exhaustive. Other plays also contained topical plot items or characters that put Herbert forebears and various prominent Elizabethans at risk if de Vere's authorship were known. Such plays include *Richard III*<sup>7</sup> and *Cymbeline*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *As You Like It*, *Taming of A* [and *The*] *Shrew*, *Troublesome Raigne* and *King John*, *Anthony and Cleopatra* and apocryphal "War of the Roses" quartos that were staged by Lord Pembroke's Servants.

***Titus Andronicus*.** De Vere's *Titus* integrated Ovidian and Senecan barbarism where body parts and classical time, place and plot unities were serially dismembered. The 1594 and 1600 *Titus* quarto title pages both expressly endangered the Herberts' reputation, for they announced to history that Henry Herbert's "Pembroke" servants staged *Titus*—a popular, dystopian bloodbath that disemboweled Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* rules.

Could Mary Sidney Herbert allow history to remember that *Titus* was staged by the players of Lord Pembroke, her own husband, the father of her

“Incomparable Paire” of sons? Could she permit her grandchildren to learn that their two grandfathers, the Earls of Oxford and Pembroke, had enabled this Senecan savagery to soil the public stages? Whom would an indignant Sir Philip have challenged to a duel? The 1623 decontextualization imposed by the Herberts’ First Folio project answered all three questions.

**Richard II.** Lands and estates are seized and political anarchy ensues. A king is deposed, humiliated, imprisoned, and then murdered on stage. Much stage rhyming occurs—something that Sidney derided. Gardening clowns (III.4) share the stage with and instruct the queen. The word “gage” (glove) is spoken 12 times in this play (“engaged” three more times) during fiery duel challenges. Act V.1 contains six hilarious, glove-slamming duel challenges that the Crown vetoes, at which modern audiences still roar with laughter. We can also laugh with the knowledge of Sidney’s many rash, forbidden duel challenges that de Vere satirizes. Act 5, scene 3 similarly engages in near farce by making fun of speaking French with a king on stage. Oxford’s history thus minces Sidney and his *Defence of Poesy* principles.

**Famous Victories of Henry V.** Oxford’s apocryphal, juvenile history-comedy likely triggered many of Philip Sidney’s attacks in *Defence of Poesy* (Jiménez 31–108). No direct evidence exists: (i) that Philip Sidney attended productions of *Famous Victories* (or the 1579 *Double Masques* of the *Knights* and *Amazons*); (ii) that those three works were the beginnings of *Henry V* and *Love’s Labour’s Lost*; or (iii) that de Vere acquired a manuscript of *Defense of Poesy* before its 1595 publication. But myriad written documents and public behavior amount to compelling circumstantial evidence for all three conjectures. Thus, Jiménez concludes that Sidney critiqued *Famous Victories* in *Defence* (91) and that Vere accessed a manuscript copy of *Defence* “in the early 1580s” (93).

*Famous Victories* mixes theater genres and commingles clowns with kings so that undignified royal behavior is placed center stage. Oxford redoubled the rebukes to Sidney when he expanded *Famous Victories* into their three *Folio* plays. For example, *Henry V* adds a chorus that makes sarcastic apologies for the upcoming time and place disunities and begs theater audiences to use their imagination as scenes are changed on stage. Oxford also included French and English language jokes and bawdy innuendo wholly at odds with Sidney’s prim *Defence* stage rules.

**Loves’ Labour’s Lost.** In 1579 two masques (of *Amazons* and *Knights*) played at court (Clark 107). Rima Greenhill explains how de Vere enhanced these early proto-comedies with layers of topical allusions such as Russian and French marriage politics, Euphuism, the Nashe-Harvey literary wars, etc. (113–35). Indeed, scholars have labored for four centuries to uncover all of *LLL*’s dense tapestry of puns, allusions and topical enigmas.

## What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?

Oxford ridicules Philip Sidney in *LLL* as the character Boyet—a preening, gossipy Frenchman whom Berowne (de Vere) accuses of plagiarizing others' words. De Vere has Boyet recite flowery, Euphuist vocabulary (which Sidney detested) penned by an impoverished knight (which Sidney was) who cites variations on the word “truth” (de Vere's motto) four times in three lines along with Sidney's *Defence* word for tragedy, “commiseration,” while reading from a letter that is misdelivered (as Sidney did with a Dudley letter) to Rosaline instead of to the wanton Jaquenetta<sup>8</sup>—who is already pregnant by a bawdy clown who mingles with and jokes on stage with royalty. This offensive stagecraft was surely intentional. Orthodox sources acknowledge *LLL*'s many violations of Sidney's *Defence* precepts (*Arden LLL* 1998, 2–6).

*LLL* also satirizes pedantic erudition. Holofernes spouts tedious Latinizations and long rhapsodies of synonyms and subordinate clauses—thereby ridiculing the affectations of Sidney supporter Gabriel Harvey, professor of rhetoric at Cambridge University. Yet de Vere grants to the clown Costard the longest word (and in Latin) in the entire Shakespeare canon: “*honorificabilitudinitatibus*” (V.1.40).

Another key allusion to Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* occurs in *LLL* when the witty Rosaline says (II.1.74–5) that Berowne speaks so well: “That aged ears play truant at his tales/And younger hearings are quite ravished.” Oxford's homage to a poet reworks and versifies Sidney's prose in *Defence* that the best poet “cometh unto you, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner” (*Major Works*, l. 609–10).

***Twelfth Night*.** Performed in 1602 at Middle Temple but unpublished until the First Folio in 1623, the play satirizes Sidney's didactic virtue and piety in the character of Sir Andrew Aguecheek. The identification is twofold: Philip Sidney was born on St. Andrew's Day, while a bout with smallpox had given him an “agued” cheek. He is a romantically awkward narcissist and braggart who capers on stage like an Elizabethan clown. Aguecheek also issues a challenge to a duel, then flees from a female duelist who (dressed as a young man) timidly brandishes a sword. The regal Lady Olivia, like Mary Sidney Herbert, is in deep mourning for a recently deceased brother. Olivia is captivated by a dashing young man; for Mary Sidney in real life this was Dr. Matthew Lister (Hannay 191, 201). Sir Toby Belch evokes Peregrine Bertie, a Dudley-Sidney ally and de Vere's brother-in-law. French and English words are hilariously garbled.

Yet Oxford lampooned a more powerful courtier in the play—Sir Christopher Hatton, Lord Chancellor of England from 1587–91.

“I may command where I adore,” Malvolio reads in a fabricated letter in *Twelfth Night*, assuming it is addressed to him by the rich countess Olivia,

whom he slavishly serves as both steward and hopeful lover. The letter is signed “The Fortunate Unhappy”—echoing the Latin pen name *Si Fortunatus Infoelix*, which appears on numerous poems in the 1573 poetry anthology, *A Hundred Sundry Flowers*. That it was a posy of Hatton was confirmed by his contemporary, Gabriel Harvey. In his copy of the 1576 reprint of *A Hundred Sundry Flowers*, Harvey wrote in the margin, “Fortunatus infoelix, lately a posy of Sir Christopher Hatton” (Anderson 69).

Queen Elizabeth made Hatton the Captain of her Bodyguard in 1572. At thirty-two, tall and handsome, Hatton had attracted the Queen with his dancing. Hatton was infatuated with the Queen, whose nickname for him was “mutton” or “sheep,” whereas Oxford was the “boar” because of the boar on his coat of arms. During the summer of 1573, when Hatton became ill, Elizabeth sent him to Spa in Belgium; he wrote to her using those nicknames to express his jealousy over Oxford.

In 1577 the Queen knighted Hatton and made him a member of her Privy Council. In a 1580 letter to Elizabeth, Hatton wrote, “It is a gracious favour, most dear and welcome to me. Reserve it to the Sheep [i.e., Hatton himself]. He hath no tooth to bite, where the Boar’s [Oxford’s] tusk may both raze and tear.” He signed the letter, “Your Majesty’s Sheep and most bound vassal” (Anderson 153).

This brings us back to the play on Hatton’s pen name as “The Fortunate Unhappy” that appears in the letter Malvolio reads in *Twelfth Night*, believing it was written to him by Olivia. In the comedy, Olivia’s uncle Sir Toby Belch refers to Malvolio as a “rascally sheep-biter”—echoing Hatton’s letter to the Queen (154).

Finally, Maria’s letter to Malvolio suggests that wearing yellow stockings will empower Malvolio in his love suit for Olivia—which points to Hatton since his coat of arms bore a golden hind.

***The Merry Wives of Windsor.*** This comedy targets Sidney and Dudley with its biting topical plot—the courtship of Anne Cecil. A thin and impoverished young man named Slender (Sidney) with a bullying uncle Shallow (Dudley) seeks but loses the hand in marriage of Anne (Anne Cecil), who instead marries Fenton (de Vere). As Looney pointed out in 1922, Fenton is described with such precision that all the references to him also apply to Oxford: “Great of birth,” “his state gall’d with expense,” “his riots,” “his wild societies,” “he capers, he dances, he writes verses,” “he kept company with the wild prince and Pains” (“New Evidence” 89). At the same time, Charles Vere states that Shakespeare’s characterization of Slender clearly applies to Sidney: his humorlessness, his slender physique and history of ill

## What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?

health, his clichéd and trite use of language, insecurity over his family lineage, his dependence on the wealth and word of his uncle (“Sir Philip Sidney” 5).

In addition, the character of the Welshman Hugh Evans rehearses children for the masque that ends the play, thereby mirroring Henry Evans, the Blackfriars manager of Oxford’s Boys. J. Thomas Looney (“New Evidence” 79–93), Ruth Miller (*Oxfordian Vistas*, 2, 161–76) and Charles Vere (3–10) all noted the play’s deep biographical ties to de Vere and Sidney.

***Hamlet***. Many scholars see Dudley as Claudius to Oxford’s autobiographical Hamlet. Claudius is a usurping adulterer who seduces a Queen, poisons his brother/king, steals his crown, seizes his estate and displaces the rightful young heir. In the bloody finale, Claudius poisons his queen and Hamlet before the dying heir poisons the villainous usurper. Richard Whalen concludes that:

Leicester’s notorious reputation as a poisoner and using henchmen to carry out his murderous poisonings are fundamental to the plot of *Hamlet*. . . . Oxford may well have felt the ancient desire to avenge the death of his father by killing Leicester and also felt the artistic compulsion to work through these conflicted emotions by writing *Hamlet* (22, 38).

Insofar as Claudius mirrors Dudley, Laertes evokes Sidney—a dueling Francophile hothead whose aggression and bravado enable his own death. Oxford also rebukes Philip Sidney with Hamlet’s famous advice to the players: that poets, playwrights and actors must “hold a mirror up to nature,” not seek to surpass nature, as Sidney advises in *Defence of Poesy*.<sup>9</sup> Ridiculing two prominent Elizabethans at once, Oxford has the tedious Polonius (William Cecil) list all possible mixed-genre drama categories (II. 2) that violated Sidney’s fussy classical unities.

Topical allusions to the Cecils go far beyond this. Oxford’s father-in-law, Lord Burghley, wrote out a set of precepts (“Towards thy superiors be humble yet generous; with thine equals familiar yet respective”) strongly reminiscent of the advice Polonius gives to Laertes (“Be thou familiar but by no means vulgar. . .”). Other precepts also echoed the advice of Polonius. For example, Burghley writes that, “Neither borrow of a neighbor or of a friend, but of a stranger, whose paying for it thou shalt hear no more of it. . . . Trust not any man with thy life credit, or estate.” Compare with Polonius: “Neither a borrower nor a lender be; for loan oft loses both itself and friend and borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.”

Burghley’s *Precepts*, intended for the use of his son Robert, was published in 1618. *Hamlet* first appeared in quarto in 1603. Edmund K. Chambers, one of

the leading Shakespeare scholars of the twentieth century, offered the following explanation: “Conceivably Shakespeare knew a pocket manuscript.” A more likely explanation is that Oxford, being Burghley’s ward and then son-in-law, had easy access to the original manuscript.

In Act II, Polonius sends Reynaldo to spy on Laertes in Paris, possibly to catch him “drinking, fencing, swearing, quarreling,” or “falling out at tennis.” In real life Burghley’s older son, Thomas Cecil, did go to Paris, but Burghley somehow received information, through a secret channel, of Thomas’s “inordinate love of . . . dice and cards.” Oxford, of course, did have a real “falling out at tennis” in 1579 at Court with Philip Sidney.

The King’s counselor, Polonius (Burghley), is stabbed and killed by Hamlet while spying on the Prince. Burghley, of course, was Elizabeth’s lifelong senior counselor, serving as Secretary of State from 1557 to 1572, then as Lord Treasurer from 1572 to 1598.

***Troilus and Cressida*.** The play is a nihilistic, dystopian anti-Sidneian history-tragedy-comedy that satirized several prominent Elizabethans (see <https://public.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/shakespeare/t&c1.html> by Michael Delahoyde). Does the character of Pandarus ridicule William Cecil? The Achilles character upended Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy* hierarchies that ranked heroic verse as the best possible poetry subset and expressly named Achilles as first among warriors meriting such poetic treatment (*Major Works* 231). But Oxford transforms Achilles into a volatile, arrogant, self-absorbed brute. Anti-hero Achilles cowardly unleashes his demonic Myrmidons to encircle and butcher an unarmed, helpless Hector, whose corpse is then defiled by Achilles. The senior Ogburns and Eva Turner Clark saw in Achilles the moody bully Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Similarly, the taunting, brash Patroclus evokes Philip Sidney’s brash, fatally armored battlefield demise in the Netherlands.

## The Herberts and Edward de Vere

De Vere’s animus for Philip Sidney apparently bypassed Henry Herbert, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Pembroke, his wife Mary and their issue. Henry’s Pembroke’s players staged at least three of Oxford’s plays: *The Taming of a Shrew*, *Titus Andronicus* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (Brennan 94–5). Another indication that de Vere’s enmity toward Sidney and Dudley did not attach to Mary Sidney Herbert is that Oxford gave her a flattering portrayal as Lady Olivia in *Twelfth Night*.

With her deep reverence for her brother, Mary Sidney became guardian, defender and executor of his writings and legacy. In the late 1580s, she began editing his manuscripts and faced numerous difficulties in controlling the

## What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?

content and printing of Sidney's four major works. Philip's Puritanical stage rules in *Defence* were already superseded by the robust post-*Tamburlaine* London theater scene. Sidney's 150 *Psalm* adaptations were only a quarter complete.<sup>10</sup> Finally, *Astrophel* and *Arcadia* both faced challenges of ownership, propriety, editing and publishing.

Mary Sidney ultimately drew criticism for bowdlerizing Philip's works (altering a rape scenario in "old" *Arcadia*) and for "trying to supplant" or "strike a blow against Shakespeare" (Hannay, *Phoenix* 120–1; *DLB*, Mary Sidney Herbert, 191). Indeed, she did both but in her own circumspect and indirect ways.<sup>11</sup> Mary's elder son William, tutored by Samuel Daniel and herself, was taught how "he was the family's heir to the mantle of the famous dead hero" Philip Sidney (Waller 140–1) and "to emulate his uncle's example" (Brennan 76).

More significantly, both Herbert brothers pursued Oxford's daughters in marriage. In 1597, Henry Herbert (Mary's husband) negotiated with Lord Treasurer Cecil for the marriage of son William to de Vere's middle daughter Bridget—a marriage for which de Vere expressed approval (Anderson 314). But negotiations failed due to financial demands by Cecil. Younger brother Philip Herbert, who quickly became a favorite of King James (Hannay 123; Hughes 95, n.25), later successfully courted Oxford's youngest daughter, Susan. In December 1604 Crown Prince Henry walked Susan de Vere to Whitehall chapel where a delighted King James presented Susan to wed Philip Herbert. Further illuminating these Herbert-Oxford marital dynamics, Roger Stritmatter explains how a 1619 book entitled *ARXAIO-PLOUTOS*, from the Jaggard publishing house, dedicated to Susan de Vere and her husband, identified them as the key to the Herberts' grand possession of unpublished de Vere playscripts. In the dedication, the pair is described as owners of an orchard, whose fruits "are all yours, and whosoever else shall taste of them, do enioy such freedome but by your favor." These stewards are therefore urged to "bestow how, and when you list [i.e., please]" ("Bestow" 18–19). Jaggard would go on to publish the First Folio in 1623.



*Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke, in the robes of the Order of the Garter c. 1615.*



Concurrent with the 1604–5 Christmas celebrations and the Vere-Herbert marriage, King James attended a series of plays written by or related to Oxford. The 1623 short titles of these plays were: *Merchant of Venice* (played twice), *Othello*<sup>12</sup>, *Comedy of Errors*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Measure for Measure* and *Henry V*. Staged as well was Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of his Humour*, a comedy with a character, Sogliardo, whose motto is "Not Without Mustard," which directly ridiculed the Stratford Shakspeare by reference to the coat of arms that Shakspeare had recently acquired for himself bearing the motto *Non Sans Droit*, or "Not Without Right." The Revels account lists "Shaxberd" the playwright for each de Vere play that listed an author. Orthodox scholars suggest various reasons for the five distinct "Shaxberd" Revels entries.<sup>13</sup> "Berd" is a Frisian/Middle English noun that glosses as "beard"—a disguise—ergo: *Shaks disguise* (Farina 39).

Since this royal festival of plays exudes Sidney-Vere frictions and authorship challenges, why would the Herberts and Robert Cecil have presented them to King James? Perhaps it demonstrated to James and Queen Anne the potential risks that de Vere's plays presented to the Crown, thereby giving the Stuarts ocular proof that Oxford must remain disguised by the "beard" of Stratford's Shakspeare.

As the two Herbert brothers amassed Jacobean titles and power, they captured positions at Court that permitted them to reign over de Vere's entire canon of plays. William Herbert refused several higher positions from King James in order to become Lord Chamberlain in 1615 (Miller, *Oxfordian Vistas* 2:6–17). William served as Lord Chamberlain until 1626, refusing to relinquish the title until James permitted brother Philip to succeed him. Philip Herbert proceeded to serve as Lord Chamberlain from 1626 to 1641. Meanwhile William had arranged for his cousin Sir Henry Herbert to operate as Master of Revels from 1623 to 1641 and again from 1660 to 1673 (Ogburn, 217; Brennan 139).

With control of playscripts, archives and theater stagings owned by The King's Men, the Herberts could shape the future of each Oxford play. History shows that the Herberts chose to erase Oxford as playwright by strategically defining his play canon and transferring de Vere's narrative poem pseudonym to *Guilliermus Shakspeare*—i.e., to William Shakspeare of Stratford.<sup>14</sup> As the target for reassigning most of the play canon, William Shakspeare was a phonetically useful London theater name known to the Herbert family. Orthodox scholars conjecture that Shakspeare and Richard Burbage briefly shared a theater with, or joined the acting company of, Henry Herbert, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Pembroke (Mary Sidney's husband) before joining The Chamberlain's Men (Manley and MacLean 301–4; Gurr, *Shakespeare's Opposites* 28; Gurr, *Shakespeare Company* 17–19).

## What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?

The Herbert family's goal of protecting the reputation of Philip Sidney, among other members of the nobility, later would mesh with and advance the brothers' commitment to preserve England's Protestant religion and to oppose the marriage of Prince Charles to the Catholic daughter of Spain's King Philip III (Stritmatter, "Lesser Latin" Part 1, 18–22; Dickson, *Bardgate* 2011, 115–6 and *Bardgate* 2016, 73).

Despite her essential role in the Herbert family's procurement of Oxford's literary legacy, Susan Vere's prominence in Wilton House diminished over time. Bonner Cutting demonstrates that Susan's figure in the massive Van Dyke painting of the Pembroke family is now misidentified as Anne Clifford, Philip's second wife (173–95). Nor was Lady Clifford apparently a fan of the Herberts' 1623 First Folio (Cutting 151–72). Perhaps her disdain stemmed from how Oxford in *3 Henry VI* portrayed Anne's ancestor, Clifford, as the vengeful, ruthless killer of the unarmed York youth Rutland.

## A Chronology of Pivotal Events

- 1597—Shakspere buys a large Stratford house for £60 or more. That same year marriage negotiations failed for William Herbert (age 17) and Bridget Vere, Oxford’s middle daughter.
- 1598—Lord Treasurer William Cecil dies, and several quartos are published listing William Shakespeare on the title page as dramatist for the first time.
- 1601—Henry Herbert dies. Most Pembroke wealth and property passes to William Herbert, age 20. The gateway to Herbert literary patronage shifts to William from his mother Mary.
- 1602—Shakspere of Stratford buys nearby land for £320 (Ogburn 783).
- 1601–3—Elizabeth commutes Southampton’s sentence of death to life imprisonment after his Essex Rebellion conviction. After his coronation in 1603, King James frees Southampton.
- 1604—Edward de Vere dies.
- 1605—Shakspere purchases Stratford parish tithes for £440 (Ogburn 784).
- 1609—*Shake-speare’s Sonnets* are published and quickly suppressed. The “*Shake-speare*” hyphenation rebrands the name as a pseudonym.
- 1610—Philip Herbert and Henry Wriothesley engage in a heated, racquet-throwing tennis-court argument (Chiljan, *Suppressed*, 324–5). King James forbids their duel. Echoes of Philip Sidney and Oxford’s tennis court quarrel from 30 years earlier.
- 1612—young Crown Prince Henry, a committed Protestant, dies unexpectedly of typhoid fever.
- 1612—Robert Cecil dies. Stratford’s Shakspere invests £140 (Price 18) in the Blackfriars Gatehouse.<sup>15</sup>
- 1614—Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, dies.
- 1615—William Herbert, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Pembroke, becomes Lord Chamberlain, giving him control over King’s Men texts. Pembroke remains Chamberlain until his brother Philip succeeds him as Lord Chamberlain from 1626 to 1641.

## What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?

1621—Mary Sidney Herbert dies.

1621–23—the Earls of Southampton and Oxford were variously imprisoned during the Spanish Marriage crisis.

1623—the Spanish Marriage negotiations collapse.

1623—the First Folio is published. Actors John Hemminges and Henry Condell proclaimed assembly of this 36-play Shakespeare collection was derived from their “True Originall Copies.” The play collection was dedicated to William and Philip Herbert.

In the First Folio, Ben Jonson’s masterful encomium to the “Sweet Swan of Avon” ambiguously embraced three Shakespeare constituents: (i) author Edward de Vere in Hampton Court [known to contemporaries as “Avon”] (Waugh 97–103); (ii) actor *Guilliermus Shakespeare*, Stratford-on-Avon’s folio “beard;” and (iii) Mary Sidney Herbert of Wilton House, located on a different Avon river (Dickson, 2011, 108–9).

1624–5—the “Two Most Noble Henries” die. Henry Wriothesley and his son James allegedly were the victims of fever in the Lowlands in 1624. Henry de Vere, 18<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, reportedly dies on the battlefield in 1625. No autopsies were conducted, and no state funerals or hero worship followed.

1626—Philip Herbert succeeds brother William as Lord Chamberlain—thereby maintaining Herbert control over the London theaters and licensing of plays until 1641.

1630—all of Edward de Vere’s offspring are dead by this time..

1723—Westminster Abbey’s Poets’ Corner still had no monument to Ben Jonson. A Jonson monument is finally placed in a Poets’ Corner aisle by the first of a new line of the Earls of Oxford, the Harleys.

## Conclusions

Scholars have long sought explanations for why Edward de Vere's authorship of the Shakespeare canon continued to be anonymous after his 1604 death.<sup>16</sup> Building on a century of Oxfordian research and scholarship, this essay shows why the Herbert-Pembroke family as early as the 1590s had powerful motives to shield their relatives from Oxford's ridicule and public embarrassment by permanently concealing de Vere as author of the Shakespeare canon.

Throughout their lives, Edward de Vere and Philip Sidney were personal, literary and political enemies, starting with Sidney losing the hand of Anne Cecil in marriage to Oxford.<sup>17</sup> Further, Sidney detested Oxford's early court plays such as the early versions of *Henry V* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, then criticized Oxford and issued didactic stage and poetry rules in his posthumous *Defence of Poesy*. In response, Oxford in his dramas took satiric revenge on the Sidney-Dudley family.

Moreover, in two narrative poems de Vere flouted Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* rules with his own literary philosophy along with caustic barbs at Sidney and Dudley. *Venus & Adonis* allegorically mocked Sidney as a narcissist boy who esteemed hunting and horses but fled carnal embrace from Love's Goddess. The "graver labour" *Lucrece* darkened de Vere's themes of lust, chastity, and death by adding predation, rape, revenge, suicide and political anarchy. *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* displayed de Vere's poetic and dramatic genius and defied Sidney's pious, moralizing literary views. But the 1594 *Willobie His Avis* libel revealed Oxford as a published author and flagged "William Shakespeare" as his pseudonym, thereby dangerously contextualizing de Vere's plays and poems. Indeed, it would take until 1598 for the name William Shakespeare to be printed on a title page of a Shakespeare drama.

By Oxford's death in 1604, more than 30 play quartos bearing the name of William Shakespeare were in print. Many plays lampooned Philip Sidney or his uncle Robert Dudley. Equally important, other prominent Elizabethans who were directly ridiculed or collaterally endangered by de Vere's plays included William Cecil, Lord Burghley and his son, Sir Robert Cecil; Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton; Lady Penelope Rich; William Brooke, Baron Cobham; Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton; Sir Peregrine Bertie; Sir Francis Walsingham; Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Christopher Hatton. Many of these men occupied powerful positions—from Secretary of State (the Cecils and Walsingham) and Lord Treasurer (Burghley), to Lord Chancellor (Hatton). Even de Vere's own offspring, not to mention the monarchs Elizabeth and James, risked embarrassment were Oxford to be formally recognized as Shakespeare.

## What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?

The extended Sidney-Herbert families thus had compelling personal and political motives to banish de Vere permanently as Shakespeare. In King James' regime the Herbert brothers methodically sought, seized and retained the power to do just that. The Herberts opened their path to controlling unpublished de Vere playscripts by marrying a de Vere daughter in 1604. The brothers then sought and for over two decades retained the most powerful oversight position for theater and publishing in King James' regime: that of Lord Chamberlain.

The Herberts' Shakespeare project was inspired by the chaos of the Spanish Marriage crisis and its pro-Protestant resolution. Armed with the original play texts along with publishing and Revels control, the Herberts in 1623 severed Edward de Vere's authorship from his plays—an outcome collectively serving the Herberts' family legacy along with religious and political interests. Many other parodied nobles and royals were collaterally rescued at the same time.

Thus, Herbert family wealth and political power succeeded in (i) enshrining Philip Sidney; (ii) covering up Philip's "Stella" muse; (iii) covering up William Herbert's trysts and two illegitimate children with his first cousin, Mary Wroth—the daughter of his mother's brother Robert Sidney (Waller); (iv) catching the young Susan Vere (Stritmatter) and then making her disappear from Herbert family history (Cutting); and (v) enabling the 1623 substitution of William Shakspere as the Shakespeare canon author.

In their own poets' duel, the Houses of Oxford and Sidney engaged in lifelong combat. Sidney was fatally wounded in battle and soon mourned and exalted nationally as a war hero and poet. Edward de Vere was interred unceremoniously. He now rests perhaps in Westminster Abbey anonymously, or entombed beside his widow Elizabeth Trentham, or his corpse is lost (Anderson 357–8). Mary Sidney Herbert was likely a seminal force in promoting her brother's literary and martial acclaim above his tangible accomplishments and creative talents; and motivating her two "Incomparable" sons to strip the Shakespeare authorship from Oxford. Those two missions profoundly reshaped English and world culture.

## Endnotes

1. Some viewed Philip Sidney's long funeral delay as a calculated Crown decision to distract public attention away from the execution of Mary Queen of Scots (Looney, ed. Warren, 295–6). Sidney died £6000 in debt. The burden for settling Sidney's estate and financing his funeral reportedly fell to his father-in-law, Sir Francis Walsingham. See a multimedia artwork display commemorating Sidney's funeral at <http://michaelharrison.ws/sidney/>. See Duncan-Jones (*Courtier Poet*, 308–39) for 32 still plates of the funeral procession.
2. The 1589 *Arte of English Poesy* suggests that its anonymous author either had a manuscript copy, or had been alerted to some of the contents, of Sidney's *Defence of Poesy*. See *Arte's* praise instead of debasement of history writers (First Book Chapter XIX); recognition of an iterative relationship between poets and other disciplines, instead of Sidney's static hierarchy (First Book Chapters III and IV); and analyses of whether a poet should reflect or “surpass” nature (Third Book Chapter XXV). Dr. Richard Waugaman in *Newly Discovered Works* supports Oxford as the author of *Arte*.
3. Their two sonnet cycles have aged far differently. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* showcases frustrated male desire, self-pity, histrionic mood swings, metric experiments and Petrarchan conceits. Duncan-Jones views *Astrophel's* Song X as a “masturbatory fantasy” (*Courtier Poet*, 239), a feature that, if true, apparently escaped Mary Sidney. In contrast, Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are filled with haunting imagery, sophisticated ideas, poetic depth, human drama, real sincerity. De Vere also embedded sonnets in his dramas, such as *Romeo and Juliet*. Upon their first meeting in Act One, the lovers exchange quatrains and complete each other's rhymes and lines. Their introduction sonnet endures as a dramatic, breathtaking on-stage metaphor of love and consummation where form and content mesh.
4. Several plays (*Henry V*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Troilus and Cressida*) are *palimpsest* texts (Anderson 124), where de Vere made extensive revisions to his original texts, sometimes resulting in a counterpoint of characters, themes, imagery and allegories. Here is a conjectured division of *Venus and Adoni*: poem begun before 1586 (the year of Sidney's death and de Vere's £1000 annuity) reflected Oxford's failing personal bond with Elizabeth, her broken promises of favor, his succession concerns. *Venus*

## What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?

revisions after 1586 added and integrated de Vere's revenge for Philip Sidney affronts and de Vere's entreaties to Southampton about eschewing both Sidney and Essex as role models. Would the Archbishop of Canterbury (Anderson 267) have approved for print de Vere's earliest text had it portrayed too candidly a young, sexually aggressive Elizabeth with her imperious personality? Probably not—but a revised (“palimpsest”) poem text published in 1593 enabled credible denial of both allegories. As Roger Stritmatter concludes: “the text is defensible only because it can be construed in all kinds of creative ways other than the interpretation offered here. Poets themselves must take refuge from censorious authorities in such creative misconstruction” (*Case in Verse* 337).

5. Among the highly personal, topical bases for de Vere's pseudonym are:
  - (i) Gabriel Harvey's 1578 public observation in Latin that de Vere's countenance “shakes a spear;”
  - (ii) de Vere's success in the tiltyard; and
  - (iii) the spear-bearing Greek goddess of wit and war, Pallas Athena Minerva. See <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ezk1B-airWI>—Katherine Chiljan's 2015 presentation at the Ashland, Oregon, Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship Conference.
6. Oxfordians debate the identity of the Avisia/Dark Lady to be wooed by the youth. See e.g. on You Tube:
  - (i) Alexander Waugh re Penelope Rich: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6l70pqqQEY> ;
  - (ii) John Hamill re Antonio Perez and Penelope Rich: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cI1HNp4KU2Q>; and
  - (iii) an October 2018 Dark Lady debate: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTUdEktvvB4&list=PLidycjyiCwGljyFt57Od85VEje1RERd-JT\\_](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTUdEktvvB4&list=PLidycjyiCwGljyFt57Od85VEje1RERd-JT_). If either the mistress of *Avisia* or Dark Lady of the *Sonnets* were Penelope Devereux Rich, then the Sidney-Herbert families faced literary threats to the hagiography of Philip Sidney crafted by his sister Mary. See Peter Moore's “Stella Coverup.”
7. By illustration, de Vere portrayed King Richard III as an ambitious, scheming, hunchbacked tyrant blending the worst of the two Roberts—Dudley and Cecil.
8. Don Armado yearns to write a sonnet folio to Jaquenetta, a flirty peasant pregnant by another man. The word *jaquenetta* in colloquial vulgar French denotes a mobile “toilet”—something serving the common use of the community. De Vere thereby ridicules Sidney's overwrought Petrarchan *Astrophel* sonnets and songs for which his muse, Penelope Devereux Rich, became an Elizabethan scandal—a connection that the Sidney-Herbert descendants surely wanted to suppress.



9. A fundamental dispute between de Vere and Sidney centered on the concept of Nature. Sidney in *Defence* claimed that the poet could and should seek to exceed “nature” (Sidney, *Major Works*, 216, italics added):

Only the poet, . . . lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect *another nature*, in making things either *better than nature* bringeth forth, *or quite anen, forms such as never were in nature*. . . . Nature *never* set forth the earth in so such rich tapestry as divers poets have done. . . . Her [nature’s] world is *brazen*, the poets only deliver a golden.

Should “brazen” Nature be censored? De Vere thought otherwise. Speaking through Prince Hamlet he famously sought to “hold the mirror up to nature”—to show us truth whether it is brutal and ugly or good and beautiful.

10. Consider this contrast of the Sidney treatment of literary content and form. Philip Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy* precepts derided “being rhymed to death” with trivial content in the Euphuistic style. Yet Philip concurrently viewed the text of the *Psalms*, i.e., the sacred word of God to the Hebrew King David, as suitable text for alteration by inserting rhymes and English metric forms. Philip’s sister Mary apparently agreed. Moreover, in her *Psalm* editing, Mary also engaged in “expanding metaphors and descriptions present in the original Hebrew,” thereby incorporating “her experiences at Elizabeth’s court, as well as female experiences of marriage and childbirth” (*DLB*, Mary Sidney Herbert. ed. Hannay 187).
11. Philip Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy* ranked the Continental literary page over the dynamic British stage. With a similar bent for derivative translated verse, Mary Sidney translated Robert Garnier’s poem into her 1592 *Antonius*—a cerebral, low-action, high-interiority blank verse poem that advanced the French neo-Senecan “closet drama.” Herbert family tutor and acolyte Samuel Daniel followed her with his rhyming 1594 *Cleopatra* and “War of the Roses” poems (published 1595–1623)—thereby countering de Vere’s theatrical sensualities and action, and promoting their poetic pages over his dynamic stages.
12. The plot of *Merchant of Venice* suddenly had ironic topical echoes in James’ court: a handsome young man with an older, wealthy male companion suddenly sought traditional marriage with a charming woman he newly loves. *Othello* contained two characters of potential interest to James’ court circle. Cassio has been likened to Philip Sidney. Iago has been likened to crypto-Catholic Henry Howard (Ogburn 563, 569), an arch enemy of Oxford who was resurrected from two decades of dishonor and poverty by Robert Cecil and then elevated to court prominence by King James.

## What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?

13. See: Schoenbaum, *Compact Documentary*, 252–3. See also screens 3–4 from: <https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/exhibition/document/account-edmund-tylney-master-revels-listing-plays-performed-year-1604-5>. The notion that James' Revels scribe for five different account entries would add a hard *d* consonant to a “speer” sound in order to achieve phonetic accuracy for the Stratford Shakspere, allegedly at his peak popularity and therefore well known, strains credulity.
14. There is sound logic in the exclusion of several de Vere works by the Herberts in the First Folio. Although *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* satirized the Sidney-Dudley-Herbert families, these poems were perhaps best defused indirectly by express decontextualization of the “William Shakespeare” pseudonym for the plays. Likewise excluded were the already suppressed 1609 *Sonnets* that might embarrass Southampton, the Oxford/Herbert descendants and the Herberts' Protestant cause. Among de Vere's excluded anonymous plays, *Edward III* disparaged the Scots and thereby insulted King James.
15. Four investments by Shakspere between 1597 and 1613 total nearly £1000, an extraordinary sum for a London theater person. Peter Dickson cites an estimated annual Pembroke income of £22,000 (*Bardgate*, 2011, 111) from which a £1000 payoff paid out over 17 years would have been a pittance.
16. Government support for maintaining de Vere's anonymity from 1604 to 1614 likely came from the dual presence of Robert Cecil (Richard Gloucester) and Henry Howard (Iago, Aaron) in the court of King James. Cecil had secretly engaged Howard in his succession negotiations with James prior to Elizabeth's death (Robinson 85). Neither the Protestant Cecil nor crypto-Catholic Howard faction wanted Oxford to be revealed as Shakespeare.
17. In 1920 J. Thomas Looney in “*Shakespeare*” *Identified* first outlined the Sidney-Oxford literary animus, followed by Eva Turner Clark and Ruth Loyd Miller (*Oxfordian Vistas*, 2, 166–76). Ramon Jiménez detailed specific literary conflicts among the *Famous Victories* plays in *Shakespeare's Apprenticeship* (90–104). Gerit Quealy described the literary Sidney-Oxford barbs at Shakespeare Oxford conferences in Washington, D.C. (2011), Toronto (2013) and in a 2014 *DeVere Society Newsletter*.

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