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The Shakespeare Fellowship
Designed in Baltimore, MD.
Online ISSN: 2157-6793
Print ISSN: 2157-6785



This 2011 volume III of *Brief Chronicles* was, like the previous two issues, set in **Chaparral Pro**. Our ornament selection continues to be inspired not only by early modern semiotics, but by the generosity of contemporary designers, such as Rob Anderson, who designed the **Flight of the Dragon** Celtic Knot Caps which contribute so much to our leading paragraphs. T. Olsson's 1993 **Ornament Scrolls**, available for free download from **typOasis**, have once again furnished an inviting opportunity to apply some of the theoretical principles discussed by our more distinguished contributors.



In memoriam, C.O., Jr.
Who led the way...
against many
impediments.



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Earl Showerman graduated from Harvard College and the University of Michigan Medical School, has been a patron of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival since 1974, and reads at the Hannon Library of Southern Oregon University in pursuit of the Shakespeare authorship question. He has served as a Trustee of the Shakespeare Fellowship and The Shakespeare Authorship Coalition. Since 2005 he has presented and published a series of papers on the topic of Shakespeare’s “greater Greek,” explicating the Greek dramatic sources in *Hamlet*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *Pericles*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Timon of Athens*, *Troilus and Cressida* and the Tudor interlude, *Horestes*.

Michael Wainwright studied for his BA in English and Mathematics at Kingston University and gained his MA in Modernism and Modern Writers from Royal Holloway, University of London, where he also completed his PhD as a scholarship winner. He has taught literary theory from Plato to Butler at Lancaster University and courses dedicated to twentieth-century American literature at the University of London, Staffordshire University, and the University of Birmingham. Twice winner of the Faulkner Conference “Call for Papers,” his publications include three monographs for Palgrave Macmillan: *Darwin and Faulkner’s Novels: Evolution and Southern Fiction* (2008), *Faulkner’s Gambit: Chess and Literature* (2011), and the forthcoming *Toward a Sociobiological Hermeneutic: Darwinian Essays on Literature* (2012).

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Richard Whalen is co-editor with Ren Draya of Blackburn College of *Othello* in the Oxfordian Shakespeare Series. He is co-general editor of the series with Daniel Wright of Concordia University and the author of *Shakespeare Who Was He? The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon* (Greenwood-Praeger, 1994).



To Whom it May Concern: Greetings

Great floods have flown
From simple sources, and great seas have dried
When miracles have by the greatest been denied.

—Helena, *All's Well that Ends Well*

his third issue of *Brief Chronicles* goes to the electronic press at a watershed moment in authorship studies. The “seismic transformation in public awareness”¹ recently predicted by Shakespeare Fellowship President Earl Showerman is well underway. Stimulated not only by the massive exposure to the Oxford case brought on by *Anonymous* and at least two about-to-be-released independent documentaries, the shift is also being enabled by the vigorous development of new organs of scholarship and communication such as *Brief Chronicles*, and an entire spectrum of new authorship blogs. Given the intellectual inertia (or worse) involved in the authorship question, it would be rash to predict an optimistic timetable for the Oxford revolution – but there is no doubt that the “handwriting is on the wall” as never before.

New books on the authorship question, most of them by a new generation of talented and dedicated Oxfordians, continue to expand our intellectual horizons and inject both sense and sensibility into the study of the English literary renaissance. Check out the reviews in this issue if you don’t believe me. The editor could not stop them. As Ben Jonson said of the bard, “sufflimandus erat.” They just kept coming.

How else can one explain the extraordinary new energy that has been injected into the authorship debate by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust’s sponsorship of the new “Sixty Minutes with Shakespeare” attempt to rebut the anti-Stratfordian case? Released two full months before *Anonymous*, the online program prominently features such paragons of scholarship as the Prince of Wales, speaking out on behalf of the Birthplace on topics such as “Gaps in the record,” “Where did Shakespeare get his money?” or “Why aren’t there any books in the Shakespeare Will?” Despite enlisting sixty experts, the Trust apparently could not find anyone to address the topic of connections between the plays and the Earl of Oxford’s life, although the ubiquitous Professor Alan Nelson did weigh in on “Factual objections to Oxford” as the author.

The Trust has yet to learn the importance of Richard Feynman's first principle of inquiry: you must not fool yourself, and you are the easiest person to fool.

The editor has learned over the years that the best strategy for following Feynman's advice is to cultivate the ability to argue the contrary position in its strongest possible formulation. For example, the Stratfordians have a monument in Stratford, a name on some title pages, and even a 1623 folio that alludes convincingly to that monument and purports to represent an "author" associated with it. What they don't have, and never have had, is an *actual* author with a biographical footprint to match his literary remains. As Mark Twain put it, "when we find a vague file of chipmunk tracks stringing through the dust of Stratford village, we know by our reasoning powers that Hercules has been along there."² In words of William H. Furness, already quoted in an earlier issue of *Brief Chronicles* but deserving repetition until their significance becomes more readily apparent, anti-Stratfordians are those who have "never been able to bring the life of William Shakespeare within planetary space of the plays. Are there any two things in the world more incongruous?"³

It is this massive failure of biographical inquiry that lies behind the complaint that Oxfordians fail to apprehend the mysterious workings of literary creativity. As put by James Shapiro, "the claim that Shakespeare of Stratford lacked the life experiences to have written the plays" is "disheartening" because "it diminishes the very thing that makes him so exceptional: his imagination."⁴ Implicit in this view is an unarticulated admission of orthodoxy's failure to discover meaningful connections between the life of their author and his "imagination." All that's left for them is *imagination* – which is for Stratfordians less a term of literary criticism than of ideology.

As Charles Beauclerk has said, Shakespearean traditionalists like Shapiro confuse imagination with fantasy. Imagination is the power of the mind to work upon what the senses provide. It is not the antithesis of what is given to the senses, but a creative, synthetic transformation. Rather than juxtaposing "imagination" and experience, a literary criticism committed to the inductive principles of post-enlightenment inquiry ought to be asking how they undergo fusion in the creative act. Like so much else in the current sophistic treatment of the authorship question, the idea that the Oxfordians are, as a school, insensitive to the creative process is more a matter of the convenient rewriting of intellectual history to suit complacent prejudices and reinforce pre-existing biases than an authentic representation of the view it purports to challenge. Here is how Charlton Ogburn, writing more than half a century ago, put the problem, now inherited by Shapiro's orthodox colleagues without – for them at least – any credible resolution in sight:

In a way, it may be considered a tribute to the works of this genius that almost from the time of his death the large majority of people have been content tacitly to assume that these works were given to the world like manna. All of a sudden, in the conventional view—or at best after a few years' gestation of a most mysterious kind—the dramas and poems simply appeared, full-panoplied, like Pallas from the brow of Zeus. What was their substance? Why were they written? More than three centuries of critical scholarship throw

no light upon these questions. Indeed, such questions seem hardly to have arisen in scholastic minds. What manner of man was he who brought forth the supreme works of literature of our language? "Little," we are told, "is known of the author of the plays"; or, in a shameless imposition upon our credulity, we are given "lives" of Shakespeare which are airy imaginings undisciplined except by a few facts largely irrelevant.⁵

An industry in denial – as the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition defines it in its recent rebuttal to the Birthplace Trust's "60 Minutes" – must eventually come face to face with whatever it's avoiding. As this passage from Ogburn suggests, Oxfordians have wrestled fruitfully for decades with the very problems Stratfordians conveniently accuse them of ignoring; indeed, the *status quo ante* in Shakespearean studies has over and over again pointed to the intellectual emptiness of appeals to the explanatory force of such abstractions as "creativity," "genius," or "imagination," ungrounded in historical, biographical, or artistic circumstance. This is not to deny that the search for relevant Oxfordian context has sometimes encouraged excessive indulgence in a kind of literalist reductionism. Stratfordians are right that imagination is important; they are wrong in accusing Oxfordians of trying to deny its importance, and even more wrong in supposing that it can substitute for actual experience – including rigorous training. Even the most talented musician must do scales, and a writer without books is no writer at all. At its best, as Ogburn suggests, Oxfordian scholarship has brought to bear an interdisciplinary methodology aimed at appreciating "the voice of the artist," which only speaks to us with "added force and illumination with the passage of centuries."⁶

The interdisciplinary nature of an authorship inquiry grounded in first principles is well represented in the essays included in this issue. Leading off our volume is Michael Wainwright's "Veering toward an Evolutionary *Hamlet*," a highly disciplined yet creative fusion of Darwin, Freud, and the great sociologist Edvard Westermarck, who first established that propinquity in childhood under normal conditions produces sexual avoidance in adults. This biologically based, natural pattern of incest avoidance breaks down, however, under conditions of the concentration of state power in royal families. It is also complicated by such social inventions as the Elizabethan wardship system in which Edward de Vere was raised, where adoptive siblings were often forced into marriage for reasons of the acquisition of power and property. In his application of a sociobiological model to the dynamics of Shakespearean authorship, Wainwright's essay fulfills the prediction

of William McFee in his introduction to the 1948 second edition of "*Shakespeare Identified*." The book, declared McFee, is "destined to occupy, in modern Shakespearean controversy, the place Darwin's great work occupies in Evolutionary theory. It may be superseded, but all modern discussion of the authorship of the plays and poems stems from it, and owes the author an inestimable debt."⁷

Drawing both from orthodox and Oxfordian criticism, Wainwright demonstrates that *Hamlet* bears the unmistakable imprint of Oxford's biography. Arguing that "one paradigm shift, from the Stratfordian to the Oxfordian, finds substantiation from another, the shift from the Cartesian to the Freudian,"⁸ Wainwright delivers an

interdisciplinary *tour de force* that reads *Hamlet* as a “psychological palimpsest created by the displacement, condensation, and overdetermination”⁹ of the dreamlike powers of the artist. Written from within the endogamous confines of the prison house of aristocratic wardship, the ontology invoked in *Hamlet* “describes a snare between the biological man, whom Freud underestimates, the man beset with unconscious psychological demands, whom Westermarck underestimates, and the conscientiously lawful prince [Hamlet] must be.”¹⁰ In his successful negotiation, the artist “offered exogamous stock to the aristocracy, and thus succeeded where monarchies by necessity usually fail.”¹¹

The eighth in a series of articles by Earl Showerman on Greek influences in the Shakespeare plays,¹² the offering in this volume, “Shakespeare’s Greater Greek: *Macbeth* and Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*,” reveals a longstanding contradiction in the orthodox scholarship on Shakespeare’s classical influences. Unlike Euripides, several of whose plays were widely available in vernacular translations within the lifetime of the author and were widely known among the Elizabethan literati, Aeschylus, even to the average literate Elizabethan, remained essentially an untranslated *terra incognita*; not even one of his plays had been translated into Italian, French, English, German or Spanish before 1600. Knowledge of the Greek original such as the Vettori (Henri Estienne Paris, 1557, 1567), or a Latin translation such as the Saint-Ravy (Basel, 1555)¹³ was the forbidding prerequisite for a Shakespeare able to draw on Aeschylus. Yet Showerman documents an extensive tradition confirming Aeschylan influence on “the most classical of all Shakespearean plays,” a work exhibiting “innumerable instances of striking similarity” in “metaphorical mintage” from Aeschylus. Despite this, Showerman’s review of the critical literature on Shakespeare’s classical, and more specifically Aeschylan, influences reveals a clear pattern of avoidance behavior. Shakespearean scholars can’t really deny compelling evidence for the bard’s firsthand knowledge of Aeschylus, but they also don’t want to “go there.” Even J. Churton Collins, who “has gone farther than any 20th century scholar” in documenting the appearance of a direct link between the bard of Athens and the author of *Macbeth*, concludes that “we must *assume* that *instinct* led Shakespeare to the Greek conception of the scope and functions of tragedy.”¹⁴

Assume....instinct....imagination. Such keywords are the semantic flags of an industry in denial.

A very different kind of influence – one contemporary with the bard’s own life and times – is the focus of Richard Whalen’s survey of scholarship on the *commedia dell Arte*. Like Showerman’s essay, the key word here would be “comprehensive.” Whalen’s essay exemplifies how thoroughly the best Oxfordian scholarship has assimilated the insights of traditional scholars, and how effective it can be in exposing intrinsic contradictions that cry out for post-Stratfordian synthesis. The elusive, unscripted dramatic practice of the *commedia dell Arte*, arguably left a deeper and more pervasive stamp on *Othello* and other plays than any other theatrical art of the bard’s own generation.

The same ambivalence noted by Showerman – between the “he must have” and the “no evidence that he did” – is evident in Whalen’s study: while a surprising abundance of testimony points to a direct, resonant, and comprehensive influence of

the *commedia* on the characterizations, satiric tone, and improvisational ethos of the Shakespeare plays, these findings have readily been ignored for lack of any credible biographical context.

Such practices expose the essentially ideological role that “biography” has come to play in Shakespearean criticism by the early 21st century. At least one highly regarded hypothetical author “lived in Venice and traveled in northern Italy for about five months in 1575-76, when he was in his impressionable mid-20s and when *commedia dell’arte* was flourishing there,” where he “had ample opportunity to see *commedia* performances in the public squares and in the palaces of the rich and the nobility.”¹⁵ But the response to this fact by traditional Shakespeareans is best summarized by the title of a recent biography: to the average Shakespearean scholar, the Earl of Oxford remains not just a biographical enigma, but a “monstrous adversary.”¹⁶

The third of our articles dealing with what might broadly be termed Shakespeare’s “domains of knowledge” is Thomas Regnier’s study of legal themes in *Hamlet*. Like Showerman and Whalen, Regnier brings to this topic not only a formidable record of his own scholarship¹⁷ but a close reading of the relevant critical tradition. This includes two outstanding and underestimated articles by another lawyer, Tony Burton, whose work, although written from a nominally orthodox perspective, has for a decade implicitly challenged many of the presumptions on which this view is predicated. As an independent scholar, Burton was unimpeded by the epistemic constraints imposed by struggle for professional advancement in an intellectual context that still finds it expedient to substitute ridicule and ostracism for rational engagement of relevant factual and theoretical questions. Regnier finds that *Hamlet* “contains legal issues that parallel watershed events in Oxford’s life, particular events that concerned homicide and property law.”¹⁸ Drawing also on Nina Green’s detailed study of the finances of the Oxford Earldom published in *Brief Chronicles I*,¹⁹ he concludes that the dominant *Hamlet* theme of frustrated inheritance is foreshadowed in the decline of Oxford’s estate under the Machiavellian machinations of Robert Dudley, who in 1562 became legal supervisor of the Oxford estates on the death of the 16th Earl.

Regnier’s study of the legal subtext of *Hamlet* reminds us of the central role that legal analysis has always played in a fully informed and conscientious Shakespeare scholarship. To define Shakespearean studies as consisting of “Shakespeare – not law” is to indulge in an elementary error of binary either/or logic that not only mistakes the object of its own study but also parodies the authentic quest for knowledge. When joined to the proofs of the other divergent domains of knowledge embodied in the plays and documented by Showerman and Whalen, the legal erudition displayed in *Hamlet* cannot fail to strike the unprejudiced reader as a powerful contradiction of the orthodox paradigm of authorship. This most autobiographical of plays reveals an author conversant with abstruse legal principles that ultimately invoke the traditional conflict between law and equity.²⁰ The Stratfordians are half right. Shakespeare did not think like a lawyer. He thought like a judge, a brilliantly imaginative judge with a literary message about equity.

Together these first four essays present the orthodox biographical tradition

with a formidable challenge from circumstantial fact pattern. As exemplified in the substantive, but consistently ignored or unjustly deprecated scholarship of such writers as those represented here, authorship studies may lack the official approval of the academy, but it cannot fail an impartial test of either comprehensiveness or credibility. Those who suppose that Oxfordian scholarship is confined to a narrowly defined biographical register enabled by naïveté about the complex interrelatedness of experience and art will be disappointed. These writers bring credibility to their analyses because they have studied and contemplated their subjects with as much, or greater, passion and intellect as the best professional scholars in their respective fields of inquiry. And they have done so in an atmosphere free from the need to gain social approval by reaching preordained conclusions aimed at advancing themselves professionally by flattering peers who are still fooling themselves more effectively than anyone else could. These essays, then, highlight various dimensions of the “myriad minded” experience deposited in the plays, confirming what smart scholars have always known even if they are reluctant to admit it: the range and subtlety of this Renaissance author transcends the confines of the territorial borders that characterize the modern intellectual division of labor within academia. These scholars explore not just the intersection of the biological and biographical (Wainwright), but classical (Showerman), theatrical (Whalen), and legal (Regnier) aspects of the plays.

The evidence cited in both Showerman’s and Whalen’s articles suggests that the alchemical transformation of lived experience into great literature was facilitated by the author’s having had access to an exceptionally wide range of books. Abraham Lincoln and Fredrick Douglass, both omnivorous readers, were advantaged by reading both the Bible and Shakespeare, among many other books. The bard himself read not only the Bible and Seneca (among many other books), but also Aeschylus. Given the imprint of such untranslated sources as the *Oresteia*, as documented in Showerman’s essay, he was (notwithstanding Ben Jonson’s deliberately ambiguous gibe) conversant in Greek, as well as Latin, Italian, and French. His knowledge of Italian geography, as documented in Richard Roe’s recent *Shakespeare Guide to Italy* (see review this issue, 279-284), is matched by a versatile awareness of the forms and possibilities inherent in the popular *commedia dell Arte* – which, however, influential it may have been in 16th century Italy or even France, was virtually non-existent in Elizabeth’s England. The author, like his creation Jacques, seems to have been a traveler, indulging a literary melancholy “compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels” (*AYLI* 4.1.15-16).

The fifth contribution to this volume, Robert Prechter’s “On the Authorship of *Avisa*,” concentrates a spotlight on one of the most intriguing and unresolved authorship enigmas of the 1590s. Prechter argues that *Willowbie His Avisa*, conventionally attributed by the pseudonymous editor “Hadrian Dorrell” to Henry Willobie, is a work by George Gascoigne, written sometime in the 1570s not long before Gascoigne’s death and reflecting an allegory of Elizabeth’s royal suitors from the perspective of that temporal horizon. Like his previous iconoclastic article on *Hundredth Sundrie Flowres* (1573),²¹ Prechter breaks new ground in attributing to Gascoigne a work sometimes assigned to Matthew Roydon²² or even to the Earl of

Oxford. We are pleased that Prechter's previous article has stimulated vigorous debate, printed in this issue (see "Kreiler and Prechter on *Hundredth Sundrie Flowres*," 294-314), and hope that his further contributions will continue to promote thoughtful methodological dialogue.

Our next essay, Bonner Miller Cutting's "She Will Not Be a Mother: Evaluating the Seymour Prince Tudor Hypothesis," seems destined to upset more than the average number of readers. For far too long, in my opinion, the so-called "Prince Tudor" debate has suffered from various forms of intolerance and irrational combativeness from nearly every side. Miller's article refreshingly cuts through a great deal of the emotional posturing to show that there is good historical reason to suspect that Princess Elizabeth Tudor may well have become pregnant – as wide rumor speculated – by the unscrupulous Admiral Seymour in spring 1548. Cutting asks a simple but provocative question to which there is but one obvious answer: if there was nothing to such rumors, why did the Princess remain sequestered in Anthony Denny's country manor of Cheshunt from May, when she left Queen Katherine's household, until December – a full seven months, during which time she missed several critical opportunities to "show" herself in public in order to quell the rumors of her pregnancy. In the course of establishing this possibility Cutting revisits some long-assumed interpretations of known historical events such as the famous "teasing" event during which the Katherine, the wife of Elizabeth's alleged molester, supposedly was having a romp with the princess by slicing off her dress in the garden. This received story, suggests Cutting, is a thinly veiled cover for a much more serious and scandalous reality. The "tease" was an *assault*:

Cutting off the clothes of a Princess was not an everyday occurrence in a royal household. It suggests that there was nothing playful about it. No one was "tickling" Elizabeth, either in the garden or during the reported visits to the Princess' bedchamber. The Queen wanted to know the truth: was Elizabeth pregnant?²³

Having taken us this far, Cutting turns the tables on a great deal of loose thinking by applying the same critical interrogation she has directed against contradictory official documents to the "Seymour PT" theory, which would make the alleged child of the possibly pregnant Elizabeth into a changeling raised as the 17th Earl of Oxford. Arguing that "historical events can be easily conflated when viewed retrospectively," Cutting concludes that even if such a child was born, there are "compelling reasons to conclude that this child was *not* the 17th Earl of Oxford."²⁴

In "Shakespeare's Antagonistic Disposition," Williams College Psychology Professor Andrew Crider revisits one of the most important documents in the orthodox biographical tradition, *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), to analyze its ambivalent portrayal of a figure who is often thought to be William Shakespeare. Taken in conjunction with his analysis of other documents such as those of the Wayte affair and Shakespeare's will, Crider suggests that the hero of the Stratfordian narrative seems characterized by an "antagonistic propensity...most reliably expressed in the facets of

low altruism and tough-mindedness”²⁵ and “that Shakespeare’s successful career as a businessman may have been influenced by dispositional conscientiousness, which the five-factor model opposes to undependability.”²⁶ Although Crider does not take up the issue, one can only wonder how the average literary genius – more likely than not a manic depressive – ranks on the five-factor axis of “dispositional conscientiousness” versus undependability.

The final essay in this volume, Richard Waugaman’s “*The Sternhold and Hopkins Whole Book of Psalms: Crucial Evidence for Edward de Vere’s Authorship of the Works of Shakespeare*,” is one toward which the editor must confess a partiality. Paradigm shifts are always driven in part by new methodologies. That the annotations of the Earl of Oxford’s Geneva Bible can point to new discoveries regarding Shakespeare’s use of the Bible has been a scandal for a decade, the implications of which orthodox Shakespeareans have devoted some effort to ignoring. Doing so has required studiously ignoring a series of articles in *Notes and Queries* and other academic publications, both by myself²⁷ and by Waugaman,²⁸ as well as in my 2001 University of Massachusetts PhD dissertation. In this article Waugaman takes up a new and revealing dimension of this question by suggesting that the Sternhold and Hopkins Psalms (WBP), a copy of which is bound and annotated with the de Vere Bible, left a far deeper and more pervasive imprint on Shakespeare than previously recognized. Waugaman reached this conclusion through a systematic study of the verbal traces left in the plays and poems of the 21 psalms – most especially 51, 25, 65, 63, and 103 – marked in the de Vere Bible. Waugaman concludes that “close examination....reveals the WBP to be a much richer source of Shakespearean sources than previously acknowledged”²⁹ and hypothesizes that “De Vere was so familiar with the [WBP] that some of its echoes in his works probably reflect the associative process that was integral to his creative genius.”³⁰ If so, one can only look forward to the day when further discoveries of this kind will serve to more fully reveal the author’s creative engagement with the many written sources that informed his extraordinarily rich imaginative life.

Endnotes

- ¹ Earl Showerman, "The Watershed," *Shakespeare Matters*, 10:3 (Summer 2011), 3.
- ² Mark Twain, *Is Shakespeare Dead* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1909), 131.
- ³ As cited in Edwin Reed, *Noteworthy Opinions, Pro and Con: Bacon vrs. Shakespeare* (Boston: Coburn, 1905), 9.
- ⁴ James Shapiro, *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 277.
- ⁵ Charlton Ogburn, 3. All references with only an author's name are to page numbers in the present volume.
- ⁶ Ogburn, 1.
- ⁷ William McFee, in J. Thomas Looney, "*Shakespeare*" Identified in *Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1948), xix.
- ⁸ Michael Wainwright, 15.
- ⁹ Wainwright, 13.
- ¹⁰ Wainwright, 30.
- ¹¹ Wainwright, 30.
- ¹² "Shakespeare's Many Much Ado's: *Alcestis*, *Hercules* and *Love's Labour's Wonne*," reprinted in *Shakespeare Criticism Vol. 141*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2012. Originally published in *Brief Chronicles Vol.1* (2009); "*Timon of Athens*: Shakespeare's Sophoclean Tragedy," *The Oxfordian Vol XI* (2009); "Look down and see what Death is doing": Gods and Greeks in *The Winter's Tale*," *The Oxfordian Vol X* (2007); "*Orestes* and *Hamlet*: from Myth to Masterpiece," *The Oxfordian Vol. VII* (2004); "Mythopoesis of Resurrection: Hesiod to Shakespeare – *The Winter's Tale* and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*," *Discovering Shakespeare: A Festschrift in Honour of Isabel Holden*, Concordia University (2009); "Shakespeare's Plutarchan Nomenclature: The Company of Noble Grecians," *Shakespeare Matters Vol.8:3* (2009); "Horestes and Hamlet," *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*, Vol.44 (2008).
- ¹³ Oxford's mother-in-law, Mildred Cooke, among the most educated women in England, owned Aeschylus, *Tragoediae VII* (in Greek). Paris, 1557. 4^o. See Caroline Bowdon's "The Library of Mildred Cooke Cecil, Lady Burghley," *Library* 6:1 (March 2005), 26.
- ¹⁴ Cited in Showerman, 39.
- ¹⁵ Richard Whalen, 99.

- ¹⁶ Alan Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford* (Liverpool English Texts and Studies), 40 (2003).
- ¹⁷ “Could Shakespeare Think Like a Lawyer? How Inheritance Law Issues in *Hamlet* May Shed Light on the Authorship Question,” *University of Miami Law Review*, 57 (2003): 377–428; “Teaching Shakespeare and the Law,” *Shakespeare Matters* 6:1 (Fall 2006), 1, 11-13. Regnier also lectures on a regular basis on Shakespeare and the Law, and has taught a course on Shakespeare and the Law at the University of Miami School of Law.
- ¹⁸ Thomas Regnier, 109.
- ¹⁹ Nina Green, “The Fall of the House of Oxford,” *Brief Chronicles I*, 41-95.
- ²⁰ Equity deals with legal contests that fall outside the traditional province of common law, seeking to reconcile contradictions so as to preserve the “spirit” of the law in cases in which the “letter” seems inapplicable.
- ²¹ Robert Prechter, *Hundreth Sundrie Flowres Revisited: Was Oxford Really Involved*,” *Brief Chronicles II*, 45-78.
- ²² See, for example, Arthur Acheson, *Mistress Davenant: The Dark Lady of Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1913).
- ²³ Bonner Cutting, 172.
- ²⁴ Cutting, 182.
- ²⁵ Andrew Crider, 209.
- ²⁶ Crider, 210.
- ²⁷ See, for example, Roger Stritmatter, “Shakespeare’s Ecclesiasticus 28.2-5: A Biblical Source for Ariel’s Doctrine of Mercy,” *Notes and Queries*, 254:1 (March 2009), 67-70; “The Source of Harry of Cornwall’s Theological Doctrine,” *Notes and Queries*, 246: 3 (September 2001), 280-82; “‘Old’ and ‘New’ Law in *Merchant of Venice*,” *Notes and Queries*, 245:1 (March 2000), 70-72; “By Providence Divine: Shakespeare’s Awareness of Some Geneva Marginal Notes of I Samuel,” *Notes and Queries* 245:1 (March 2000), 97-100; “A New Biblical Source for Shakespeare’s Concept of ‘All Seeing Heaven,’” *Notes and Queries* 244:2 (June 1999), 207-09; “The Heavenly Treasure of Sonnets 48 and 52,” *Notes and Queries*, 244:2 (June 1999), 226-28; “The Influence of a Genevan Note from Romans 7.19 on Shakespeare’s Sonnet 151.” *Notes and Queries* 242:4 (December 1997), 514-16.
- ²⁸ Waugaman’s publications on the Bible as a Shakespearean source include, “The Sternhold and Hopkins *Whole Book of the Psalms* is a Major Source for the Works of Shakespeare,” *Notes and Queries* 56:4 (2009) 595-604; Psalm Echoes in Shakespeare’s *1 Henry VI*, *Richard II*, and *Edward III*,” *Notes and Queries* 57: 3 (2010), 359-64; “Maniculed Psalms in the de Vere Bible: A New Literary Source for Shakespeare,” *Brief Chronicles II* (2010), 109-120; *Titus Andronicus*, the Psalms,

and Edward de Vere's Bible, *The Oxfordian* (2011), 1-17; and "Shakespeare's Bible: A Personal Odyssey," *American Academy of Psychoanalysis Forum* 54:16-18, 2010.


²⁹ Richard Waugaman, 215.

³⁰Waugman, 227.



From the Foreword to *This Star of England*

(Coward-McCann, 1952)

 Besides the two authorities that traditionally confront us—the authority of government, which tells us what is incumbent upon citizens of a society, and the other, theological, philosophical, or scientific, which sets forth our genesis and our significance in the universe—besides these, there is still another voice, non-authoritative, personal and potent, which interprets us to ourselves. This is the voice of the artist. It is the great literature, the painting or sculpture, the symphony or concerto, opera or oratorio, which imparts a conviction of truth—of ultimate harmony and meaning—and produces in us a feeling of exaltation.

Often the truths conveyed are ephemeral: they do not endure as patterns of life shift and change. But the work of a few transcends their own era, remains fresh and vital, abiding with us. Of no one is this more strikingly the case than of Shakespeare. The nature of Shakespeare's genius was "such as to exalt the glory of man," to show that the resources of human nature are unfathomable and that the human spirit can be neither explained nor contained by the mean attributes the rationality of our age allows it.

Since his time, the principles of governmental authority, as well as the theological, philosophical, and scientific edifices of thought, have undergone drastic alteration or have been abandoned. Yet Shakespeare's conception of man seems not only to have retained its validity but to acquire added force and illumination with the passage of the centuries. As science progresses and man's stock in himself tends to sink lower in relation to his increasing mastery over his material environment, the prospect is not that the truths bequeathed to us by Shakespeare and a few other superlative artists will be superseded, but that they will be the only certainties we can hold to.

If Shakespeare's appeal is greater today than it has been during the three intervening centuries since his time, the reason may be that our age, like that of

Elizabeth, is one of expanding horizons, of speculation in unfamiliar fields, of formidable uncertainties and few signposts. The roving and unconstrained imagination of four centuries ago finds its counterpart in this present age of unstable values and shattered institutions, as it has not done in all the years between. The man of the Renaissance was an adventurer in a chartless universe, and this is what man has again become in the twentieth century. The directions in which our predecessors in the era of Elizabeth and of the Medicis set forth into the unknown are those whom we have followed: the mould of our civilization took shape in that age of trial and discovery. What we are now was to a considerable extent determined in those formative years of our culture.

All art has a tremendous potency for mankind, none more so than the incandescent creativeness of Shakespeare's genius. It has been observed that Balzac's characters were more typical of the generation that followed him than of the one he depicted; likewise that, after Kipling's best stories had been written, such men as he described began to be encountered in the far places of the world; so that these artists actually created men.

It is not the business of art to follow reality. Reality follows art. When we gaze at a sunset, we do not see it "as it is"—as an amalgam of Copernicus's vision of the earth's revolution round the sun and Max Planck's quantum theory of light. We see it through the eyes of generations of painters and poets who have infused into the spectacle the lofty symbol of aspiration and resignation or the grandeur of celestial harmony. The mathematician cannot postulate his universe without symbols. Without words man cannot think; and without the identification of our emotions which the artist has traditionally given us we could scarcely feel. For it is not only the phenomena of our material abode that art has endowed with significance: art has, through the ages, given us our ideas of ourselves, the intimate and impelling characterizations which we recognize as "true" because they come to life in terms of our common experience. A character in fiction becomes real in proportion as we can see ourselves in him. At the same time, we are real to ourselves in proportion as we recognize ourselves in portrayals of men and women in literature. Inspired by the artist, man creates and re-creates himself. The greater the artist, the more enduring is the conception of man that he provides. There is perhaps no other criterion of supremacy in art.

The pre-eminence of Shakespeare lies in his having achieved a more comprehensive realization of man's potentialities than any other poet has done. He not only created characters, but in a very real sense he created the English race as we now know it. All genuine artists are explorers. They extend the boundaries of our known world, and we others follow, our heritage and our lives enhanced by their vision. Their conception of mankind is fulfilled in time by the culture of which they are the expression; their bright vision becomes a commonplace. Although many a poet has only a transitory influence because, limited to a peculiar set of circumstances, he lacks universality and thus permanent significance, Shakespeare is immortal. The spectacle of his dramas gives us a sense of ultimate realization of essential humanity, as nearly ultimate as we are likely to conceive; gives us, indeed, an apprehension like a god's.

It is not that Shakespeare's characters are superhuman: literature abounds in characters of superhuman heroism, superhuman strength, or villainy, and we find them merely tedious. Shakespeare's men and women are not superhuman but superbly human.

What is absent from Shakespeare is the mediocre, the lifeless, the half-formed, the imperfectly comprehended, the trite, the passive, the mean and the meaningless. What is absent, it might be said, is that which modern writers conscientiously represent and define, on the grounds that life is like that. This is what we imply when we say that Shakespeare's conception of man is a lofty one. For to him it is the essence of man's destiny to encompass a totality of experience and to bear a burden of self-knowledge that marks him a figure of infinite capacity, himself at once the explanation and the mystery of the universe. However else Shakespeare's heroes and heroines, villains and villainesses feel and act, they feel and act greatly, in keeping with an exalted conception of man's fate. In a time like ours when the arts form what has been called a petty conspiracy to debase the stature of man, one finds reassurance in the manifest instinct of our generation to turn to the poet who, above all others, has endowed man with a stature great even in his weakness, transcendent in meaning even in the face of final futility and extinction.

In a way, it may be considered a tribute to the works of this genius that almost from the time of his death the large majority of people have been content tacitly to assume that these works were given to the world like manna. All of a sudden, in the conventional view—or at best after a few years' gestation of a most mysterious kind—the dramas and poems simply appeared, full-panoplied, like Pallas from the brow of Zeus. What was their substance? Why were they written? More than three centuries of critical scholarship throw no light upon these questions. Indeed, such questions seem hardly to have arisen in scholastic minds. What manner of man was he who brought forth the supreme works of literature of our language? "Little," we are told, "is known of the author of the plays"; or, in a shameless imposition upon our credulity, we are given "lives" of Shakespeare which are airy imaginings undisciplined except by a few facts largely irrelevant.

The Elizabethan age was the young manhood of our civilization. It was a time when we awoke to the world around us and took fire from what we saw; a time when, as in the spring, the essences stored beneath the surface through the long medieval twilight rose in all their vigor for the flowering of the Renaissance. It was above all, as we have said the time when the character of our culture took shape. And in no one person was the quality of the age so richly illuminated, so powerfully sustained, as in the author of the poems and dramas of Shakespeare. He was to this Golden Age as the centerpole of a tent to the canvas. The whole literature of the times was elevated through him. Like Aeschylus, in the Golden Age of Greece, he inspired and exceeded his followers. Contemporaneous writers attained to excellence because they shared the stage with him. Without this man's genius, there would have been no such Elizabethan age as we know.

Had his plays and poems been frankly offered as anonymous, no doubt the scholars of subsequent times would have been quick to respond to the challenge and

would long since have cleared up the mystery of their origin. The works were, however, published under the name "William Shakespeare," which resembled the name of an obscure young grain-dealer of Stratford, one William Shaksper (or Shagsper, or Shakspe, or Shaxper, as it was variously written). According to the few meagre records of him which exist, this Shaksper spent some years in London during the period when the dramas were appearing in the public theatres. As a result of this coincidence, generations of school-children have been instructed to believe that the incomparably talented and sensitive genius who wrought the plays out of the tumult of joys, anguish, and intellectual zest to which they bear unmistakable witness, out of a broad learning and experience, out of an intimate familiarity with the whole range of court-life, to say nothing of a jealous and passionate pride of heritage, who contributed more than any other hundred writers to the creation of the language we speak, was a kind of amiable nonentity, nearly unknown to his contemporaries, almost illiterate. We are told that his interest in the literary age he crowned was so slight that after dashing off the plays he returned to the grain business in Stratford and for a period of years paid no further heed to literature, received not a single visitor from the theatrical or literary world, was never referred to, while living, as a writer, was accorded no public comment upon his death; further, that he had never thought it worth while to teach his daughters to read or write, and that he left no book or manuscript in his carefully drawn will. This is the legend we were taught as children to believe, and most of us as adults have been content with it.

The conventional attribution of the works of Shakespeare has corrupted the judgment and insight of generations. It has misled us as to the whole nature of artistic creation. Solely on the strength of the example Shakespeare has been supposed to afford, we have been prone to believe that the artist may be no more than a pipeline between a source of divine inspiration and a pad of paper, that since his participation is only that of a medium in a séance, all things are possible to him without volition, knowledge, or effort. This fiction corresponds with no valid human experience. It would reduce art to the level of prestidigitation, of pulling a rabbit out of a hat. Yet one must accept it if one is to believe that the dramas of Shakespeare were written by a man who—if he could write at all—could have had no possible experience of what he was writing about, and to whom the point of view from which he wrote would have been foreign to a degree almost impossible for us to comprehend in these days of social fluidity and classlessness.

The identification of the uneducated, unlettered, undistinguished, and virtually unknown Shaksper with the brilliant, highly cultivated, worldly, intuitive genius whose self-portrait emerges unmistakably from the series of nobly born Shakespearean heroes, imposes upon us not merely a misconception of the personality behind the dramas but a misconception of the origins of all artistic production. For, as even the meanest artist knows, there is nothing upon which the creator can call outside himself. What he produces must come from what he contains, and all his prayers will not add to the raw material with which he works one single experience, one element of knowledge, one insight that he has not himself acquired honestly and for the most part painfully in the process of living. There is no help to be sought from any quarter.

What he produces is what he is. It is himself that he mines: there is no other source of ore. That is why the task of artistic creation is among the most exhausting occupations known to man. Joseph Conrad remarked that he had spent twelve hours a day bent over in the hold of a ship under the weight of hundred-pound sacks of wheat, but that this toil was not to be compared with that of writing.

It is, therefore, not only the author of the Shakespearean dramas who has so long awaited recognition. It is all artists. To those who have labored in the bitter void where artistic creation can alone take place, in order to enlarge the world in which our spirits may roam, the least repayment we can make is to disabuse ourselves of the myth that spontaneous generation can occur in the mind of the artist, and to comprehend that his achievement has been wrested from the resistant soil of the experience he has endured and mastered.

Of all Shakespeare's contemporaries of whom we have any record, the least likely to have written the plays and poems was William Shaksper. Thirty-five years ago an English schoolmaster, J. Thomas Looney, having like so many others found it impossible to relate the one to the other, set out with an open mind to try to determine who among all possible candidates *could* have written the plays. On the basis of internal evidence, he first enumerated all the characteristics and qualifications which the author must have had. Against these he measured all the possibilities and inevitably eliminated each—all of them but one. Only one man met the clear specifications. As he pressed his inquiries further, additional supporting evidence came to light. The case, as it progressed, approached ever nearer the irrefutable. The results of this fascinating work of ratiocination were published under the title, *Shakespeare Identified*. The findings contained in that study were, it is evident, unlikely ever to be challenged. However, *Shakespeare Identified*, masterful as was its analysis, left enormous reaches of the subject unexplored.

Since its publication, a vast amount of new evidence has been unearthed, a great part of it as a result of the research which led to the present volume. All of it confirms the initial identification. It would seem fair to say that at last the picture, pieced together from a thousand fragments, each of which fits perfectly beside its neighbors, is now in all essentials complete. In particular the central mystery—why the author of the plays was forced to accept anonymity—is finally explained.

However, the main problem to which this work addresses itself is not the identity of the author, though that is fully established, but the infinitely more extensive and complicated matter of how his personality is revealed in the poems and plays, and how the meaning of innumerable passages—indeed, of whole plays and of the entire sonnet-sequence—which scholars have been content to pass over as enigmatic, is to be found in the dramatist's life and character and those of his renowned contemporaries.

It has been necessary for the writers of this work to reconstruct an era: an era we rightly think of as a Golden Age. Insofar as this has involved them in research so extended that it seemed at times they would never emerge from it, no apology is required. But the time has come when readers are asked also to involve themselves in this undertaking. And at this stage an apology is, indeed, due. Not—in the words of Mr. Snagsby—to put too fine a point on it, the results of this research are of large

dimensions. The explanation is that nothing of smaller scope than this book seems to have been possible.

The author of the Shakespearean dramas and the great age in which he lived fitted like hand and glove. Each took character from the other; and to understand the one you must understand the companion-piece. The dramas themselves are rich and complex as are few other works of human artistry: the bafflement of generations of scholars bears witness to that. Many of them are three plays in one, each veridical on its own level, as will be shown. Finally, the personality of the creator is no less profound, manifold, and fascinating than the plays. There are, thus, three elements to be examined: the man, the works, and the times; and the relations of each element to the other two have required exploration. The task of bringing to light all that has been obscured beneath the accumulated sedimentation of three centuries' neglect and misunderstanding is not one of a month or of a year. It was not intended by the man responsible for the initial concealment that the work should be done at all. The poet masked behind the name, "Shakespeare," though like Ariel he commanded the spirits of the air, was helpless, as may now be seen, against those earthly powers whose high interests demanded that his authorship of the poems and dramas be unknown. There has, thus, been more than the accident of neglect to be overcome. There has been the studied purpose of those in a position to enforce their will against the dramatist both during his lifetime and after his death.

The author of *King Henry the Fifth* himself, seeking to "cram within this wooden O the very casques that did affright the air at Agincourt," could not have felt one-tenth so abashed as have the writers of this volume who, doubting that justice could ever be done in the compass of a single book to this most strange and exciting story in all the literary history of the English-speaking world, have yet "dared on this unworthy scaffold to bring forth so great an object." The book, then, is not a large one. These matters are relative. It is a small one. And it is for this that apologies are owed.

To whom is it addressed? It is believed that all readers of Shakespeare will find that the story of the author's life will open up new worlds, as it has to those who have recorded it here. Surely some of the Shakespearean scholars will be sufficiently pure in heart to accept the revelation of the truth, painful wrench though the readjustment may at first be. To these, in a gesture of comradeship and a common, inspiring purpose, this study is offered; and to the coming generation as well, in the hope that its members will carry the work of exploration farther and find much to add which is illuminating.

And there is one other to whom it is addressed in dedication. There is the poet who, with the freedom from the limitations of the factual that rewards the artist for his anguish and toil, was able to frame his own dying plea for recognition and the immortality of his good name, for which his spirit yearned, in poignant lines to the friend surviving him:

O God, Horatio! what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me.
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.

Perhaps it will not be taken as an impertinence if the writers of this account think of it as offering some amends, however inadequate, to the tragic, sublime, and superlatively human figure of Edward de Vere himself.

Our world is full of tumult. The man of the Renaissance “would not”—to speak in Conrad’s phrase—“understand the watchwords of our day, would gaze with amazed eyes at the engines of our strife.” By contrast with our century, we may look back upon the period to which Edward de Vere gave the loftiest expression in the products of his heart and mind and in himself as a man, as “small time.” So be it:

. . . but in that small most greatly liv’d
This Star of England.

C. O., Jr.



C.O., Jr., was the cryptonym of Charlton Ogburn, Jr., subsequently the author of *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and The Reality* (1984). His parents, Charlton Senior (1882-1962) and Dorothy (1890-1981), were themselves Oxfordians of some distinction. In 1952 C.O., Jr. was asked by his parents to write the introduction to their forthcoming *This Star of England*, a book denounced by Columbia Professor O. J. Campbell, in a thoroughly revealing oxymoron, for possessing a “specious plausibility..... likely to mislead the non-specialist reader.” During the 1940s and 1950s, Campbell, a scholar of some distinction on his own account, also took up the cause to slay the Oxfordian dragon. We felt it timely to reprint some of the ideas in C.O. Jr.’s original 1952 essay on genius, creativity, and imagination. This issue of *Brief Chronicles* is dedicated to the honor of this remarkable man, C.O., Jr. — and his remarkable parents.




Veering Toward an Evolutionary Realignment of Freud's *Hamlet*

Michael Wainwright

King. Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame.

Hamlet (1.2.19–20)¹

ust as all neurotic symptoms, and, for that matter, dreams, are capable of being 'over-interpreted' and indeed need to be, if they are to be fully understood," reasons Sigmund Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), "so all genuinely creative writings are the product of more than a single motive and more than a single impulse in the poet's mind."² Yet, while psychoanalysis enables the literary critic to investigate the stimuli behind creativity, "the grandest and most overwhelming creations of art," as Freud concludes in "The *Moses* of Michelangelo" (1914), "are still unsolved riddles to our understanding. We admire them, we feel overawed by them, but," he maintains, "we are unable to say what they represent to us."³ Michelangelo's *Moses* exemplifies this mystery in sculpture, while "another of these inscrutable and wonderful works of art," William "Shakespeare's masterpiece," *Hamlet*, does so in literature.⁴

The truly artistic process remains a psychoanalytical enigma. In accordance with Freudian precepts, a functioning member of society allows the "reality principle" to repress the "pleasure principle," but artists must temporarily abjure repression. This renunciation affords them the freedom to shape their fantasies into substantive expressions. Their masterpieces arise from the interplay of "displacement, condensation and overdetermination," which is common to the imaginative faculty during dreams, as Freud had posited in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, but these particular confluences

become the creatively successful sublimation of personal neuroses.⁵ In short, great artists are a class of fascinating but annoying patients whom psychoanalysts cannot cure, the reality-pleasure conundrum defining the Freudian essence of their artistic sensitivity.

In bringing impulses into the creative process that less sensitive minds repress, artists rework the traces of primal behavior. Freud draws on Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), William Robertson Smith's *The Religion of the Semites* (1889), Ernst Haeckel's *General Morphology of Organisms* (1866), James George Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910), and the Lamarckian hypothesis to substantiate this proposal. Although there is "no place for the beginnings of totemism in Darwin's primal horde," as Freud acknowledges in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), "there is a violent and jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up."⁶ The Darwinian "conjecture that men originally lived in hordes, each under the domination of a single powerful, violent and jealous male," therefore combined with Smith's idea of "the totem male," as Freud recalls in "An Autobiographical Study" (1925), to produce a "vision" of social emergence.⁷

This exclusive harem, which comprised daughters as well as mothers, was a matter of both biological immanence and familial incest. Academics have paid little attention to this stage in social evolution, according to Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, but when Darwin's theory comes under "psychoanalytic translation," the significance of the exasperated sons uniting to make "an end of the patriarchal horde" becomes apparent.⁸ "Cannibal savages as they were," contends Freud, "they devoured their victim as well as killing him. The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers," he continues, "and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him."⁹ The sons had won access to their father's females—their aunts, nieces, mothers, and sisters—but remorse for the murder made itself felt; as a result, "the dead father became stronger than the living one." Henceforth, the "sons themselves, in accordance with the psychological procedure so familiar to us in psycho-analysis under the name of 'deferred obedience,'" proscribed what their father, the Father, had previously prevented. They forbade patricide and "renounced its fruits by resigning their claim to the women who had now been set free." Thus, summarizes Freud, filial guilt underlies "the two fundamental taboos of totemism," patricide and incest.¹⁰

Freud employs Haeckel's biogenetic law, the supposition that individual human development (ontogeny) recapitulates the evolutionary history of the species (phylogeny), to refine his argument: the human subject maturing from animalist tendencies in childhood to civilized behavior as an adult. "The earliest sexual excitations of youthful human beings," states Freud, "are invariably of an incestuous character."¹¹ While maturation works to repress these stimuli, however, the adult subject retains their vestiges. Indeed, the unconscious retains "these ancient wishes," as Freud wrote James S. H. Bransom in 1934, "in all their force."¹² Hence, "the view which explains the horror of incest as an innate instinct," asserts Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, "must be abandoned."¹³ His insistence echoes Frazer's declaration in *Totemism and Exogamy*. "The law only forbids men to do what their instincts incline them to do; what nature

itself prohibits and punishes, it would be superfluous for the law to prohibit and punish. Accordingly,” infers Frazer, “we may always safely assume that crimes forbidden by law are crimes which many men have a natural propensity to commit.”¹⁴ An aversion to incest fostered the emergence of conscience, a crucial development in the formation and stabilization of human societies, with the negotiation of ambivalent feelings toward one’s parents an essential part of individual maturation.

There are, then, as David H. Spain maintains, two major elements to Freud’s theory: “(1) a primal-crime effect—the establishment in the species of guilt and various taboos in response to the primal parricide, effects which Freud thought were passed on by Lamarckian inheritance; and (2) a psychosexual-development effect—the establishment in individuals of a ‘horror’ of incest by means of castration anxiety and the internalization of parental values” during psychological maturation.¹⁵ Freud’s proviso in using “Darwin’s primal horde” hypothesis therefore agrees with his ontogenic rejection of Darwinism. Exogamy, the custom of promoting sexual relations between individuals of different families, clans, or social units, has evolved from a historic origin to counter the animalist potential, which a phylogenetic chain of causation maintains at a vestigial level, toward the practice of incest. *Homo sapiens* are at once animals and above consideration as animals. The preeminent aspect to this simultaneity is a cultural one, but the species pays a price in achieving it: the repression of incestuous impulses creates certain neuroses. That repressed efferents potentialize the psychological turmoil of adulthood, insists Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, “can scarcely be over-estimated,” as his recourse to literature in *The Interpretation of Dreams* had already demonstrated.¹⁶

Freud’s treatise on dream-work identifies “Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*” alongside “the legend of King Oedipus and Sophocles’ drama which bears his name” as prescient expressions of humankind’s bifurcated response to incest.¹⁷ What is more, boasts Freud, the “profound and universal power” of these plays “can only be understood” if psychoanalysis has “universal validity.”¹⁸ Sophocles’ tragedy depends on an oracular decree twice spoken. Laius, King of Thebes, informed that the child expected of his wife Jocasta will grow up to be his murderer, abandons his newborn son to an unattended death. An alien court adopts the rescued child as a prince. In due course, Oedipus too asks the oracle about his birth, and hears that he will murder his father and marry his mother. Events confirm these terrible predictions. “The lesson which, it is said, the deeply moved spectator should learn from the tragedy,” notes Freud, “is submission to the divine will and realization of his own impotence.” Numerous playwrights since Sophocles’ time have tried to emulate *Oedipus Rex* by presenting the same message in a contemporary formulation; yet, “spectators have looked on unmoved.” Critics and dramatists have simply missed the point. “If *Oedipus Rex* moves a modern audience no less than it did the contemporary Greek one,” believes Freud, “the explanation can only be that its effect does not lie in the contrast between destiny and human will,” but on “the particular nature of the material.” That essence is psychological. “King Oedipus, who slew his father Laius and married his mother Jocasta, merely shows us the fulfillment of our own childhood wishes.”¹⁹ A son must symbolically kill his father because the older man impedes his unconscious designs toward his own mother. To become an

accepted member of society, therefore, a son must traverse the dilemma arising from his incestuous impulses. Freud names this maturational stage the “Oedipus complex” after Sophocles’ archetypal delineation. Daughters must negotiate a similar period of psychological development, but with complementary objects: hostility toward the mother accompanies an unconscious desire for the father. The Swiss psychologist Karl Jung later named this oedipal version the “Electra complex.”

“*Hamlet*,” as Freud confirms in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “has its roots in the same soil as ‘Oedipus Rex,’” but, as Freud’s disquisition in “Dostoevsky and Parricide” (1928) makes plain, “in the English play the presentation is more indirect.”²⁰ Prince Hamlet “does not commit the crime himself; it is carried out by someone else, for whom it is not parricide. The forbidden motive of sexual rivalry for the woman does not need, therefore, to be disguised. Moreover,” adds Freud, “we see the hero’s Oedipus complex, as it were, in a reflected light, by learning the effect upon him of the other’s crime.”²¹ Prince Hamlet “ought to avenge the crime, but finds himself, strangely enough, incapable of doing so. We know that it is his sense of guilt that is paralysing him; but, in a manner entirely in keeping with neurotic processes, the sense of guilt is displaced on to the perception of his inadequacy for fulfilling his task.”²² Claudius’ murder of his brother, King Hamlet, and his subsequent marriage to his brother’s widow, Queen Gertrude, prefigure young Hamlet’s unconscious wishes. “Thus,” states Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “the loathing which could drive the prince [him] on to revenge is replaced in him by self-reproaches, by scruples of conscience, which remind him that he himself is literally no better than the sinner whom he is to punish.”²³ Prince Hamlet’s tergiversations arise from that “nucleus of the neuroses,” as Freud had described it in his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1916–1917), the Oedipus complex.²⁴ *Hamlet* hereby illustrates, as Freud wrote Bransom, “how sensitive” the playwright was to that particular dilemma.²⁵

Prince Hamlet’s guilt, argues Freud in “Dostoevsky and Parricide,” is “a super-individual one.”²⁶ The young man despises others as much as he despises himself. “Use every man after his desert,” as the prince contends, “and who should ‘scape whipping?’” (2.2.528). Freud does not assume, however, that normal child development produces incestuous desires; rather, he supposes that abnormal maturation precedes such adult impulses. Although these vestigial characteristics remain latent in the psychological substrata of mature and well-adjusted individuals, the creative mind behind *Hamlet* had privileged access to them. Holding the censorial aspect of his psyche in abeyance, and with his psychical integrity open to the whims of the unconscious, the dramatist penned his drama, a *tour de force*, which literary historian J. Thomas Looney ranks, in agreement with Freud, as “the greatest play” attributed to Shakespeare.²⁷ The psychological struggle that produced this magnificent work exhibits the artistic sensibility of genius, but for Looney, only one “so sensitively constituted” as Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, a man whose “impressionability is testified by his quickness to detect a slight and his readiness to resent it,” could have created such a masterpiece.²⁸

This authorial hypothesis does not posit a conscious sublimation of personal experiences on the part of Oxford; rather, de Vere’s oeuvre, of which *Hamlet* is

symptomatic, carries a psychological palimpsest created by the displacement, condensation, and overdetermination of his dream-like creative faculty. If so, biographical inquiry should help to penetrate these layers. Freud, as his “Address Delivered in the Goethe House at Frankfurt” (1930) attests, held reservations as to this methodological resort. “Even the best and fullest of biographies,” he opines, “could not answer the two questions which alone seem worth knowing about. It would not throw any light on the riddle of the miraculous gift that makes an artist, and it could not help us to comprehend any better the value and the effect of his works.” Even so, in the case of a great artist, he concedes, “there is no doubt that such a biography does satisfy a powerful need in us,” the desire to psychoanalytically track the maturation of creative genius.²⁹

Freud’s initial views on Shakespeare’s authorship appeared in his own autobiographical study. “*Hamlet*,” he muses, “had been admired for three hundred years without its meaning being discovered or its author’s motives guessed. It could scarcely be a chance,” Freud reasons, “that this neurotic creation of the poet should have come to grief, like his numberless fellows in the real world, over the Oedipus complex.”³⁰ King Hamlet, as his son declaims, “was a man. Take him for all in all, / I shall not look upon his like again” (1.2.187–88). Such a progenitor, avers Looney, ensures that “*Hamlet* has father-worship as its prime motive.”³¹ “For *Hamlet* was faced,” as Freud’s autobiographical vignette maintains, “with the task of taking vengeance on another for the two deeds which are the subject of the Oedipus desires; and before that task his arm was paralysed by his own obscure sense of guilt.” Significantly, adds Freud, “Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* very soon after his father’s death.”³² This observation, however, which supports the Stratfordian rather than Oxfordian premise, and which is in contradistinction to Looney’s stance (of which Freud was then unaware), was discounted by Freud five years later.

He aired his revised thoughts on the issue during his address in the Goethe House. “It is undeniably painful to all of us that even now we do not know who was the author of the Comedies, Tragedies and Sonnets of Shakespeare,” laments Freud; “whether it was in fact the untutored son of the provincial citizen of Stratford, who attained a modest position as an actor in London, or whether it was, rather, the nobly-born and highly cultivated, passionately wayward, to some extent *déclassé* aristocrat Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, hereditary Lord Great Chamberlain of England.”³³ Freud pursued his detective work in his 1934 letter to Bransom. “I have already taken the liberty of hinting to you my belief in the identity of Shakespeare with Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford. Let us see,” he proposes, “if this assumption contributes anything to the understanding of the tragedy.” *King Lear* is the play in question, Bransom conjecturing that the king is an autobiographical expression of the playwright, and Freud finding in his correspondent’s favor. Firstly, notes Freud, “Oxford had three grown-up daughters (other children had died young, including the only son): Elizabeth, born 1575, Bridget 1584 and Susan 1587.”³⁴ Secondly, Lear’s madness reflects Oxford’s rejection of the manifest content of his own psyche. When incestuous desires “came too near to his consciousness,” he transferred them onto the king in a sublimely overdetermined form: madness.³⁵ “Shakespeare” was Edward de

Vere's nom de plume and Looney's book, which Freud had now read, confirmed this judgment; in consequence, the 1935 edition of "An Autobiographical Study" would retrospectively deny his Stratfordian claim. "This is a construction which I should like explicitly to withdraw," states Freud in a footnoted addendum to his original statement. "I no longer believe that William Shakespeare the actor from Stratford was the author of the works which have so long been attributed to him. Since the publication of J. T. Looney's volume '*Shakespeare Identified*,' he explains, "I am almost convinced that in fact Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, is concealed behind this pseudonym."³⁶

Biographical evidence certainly implicates childhood trauma as a possible neurotic stimulant for Edward de Vere. The Sixteenth Earl of Oxford, John de Vere, loomed large in Edward's early life. John was "greatly honoured in his county and highly respected, especially by his tenantry," records Looney. "He was also a keen sportsman, being evidently noted as such." To a young son, adjudges Looney, "a father of this kind is an ideal."³⁷ When Edward was twelve years old, and on the verge of mounting an oedipal challenge to this beloved but formidable presence, however, John de Vere died unexpectedly. "The loss of such a father, with the complete upsetting of his young life that it immediately involved," thinks Looney, "must have been a great grief."³⁸ More lastingly in psychological terms, the Earl's demise left Edward's desire to overcome the supreme male imago permanently frustrated.

Edward's mother, Countess Margery de Vere (née Golding), exacerbated his despair by soon remarrying. "Countess Margery," reports Alan H. Nelson, "took as her second husband the Gentleman Pensioner Charles Tyrrell."³⁹ "Although references to the event appear in histories of Essex, no date is given," observes Looney, "thus strengthening our suspicion that not much prominence was given to the marriage at the time: the date especially being kept in the background."⁴⁰ William Farina agrees with Looney concerning the embarrassing speed of this union. "When de Vere was 12 years old," he states, "his father died suddenly and his mother hastily remarried." Psychological circumstances then worsened for Edward when "both his mother and stepfather died a few years later."⁴¹ In effect, and as a counterpart to John de Vere's absence, death also indefinitely withheld the ultimate female imago from him.

Historical details supported Freud's oedipal claim with respect to de Vere, and although James Strachey advised Freud to remove the "Looney" addendum to "An Autobiographical Study," Freud remained in favor of the Oxfordian hypothesis.⁴² Other prominent figures backed Looney, too. "Professor Frederick Tabor Cooper of Columbia University," as Richard F. Whalen chronicles, "welcome[d] the book," while "the novelist John Galsworthy called Looney's book the best detective story he had ever read. He recommended it to his friends and supplied them with copies."⁴³ Fifty years later, Looney's monograph continued to attract followers, with Craig Huston championing Looney's proposition that *Hamlet* is a piece of authorial self-revelation. "The play is autobiographical," insists Huston, "and it is obvious from a study of Oxford's life that Hamlet is Oxford himself."⁴⁴

Thus, one paradigm shift, from the Stratfordian to the Oxfordian, finds substantiation from another, the shift from the Cartesian to the Freudian. This comparison might seem hyperbolic, but William McFee's introduction to the second

edition of Looney's work uses a related analogy. "*Shakespeare*" Identified, declares McFee, is "destined to occupy, in modern Shakespearean controversy, the place Darwin's great work occupies in Evolutionary theory. It may be superseded, but all modern discussion of the authorship of the plays and poems stems from it, and owes the author an inestimable debt."⁴⁵ Notwithstanding Freud's recourse to Darwinian conjecture, the Freudian model lacks evolutionary rigor: Darwin, unlike Freud, was certain about the dangers of inbreeding, and addressing this deficiency affects the Stratfordian-Oxfordian debate, (ironically) bringing Freud's near conviction closer to certainty.

"It seems possible that men during primeval times may have been more excited by strange females than by those with whom they habitually lived," muses Darwin in *The Descent of Man*. "If any such feeling formerly existed in man," he continues, "this would have led to a preference for marriages beyond the nearest kin, and might have been strengthened by the offspring of such marriages surviving in greater numbers."⁴⁶ An aversion toward inbreeding is a consequence of evolution; as a corollary, human exogamy has promoted the taboo against incest as cultural safeguard. That the genealogy of *Homo sapiens* lacks a hereditary bottleneck points to this conclusion. "We may, therefore, reject the belief," asserts Darwin, "that the abhorrence of incest is due to our possessing a special God-implanted conscience."⁴⁷ Twentieth-century advances in evolutionary science confirm Darwin's opinion. Tolerance of incest by any mammalian species, as comparative ethologist Norbert Bischof testifies, is a "die-hard fable."⁴⁸

Unfortunately, Freud not only interchanged the terms inbreeding and incest in an injudicious manner, but also underestimated the robustness of Darwin's exogamic hypothesis. In contrast, anthropologist Edward Westermarck both understood that inbreeding denotes incest, while incest need not signify inbreeding, and appreciated the evolutionary soundness of exogamy. Contemporaneous with Freud's conjectures, but firmly built on Darwinian principles, Westermarck's *The History of Human Marriage* (successive editions, 1891–1925) is an extended disquisition on incest avoidance that recognizes the maladaptive dangers of inbreeding. For Westermarck, the aversion to sexual intimacy between cohabiting relatives (whatever the mammalian species) is innate, with an increased incidence of deleterious traits, a reduction of physiological vigor, and a notable increase in premature mortality evincing the undesirability of inbreeding. The incest taboo, which identifies propinquity with respect to the family, clan, or social unit, arises from a biological foundation, supplementing an innate avoidance of inbreeding.

Freud did consider Westermarck's argument. "Domestication of animals," he concedes in *Totem and Taboo*, "might have enabled men to observe the effects of inbreeding upon racial characters," but Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy*, which he was more inclined to believe, found against the idea.⁴⁹ "It cannot have been that primitive savages forbade incest because they perceived it to be injurious to the offspring," reasons Frazer; "for down to our own time the opinions of scientific men have differed on the question of whether the closest inbreeding, in other words, the highest degree of incest, is injurious or not to the progeny."⁵⁰ Freud therefore discounts this notion

too. “Even to-day,” he maintains, “the detrimental results of inbreeding are not established with certainty and cannot easily be demonstrated in man”; rather, pets and livestock evince the high incidence of incest among animals.⁵¹ Westermarckian psychologist Mark T. Erickson reinforces Bischof’s dismissal of this supposition. “Observations of mating in animals,” he insists, “show incest to be rare.”⁵² Both Frazer and Freud overlook the possibility that domestication perverts the kindred dynamics of mammals, Westermarck’s emphasis on the importance of healthy child-parent bonding remaining “a good first approximation” to the evolution of incest avoidance.⁵³

Westermarckians accept that the interdiction on incest, as a form of biosocial safeguard, supports an inherent aversion to inbreeding. Inbred progeny might not survive pregnancy or might die in adolescence. The simultaneity of the human condition—that *Homo sapiens* are both animals and beyond the animal sphere—does not challenge this conclusion. Cultural proscription does not disprove biological proscription; coevolution has simply provided a twofold security system against inbreeding. Certainly, as anthropology shows, different cultures have alternative practices with regard to the same interdiction, but these differences do not undermine the evolutionary basis of that proscription. “Incest taboos,” emphasizes geneticist Richard Dawkins, “testify to the great kinship-consciousness of man.”⁵⁴

That virtually all cultures raise children in close proximity to family members commends the scope of Westermarck’s hypothesis. Salubrious child-parent bonding is a historical and geographical standard. “It has been argued in the past few decades that there was no concept of ‘childhood’ in premodern Europe,” adduces John Boswell in *The Kindness of Strangers* (1988).⁵⁵ Familial bonds and affective ties in such societies might not conform to those envisaged by Westermarck. “These theories, however, do not fit the evidence,” continues Boswell.⁵⁶ “It is clear,” he avows, “that there was no general absence of tender feeling for children as special beings among any premodern European peoples. Everywhere in Western culture, from religious literature to secular poetry,” he maintains, “parental love is invoked as the ultimate standard of selfless and untiring devotion, central metaphors of theology and ethics presuppose this love as a universal point of reference, and language must devise special terms to characterize persons wanting in this ‘natural’ affection.”⁵⁷

Child psychologist John Bowlby’s notion of attachment helps to bring Westermarck’s approach to this feeling up to scientific date. “To say of a child that he is attached to, or has an attachment to, someone,” explains Bowlby, “means that he is strongly disposed to seek proximity to and contact with a specific figure and to do so in certain situations, notably when he is frightened, tired, or ill.”⁵⁸ This disposition is a process of physiological and psychological maturation that transient events leave unaffected. “Attachment behavior,” argues Bowlby, is somewhat different. This term “refers to any of the various forms of behaviour that a child commonly engages in to attain and/or maintain a desired proximity.”⁵⁹ The presence of this trait is “dependent on the conditions obtaining at the time.” Thus, Bowlby’s attachment theory covers “both attachment behaviour, with its episodic appearance and disappearance, and also the enduring attachments that children and older individuals make to particular figures.”⁶⁰ On the one hand, social rather than sexual factors condition the adult contribution

to a wholesome child-parent relationship. On the other hand, ontogeny activates infantile attachment and mature sexuality independently, these two behaviors being isolated phases in an emotional lifetime rather than different manifestations of a single libidinal force. Attachment guarantees that the robust bequests of outbreeding to the gene pool override the rare legacies of maladaptive inbreeding. The impress of phylogeny ensures the universal nature of Bowlby's hypothesis. Child-parent attachment ameliorated predation as the main source of mortality in primeval man, but even in postmodern milieus, the majority of parents protect their children until they are environmentally competent.

Evolutionary scientists employ Sewall Wright's "coefficient of relationship/relatedness," which is alternatively known as the "index of relationship/relatedness," or r , to measure the evolutionarily endowed support provided to relational bonds. To calculate r for two people, A and B, one must first identify their most recent common antecedents. For example, in the case of A and B being siblings, their closest shared ancestors are their parents. Common grandparents take these roles for first cousins; half-siblings share only one immediate antecedent. The next step in the formulation is to count the generational distance between A and B via their most recent common ancestors. In the case of siblings with shared parents, there is a single step up the family tree from A to A's parents and a second step down to B, so the genealogical gap equals 2. For first cousins, there are two generational steps up to A's common grandparents and two steps down to B, giving a genealogical distance of 4. Children with only one shared parent have a single step up from A to that ancestor followed by a single step down to B, providing a generational gap of 2. Having counted this distance for each common antecedent, one must next calculate that ancestor's contribution to A and B's relatedness. Each step in genealogical distance corresponds to a diminution in relationship by a factor of $1/2$. If the generational gap is 2, as is the case for siblings with shared parents, then each closest common ancestor contributes $(1/2)^2$, or $1/4$, to the coefficient of relatedness: fully related brothers and sisters therefore have an index equal to $1/2$; the coefficient of relationship between first cousins is $1/8$ because each shared ancestor contributes a ratio of $(1/2)^4$; for siblings with one common parent, r is $1/4$.⁶¹

A sliding scale measures relatedness. No evolutionary foundation to bonding exists when the coefficient of relatedness is less than $1/64$, but significant support occurs when the index is greater than or equal to $1/9$. These approximations help to classify two distinct forms of social attraction. "Sexual behavior typically occurs between distantly related or unrelated individuals," notes Erickson. Conversely, "attachment bonding in early life and, later on, sexual avoidance and preferential altruism occur almost exclusively between immediate kin." Westermarck's concept of incest avoidance and Bowlby's attachment theory describe separate features of a single, encompassing phenomenon, which Erickson terms "familial bonding."⁶² Dependable family bonds develop in a childhood environment that provides physical nourishment, emotional support, and responsible care. Hence, the explanation of personal development offered by familial bonding and the Oedipus complex stress different aspects of individual maturation: the evolutionary perspective emphasizes that discriminatory nurture

schools against abhorrent sexual practice, whereas the Freudian viewpoint emphasizes that ideological apparatuses of the state, and especially the home, *repress* any tendency toward incest.

Erickson's paradigm grades the likelihood of incest between individuals according to the strength of the intervening familial bond. Incestuous practice is least likely when this link is secure. If familial relations are either unavailable or unresponsive, however, then the probable result of a child's maturation is at once a diminished sensitivity and a sexual ambivalence toward family members. Another level of relational degradation occurs when a newborn child is separated from immediate kin to be reunited with them in adulthood. Incest is therefore most probable between relations with no familial bond. Erickson defers to Donald Webster Cory's *Violation of the Taboo* (1963), a seminal enumeration of incest in literature, to support his thesis in an echo of Freud's recourse to *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*.⁶³ "The typical story line in poems, novels, and plays in which incest is a theme," concludes Erickson, "is one of separation in infancy with later incestuous reunion." This two-stage process is the archetype that *Oedipus Rex* so acutely portrays, Sophocles' drama illustrating how "early separation undermines natural incest avoidance," his play remaining a vital theatrical experience because it hinges on the universality of familial bonding, not incest.⁶⁴

Inbreeding is rare and laws against incest, as Boswell states, "reflect degree of disapproval more than frequency of occurrence."⁶⁵ Freud was correct, there is an incest taboo, but he was wrong concerning the related aversion-inducing mechanism. "Freud," explains Spain, "mistakenly considered Westermarck's theory a mere tautology."⁶⁶ *Totem and Taboo* exemplifies this error. To explain the horror of incest "by the existence of an instinctive dislike of sexual intercourse with blood relatives," argues Freud, "—that is to say, by an appeal to the fact that there is a horror of incest—is clearly unsatisfactory."⁶⁷ Conversely, adds Spain, Westermarck "did not credit Freud's distinction between unconscious and conscious impulses. For whatever reason, he was unable to appreciate that Freud did not believe that the outcome of normal child development was a desire to mate or have sex with family members but held precisely the opposite view."⁶⁸ This intellectual disparity forms the essence of the ongoing Freudian-Westermarckian debate. Affording adequate attention not only to the ontogeny of the Oedipus complex, but also to the aversion-inducing mechanism behind the incest taboo, as promulgated by Westermarck and updated by Erickson, brings these two viewpoints into closer alignment.

This methodological move helps to substantiate Oxfordian claims concerning *Hamlet*. As a boy, Edward de Vere experienced two distinctive phases of familial bonding, with a foster family taking over the role of his biological parents when his father died. This process witnessed the disarticulation of the asymmetric parental affiliation that informed the earliest years of Earl Edward's life. The affective tie between Edward and his father, as the aforementioned quotes from Looney, Nelson, and Farina evince, was strong: Edward's reverence for his father finding an analogy in the prime motive behind Prince Hamlet's behavior. On his mother's side, however, and if Margery de Vere's attitude toward Edward after his father's death is a reliable

indicator of her nurturing attitude, then his familial abandonment to become a ward of court hints at circumstances conducive to an unhealthy desire for mother-love. We may speculate that Edward wished for a stronger bond with Margery than she was ready to provide. Edward's sheltering under royal auspices therefore promised to heal and redress the broken and asymmetrical familial bonds that characterized son-parent relationships at Hedingham.

After the death of his father in 1562, Edward became a member of William Cecil's London household. Despite his status as a commoner, Cecil was not only Master of the Court of Wards and Liveries, but also an influential adviser to Queen Elizabeth. The Cecils' acceptance of Edward de Vere into their family might seem to exemplify the kindness of strangers, but this was not the case. "Oxford was legally a royal ward," documents Daphne Pearson, "his wardship was not sold, and it appears that he had to buy it himself on his majority." The queen's relationship with Cecil "was such that no transaction was necessary if Cecil expressed an interest in what was practical, if not recorded, guardianship of such a young nobleman as Oxford."⁶⁹ Hence, as Boswell contends, the expediency of court wardship was less altruistic than the general tenor of fostering in earlier times. The "increasing social significance" afforded to "lineage and birth" meant "the much idealized, almost transcendent relationship of *alumnus* with foster parent, so admired in the ancient world, had only pale counterparts in medieval [and post-medieval] Europe."⁷⁰

Indeed, evidence suggests that although Edward de Vere's foster parents displayed a symmetric attitude toward him, this evenhandedness was not a matter of nurture and healthy sustenance. On the side of the paternal imago, William Cecil did not form strong bonds with his own (let alone anybody else's) children. "As a guardian," states Bronson Feldman, "the political polymath Cecil exhibited no less care for the orphan Earl of Oxford than he showed for his own son."⁷¹ None of Cecil's "children" received affection from their father. Cecil's confession about his son Robert, which Conyers Read cites, exemplifies this coldness. "I never showed any fatherly fancy to him," admitted Cecil, "but in teaching and correcting."⁷² A post-Armada letter—one of those missives that, as William Plumer Fowler avows, "offer strong and convincing corroboration of J. Thomas Looney's well-documented conclusion that Oxford, rather than the scantily-educated Stratford theater-worker William Shaksper [*sic*], was the true author of the imposing Shakespearean literary output"—indicates Edward's sly acknowledgment of this parental reluctance.⁷³ "I find mine honorable good Lord," Edward wrote Cecil on September 8, 1590, that you "deal more fatherly than friendly with me, for which I do acknowledge and ever will myself in most especial wise bound."⁷⁴ Cecil was less than friendly, and rather authoritarian, in his guardianship of Edward.

Cecil's inability to forge close ties with either natural or fostered children resulted from his own formative genealogical disappointment. "At the Field of the Cloth of Gold," as Alan Gordon Smith chronicles, "there was in attendance on King Henry VIII of England a young squire named Richard Cecil, a humble page of the household, whose solitary claim to distinction is that on the 13th of the following September he became the father of his illustrious son." William, embittered by his father's low social rank, associated himself with his paternal grandfather. "Feeling presently that his own

[genealogy] lacked something in distinction,” notes Smith, “he was tempted to engraft it from his grandfather, David Cecil, upon the enviable antiquity of the Herefordshire Sitsilts.”⁷⁵ Identification with these revered antecedents enabled William to dismiss his paternal epigone. In William’s mind, he was anterior to his father’s generation; in effect, he reduced his own father Richard to a genealogical interloper.

Abandonment of filial ties therefore characterized William Cecil’s indifference to familial bonds as a father. What was worse for Edward de Vere, Cecil’s familial aloofness repeated Edward’s loss of a paternal imago against whom to resolve his Oedipus complex, a symbolic reiteration that Feldman’s evidence supports. For, when grown (rather than matured) into manhood, de Vere “confided his military aspirations to Cecil and pleaded with him to gain the queen’s goodwill to his going overseas in order to learn the skills of battle in a foreign field of blood.” Cecil, in a rebuff that continued to arrest de Vere’s psychological development, “did not take his aspiration seriously; he kept the young man at his books.”⁷⁶ Other father figures, including Thomas Radcliff, Earl of Sussex, somewhat filled the paternal void, but the main familial bond on Oxford’s spear-side remained unquestionably weak.

On the side of the maternal imago, Lady Mildred Cecil was a woman begrudging in her love, toward whom Edward took a dislike. The young de Vere was supposed to have “quarrelled with the other members of the household,” reports Looney, but with William Cecil’s lack of bonding, and with “the fact that when Oxford entered the house Anne Cecil was a child five years old, Robert Cecil was still unborn and Thomas Cecil had already left home, it is not easy to see who there would be to quarrel with except the irascible Lady Cecil.”⁷⁷ In consequence, Edward’s desire for a maternal bond alighted on Queen Elizabeth. “He enjoyed an easy familiarity with the Queen,” documents Looney. “He seems in his early life to have had a real affection for her and she for him; and, later on, as he developed into manhood, received attentions of such a nature from the Queen, now middle-aged, as to cause his irate mother-in-law to take her royal mistress to task about it. An entry appears in the Calendered State Papers stating that it was affirmed by one party that ‘the Queen wooed the Earl of Oxford but he would not fall in.’”⁷⁸ De Vere’s mother-love would remain unrequited because Margery’s remarriage strained the already fragile familial bond between them and, by the time of her death, he was too old to find its adequate replacement.

Put succinctly, and as Looney argues about de Vere’s wardship under the Cecils, the boy was “subjected to corrupting influences” and “true domestic influences were lost to him.”⁷⁹ Erickson’s predictive scale forecasts the result of such unhealthy familial bonding: incest was somewhat likely to occur between Edward de Vere and a member of his guardian’s household. That Anne Cecil, who was five years old when her parents took in the twelve-year-old Oxford, became his “incestuous” mate is of little evolutionary surprise. Their union in December 1571 not only suited Lord Burghley—the queen had raised Cecil to the Peerage ten months earlier—but also revealed his motives for being Master of the Court of Wards and Liveries. Cecil might “not have the right of guardianship” over de Vere, stresses Pearson, but “he had custody of the body.” Moreover, “Cecil would appear to have had a guardian’s right of marriage,” and this proprietorship “was not entirely what it seemed.”⁸⁰ Cecil’s childhood stigma with

regard to his own lineage was again at issue. “For one of the very few hobbies of William Cecil’s maturity,” observes Smith, “was to be a passionate interest in genealogies.”⁸¹ Hence, Anne’s marriage was, as John Waterfield avers, “very much a part of Burghley’s strategy for expanding his power base.”⁸²

Although the index of relationship between Edward de Vere and Anne confirmed that the danger of inbreeding was negligible, their shared environment as children, a common home life that should have formed a notable sibling bond between them, meant their marriage bordered on the incest taboo. This implicit dubiousness may even have subconsciously triggered the subsequent animosity (rather than irascibility) of Edward’s mother-in-law toward him. “Lady Burghley,” notes Farina, “was known to have been highly critical of her son-in-law, especially for his neglect of her daughter.” This indifference echoed both William’s emotional neglect of de Vere and Edward’s desire to escape Mildred’s presence. That “de Vere’s mother-in-law” came to have “no use for him,” as Farina attests, was inevitable in the wake of such impaired bonding.⁸³

Steps toward the resolution of the Freudian-Westermarckian debate indicate that the Cecils’ perverse altruism toward de Vere conflated with Edward’s unresolved Oedipus complex. What is more, as an expression of psychological displacement, distillation, and overdetermination, *Hamlet* testifies to this complex dynamic. De Vere’s marriage to Anne Cecil condensed a sense of incestuousness with one of outbreeding. The play transfers this condition onto the similar case of Claudius’ union with Gertrude and simultaneously overdetermines this displacement with the prince and stepfather’s coefficient of relationship. Rather than an insignificant index of relatedness, as usually holds between stepsons and stepfathers, a factor of $\frac{1}{4}$ intervenes between nephew-stepson and uncle-stepfather, an unusual closeness that conjures up the specter of inbreeding. The scheming and manipulative Claudius—Jason P. Rosenblatt likens him to his namesake, the Roman Emperor Claudius—heightens perceptions of this perversion with his first words to Hamlet.⁸⁴ “But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son” (1.2.64), expresses the desire to push their coefficient of relatedness from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$. Hamlet, attuned to his uncle’s duplicity, answers in an aside that echoes de Vere’s September 8, 1590, letter to Cecil, “a little more than kin, and less than kind!” (1.2.65).⁸⁵

Being closer than kin, or natural family, intimates the dangers of inbreeding and although Hamlet’s existence “freed Gertrude from the obligation to marry Claudius,” as Rosenblatt states, “she has not chosen freedom.”⁸⁶ The queen herself believes, however, that the source of her son’s distraction is “no other but the main, / His father’s death and our o’erhasty marriage” (2.2.56–57). Hence, despite Gertrude’s impulsive union with Claudius refiguring Margery de Vere’s hastiness in remarrying, the graver charge of incest is surely the playwright’s transference of a personal sense of guilt. He well knew that his marriage to Anne Cecil tested the propinquity of familial bonds and, while Gertrude’s act “is a censurable indiscretion perhaps but no mortal sin,” as Baldwin Maxwell argues, Edward de Vere judged himself more harshly; as a corollary, an evolutionarily inflected reading of *Hamlet* must abandon the charge of incest against Gertrude.⁸⁷

Ernest Jones, Freud's acolyte and first biographer, makes this accusation against the queen in "The Oedipus Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery" (1910), a study that he later reprised and extended in *Hamlet and Oedipus* (1949). Had Claudius' relationship with Gertrude "not counted as incestuous," argues Jones, "then Queen Elizabeth would have had no right to the throne; she would have been a bastard, Katherine [sic] of Aragon being still alive at her birth."⁸⁸ Jones appeals to F. J. Furnivall to justify this interpretation of the play. Gertrude's "disgraceful adultery and incest, and treason to his noble father's memory, Hamlet has felt in his inmost soul. Compared to their ingrain die," maintains Furnivall, "Claudius' murder of his father—notwithstanding all his protestations—is only a skin-deep stain."⁸⁹ The evolutionary realignment of Freudian theory discounts this finding. Hamlet's supplication, "go not to my uncle's bed" (3.4.160), may avail nothing of his mother, but even his repetition of this demand need not damn Gertrude. "The aspect of incest in the plea, if it exists at all," agrees Lowell L. Manfull, "is mitigated by the fact that Hamlet is being motivated not so much by an immoral passion as by a wholly natural desire associated with the role of son." Prince Hamlet simply wishes "to restore his mother to the position of unquestioned virtue which once she held."⁹⁰

This desire may be of no great matter to Claudius, but his marriage to Gertrude is unsettled from the start. "Above the fact that a crime has been committed within the domestic scene," notes Manfull, "a criminal act has been perpetrated against the state."⁹¹ The ghost of King Hamlet repeatedly complains, "the whole ear of Denmark / Is by a forgèd process of my death / Rankly abused" (1.5. 36–38). While a Freudian-Westermarckian perspective understands Claudius' behavior as self-interest in advance of kin-selected altruism, however, Rosenblatt prefers to blame individual selfishness in defiance of cultural decency. "The solitary human organism born at a particular time and place is the biological base for Claudius' [his] position."⁹² Notwithstanding this partial disagreement, both readings resound to the tenor of selfishness, and Claudius' murder of his brother arises from an atypical distortion of self-interest.

Hamlet hereby presents Claudius as the victimizing victim of a perverse familial bonding environment: the monarchal biotope. "Our state to be disjoint and out of frame" (1.2.20) is Claudius' avowed perspective on the House of Denmark. This distorted environment must have been especially to the fore during his formative years. As a boy, Claudius was "the spare" to his brother, "the heir"—the paradoxical extraneous necessity of a royal genealogy, which would have informed a certain spiritual separation from his parents during childhood. When Gertrude's son survived into adulthood, the needlessness of Claudius' position must have taken precedence in his mind. Worse, a close biological relationship never gives absolute grounds for royal altruism, because monarchies are particularly subject to maladaptive evolution. Desire for the crown is a form of intraspecific competition that severely impairs bonding; as a result, the covariation of Wright's index posits the possibility of significant intrafamilial aggression, with threat perception proportional to the value of r . The index of relatedness between full brothers ($1/2$) is enough to abet Claudius' actions. "We have good reason to consider intra-specific [sic] aggression the greatest of all dangers," warns ethologist Konrad Lorenz.⁹³ With his murder of King Hamlet,

usurpation of the throne, and acquisition of the dead king's wife in an instance of widow-inheritance, Claudius reduces Lorenz's intraspecific set to a familial one.

Royal families must fight hard to survive and Oxford understood the monarchical biotope from the inside. Under normal social conditions, the danger of excessive population density is obviated by mutual repulsion, as Lorenz explains, with interpersonal spacing regulated "in much the same manner as electrical charges are regularly distributed all over the surface of a spherical conductor." But in small, isolated groups, there is not enough room to provide each member with adequate individual space, and what ethologists now call "polar disease," or "expedition cholera," becomes a pressing danger. Small groups who are completely dependent on one another are predisposed to this type of antagonism. "Intraspecific competition," as Lorenz stresses, "is the 'root of all evil' in a more direct sense than aggression can ever be." That is why there is so much pageantry and ceremony in and about monarchies. The process of phylogenetic ritualization promotes an autonomous instinct that diverts aggression along harmless channels. Culturally conventionalized behavior patterns should unite the individuals within a royal group, suppress intragroup fighting, and set that collective apart from other groups.

Edward de Vere understood pageantry not as a spectator, but as a participant, and his formal inauguration into this aspect of the nobility's environment came with his father's death. Feldman records how the Sixteenth Earl of Oxford was buried "with pomp of heraldry and much mortuary ritual."⁹⁴ Edward immediately succeeded him as Lord Great Chamberlain, an office that, as Looney states, "had been hereditary in his family for centuries." This position concerned "state functions and the royal person, near whom this official was placed on such great occasions as coronations and royal funerals."⁹⁵ Farina reiterates this point. De Vere, as Lord Great Chamberlain, "was entitled and obligated to play various ceremonial roles at court, with emphasis on pomp and display."⁹⁶ This experience must have influenced his creative writing because these ceremonial duties would have honed "valuable skills for the accomplished stage dramatist that he was noted to have been." Furthermore, "de Vere's successful career as an athlete would have provided him invaluable experience in the arts of Elizabethan pageantry and showmanship. His three tournament victories in 1571 and 1581 (twice), along with his unanswered Palermo challenge in Sicily," states Farina, "established his reputation as a master of the tilt. To accomplish this, de Vere would had to have been a crowd pleaser, comfortable with the rituals of heraldry and providing lavish costuming, along with dramatic visual spectacle."⁹⁷ Thus, Oxford's marriage to Anne Cecil, as Looney relates, "was celebrated with great pomp," and in Queen Elizabeth's presence.⁹⁸

Pageantry aids royal families to skew their subjects' perception of biological innateness. This deception is a hegemonic necessity because the human bauplan is consistent across the species. Evolution is conservative and natural selection works by varying the relative sizes and, to some extent in some species, the numbers of parts in a bodily structure, rather than by altering the bauplan. The human blueprint, which casts all humans equal, does not favor the blueblooded. An evolutionary viewpoint therefore provokes a disagreement with Feldman concerning Edward de Vere himself.

“All men are created unequal, he thought,” states Feldman, “and are destined by celestial law to govern or to serve.”⁹⁹ Feldman’s declaration is surely mistaken. Oxford was certainly a member of the nobility and acutely aware of the need for ceremony and pageantry to set that group apart, but he also fantasized of escaping from that environment. “The irksomeness to him of court life,” argues Looney, “seems to have manifested itself quite early in manhood.” Discerning the monarchy’s lack of vigorous stock, individuals sourced from beyond the confines of nobility, “he made several efforts to escape from it.”¹⁰⁰ Hence, an evolutionarily inflected reading of de Vere further disagrees with Feldman when he contends that to Oxford’s “way of thinking, gentility signified virtue, and virtue meant venerable stock, an old holiness of blood.” De Vere did hold social differences “dear,” as Feldman declares, but dear to Oxford in this context meant a costly demand.¹⁰¹

Genetic faults and problems in ontogeny occasionally lead to unexpected biological occurrences, but such events are rare. Paradoxically, the monarchal tendency toward inbreeding leaves blue blood more susceptible to undesirable outcomes beyond the standard blueprint. That the restrictive monarchal biotope is biologically unhealthy further undermines the unstable familial bonds of royalty. Maladaptive evolution, as promulgated by inbreeding, lies at the heart of this threat. Oxford, as the descendant of a restricted social group, was aware of the danger. “The de Veres,” chronicles Frederic Chancellor, “were the representative family of the nobility in Essex.”¹⁰² They traced their descent, as Looney notes, “in a direct line from the Norman Conquest,” and boasted “five and a half centuries” of unbroken male lineage.¹⁰³ In short, “without being actually a prince of royal blood he was so near to it,” states Looney, “as to be regarded in that light.”¹⁰⁴ Pertaining to the higher aristocracy meant that Oxford understood the nobility’s domination “by the feudal ideals of *noblesse oblige*.”¹⁰⁵

The 1579 tennis-court dispute between Edward de Vere and Philip Sidney indicated Edward’s position in the monarchal pecking order. “There is a great difference in degree between the Earls and private gentlemen,” Queen Elizabeth rebuked Sidney, “and Princes are bound to support the nobility and to insist on their being treated with proper respect.”¹⁰⁶ “Edward de Vere’s pride in his ancient ancestry,” as Looney observes of Oxford’s contemporaries, “is commented on by more than one writer,” but Oxford also appreciated the exogamic safeguard against hereditary maladaptation.¹⁰⁷ Paradoxically, de Vere’s appreciation of this benefit found solid expression in his betrothal to Anne Cecil, who belonged “to the newly emerging middle class.”¹⁰⁸ Oxford was biologically satisfied with his choice of bride, but Queen Elizabeth’s marriage consent was “almost as great a concession ... as was that of Denmark’s King and Queen to the marriage of Hamlet with the daughter of Polonius” because the middle class were “held in contempt by the few remaining representatives of the ancient aristocracy.”¹⁰⁹ To offset her concession, the queen symbolically ensured that children from the de Vere-Cecil union would be of the royal biotope: as previously observed, she raised Anne’s father to the peerage. Even so, as Looney reports, this promotion did not still the tongue of every lord. “We have it reported by a contemporary, Lady Lord St. John,” he notes, “that, ‘the Erle of Oxenforde hath Oxford gotten himself a wyffe, or, at *leste* a wyffe hath caught him.’”¹¹⁰

Such considerations go unrecognized by Freud. This is unfortunate for his interpretation of *Hamlet* because a monarchy comprises individuals of a pseudospecies for whom exogamy plays an ambiguous role in survival. On the one hand, outbreeding guards against poor evolutionary adaptations. On the other hand, formally ratified exogamic relations dilute the distinctiveness of an intraspecific group that wishes to remain an inherently isolated group. This paradox contributes in no small part to Prince Hamlet's dilemma. For, despite coefficients of relationship buttressed against internecine fractiousness by the ceremonies of monarchy, the results of maladaptive evolution can prove overwhelming. Under this sort of pressure, as Oxford delineates, a mind can disintegrate. Conflation ironically symptomizes this distress for Hamlet when he interprets Claudius' murderous actions as the killing of two people. "Father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is / one flesh; and so, my mother" (4.3.49–51). King Hamlet's union with Gertrude, believes their son, was a bond so strong as to unite them in a single being. "Where a Freudian, Oedipal view of incest presumes Hamlet's envy of his father," insists Rosenblatt, "a Scriptural view of the incest prohibition might posit instead a relationship of concord between father and son, both of whom require from Gertrude the loyalty that would confirm their existence."¹¹ A literary hermeneutic attuned to Erickson's updated Westermarckian paradigm confirms Rosenblatt's assertion.

Although the coefficient of relationship between uncle and nephew is less than that between siblings with shared parents, a value of $\frac{1}{4}$ remains significant in kindred terms. From Claudius' view of familial bonding, one that rates intraspecific competition in aggressive terms, Prince Hamlet is a threat even before King Hamlet's murder provokes the possibility of revenge. Claudius must remove this danger. His attempt to do so through the agency of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern signifies this elimination topographically with the prince's journey to England implying his permanent removal by death. The failure of this scheme keeps Hamlet's threat alive in Claudius' calculations and Claudius is too paranoid to realize that two asymmetries in response to their relatedness play in his favor.

Ritualized behavior that diminishes heterogenerational antagonism from the perspective of the younger participant constitutes one of these inequalities. Social conditioning intends members of a generation to be respectful, submissive, and appeasing to their forebears. People who know their place tend to defer to those above them. If aggressive feelings do arise in a submissive individual of this type, then they tend to be canalized toward a third party. Ethologist Nikolaas Tinbergen calls this form of behavior a redirected activity. Provocative stimuli both elicit a response and emit other reactions that deflect the direct discharge of aggression. Hamlet's soliloquies testify to his ratiocinative character and such a man is more likely to express violence through redirection. This expedient prevents the injurious effects of aggressive behavior on either the subject (Hamlet) or the stimulating object (Claudius). As Tinbergen's thesis predicts, and as Oxford shows, however, this redirected aggression is not without a target.

Hamlet's canalization transmutes into and terminates in his disproportionate love for Ophelia. His feelings cannot disregard their origin but hide that wellspring

beneath a cloak of excess. Laertes is awake to these symptoms. He at once understands the strength of Hamlet's passion and something of its unhealthy genesis. "Perhaps he loves you now, / And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch / The virtue of his will," he tells Ophelia. "But you must fear, / His greatest weighed, his will is not his own. / For he himself is subject to his birth" (1.3.14–18). Ophelia is an appealingly static and stoic target for Hamlet's redirected emotions. Her demure character recalls Lorenz's thoughts on withholding emotion. If the subject must act "so as not to betray inner tension," and is "longing to do something but prevented by strong opposing motives from doing it," then an internal conflict has arisen.¹¹² The realignment of Hamlet's passion from Claudius to Ophelia results in her own realignment of that confusing imposition. Redirection of redirected aggression, as if engendering an inward and autotelic process, is the possible cause of her suicide.

Age difference also lies at the heart of the second asymmetry of relatedness that plays in Claudius' favor over the prince. In both relational directions, to reiterate Claudius, "Our state" remains "disjoint and out of frame" (1.2.20). An only son, Prince Hamlet's childhood was not dogged by the extraneous necessity that must have attended Claudius' upbringing, and an evolutionary reading explains this imbalance through cost-benefit analysis. The amount lost or gained by certain actions factorizes the coefficient of relatedness. In all probability, Claudius will predecease his nephew, whereas a violent altercation between the two men exposes Hamlet to serious danger. Patience will afford the prince the crown, but impatience will severely compromise his life.

Despite both of these asymmetries, however, Claudius understands inaction toward his nephew as the chance for princely revenge. Paranoid, but logical, Claudius desires the prompt and permanent removal of his nephew. Denmark's laws of succession and marriage may break with natural heredity, yet Hamlet's lineage, his very body, proclaims his right to the crown. Oxford was intensely aware of this conundrum. His own body, as a manifestation of his genealogy, proclaimed his rightful inheritance of Castle Hedingham on John de Vere's demise, but "owing to his being in his minority at the time," as Looney reports, "the latter's nomination of him as one of the executors of his will was inoperative." De Vere's uncle, Arthur Golding, became his tutor and "receiver of his property."¹¹³

Oxford's complement to Hamlet's situation in *King John* reiterates the playwright's anger at this state of affairs. The biological immanence of Philip the bastard, argues Alison Findlay, "proclaims his identity as Coeur de Lion's son and makes a mockery of the law expounded by King John." *Hamlet* delineates a similar reason for disdain. In either case, the law of kingship "relies on a type of justice which ignores immediate evidence."¹¹⁴ The word of law confounds an illegitimate body in *King John*; in *Hamlet*, the semi-legitimate body of the dead king's brother confronts and contradicts the legitimate body of the dead king's son. Prince Hamlet's index of relationship to the monarch can be nothing other than $\frac{1}{2}$ and the coefficient he shares with Claudius, $\frac{1}{4}$, is shy of this value. "Hamlet, the only child of the reigning house," notes Simon Augustine Blackmore, "was the recognized heir apparent, and in an absolute monarchy like the Denmark of his day, became ipso facto king on the death

of his father.”¹¹⁵ While biological evidence backs Hamlet’s right to the throne, Claudius must rely on hidebound words.

Even so, the caprices inherent in familial and contextual certainty afflict the situations of Hamlet and Claudius respectively. Although kindred bonding is proportional to the index of relatedness, explains Dawkins, “the distinction between family and non-family is not hard and fast, but a matter of mathematical probability.”¹¹⁶ The possibility of ambiguity increases when a conditioning effect on Wright’s coefficient of relationship is considered; expressed briefly, biological relatedness is sometimes less important than a best estimate of interpersonal affinity. Notwithstanding the cultural aid afforded to kinship recognition among humans, relational certainty remains important in familial behavior. On the prince’s side, paternity is far more questionable than maternity. On his uncle’s side, language operates through *différance* rather than presence. “The law,” as Hélène Cixous adjudges, “is absolute, verbal, invisible, negative, it is a symbolic *coup de force* and its force is its invisibility, its non-existence, its force of denial, its ‘not.’”¹¹⁷ However, while Cixous posits bodily presence as facing the law, a substantiality “which is, is, is,” Findlay comes nearer the point with her insistence of the parallel case in *King John*: “while the bastard’s evidence is physically present and obvious to all in the court, the word remains detached, relying on a lack of evidence—the same kind of paternal ‘absence’ found in human reproduction.”¹¹⁸

Biology and culture never confer surety of status because each context lacks completeness. Such reasoning helps to elucidate Hamlet’s contradictory axiom in which “the body is with the King, but the King is not with the body” (4.2.27). Direct genetic lineage and *de facto* kingship fracture Hamlet’s rights of inheritance. What is more, as Findlay emphasizes, fragmentation of royal legitimacy “is magnified in the disintegration of absolute values in their world.” “Bastardy,” then, “is a powerful metaphor for such decay in *King John*,” as Findlay believes, but *Hamlet* goes further, proffering the more disturbing correlate of close kin *separated* by their coefficient of relationship.¹¹⁹ Hamlet’s aside in response to his uncle’s opening address, his Oxfordian jibe at Claudius for being “a little more than kin, and less than kind!” (1.2.65), expresses this obfuscation of familial identities. As Manfull argues, Hamlet determines “to remain the son of the dead king.”¹²⁰ No wonder, when asked by Claudius, “How is it that the clouds still hang on you?” (1.2.66), he replies in punning fashion, “Not so, my lord. I am too much in the sun” (1.2.67).

Hamlet’s fractured rights of inheritance reveal cultural ratification of the kingly soma as an increasingly important prerequisite for the lineal sustenance of royal families. Some monarchies rely on ideological state apparatuses to maintain their social preeminence, others prefer repressive state apparatuses, but most employ a combination of the two systems. King Claudius rules via such a structural mix. In his uncle, Hamlet faces an almost overwhelmingly powerful opponent, a man who deserves Hamlet’s respect as an older relative, a man whose apparently lawful accession the well-established ranks of Danish society seemingly support, a man who controls the Danish army, palace guards, and civil militia. This antagonist’s cultural, ideological, and hierarchical preeminence admirably demonstrate the coevolutionary fostering of degenerate behavior. Kingship in the Royal House of Denmark has

perverted monarchical kinship. “The whole play,” as Feldman correctly asserts, “is the product of ‘Shakespeare’s’ angry meditations on the rottenness which he had detected in royalty.”¹²¹

The tragic predicament of perverted monarchical kinship, rather than the repression of incestuous desires of which Freud writes, impels the prince’s moral regression. Young Hamlet recognizes and accepts manmade laws, but must eventually violate those very edicts. This vital inner tension helps to set Oxford’s drama above its Danish antecedent. The twelfth-century chronicle of Horwendill, Feng, and Amleth in the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus’s *Historiae Danicae* is more akin to a primitive morality play in which vengeance is a mandatory response to heinous crimes against the family—considerations of law and legal justice are of little matter. By Oxford’s time, “the conviction that retaliation for murder was solely the prerogative of the state and its legal institutions,” as Anne Barton emphasizes, “clashed with an irrational but powerful feeling that private individuals cannot be blamed for taking vengeance into their own hands, for ensuring that the punishment truly answers the crime.”¹²² Elizabethan England was establishing the primacy of written statutes and Oxford’s play anticipates the furtherance of this state of affairs. Judiciousness undoubtedly contributes to Hamlet’s proration of revenge. As potential head of state, the prince must set an example in lawful conduct, as King Hamlet had done. Horatio’s testimony concerning the death of the King of Norway expresses this prerogative.¹²³ King Hamlet

Did slay this Fortinbras; who, by a sealed compact
Well ratified by law and heraldry,
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands
Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror;
Against the which a moiety competent
Was gagèd by our King; which had returned
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,
Had he been vanquisher, as, by the same covenant
And carriage of the article designed,
His fell to Hamlet (1.1.86–95).

Young Fortinbras acts immediately to avenge his father’s death. Claudius recognizes the danger posed and knows that appeals to international agreements will not sway his determination:

He hath not failed to pester us with message
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bands of law,
To our most valiant brother
(1.2.22–25).

Where international relations are involved, fewer worries niggle at Fortinbras’s resolve, which stands in sharp contrast to Hamlet’s tergiversations. Only physical

distance holds back the act of revenge. No such problem faces Laertes, who vows to requite Polonius's death at the hands of Prince Hamlet. "To this point I stand," swears Laertes, "That both the worlds I give to negligence, / Let come what comes, only I'll be revenged / Most thoroughly for my father" (4.5.135–38). Nor does genealogical relatedness impede Laertes's desire for action.

In comparison, the evolutionarily engendered trap that retains Hamlet is a multifaceted web, with his clouded perspective on kindred certainty being another source of prevarication. Patience, as cost-benefit analysis has already shown, should afford Hamlet the crown, whereas impatience will severely endanger his prospects, but this calculation must also include the likelihood of future procreation. "To save the life of a relative who is soon going to die of old age," avers Dawkins, "has less of an impact on the gene pool of the future than to save the life of an equally close relative who has the bulk of his life ahead of him."¹²⁴ If Hamlet had directed his murderous thoughts primarily toward his mother, then the prospect of new kin would not be a consideration. Men, however, do not go through the menopause, and Claudius presumably remains able to sire children. Their relatedness to Hamlet would evince an index of relationship equal to $\frac{1}{4}$, which is less than the $\frac{1}{2}$ pertaining to any future children Hamlet might have, but more than the 0 of no progeny. Royal lineage is a matter of generations and the odds on a direct descendant from Prince Hamlet lengthen considerably with Ophelia's death.

Hence, the prince's consideration of relatedness must take into account the likelihood of future reproduction appertaining to his uncle. This cost-benefit analysis is complicated and an evolutionarily inclined criticism surmises that the intuitive consideration and reconsideration of this reckoning contribute to Hamlet's hesitancy. "There is no end to the progressive refinement of the calculation that could be achieved in the best of all possible worlds," admits Dawkins. "But real life is not lived in the best of all possible worlds. We cannot expect real animals to take every last detail into account in coming to an optimum decision. We shall have to discover," he concedes, "by observation and experiment in the wild, how closely real animals actually come to achieving an ideal cost-benefit analysis."¹²⁵ Oxford's insight presents Hamlet's febrile attempt to balance his biological cost-benefit calculation with the cultural expectations and pressures of his particular situation. Innate strategies dominate the actions of non-human animals, but Hamlet does not have this license. He has fallen foul of the monarchical biotope into which he was born. "The time is out of joint," he declares of the rotten state of Denmark, "O, cursèd spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!" (1.5.188–89). Hamlet's ontology describes a snare between the biological man, whom Freud underestimates, the man beset with unconscious psychological demands, whom Westermarck underestimates, and the conscientiously lawful prince he must be.

Edward de Vere suffered a similar bind. "Three of the noblemen most hostile to the Cecils and the Cecil faction in Elizabeth's court, had all been royal wards, having had the great Lord Burleigh as their guardian," notes Looney: "Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford; Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton; and Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. These noblemen," continues Looney, "apparently considered it no great blessing to have had the paternal attentions of the great minister, and cherished no particular

affection for the family.” As far as Edward de Vere “is concerned,” states Looney bluntly, “whatever disaster may have come into his life, we are confident, had its beginning in the death of his father, the severance of his home ties, and the combined influences of Elizabeth’s court and Burleigh’s household, from which he was anxious to escape.”¹²⁶

Feldman takes this line of reasoning a stage further. Whatever analogies the critic sets up between the Cecils and the characters in *Hamlet*—Anne Cecil as Ophelia, Thomas or Robert Cecil as Polonius, and William Cecil as Claudius, for example—“the dramatist got a deep sadistic satisfaction from imaging the extinction, in blood, of the Cecil family.”¹²⁷ If Hamlet were Edward de Vere—both figures characterized by their growth rather than maturation into manhood— then the prince’s behavior expresses an extraordinary degree of repression. This regression stoked Oxford’s sensibilities into the sublime transference of his neuroses onto paper. De Vere was of the nobility, and of ancient noble lineage, but he longed to partake happily of the exogamic rather than the monarchic. “In his early forties,” reports Looney, “Oxford, a widower for three years, married his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, the daughter of a landowner and one of the queen’s maids of honor.” Oxford’s remarriage repeated the evolutionary tactic of his first union. Marriage to Anne Cecil had produced three daughters. “A son, Henry, who became the Eighteenth Earl of Oxford,” notes Looney, “was the only child of his second marriage.”¹²⁸ With these bequests, Oxford offered exogamic stock to the aristocracy, and thus succeeded where monarchies by necessity usually fail.

Endnotes

- ¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. T. J. B. Spencer (London: Penguin, 1996).
- ² Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in *SE* 4, 266.
- ³ Sigmund Freud, "The Moses of Michelangelo," in *SE* 13, 211–36, quotation on 211.
- ⁴ Freud, "Moses," 213.
- ⁵ Freud, *Interpretation*, in *SE* 4, 308.
- ⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, in *SE* 13, 141.
- ⁷ Sigmund Freud, "An Autobiographical Study," in *SE* 20, 7–70, quotation on 67, 68.
- ⁸ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 141.
- ⁹ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 141–42.
- ¹⁰ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 143.
- ¹¹ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 124.
- ¹² Sigmund Freud, "Freud's Letter to James S. H. Bransom of 25 March 1934," *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, by Ernest Jones, vol. 3 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–57), Appendix A, 478–88, quotation on 487.
- ¹³ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 124.
- ¹⁴ James George Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, 4 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1910), 4:97.
- ¹⁵ David H. Spain, "The Westermarck-Freud Incest-Theory Debate: An Evaluation and Reformulation," *Current Anthropology* 28, no. 5 (December, 1987): 623–45, quotation on 625. Jean Baptiste Lamarck argued that organisms could transmit characteristics acquired during their lifetime to their offspring.
- ¹⁶ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 124.
- ¹⁷ Freud, *Interpretation*, in *SE* 4, 264, 261.
- ¹⁸ Freud, *Interpretation*, in *SE* 4, 261.
- ¹⁹ Freud, *Interpretation*, in *SE* 4, 262.
- ²⁰ Freud, *Interpretation*, in *SE* 4, 264. Sigmund Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide," in *SE* 21, 177–96, quotation on 188.
- ²¹ Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide," 188–89.
- ²² Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide," 189.
- ²³ Freud, *Interpretation*, in *SE* 4, 263.
- ²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, in *SE* 16, 337.
- ²⁵ Freud, "Freud's Letter to James S. H. Bransom of 25 March 1934," 487.
- ²⁶ Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide," 189.
- ²⁷ J. Thomas Looney, "Shakespeare" Identified in Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford,

Introduction William McFee, 2nd edition (New York: Duell, Sloane and Pearce, 1948), 232.

²⁸ Looney, "Shakespeare," 232, 144.

²⁹ Sigmund Freud, "Address Delivered in the Goethe House at Frankfurt," in *SE* 21, 208–12, quotation on 211.

³⁰ Freud, "An Autobiographical Study," 63.

³¹ Looney, "Shakespeare," 232.

³² Freud, "An Autobiographical Study," 63.

³³ Freud, "Address Delivered in the Goethe House," 211.

³⁴ Freud, "Freud's Letter to James S. H. Bransom of 25 March 1934," 487.

³⁵ Freud, "Freud's Letter to James S. H. Bransom of 25 March 1934," 488.

³⁶ Freud, "An Autobiographical Study," 63–4 n.1.

³⁷ Looney, "Shakespeare," 231.

³⁸ Looney, "Shakespeare," 231–32.

³⁹ Alan H. Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 41.

⁴⁰ Looney, "Shakespeare," 234.

⁴¹ William Farina, *De Vere as Shakespeare: An Oxfordian Reading of the Canon* (Jefferson, CA: McFarland, 2006), 199.

⁴² Strachey worried that Looney's name left those who quoted him open to ridicule. Looney, of course, pronounced his name *Lohny*.

⁴³ Richard F. Whalen, *Shakespeare—Who Was He?: The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1994), 69.

⁴⁴ Craig Huston, *The Shakespeare Authorship Question. Evidence for Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford* (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1971), 55.

⁴⁵ William McFee, introduction to "Shakespeare" Identified in *Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*, by J. Thomas Looney, 2nd edition (New York: Duell, Sloane and Pearce, 1948), xix. "Of course Looney's work is not flawless, especially from the perspective of eighty-five years of progress in literary and historical methodology," as Roger Stritmatter observes. "But the intellectual historian need not be distracted by the incidental failures to which even pioneering works are sometimes susceptible, nor confused by a prevailing academic culture in which the traditional virtue of plausibility has been declared irrelevant; instead she will ponder the sobering implications of McFee's comparison of Looney's book to Darwin's." Roger Stritmatter, "What's in a Name? Everything, Apparently..." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 60, no. 2 (2006): 37–49, quotation on 41.

⁴⁶ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1896), 2:104.

⁴⁷ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 2:115.

⁴⁸ Norbert Bischof, "Comparative Ethology of Incest Avoidance," in *Biosocial Anthropology*, ed. Robin Fox (London: Malaby, 1975), 37–67, quotation on 55.

⁴⁹ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 124.

⁵⁰ Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, 4: 154.

- ⁵¹ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 124.
- ⁵² Mark T. Erickson, "Rethinking Oedipus: An Evolutionary Perspective of Incest Avoidance," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 150, no. 3 (1993): 411–16, quotation on 411.
- ⁵³ Erickson, "Rethinking Oedipus," 412.
- ⁵⁴ Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 99.
- ⁵⁵ John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 36.
- ⁵⁶ Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers*, 37.
- ⁵⁷ Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers*, 37–38.
- ⁵⁸ John Bowlby, *Attachment* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 371–72.
- ⁵⁹ Bowlby, *Attachment*, 371.
- ⁶⁰ Bowlby, *Attachment*, 372.
- ⁶¹ To be scientifically pedantic, and using the example of a parent and its child, r is approximately $1/2$ because of the complexities involved in sex cell formation. This nuance is tacitly assumed throughout the remainder of this article.
- ⁶² Erickson, "Rethinking Oedipus," 413.
- ⁶³ Donald Webster Cory was the pen name of Edward Sagarin.
- ⁶⁴ Erickson, "Rethinking Oedipus," 414.
- ⁶⁵ Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers*, 55 n.4.
- ⁶⁶ Spain, "The Westermarck-Freud Incest-Theory Debate," 625.
- ⁶⁷ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 122 (emphasis in original).
- ⁶⁸ Spain, "The Westermarck-Freud Incest-Theory Debate," 625.
- ⁶⁹ Daphne Pearson, *Edward de Vere (1550–1604): The Crisis and Consequences of Wardship* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 20.
- ⁷⁰ Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers*, 431.
- ⁷¹ Bronson Feldman, *Hamlet Himself* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2010), 22.
- ⁷² Cecil quoted by Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955), 212.
- ⁷³ William Plumer Fowler, *Shakespeare Revealed in Oxford's Letters: The Pre-Armada Letters, 1563–1585, and the Post-Armada Letters, 1590–1603, of Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* (Portsmouth, NH: P. E. Randall, 1986), 363.
- ⁷⁴ Edward de Vere, "London Letter of September 8, 1590," *Shakespeare Revealed in Oxford's Letters*, 379.
- ⁷⁵ Alan Gordon Smith, *William Cecil, the Power Behind Elizabeth* (London: Kegan Paul, 1934), 4.
- ⁷⁶ Feldman, *Hamlet Himself*, 24.
- ⁷⁷ Looney, "Shakespeare," 244–45.
- ⁷⁸ Looney, "Shakespeare," 246.
- ⁷⁹ Looney, "Shakespeare," 235.
- ⁸⁰ Pearson, *Edward de Vere*, 20.
- ⁸¹ Smith, *William Cecil*, 4.
- ⁸² John Waterfield, *The Heart of his Mystery: Shakespeare and the Catholic Faith in England*

under Elizabeth and James (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.com, 2009), 139.

⁸³ Farina, *De Vere*, 91, 176.

⁸⁴ Jason P. Rosenblatt, "Aspects of the Incest Problem in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (Summer 1978): 349–64, quotation on 354.

⁸⁵ Intriguingly, as Fowler observes of de Vere's letter, "Oxford's superlative phrase 'in most especial wise' is arrestingly duplicated in *Hamlet* (IV.7.98) when Hamlet's uncle, King Claudius, to induce Laertes to engage in a weighted duel with Hamlet, tells Laertes of the high report accorded him by the outstanding Norman swordsman Lamond: 'He made confession of you; / And gave you such a masterly report / For art and exercise in your defence, / And for your rapier most especially' (IV.7.98)." Fowler, *Shakespeare Revealed*, 390.

⁸⁶ Rosenblatt, "Aspects of the Incest Problem," 362.

⁸⁷ Baldwin Maxwell, "Hamlet's Mother," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15:2 (Spring 1964): 235–46, quotation on 240.

⁸⁸ Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1949), 61:1.

⁸⁹ F. J. Furnivall, introduction to *The Leopold Shakspeare: The Poet's Works, in Chronological Order, from the Text of Professor Delius, with The Two Noble Kinsmen and Edward III, by William Shakespeare* (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1877), 72.

⁹⁰ Lowell L. Manfull, "The Histrionic Hamlet," *Educational Theatre Journal* 16, no. 2 (May 1964): 103–13, quotation on 109.

⁹¹ Manfull, "The Histrionic Hamlet," 107.

⁹² Rosenblatt, "Aspects of the Incest Problem," 355.

⁹³ Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression*, trans. Marjorie Latzke (London: Methuen, 1976), 21–22.

⁹⁴ Feldman, *Hamlet Himself*, 10.

⁹⁵ Looney, "Shakespeare," 229.

⁹⁶ Farina, *De Vere*, 123.

⁹⁷ Farina, *De Vere*, 113.

⁹⁸ Looney, "Shakespeare," 253.

⁹⁹ Feldman, *Hamlet Himself*, 134.

¹⁰⁰ Looney, "Shakespeare," 146.

¹⁰¹ Feldman, *Hamlet Himself*, 135.

¹⁰² Frederic Chancellor, *The Ancient Sepulchral Monuments of Essex* (London, Printed for the Author: 1890), 161.

¹⁰³ Looney, "Shakespeare," 146.

¹⁰⁴ Looney, "Shakespeare," 246.

¹⁰⁵ Looney, "Shakespeare," 233.

¹⁰⁶ Queen Elizabeth, *The Sayings of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. Frederick Chamberlin (London: John Lane, 1923), 158.

¹⁰⁷ Looney, "Shakespeare," 222.

¹⁰⁸ Looney, "Shakespeare," 254.

¹⁰⁹ Looney, "Shakespeare," 257, 254.


¹¹⁰ Looney, "Shakespeare," 254 (emphasis in original).

¹¹¹ Rosenblatt, "Aspects of the Incest Problem," 362.

- ¹¹² Lorenz, *On Aggression*, 61.
- ¹¹³ Looney, "Shakespeare," 234, 236.
- ¹¹⁴ Alison Findlay, *Illegitimate Power: Bastards in Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 25.
- ¹¹⁵ Simon Augustine Blackmore, *The Riddles of Hamlet and the Newest Answers* (Boston, MA: Stratford Company, 1917), 44.
- ¹¹⁶ Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 94.
- ¹¹⁷ Hélène Cixous, "Extreme Fidelity," in *Writing Difference: Readings from the Seminar of Hélène Cixous*, ed. Susan Sellers, trans. Ann Liddle and Susan Sellers (Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press), 9–36, quotation on 16.
- ¹¹⁸ Cixous, "Extreme Fidelity," 16. Findlay, *Illegitimate Power*, 25.
- ¹¹⁹ Findlay, *Illegitimate Power*, 26.
- ¹²⁰ Manfull, "The Histrionic Hamlet," 106.
- ¹²¹ Feldman, *Hamlet Himself*, 135.
- ¹²² Anne Barton, introduction to *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare, ed. T. J. B. Spencer (London: Penguin, 1996), 12.
- ¹²³ The coefficient of relationship between Oxford and his first cousins Sir Horace and Sir Francis Vere ($r = \frac{1}{4}$) informs the characters of Horatio and Francisco. "These brothers," agrees Feldman, "always acted as upholders of Oxford's [his] house." Feldman, *Hamlet Himself*, 60.
- ¹²⁴ Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 95.
- ¹²⁵ Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 98.
- ¹²⁶ Looney, "Shakespeare," 245.
- ¹²⁷ Feldman, *Hamlet Himself*, 13.
- ¹²⁸ Looney, "Shakespeare," 78.

Shakespeare's Greater Greek: *Macbeth and Aeschylus' Oresteia*

Earl Showerman

hakespeare criticism rarely includes an examination of the influence of untranslated Greek dramas. Greek poetry was not taught in the grammar schools, and editions or translations of most of these dramas were never published in England during the playwright's lifetime. For the past century, scholars have generally abided by the assumption expressed by Robert Root: "Shakespeare nowhere alludes to any characters or episodes of Greek drama, that they extended no influence whatsoever on his conception of mythology."¹ Many scholars, however, have subsequently commented on peculiar instances of commonality between Shakespeare and the Greek playwrights, but editor Michael Silk has most recently reconfirmed the prevailing denial that there was "any Shakespearean 'reading' of the Attic drama."² Jan Kott succinctly described the constrictive effects of the presumption of Shakespeare's "lesse Greek."

A great deal has been written about *Hamlet's* connections to ancient tragedy. It is significant that the subject has been treated least by Shakespearean scholars. Shakespeare did not know Greek tragedy and for this reason the subject did not exist, as far as philological research was concerned.³

Nonetheless, Greek and Shakespeare scholars have on occasion broken rank and argued the case for direct influence on *Hamlet* of the Orestes dramas of Aeschylus and Euripides. Renowned Greek scholar and translator Gilbert Murray made compelling arguments for a connection in his monograph, "*Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types*,"⁴ presented to the British Academy in 1914. Since Murray's detailed comparative analysis, a handful of 20th century scholars have published works exploring the elements of Greek drama exhibited in Shakespeare's masterpiece.⁵

Modern editions and critical reviews of *Hamlet*, however, do not list Aeschylus or Euripides as accepted direct sources.

If *Hamlet* serves as evidence that Shakespeare critics have consistently ignored the influence of the *Oresteia*, it is hardly anomalous that academics have never seriously considered Aeschylus' trilogy as a source of Shakespeare's other northern, revenge tragedy, *Macbeth*. The significance of this lacuna in Renaissance studies can be inferred from the opinion of one scholar who recognized that, in the entire canon, "*Macbeth* most resembles a Greek tragedy."⁶ J.A.K. Thompson remarked similarly in his highly respected study, *Shakespeare and the Classics* (1952):

Macbeth is in many respects the most classical of all Shakespeare's plays. It employs more powerfully and overtly than any other, the method of tragic irony, which gets its effects by working on the foreknowledge of the audience – here communicated by the Witches –.... And the killing of Duncan is, in the Greek manner, done off stage.⁷

In his commentaries on *Macbeth*, however, Thompson completely ignored the Greek tragedies as primary classical sources and, instead, focused on Seneca's *Hercules Furens* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Thompson is not the first scholar to identify analogs of Greek tragedy in *Macbeth* and then drop the matter without further consideration. In *Shakespeare Survey Volume 19: Macbeth* (1966), editor Kenneth Muir writes that "*Macbeth* has long been considered one of Shakespeare's 'most sublime' plays, if only because of the analogues between it and Greek tragedies."⁸ Muir's edition includes an excellent commentary by Arthur McGhee on "*Macbeth* and the Furies," but as evidence for Greek influence, he simply references Richard Moulton's "*Shakespeare's Macbeth Arranged as an Ancient Tragedy*" (1890),⁹ an imaginary, compressed reconstruction of Shakespeare's tragedy as it might appear on the Attic stage. However, neither Moulton nor Muir identified any instances of intertextual connection between Aeschylus and Shakespeare.

Among the very early critical commentaries linking *Macbeth* to the *Oresteia* cited in Horace Howard Furness' *Variorum* edition (1901) is this passage by the German scholar A.W. Schlegel: "Who could exhaust the praise of this sublime work? Since *The Furies* of Aeschylus, nothing so grand and terrible has ever been composed."¹⁰ Furness includes the opinion of Lord Campbell, who published a book on Shakespeare's legal acquirements and who wrote that Macbeth's tragedy reminded him of Aeschylus' poetry, that both playwrights employed scenes and conceptions too bold for easy representation:

In the grandeur of tragedy, Macbeth has no parallel, until we go back to *The Prometheus* and *The Furies* of the Attic stage. I could produce ... innumerable instances of striking similarity between the metaphorical mintage of Shakespeare's and Aeschylus's style, – a similarity, both in beauty and in the fault of excess, that, unless the contrary had been proved, would lead me to suspect our great dramatist to have been

a studious Greek scholar. *But their resemblance arose only from the consanguinity of nature.*¹¹

Campbell ultimately rejects the possibility of direct dependence on Aeschylus, but his contemporary, French scholar A. Mézières, asserted that had Shakespeare “been better acquainted with the Greeks, or had he needed to imitate any model to express energetic sentiments, we might be tempted to say that this piece (*Macbeth*) was inspired by the strong soul of Aeschylus. Its characters are as rude, its manners as barbarous, its style is as vigorous and full of poetry, as in the old Grecian tragedies.”¹²

J. Churton Collins (1904) has gone farther than any 20th century scholar in attempting to establish a direct link between *Macbeth* and the Greek dramatists.

Clytemnestra in the *Agamemnon* might well be the archetype of Lady Macbeth. Both possessed by one idea are, till its achievement, the incarnations of a murderous purpose. In both, the motive impulses are from the sexual affections. Both, without pity and without scruple, have nerves of steel and wills of iron before which their husband and paramour cower in admiring awe, and yet in both beats the women’s heart; and the fine touches which Aeschylus brings this out may well have arrested Shakespeare’s attention. The profound hypocrisy of the one in her speech to *Agamemnon* answers to that of the other in her speeches to Duncan.¹³

Collins describes how the buildup to Duncan’s murder and the murder itself, with Lady Macbeth waiting in suspense outside the King’s chamber, have a “strong generic resemblance to the catastrophes of the *Choephoroe* (*Libation Bearers*), the *Electra* (of Sophocles) and the *Orestes* (of Euripides).¹⁴ Collins, aware that the works of Aeschylus had never been published in England, surmised that for his later plays “we must assume that *instinct* led Shakespeare to the Greek conception of the scope and functions of tragedy and that by a certain natural affinity he caught also the accent and tone as well as some of the most striking characteristics of Greek tragedy.”¹⁵

Collins finds evidence for one particular Aeschylean allusion in *Macbeth* by noting the similarity of the Chorus in the *Choephoroe* (165): “Speak on—and yet my heart is dancing with fear” and Macbeth’s statement “make my seated heart knock at my ribs” (1:3:136).¹⁶ Interestingly, Collins failed to notice that Aeschylus employs the same expression of heart-thumping fear expressed by the Chorus in the *Agamemnon*:

Ah, to some end of fate, unseen, unguessed,
Are these wild throbbings of my heart and breast –
Yea, of some doom they tell –
Each pulse a, a knell.

(1000-02)¹⁷

In one footnote, Collins even goes so far as to suggest a “metaphysical connection” between these tragedies:

Macbeth, metaphysically considered, simply unfolds what is latent in the following passage of the *Agamemnon*, 210-6: “But when he had put on the yoke band of Necessity, blowing a changed gale of mind, impious, unblessed, unholy, from that moment he changed to all-daring recklessness, for in men a miserable frenzy, prompting deeds of shame and initiating mischief, emboldens.”¹⁸

Although Collins was reluctant to suggest openly that Aeschylus was a Shakespeare source, he does identify numerous possible parallels in *Macbeth* with the tragedies of Euripides. Examples of his findings suggesting Shakespeare’s debt to Euripides include:

- The grooms in *Macbeth* have the same vision in the same circumstances as the ill-fated charioteer in the *Rhesus*.¹⁹
- The Phrygian Eunuch in the *Orestes* is almost as great a foil to the surrounding horrors as the Porter in *Macbeth*.²⁰
- Lady Macbeth’s invocation to the “Spirits that tend on mortal thoughts” has a striking resemblance to Medea’s speech after being banished by Creon.²¹
- In the scene in *Macbeth* where Ross announces to Macduff the murder of his wife and children, he uses a paradoxical approach identical to that in the *Troades*. Macduff and Hecuba are both initially told that their dead children “are well.”²²

Despite these intriguing possibilities proposed by Collins, in the century since *Studies In Shakespeare* was published only a handful of Shakespeare scholars have continued to explore elements linking the Scottish tragedy to Greek drama, specifically to the *Oresteia*. In *Ethical Aspects of Tragedy* (1953),²³ Laura Jepsen examines *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia* in the context of dramas that are focused on the principle of “poetic justice,” where the tension between individual responsibility and hereditary guilt define the heroic struggle. “Like Aristotle, the Greek tragedians and Shakespeare generally conceive of a universe in which standards of morality are absolute.”²⁴ Jepsen suggests that the guilty conscience assailing Macbeth is a kind of Nemesis, which pursues him as furiously as it once pursued Clytemnestra, and she notes that both characters never show a sign of repentance. Macbeth is at “the end, deceived by the witch’s prophecies, but like Clytemnestra calling for the battle-axe, he dies defiantly presenting his shield.”²⁵ While Jepsen presents an extended comparative analysis of the plots, characters, and ethics of these two dramas, she never suggests that Aeschylus directly influenced Shakespeare.

In *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example* (1987), Adrian Poole begins his chapter, “‘The Initiate Fear’: Aeschylus, Shakespeare,” with the following passage:

Fear takes many diverse forms and Aeschylean tragedy is uniquely rich in its power to represent fear, its symptoms, sources, objects and consequences. *Macbeth* is in this sense Shakespeare’s most Aeschylean tragedy.²⁶

Poole accurately portrays the restless confusion and insomnia from painful memories that possess the characters of both the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*, giving rise to “a vertiginous apprehension....The almost uncontrollable shaking and throbbing that wracks Macbeth has something of the same source in the desperate fear of losing self-possession....” Poole offers valuable insights on Lady Macbeth’s character, who, like Clytemnestra, “exhibits an astonishing self-control, a violent seizure of language through which she seeks to control herself and others.”²⁷

Poole’s analysis includes a recognition of the similarities of the dramatic situations of the avenging sons, Orestes and Malcolm, and he goes so far as to suggest that the English Siwards in *Macbeth* serve as the equivalent of Aeschylus’ Pylades, as “guarantors of a justice whose source lies elsewhere, beyond the confines of natural corruption.”²⁸ Poole is the current chair of the English faculty at Trinity College Cambridge, so he stops short of making the radical proposal that Shakespeare was directly influenced by Aeschylus, and makes no effort to review previous scholarship on this question or identify specific intertextual or allusive links between these tragedies.

For over a century, scholars have repeatedly recognized common elements between *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia*. Despite the obvious parallels in plot, dramaturgy, characterization and supernatural terror, no current edition of this tragedy includes Aeschylus as a source, and no scholar since Churton Collins has offered a close reading of the texts to develop further evidence linking these dramas. There are arguably many unrecognized allusions and thematic parallels that connect the *Oresteia* with *Macbeth*, the recognition of which may credibly confirm the perceptions of other scholars and justify the conclusion that, in writing *Macbeth*, Shakespeare owed a debt to the one extant trilogy of classical Greek theater.

“Trammel Up the Consequence”

In 2009, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) produced a chillingly supernatural *Macbeth*, directed by renowned classics director Gale Edwards, the visceral qualities of the production and the scenes of horror were stunningly effective. One reviewer was impressed by the fearful “paroxysms of bloody violence and its depiction of the supernatural elements – most strikingly in the appearance of the apparitions that emerge from the witches’ cauldron with full head masks....”²⁹ The three Weird Sisters were chillingly portrayed like a sinister chorus, silently appearing repeatedly on stage as demonic and prophetic witnesses to Macbeth’s many crimes.

During that spring, Ray Embry conducted a 10-week close reading of Robert Fagle’s translation of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute of Southern Oregon University. After seeing the OSF production of *Macbeth*, several students in Ray’s class commented on the number of dramatic elements that Shakespeare’s tragedy seemed to share with the Greek trilogy. My personal list included these parallels:

- Assassinations of Duncan and Agamemnon off stage, in the Greek manner.
- Display of bloody knives after the assassination.
- Motif of bloodstained, unclean hands.
- Masculine queens capable of seductive equivocation.
- Theme of the poisoned breast.
- Sleeplessness and dream terrors requiring night lights.
- Revenge-driven ghosts.
- Fury-like chorus of Three Weird Sisters.
- Allusions to the Gorgon.
- Prophecy.
- Insanity.
- Porters.
- Messenger speeches.
- Stichomythic dialogue.

During the run of *Macbeth*, I also attended an educational lecture at OSF delivered by Michael J. Allen, former director of UCLA's Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. His presentation was titled "The Insane Root of Language in *Macbeth*" and focused on the possessive, dark power of the language imbedded in the play. Allen provided a six-page handout that focused on Macbeth's soliloquy in Act 1 when he considers the means and consequences of murdering Duncan:

If it were done when tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If the assassination
Could *trammel* up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come.³⁰

(1.7.1-7)

Allen emphasized how the language itself, the connotative power of the words the playwright employed, seems to control the characters darkly. His analysis focused primarily on the word "trammel" from this passage, and his detailed handout included definitions he had abstracted from the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Allen noted that the first use of "trammel" as a verb was in 1536, according to the *OED*, and that the definition, "to bind up (a corpse)," was used specifically for royalty. The first three reported uses of "trammel" describe the funeral binding of Queen Katherine (1536), King Henry (1547) and Queen Mary (c. 1558), who "after her departure was... tramelled in this manner."³¹ Another definition included by Allen was "to use a trammel-net," as in trapping fish or birds, and was dated to 1588. A third definition of "trammel" used as a verb was "to entangle or fasten up as in a trammel" and referenced *Macbeth* as an early example of this meaning.

The *OED* citations of “trammel” as a noun defined it as “a long narrow fishing-net,” “a fowling-net,” and “anything that hinders or impedes free action; anything that confines, restrains, fetters or shackles.” The final notation in Allen’s handout defined “trammel” as “the plaits and braids or tresses of a woman’s hair,” and cited Robert Greene, who wrote “she...wraps affection in the trammels of her hair” in his *Menaphon* (1589).³²

Allen’s detailed attention to this word did not “trammel up” one additional connotation of royal fate that may actually have been the playwright’s primary inspiration for using this rare word. The trammel net as a dramaturgic image symbolic of royal assassination had been used deliberately by Aeschylus in the *Agamemnon*, as Clytemnestra holds up the bloodstained fish net that was used to trap the king when she stabbed him to death. Similarly, Orestes holds up the same bloody net as evidence of his mother’s villainy after he executes Clytemnestra and Aegisthus at the climax of *The Libation Bearers*. Allen had evidently not considered the potential for this image to represent an analog between the tragedies of Aeschylus and Shakespeare. The stage directions for Clytemnestra’s entrance after she has assassinated Agamemnon are especially instructive in Fagles’ translation of the *Oresteia* (1966).³³ As the leader of the Chorus rushes at the door,

They open and reveal a silver cauldron that holds the body of Agamemnon shrouded in bloody robes, with the body of Cassandra to his left and Clytemnestra standing to his right, sword in hand. She strides toward the chorus.³⁴

In E.D.A. Morshead’s translation of *Agamemnon* (1938),³⁵ Clytemnestra is also described as having blood smeared upon her forehead. The concluding image of this passage has a Shakespearean resonance:

Ho, ye who heard me speak so long and oft
The glozing word that led me to my will –
Here how I shrink not to unsay it all!
How else should one who willeth to requite
Evil for evil to an enemy
Disguised as friend, weave the mesh straightly round him,
Not to be overleaped, a net of doom?
This is the sum and issue of old strife,
Of me deep-pondered and at length fulfilled.
All is avowed, and as I smote I stand
With foot set firm upon a finished thing!
I turn not to denial: thus I wrought
So he could nor flee nor ward his doom,
Even as the *trammel* hems the scaly *shoal*,
I trapped him with inextricable toils
The ill abundance of a baffling robe;
Then smote him.... (1372-90)³⁶

Morshead's translation of the stage directions for the scene in *The Libation Bearers*, when Orestes appears after he has slain Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, is almost an exact parallel to this scene in *The Agamemnon*: "The central doors of the palace open, disclosing Orestes standing over the corpses of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra; in one hand he holds his sword, in the other the robe in which Agamemnon was entangled and slain."³⁷

O ye who stand, this great doom's witnesses,
Behold this too, the dark device which bound
My sire unhappy to his death, - behold
The mesh which trapped his hands, enwound his feet!
Stand round, unfold it - 'tis the *trammel-net*
That wrapped a chieftain (980-85)³⁸

Marie Axton has noted an anomaly in the Tudor interlude *Horestes* (1567) which suggests an allusion to Aeschylus' trammel net. In a footnote to her edition of *Three Classical Tudor Interludes* (1982), Axton recalls how the medieval sources, Caxton and Lydgate, represent the murder of Agamemnon by having him killed in his bed by Aegisthus, not by Clytemnestra, who trapped him in the bath. The author of *Horestes* alludes to Clytemnestra's murderous net thus: "He that had past the fate of war, where chance was equal set,/Through Fortune's spight is caught, alacke, within old Mero's net."³⁹

While very few props are used in classical Greek theater, in the *Oresteia* no fewer than three highly symbolic props are displayed in the course of the trilogy. First are the purple, embroidered tapestries that Clytemnestra has her attendants spread across the stage when she insists that Agamemnon descend from his chariot and walk across them to enter the house. This is a highly symbolic gesture and is a visual representation of Agamemnon's *hubris*, his willingness to ruin such precious objects. The bloody robe or trammel net used to trap the Greek king is another symbolic object that is repeatedly referred to and/or displayed in both *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers*.⁴⁰ Third, the swords used by Clytemnestra to kill Agamemnon and Cassandra and by Orestes to execute Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are actually displayed according to the stage directions in several modern editions.

Though the trammel net is employed only as metaphor for fatal entrapment in *Macbeth*, Aeschylus' bloodied swords show up as symbolic props in Shakespeare's tragedy; first as Macbeth's hallucination, and then as the actual knives used to assassinate Duncan and his attendants, which leave indelible bloodstains on both the Thane and his Lady.

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible

To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
 A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
 Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
 I see thee yet, in form as palpable
 As this which now I draw.
 Thou marshal'st me the way that I was going;
 And such an instrument I was to use.
 Mine eyes were made the fool o' the other senses,
 Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still,
 And on thy blade and dudgeon, gouts of blood,
 Which was not so before.

(2.1.33-47)

Macbeth addresses the image of the dagger as if it were a living object with its own intention that marshals the possessor. The potential dramatic importance that both playwrights appear to place on these imagined or displayed bloody instruments cannot be overstated. In the Greek tradition, the dramatic props, the knives and nets, were perceived to possess an animating energy, conscious, mute witnesses to the fulfillment of dark treachery. While precious little is known about the use of props on the Attic stage, in all likelihood there were altars, statues, chariots, tapestries, and net-like robes, if not bloody swords, used in productions of trilogies like the *Oresteia*.⁴¹ If so, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* may well represent the playwright's intention of invoking highly symbolic imagery with roots drawing on the dramaturgy of Greek tragedy.

Haunted Houses

Allen's presentation on Shakespeare's "dark power" with language in *Macbeth* prompted the initiation of a search for broader evidence of direct connections between Aeschylus and Shakespeare. Certainly, the presence of ghosts bent on revenge, Clytemnestra in the *Eumenides* and Banquo in *Macbeth*, are relevant in this regard. Shakespeare also seems to have adopted the Greek manner of sinister personification of the protagonist's house. In *Agamemnon*, Cassandra breaks her silence with a howling lamentation of great sorrow for being cursed by Apollo. She then begins a chant directly addressed at Agamemnon's home, the notoriously cursed House of Atreus:

Home, cursed of God! Bear witness unto me –
 Ye visioned woes within –
 The blood-stained hands of them that smite their kin –
 The strangling noose, and, spattered o'er
 With human blood, the reeking floor!

(1086-92)⁴²

The House of Atreus, like Macbeth's castle, is portrayed as having its own mysterious voice, one that "chants of ill" and sounds deep in the night, terrorizing the

guilty into sleeplessness with prophetic nightmares. Cassandra's vision of a choir of Furies makes clear the origin of these dreadful soundings:

I scent the trail of blood shed long ago.
Within this house a choir abidingly
Chants in harsh unison the chant of ill;
Yea, and they drink, for more enhardened joy,
Man's blood for wine, and revel in the halls,
Departing never, Furies of the home.
They sit within, they chant the primal curse,
Each spitting hatred on the crime of old
(1187-94)⁴³

In the *parados* of *The Libation Bearers*, the text of the first antistrophe describes the hair-raising sound of Fear that resounds through the house at the witching hour of midnight. The sound "from realms below" that rouses Clytemnestra with a mortifying nightmare sets in motion the Queen's order that libations be offered at the tomb of Agamemnon, which will ironically serve as a means to reunite Orestes with Electra.

Oracular thro' visions, ghastly clear,
Bearing the blast of wrath from realms below,
And stiffening each rising hair with dread,
 Came out of dream-land fear,
 And, loud and awful, bade
The shriek ring out at midnight's witching hour,
 And brooded stern with woe,
Above the inner house, the woman's bower
And seers inspired did read the dream on oath,
 Chanting loud in realms below
 The dead are wroth;
Against their slayers yet their ire doth glow.
(32-45)⁴⁴

Robert Fagles' translation of this passage similarly speaks of "the voice of Terror deep in the house, bursting down on the woman's darkened chambers..."⁴⁵

En route to murdering Duncan, Macbeth conjures a similar image of an animate house: "Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear/Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts" (2.1.57-58). After Duncan's murder, bearing the daggers and gazing on his bloodied hands, Macbeth describes his horror on hearing the voice of his house speak to him.

Macbeth. Methought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep,"— the innocent sleep;
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,

The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
 Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
 Chief nourisher of life's feast.

Lady Macbeth. What do you mean?

Macbeth. Still it cried "Sleep no more!" to all the house,
 "Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor
 Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more!"

(2.2.32-40)

This dramaturgic element, the vengeful voice from the underworld in response to the assassination of a rightful king, is also found in *Hamlet*. Like the voice in *The Libation Bearers*, Hamlet's ghost rumbles "Swear" from beneath the castle battlements three times to insure that Horatio and Marcellus swear oaths of silence on the prince's sword. These prominent supernatural elements in Shakespeare's tragedies, the nocturnal ghosts and disembodied outcries, are directly traceable to elements employed by the Greek tragedians 2,000 years earlier.

Damned Spots

The sleeplessness of Clytemnestra in *The Libation Bearers* and the sleepwalking confession of Lady Macbeth offer another significant parallel in their night disturbances. Both queens require that torches and candles be lit at night by their servants. When she was awakened from her night terror, Clytemnestra "started with a cry,/ And thro' the palace for their mistress' aid/Full many lamps, that erst lay blind with night,/ Flared into light": (536-38). Similarly, as Lady Macbeth is observed sleepwalking with a taper, we learn how she has issued identical orders:

Gentlewoman. Lo you, here she comes. This is her very guise; and, upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her; stand close.

Doctor. How came she by that light?

Gentlewoman. Why, it stood by her. She has light by her continually; tis her command.

(5.1.13-16)

In the third and final antistrophe of the *parados* of the *Libation Bearers*, the Chorus reflects on the theme of murderous hands that can never be purified, not even by all the waters of the world.

Lo, when men's force doth ope
 The virgin doors, there is nor cure nor hope
 For what is lost, - even so, I deem,
 Though in one channel ran Earth's every stream,
 Laving the hand defiled from murder's stain,
 It were in vain.

(71-75)⁴⁶

Macbeth's acknowledgement of the same dilemma clearly echoes this choric image.

What hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

(2.2.56-60)

The indelible bloodstain of assassination that cannot be cleansed by all the waters of the heavens is also alluded to in *Hamlet*. Claudius, in his one moment of contrition, utters "What if this cursed hand/Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,/Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens/To wash it white as snow?" (3.3.43-46).

For Lady Macbeth the sense of irredeemable bloodguilt has an olfactory context and is dramatized by the compulsive rubbing of her hands during her night wanderings. "Here is the smell of blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!" (5.1.36-37). Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth share another significant parallel in this regard, as both characters have a bloodstain that is referred to as a "damned spot":

Chorus. Thy soul, that chose a murd'ress fate,
Is all with blood elate –
Maddened to know
The blood not yet avenged, the damned spot
Crimson upon thy brow.

(1429-33)⁴⁷

Lady Macbeth. Out damned spot! Out I say!
(5.1.24)

This image of the "damned" spot of bloody assassination, the stain that cannot be removed by all the waters of the world, as represented in the text in both Greek and Shakespearean tragedy, provides additional evidence for a direct connection.

Poisoned Breasts

The motif of the poisoned breast is another element employed by both Aeschylus and Shakespeare in their respective tragedies. The Chorus Leader in *The Libation Bearers* narrates Clytemnestra's terrifying, prophetic dream of being bitten while she nursed a poisonous serpent:

Leader. 'Twas the night-wandering terror of a dream
That flung her shivering from her couch, and bade her –

Her, the accursed of God – these offerings send.

Orestes. Heard ye the dream, to tell it forth aright?

Leader. Yea, from herself; her womb a serpent bare.

Orestes. What then the sum and issue of the tale?

Leader. Even as a swaddled thing, she lull'd the thing.

Orestes. What suckling craved the creature, born full-fanged?

Leader. Yet in her dreams she proffered it the breast.

Orestes. How? Did the hateful thing not bite her teat?

Leader. Yea, and sucked forth a blood-gout of milk.

Orestes. Not vain this dream – it bodes a man's revenge.

Orestes, on hearing this narrative, reflects on how both he and the serpent had sprung from the same womb and had sucked the same mother's milk, and concludes that the dream was prophetic; "'tis I, in semblance of a serpent, that must slay her."⁴⁸ The motif of the mother's breast is engaged again when Orestes prepares to execute Clytemnestra, who begs his mercy and reminds him of how she nursed him when he was a baby. According to classics Elizabeth Vandiver, Clytemnestra "does so in words that, without question, recalls a very famous passage in Homer's Iliad, where the aged Hecuba, queen of Troy, exposes her breasts to her son Hector, and begs him not to go out to fight Achilles."⁴⁹

Lady Macbeth uses a number of breast allusions in her provocative speeches as she drives Macbeth toward his tragic deed. In her opening speech, she expresses the fear that her husband's nature is "too full o' the milk of human kindness" (1.5.17) and that she must "pour my spirits in thine ear and chastise with the valor of my tongue" all impediments to her husband gaining the crown. Her malevolent incantation to the "murdering ministers" immediately prior to Macbeth's return home is an invitation to suckle her poisonous breast:

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top full
Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it. Come to my women's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief.

(1.5.40-50)

While Lady Macbeth wishes to be "unsexed," Clytemnestra also transcends gender identity. She is described in *Agamemnon* as "the woman-thing, the lioness," "manful and imperious."⁵⁰ The poisonous serpent image of Clytemnestra's dream

reappears in Lady Macbeth's advice to Macbeth: "bear welcome in your eye,/Your hand, your tongue. Look like the innocent flower,/But be the serpent under't" (1.5.64-66). Lady Macbeth's final appeal that makes Macbeth screw his courage "to the sticking place" and commit to the assassination of Duncan employs the metaphor of poisoned breast one more time:

I have given suck, and know
How tender tis to love the babe that milks me.
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this.

(1.7.54-59)

Macbeth, a man "too full o' the milk of human kindness," compares pity to "a naked new-born babe." Kenneth Muir observes that in these passages "the babe symbolizes pity, and the necessity for pity, and milk symbolizes humanity, tenderness, sympathy, natural human feelings, the sense of kinship, all of which have been outraged by the murderers."⁵¹

Shakespeare also employs the potent image of the poisoned breast in *Antony and Cleopatra* in an anomalous way that also invokes Clytemnestra's dream image. The playwright's source, "The Life of Antony" in *Plutarch's Lives*, presents a very different narrative concerning where on her body Cleopatra will have the asp bite after she locks herself in her monument:

Some relate that the asp was brought in amongst those figs and covered with the leaves, and that Cleopatra had arranged that it might bite her before she knew, but, when she took away some of the figs and saw it, she said, "So here it is," and held out her bare arm to be bitten.⁵²

In a second account, Plutarch recounts how some said "she vexed and pricked it with a golden spindle till it seized her arm," and, although no asp was found and self-poisoning was suspected, two faint puncture marks were found on her arm and Augustus seems to have been given credit for this account, "for in his triumph there was carried a figure of Cleopatra, with asp clinging to her."⁵³ Shakespeare clearly intended to layer this scene with an Aeschylean mythopoetic resonance by doubling the number of asps actually reported in Plutarch:

Cleopatra. Come thou mortal wretch
(*To an asp, which she applies to her breast.*)
With thy sharp teeth this knot intricate
Of life at once untie. Poor venomous fool,
Be angry and dispatch. O, couldst thou speak,

That I might hear thee call great Caesar ass
Unpolicied!

Charmian. O eastern star!

Cleopatra. Peace, peace!

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?

Charmian. O, break! O, break!

Cleopatra. As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle –
O, Antony! – Nay, I will take thee too.

(Applying another asp to her arm.)

What should I say? *(Dies)*

(5.2.303-13)⁵⁴

Shakespeare's unique poisoned breast motif for Cleopatra's suicide seems to echo Clytemnestra's prophetic nightmare, and if this is true, Lady Macbeth's poisoned breast milk turned to "gall" may well prove to be another dramatic theme confirming the likelihood of Aeschylean influence on Shakespeare.

Avian Divination

Shakespeare mentions over fifty birds in the canon, including the phoenix, peacock, vulture, parrot, and turkey.⁵⁵ In *Shakespeare's Birds*, Peter Goodfellow finds the playwright's knowledge of falconry to be particularly noteworthy. There are over fifty allusions to hawking in the plays:

He knew so much about the sport that he *must* have been personally involved, perhaps on visits to one of his noble friends; only an expert could so naturally and accurately use so many technical terms; and only an informed audience could grasp the significance of a multitude of allusions.⁵⁶

One of the most striking features of both *Macbeth* and *Agamemnon* are the number of allusions to birds, birds especially to those known for their predatory and prophetic associations.

Agamemnon. Eagle, Raven, Vulture, Owl, Swallow, Nightingale, Swan, Cock.

Macbeth. Eagle, Raven, Vulture, Owl, Kite, Falcon, Magpie, Chough, Rook, Jackdaw, Chicken, Martin, Wren, Sparrow, Loon.

According to Goodfellow, Shakespeare's naturalism is on full display in *Macbeth*. He notes that when Lady Macbeth hears the "owl *scream*, we can be sure that Shakespeare is thinking of the barn owl. The weird piercing scream of the adult bird has made it known for centuries in Britain as the screech owl. What more ghostly sight could

there be to an impressionable eye than this white bird floating silently across the graveyard...?”⁵⁷

Particularly relevant here in the comparative analysis of *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia* is the representation of avian divination. *Oionomanteia*, bird augury, is described in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, plays an important role in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and is richly developed in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Oracular birds in the Greek tradition were primarily represented by birds of prey, and in Homeric epic, the appearance of eagles always had a divinatory significance. Along with prophetic dreams and meteorological phenomena, avian behavior, flight patterns and cries were thought to convey divine knowledge to be interpreted by seers. The first strophe of the Chorus in the *Agamemnon* recounts in vivid detail the symbolic power of the appearance of twin eagle warrior-birds, emblems of the two brothers, Agamemnon and Menelaus, who were leading an army to Troy.

How brother kings, twin lords of one command,
Led forth the youth of Hellas in their flower,
Urged on their way with vengeful spear and brand,
By warrior-birds, that watched the parting hour.

Go forth to Troy, the eagles seemed to cry –
And the sea-kings obeyed the sky-kings' word,
When on the right they soared across the sky,
And one was black and one bore a white tail barred.

High o'er the palace were they seen to soar,
Then lit in sight of all and rent and tare,
Far from the fields that she should range no more,
Big with her unborn brood, a mother-hare.

The soothsayer Calchas immediately interprets the omen correctly: The Greeks shall triumph over Troy, but because Artemis has been offended by the prophecy, there must be a second sacrifice. Agamemnon is forced to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia to placate the goddess, a terrible deed that sets in motion Clytemnestra's revenge, “like a lurking snake, biding its time, a wrath unreconciled, a wily watcher, passionate to slake, in blood, resentment for a murdered child.”⁵⁸

Bird augury as ill-omen is also well-developed in *Macbeth*. The night of Duncan's murder and day after are attended by many unnatural phenomena. Ross comments that the heavens are disturbed by man's sin, that they threaten man's “bloody stage” by strangling the light of day, as “darkness does the face of earth entomb” (2.4.9). This description of daytime darkness following the murder of the Scottish king is taken from Holinshed's account.⁵⁹ However, the Old Man's reply to Ross bears attention in regard to avian prophecy:

Tis unnatural,
 Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last.
 A falcon, towering in her pride of place,
 Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.

(2.4.10-13)

A prophetic, unnatural, avian phenomenon, representing the murder of King Duncan, had been divined. The “pride of place” of a falcon is a technical term representing the highest point in the sky reached by the bird before it begins the dive toward its prey. Richard Whalen’s footnote on this image is instructive:

Falcons were regarded as intrinsically noble, valiant and aloof. In this passage, as one of the strange and unnatural phenomena, the owl, which normally flies low to catch rodents on the ground at night, attacked and killed a falcon high in the sky during the day.⁶⁰

The owl has its own mythopoetic resonance, especially as an agent identified with witches. Further, in *The Birds of Shakespeare* (1965), James Edmund Harting points out that, “With the ancients, much superstition prevailed in regard to various species of the crow family; and Shakespeare has specially mentioned three of these birds of omen.”⁶¹ The prophetic nature of crows is addressed by a highly agitated Macbeth immediately after the ghost of Banquo and the Scottish Lords have departed the banquet hall.

It will have blood; they say
 Blood will have blood.
 Stones have been known to move and trees to speak;
 Augurs and understood relations have
 By maggot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth
 The secret'st man of blood. What is the night?

(3.4.120-25)

The editorial footnote for this passage in the *Variorum Macbeth* is noteworthy: “In the weird atmosphere of this play, supernatural signs and omens do not appear out of place.”⁶² To the themes of the trammel net, haunted house, damned spot, and poisoned breast, we may now include avian divination as literary evidence for an Aeschylus-inspired intertextual mosaic of dramatic elements in *Macbeth*.

The Chorus of Weird Sisters, the Furies, Hecate and the Gorgon

Nearly two hundred years ago, A.W. Schlegel wrote of *Macbeth* that, since the Furies of Aeschylus, “nothing so grand and terrible has ever been composed.”⁶³ Since then, a number of critics have identified choral elements in *Macbeth*, and several have argued that the three Weird Sisters behave like a Greek chorus. Brents Stirling

considered the entirety of Act 2, scene 4, to be a choral scene as Ross and the prophetic Old Man seem to meet for the sole purpose of discussing what has happened: "It is a choral piece which appears at the point between the culmination of the murder and movement toward expiation by the murderers."⁶⁴

In his essay, "Macbeth and the Metaphysic of Evil," G. Wilson Knight perceived an archetypal evolution in the dramatic character of the Weird Sisters, identifying them with different aspects of the Greek Triple goddess:

The Weird Sisters who were formerly as the three Parcae or Fates, foretelling Macbeth's future, now, at this later stage of the story become the Erinyes, avengers of murder, symbols of the tormented soul. They delude and madden him with their apparitions and ghosts.⁶⁵

Knight's recognition of the Weird Sisters serving as a Greek chorus was confirmed by Harvard University's Harry Levin, who later noted, "Those 'secret, black, and midnight hags,' the Witches, who for Holinshed were goddesses of destiny, come as close as anything in Shakespeare to the chorus of Greek tragedy. They have a mysterious connection with the machinery of fate."⁶⁶ The Furies, of course, formed the chorus of *The Eumenides*, the third drama of the *Oresteia*, where the ghost of Clytemnestra provokes them into their relentless pursuit and prosecution of Orestes for the crime of matricide.

In "Macbeth and the Furies" (1966), Arthur McGee notes that the prevailing view on Hell during the Elizabethan period incorporated classical figures which had their own intriguing associations: "Dante's demons include the Furies, Medusa the Gorgon, and the Harpies.... Aeschylus associated his Eumenides with the Harpies and the Gorgons; Virgil's Celaeno is not only a Harpy, but a 'Furiarum maxima,' and she has a prophetic role like the Fates; the Alecto of the Aeneid is 'charged with Gorgon-poisons'; and the Furies of Virgil and Ovid have snakes in place of hair, like the Gorgons."⁶⁷ McGee also reports that the witches of the classical tradition were commonly represented possessing demonic features: "Lucan's Erichtho and Horace's Candida have a coiffure of serpents like the Furies. Ovid's Fury, Tisiphone, uses a cauldron in which to make a magic concoction.... Hecate is closely associated in the Aeneid with the Furies, with Proserpine and Night ("the mother of the Eumenides"); and she is often depicted as carrying a scourge and a torch, as Virgil's Furies do."⁶⁸ The associations between witches and the classical Furies would have been commonly understood by Elizabethan audiences, according to McGee, who cites S.T. Coleridge as proof: "The Weird Sisters are as true a creation of Shakespeare's as his Ariel and Caliban – fates, furies, and materializing witches being the elements."⁶⁹ McGee argues that the associations that witches, Furies, demons and devils all have with the owl also underlines their cultural identities as interchangeable symbols. In his conclusion, McGee writes, "The Weird Sisters are omnipresent in the play and are responsible for tempting Macbeth, for inciting him to murder Duncan, and they act as agents of remorse and despair like the classical Furies, their aim being to insure Macbeth's damnation."⁷⁰

Several scholars have more recently explored in greater depth the mythopoetic roots of the Weird Sisters. In *“WE Three”: The Mythology of Shakespeare’s Weird Sisters* (2007), Laura Shamas traces the origins of the sisters through Anglo-Saxon and classical representations to the Triple Goddess, paying particular attention to the Hecatean influences in *Macbeth*:

Although today the Weird Sisters are often to be considered supernatural “witch” figures, it may be seen, through tracing the historicity of Shakespeare’s likely sources for these characters, and by examining their origin through etymological clues, that the Weird Sisters have their basis in mythology, and thus have an extensive archetypal resonance.⁷¹

Webster’s Unabridged Encyclopedic Dictionary (1996), defines “weird sisters” as “The Fates,”⁷² which, Shamas points out, “correlates with the primeval and medieval accounts of them.”⁷³ Shakespeare’s prophetic Weird Sisters, who foretell of Duncan’s demise, were first described in a 15th century Scottish chronicle in which their role as seers bore no hint of evil intentions. Holinshed refers to these mysterious old women as “creatures of elder world” and “goddesses of destiny.” Shamas argues that Shakespeare’s sisters must be associated with the Anglo-Saxon Fates, the three “Wyrdes” who were particularly identified with Scotland. Further, the cauldron was the prime symbol of the druidic world, representing the womb of the Great Goddess through which the dead could be reincarnated. Shamas notes, “There seems to be a relevant association with the cauldron, the Celtic Triple Goddess, and the Scottish Weird Sisters in the scene 4.1.”⁷⁴

By telling Macbeth his past (Glamis), present (Cawdor), and future (King) in the list of his titles, Shakespeare aligns the Sisters with the Fates whose oracular function is associated with the rites of the Triple goddess. The playwright then introduces the Greek Goddess Hecate. While Shakespeare’s Weird Sisters clearly fear and obey Hecate, there is no narrative or mythological precedent for Hecate’s rule. Neither the Roman Fates nor the inflexible Greek Moirae answered to Hecate. The chthonic Greek Furies, the Erinyes, were Tisiphone (Retaliation/Destruction), Megaera (Grudge) and Alecto (Never-ending). They dwelled in the underworld and answered to no one; nor did the three Gorgons or the three Graces answer to higher authority. Hecate is closely associated in the *Aeneid* with the Furies, as McGee has noted, and educated Elizabethan audiences would have recognized Hecate and the Weird Sisters in the context of classical demonology.

The Weird Sisters’ associations with Hecate is uniquely Shakespearean, as in no other classical literature or mythology before *Macbeth* do the Weird Sisters, as an Anglo-Saxon Trinitarian mythological goddess construction “answer” to the ancient Greco-Roman goddess, Hecate. By transforming the Weird Sisters into witches and placing them under Hecate’s dominium, Shakespeare expands their archetypal resonance into the underworld of classical mythology and fairy tales.⁷⁵

In Act 3 Hecate appears briefly to chastise the Weird Sisters and spin an alchemical tale of illusion:

I am for the air; this night I'll spend
Unto a dismal and a fatal end.
Great business must be wrought ere noon.
Upon the corner of the moon
There hangs a vaporous drop profound;
I'll catch it ere it come to ground;
And that distilled by magic slights
Shall raise such artificial sprites
As by the strength of their illusion
Shall draw him on to his confusion.
He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear
He hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear.
(3.5.20-31)

Kenneth Muir has commented that Hecate's exit at the end of this short scene is often represented by a *deus ex machina* stage contraption, which enables the actor to ascend, taken up in a cloud of draperies. Shamas further suggests that

Hecate's exit as a *deus ex machina* figure physically reinforces her status as an ethereal lunar goddess, not an infernal one; it also places her character in a continuum of traditional Greek drama, in which deities descended/ascend, as *dei ex machinae*, from the celestial plane and back, in order to intervene in earthly affairs.⁷⁶

Hecate is associated with Artemis/Diana, the moon goddess, and is often represented as the leader of witches or "the fairy spirits." Her provenance includes sorcery, occult practices and midwifery. Hecate is associated with the number three, and her icon was "a sacred cauldron at the three-fold crossroads to which was added wine or milk or blood in which to stir the sacred herbs, ... adding sacred stones from the East, using the olive or willow twig to stir the contents of the bubbling, boiling cauldron—as those who called upon Hecate circled thrice about Her altar."⁷⁷ Shamas points out how perfectly fitting it is that Shakespeare's Hecate returns in Act 4 to commend the Weird Sisters, and to lead the dance around the cauldron.

In *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare*, Robert Root described how the ancients "thought of Hecate first as a moon-goddess, then as a divinity of the infernal regions, and, lastly, as a natural development of these two ideas, as patroness of witches."⁷⁸ Alex Aronson has argued that the darkly sinister tone of Shakespeare's allusions to Hecate in the canon has a fatalistic impact on *Macbeth*:

Whenever Hecate appears in the world of Shakespeare's tragedies, she forms part of a prayer or invocation addressed to the powers of darkness to bring about the death of someone whose powers of destruction would be the sacrifice required to insure the victory of evil over good.⁷⁹

In "Macbeth: The Male Medusa" (2008),⁸⁰ Marjorie Garber examines the mythological and allegorical implications of Shakespeare's use of the image of the "new Gorgon," and establishes a link between the three Gorgons of antiquity and the Weird Sisters. The Gorgon is referred to only twice in the entire canon. Macduff's cryptic description of "most sacrilegious murder" on discovering Duncan's mutilated body has a mythopoetic cue:

Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight
With a new Gorgon. Do not bid me speak;
See, and then speak yourselves.

(2.3.61-63)

Recounting the classical mythology of the Gorgon, who turned to stone all those who looked upon her, Garber contextualizes the image of the Medusa head within *Macbeth*:

The first two Gorgons, Stethno ("The Mighty One"), and Eurayle ("Wide-leaping") were immortal, and seem to have nothing really to do with the myth beyond multiplying the fearsome power of the terrible and petrifying female image from one of the favorite number of monstrous females, three, as the Graiai, or Spirits of Eld; the Moriai, or Fates; and the Charities, or Graces. The two supernumerary Gorgons disappear almost immediately from most accounts, leaving the focus on the third, the mortal Gorgon, Medusa, whose name – significantly enough for *Macbeth* – means "The Queen."⁸¹

How significant is it, then, that the Gorgon image is used to describe the Furies at the end of *The Libation Bearers* and the beginning of *The Eumenides* of Aeschylus? After Orestes has executed Aegisthus and Clytemnestra offstage, he emerges sword in hand, holding up the bloody trammel-net, accuses his mother of being venomous like a "sea-snake or adder" (993), and explains that Apollo himself ordered Orestes to revenge his father's murder. Orestes says he will now go to Loxias' shrine as a suppliant for purification, and the Leader of the Chorus expresses his gratitude to Orestes for "lopping off the two serpents' heads with a timely blow." Then, to his horror, the Furies appear to Orestes, who proclaims to the unseeing Chorus:

Look, look, alas!
Handmaidens, see – what Gorgon shapes throng up
Dusky their robes and all their hair enwound –
Snakes coiled with snakes – off, off – I must away!

(1049-52)⁸²

In the opening scene of *The Eumenides*, the Pythian Priestess uses the same image when she emerges from Apollo's temple. She describes how Orestes has taken refuge in the interior at the sacred altar, but is surrounded by the Chorus of sleeping Furies:

But lo, in front of him,
Crouched on the altar-steps, a grisly band
Of women slumbers – not like women they,
But Gorgons rather; nay, that word is weak,
Nor may I match the Gorgons' shape with theirs!
Such have I seen in painted semblance erst –
Winged Harpies, snatching food from Phineus' board, -
But these are wingless, black, and all their shape
The eye's abomination to behold.

(44-52)⁸³

Is the image of Shakespeare's "new Gorgon" that will "destroy your sight" based on the visions expressed by Orestes and the Pythian Priestess on seeing Gorgon-like Furies, the "eye's abomination"? Though Garber elaborates on the mythic history of the Gorgon Medusa, her interest is not so much philological as it is in establishing the Medusa head as an apotropaic symbol, a means of warding off evil. She even suggests a possible political allegory relating to the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, who was beheaded in 1587:

The play covers over and represses or displaces the figure of the decapitated Mary, so offensive and so omnipresent to the King's imagination, "set high upon a scaffold," and substitutes for it the appropriate and politically necessary decapitation of Macbeth: "Behold, where stands/Th'u surper's cursed head."

(5.9.20-21)⁸⁴

Macbeth commences with the Weird Sister-Furies wandering about the bloody battlefield, already on Macbeth's doorstep. They initiate the tragedy by touching his mind with prophecy, sparking his ambition, and then later mislead and torment him with their ambiguous pronouncements and disturbing visions. Under their influence Macbeth commits the most heinous of crimes, assassinating his King and kinsman while under his protection, and then ordering the killing of Banquo, Fleance, Lady Macduff, and her son, all crimes analogous to those perpetrated by Atreus, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra in a house where the Furies chant horrors from the underworld.

Both the House of Atreus and Macbeth's abode are haunted by revenge-driven supernatural entities. Adrian Poole has observed that, "The ghosts of the dead are progressively raised and made present in the course of the (Oresteian) trilogy."⁸⁵ Prophecy, ghosts, choric commentary and supernatural intervention are all hallmarks of Attic drama. These elements are also dynamic and integral to *Macbeth*. As Macbeth

and his wife go mad and swiftly self-destruct, one can almost hear the Furies of the *Eumenides* singing from within his castle:

Hear the hymn of hell,
 O'er the victim sounding –
 Chant of frenzy, chant of ill,
 Sense and will confounding!
 Round the soul entwining
 Without lute or lyre –
 Soul in madness pining,
 Wasting as with fire!

Refrain I (332-35)⁸⁶

Discussion

Clearly, there are many common elements linking the *Oresteia* to *Macbeth* that have not been previously considered by scholars. The allusion to the fatal trammel-net, the dramaturgy of bloody knives, the subterranean night terrors, the damned spots, the poisoned breast analogies, avian augury, and Weird Sisters as latter day Furies represent new textual and thematic evidence which, combined with the arguments already put forward by Collins, Poole, McGee, Shamas and Garber, draws Shakespeare ever closer to Aeschylus.

Fifty years ago A.T. Johnson wrote, “Certainly both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* employ supernatural agencies not merely for their spectacular effect, not merely to employ the scenic resources of the stage...Far more important are the effects of terror rising at times to a deeply religious awe, arising from a mysterious relationship of man to the powers, both good and evil, manifesting themselves in the universe...”⁸⁷ Johnson’s analysis of the supernatural in Shakespeare begins with his description of how Aeschylus similarly introduced the element of terror in the *Oresteia*. C.E. Whitmore called Aeschylus’ trilogy “the most perfect example of the interpenetration of the supernatural and plot that I know.”⁸⁸ Thus, from the standpoint of supernatural agency, dramaturgy, motifs, allusions, images, avian augury, stichomythic dialogues and choric commentaries, *Macbeth* is arguably Shakespeare’s closest representation of classical Attic tragedy.

This represents a particular challenge to orthodoxy, as Charles and Michelle Martindale have recently argued that any Greek language Shakespeare might have learned at the Stratford school would not have been sufficient to allow him to read the “extremely taxing poetry of the fifth century BC.... Moreover, despite all efforts, no one has succeeded in producing one single piece of evidence from the plays to make any such debt certain, or even particularly likely.”⁸⁹

Nonetheless, as to the dramas of Euripides, a number of recently published studies have confirmed the likelihood that Shakespeare was indebted to Euripides’ *Alcestis* in writing both *The Winter’s Tale* and *Much Ado about Nothing*.⁹⁰ Oxford University’s Laurie Maguire has contextualized the argument over Shakespeare’s debt

to Euripides in her recently published book, *Shakespeare's Names* (2007):

Reluctant to argue that Shakespeare's grammar-school Greek could read Euripides, critics resort to social supposition to argue their case. Charles and Michelle Martindale suggest that 'five minutes conversation with a friend could have given Shakespeare all he needed to know' as does Nutall: 'If we suppose what is simply probable, that he (Shakespeare) talked in pubs to Ben Jonson and others...' I agree with these suppositions, as it happens, but invoking the Mermaid tavern is not a methodology likely to convince skeptics that Shakespeare knew Greek drama.⁹¹

In her chapter, "The Mythological Name: Helen," under the subtitle "How Shakespeare Read his Euripides," Maguire devotes six pages to examining the availability in England of Continental editions of Latin and Italian translations of Euripides' plays. She notes that London printers evidently "lacked the expertise and experience to print Latin and Greek texts of this high quality,"⁹² and cites numerous contemporaneous allusions to Euripides in dramas, sermons, political treatises and commonplace books, many of which have been identified as sources of Shakespeare's plays. "The availability of parallel-text editions with clear Latin translations and explanatory apparatus made it easy for anyone with an interest to read Euripides."⁹³

Parallel arguments regarding Continental editions of translations of the dramas of Aeschylus and Sophocles are, however, significantly harder to establish. In *Ancient Scripts & Modern Experience on the English Stage 1500-1700*, Bruce Smith states:

In the same period, there were, to be sure, eighteen translations of the plays of Sophocles, but they were concentrated almost exclusively on only three plays, *Antigone*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *Electra*. By 1600, there was not even one translation of a play by Aeschylus in Italian, French, English, German or Spanish.⁹⁴

It is relevant at this point to briefly review the history of scholarship linking *Hamlet* to the *Oresteia*. Gilbert Murray was England's greatest Greek scholar during the first half of the 20th century and is credited with translations of many dramatic works of the 5th century tragedians and with the revival of classical Greek theater in London. In *Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types* (1913), Murray described the striking similarities in plot, character, and dramaturgy, and notes repeatedly that Aeschylus and Shakespeare are similar in certain aspects which do not occur in Saxo Grammaticus or the other known sources:

I think it will be conceded that the points of similarity... between these two tragic heroes are rather extraordinary; and are made the more striking by the fact that Hamlet and Orestes are respectively the greatest or most famous heroes of the world's two great ages of tragedy.⁹⁵

Since Murray published his remarkable insights, another Greek specialist, H.D.F. Kitto,⁹⁶ has also commented extensively on the Greek dramatic elements in *Hamlet*. Jan Kott also followed this line of analysis and examine in elements of Greek drama represented in *Hamlet*. Kott argued insightfully that the “dramatic construction of *Hamlet* is based in the Greek manner, on the principle of retardation,” and that the suspense created by the protagonist’s hesitations is crucial to the development of the plot.⁹⁷

In her seminal work published two decades ago in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Louise Schleiner went farther than any other recent critic in suggesting the direct influence of Aeschylus’ trilogy on *Hamlet*, mediated, she posits, through one of the extant continental Latin translations:

I am convinced that at least some passages of Euripides’ *Orestes* and Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* ... by some means influenced *Hamlet*. The concrete theatrical similarities between the Shakespearean and Aeschylean graveyard scenes and between the roles of Horatio and Pylades ... are in my view too close to be coincidental. Furthermore, the churchyard scene of *Hamlet* does not occur in any of the play’s known sources or analogues: if it was not a sheer invention ... it has some source not yet identified.⁹⁸

Schleiner identified several possible sources of Shakespeare’s knowledge of Latin translations of Aeschylus, including the Saint-Ravy translation (Basel, 1555) and the Vettori Aeschylus editions published by Henri Estienne (Paris, 1557, 1567). Further, she noted that Ben Jonson owned a copy of the Saint-Revy adaptation of the *Oresteia* in 1614.⁹⁹

... The Greek subtext of *Hamlet*, if such it is, will not only help account for the rebirth of full-fledged tragedy after 2,000 years, it will also clarify Horatio’s role and correct our century’s overemphasis on oedipal qualities in *Hamlet*.

For Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is much more a version – even a purposive revision – of *Orestes* than *Oedipus*. *Hamlet* is at no risk of marrying or having sex with his mother. He is at considerable risk of killing her.¹⁰⁰

Schleiner’s article concludes with a five-page epilog, “Intertextuality and Cases of Attenuated Influence,” in which she suggests that her analysis of “two textual systems – the older one and Shakespeare’s revisionist rearticulation of it – ...can permit us an observation on the human potential for tragedy....that the psychic region delineated by this convergence is the breeding ground of tragedy.” Martin Mueller has more recently advanced this notion of a direct connection in his recognition of how the “drama at Elsinore self-consciously engages the legacy of ancient tragedy through a process in which a web of allusive ties link his playwright to *Orestes*....”¹⁰¹

Despite the presence of what appear to be many obvious parallels between the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*, and the evidence that of all Shakespeare's plays *Macbeth* most engages the conventions of Greek tragedy, no scholar has ever published an argument proposing direct Aeschylean influence on the playwright for the Scottish play. The reasons for this blind spot in philological studies during the 20th century relates to the enduring legacy of Shakespeare's "lesse Greek," and has as much to do with the limitations imposed by the biography and education of the presumed author as it does with the assumption that English Renaissance culture was Latin-based, that the influence of Attic tragedy had not penetrated the English stage. While Shakespeare critics such as Laurie Maguire, Jonathan Bate, and Claire McEachern¹⁰² have all written convincingly of Shakespeare's debt to Euripides, there were many more continental Latin and vernacular editions of Euripides than there ever were of Aeschylus prior to the late 17th century.

In "Striking too short at Greeks': The Transmission of *Agamemnon* to the English Renaissance Stage" (2005), Inga-Stina Ewbank hesitates to suggest that Shakespeare knew Aeschylus' trilogy as a source, but her remarks on the "eclecticism of Shakespeare's inter-textualizing" are noteworthy:

Nor would I dare insist on the objective validity of my own growing sense that Shakespeare learned from the Aeschylean chorus, with its intimate (and totally un-Senecan) connection with the house and the city, something about achieving ... the effect of the state of the nation being conveyed through ordinary folk. I am thinking not only of the Old Man in *Macbeth*, 2.4, but of whole scenes of a choric nature.¹⁰³

Ewbank traces the history of neoclassical drama in representations of Aeschylus' characters, drawing attention to the lost *Agamemnon* and *Ulysses* acted at court by the "Earle of Oxenford his boyes" in December, 1584. In *English Dramatic Companies, 1558-1642* (1910), J. T. Murray surmised that this play "may have been written by the Earl of Oxford himself, for he was reckoned by Puttenham and Meres among 'the best for comedy' of his time."¹⁰⁴ Ewbank found, during her search for dramatic representations of *Agamemnon*, that there was actually a curious "quality of absence" about the Greek, which was literalized in the reduced Saint-Revy Latin translation published in Basel in 1555. According to Ewbank, the Saint-Revy edition "appears to have been the version of Aeschylus commonly read by humanists on the Continent and in England," and it was based on an incomplete manuscript, the Aldine edition of 1518, which compressed *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers* into one play in which *Agamemnon* never appears as a character.¹⁰⁵ Noting that even passing references to *Agamemnon* were "scarce in the drama of the period," Ewbank finds Shakespeare's *Agamemnon* from *Troilus and Cressida* to be "not a character to compel the imagination. His epithets in Shakespeare's plays are 'great,' 'high and mighty,' 'most imperious,' and so on; but in a play so skeptical of its presentation of both sides in the war, the values which these epithets may represent are also constantly being undercut."¹⁰⁶

Ewbank's most startling revelation, however, is reserved for her comments on Thomas Goffe's *The Tragedie of Orestes*, written between 1613 and 1618 and performed at Oxford University. In this drama, "Aegisthus and Clitemnestra become like the Macbeths: he invokes the 'sable wings' of Night and Clitemnestra 'unsexes' herself, and together they stab Agamemnon in his bed.... Orestes, meditating on his father's skull, Hamlet-fashion, finds assurance in a *Macbeth*-like visit to an Enchantress and three witches who produce, to the accompaniment of '*Infernall Musique*,' a dumb show of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra '*with their bloody daggers*' killing Agamemnon."¹⁰⁷ Ewbank makes it clear that Goffe saw *Hamlet* as an *Orestes* play, but the question remains how Goffe incorporated dramatic elements later found in the text of *Macbeth* which was only published in the First Folio. Ewbank concludes her essay with a plea: "We need to know more about the part played by Greek texts in Elizabethan and Jacobean literary culture, but evidence seems to mount up that some form of first-hand contact with Aeschylus has left traces in Shakespeare's dramatic imagination."¹⁰⁸

This lacuna in Shakespeare studies identified by Ewbank – its century-long reticence to address fully the question of Greek dramatic sources – may be indirectly related to the Shakespeare authorship question. The Earl of Oxford, as the primary alternative candidate for nearly a century following the publication of J. Thomas Looney's *Shakespeare Identified*, had an outstanding education and would have had access to the texts of Attic tragedies and comedies in his youth through his tutor, Cambridge University Greek orator and Vice-Chancellor, Sir Thomas Smith.¹⁰⁹ Smith knew the conventions and texts of the classical theater as he helped produce first the *Plutus* (1536) and then the *Peace* (1546) of Aristophanes at Cambridge University.¹¹⁰ As for access to translators and continental editions of Greek texts,

For nearly a decade Oxford also lived at Cecil House, where he was in close contact with England's leading translators, including his maternal uncle, Arthur Golding (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 1567), George Gascoigne (Euripides' *Phoenissiae*, 1572), and Arthur Hall (the first ten books of Homer's *Iliad*, 1581). Smith and Cecil possessed Greek editions of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Plato in their libraries....¹¹¹

Mildred Cecil, the Earl of Oxford's mother-in-law, was also an accomplished Greek translator. John Strype (quoting Roger Ascham) said, "Mildred Cecil spoke and understood Greek as easily as she spoke English."¹¹² In Caroline Bowden's recently published article, "The Library of Mildred Cooke Cecil, Lady Burghley," the inventory of her Greek editions makes clear how Edward de Vere had ready access to the plays of Attic tragedians:

Mildred Cecil's collection of Greek literature included the most important tragedians: a New edition of Aeschylus' *Tragedies* (I), which included all seven plays for the first time, as well as volumes of Euripides and Sophocles.

The call for greater interest in Greek sources echoed by Ewbank, Maguire and Schleiner runs counter to the arbitrary limits accepted by most 20th century Shakespeare critics, who turned away from untranslated Attic tragedies as possible sources because of Shakespeare's lack of education and limited access to continental editions. The authorship claim of the Earl of Oxford, who throughout his life was surrounded by scholars versed in the Greek canon, may have paradoxically limited the intellectual vigor of Shakespeare studies simply by the fact that Oxford represents a far superior candidate of the creation of dramas based on 5th century Greek tragedies.

Conclusion

Shakespeare scholars have previously identified intertextual evidence in *Hamlet* that suggests the author was influenced by the dramas of Aeschylus and Euripides. Many scholars have also suggested that *Macbeth* incorporates elements from Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, though none has previously set out to evaluate systematically the evidence that the playwright directly referred to this source. Evidence presented in this paper suggests many significant Aeschylean influences in *Macbeth*, including the representations of the supernatural, the dramaturgy of bloody knives, the allusions to the trammel-net and Gorgon, the theme of the poisoned breast, the "damned spot," avian augury, and the chorus of Weird Sisters. These findings challenge the limitations traditional scholarship has placed on Shakespeare studies and should promote further investigations into the playwright's "greater Greek."

Endnotes

- ¹ Robert Kilburn Root, *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare* (New York: Gordion Press, Inc. 1903), 6.
- ² Michael Silk, "Shakespeare and Greek tragedy: strange relationship," in *Shakespeare and the Classics*. eds. Charles Martindale & A.B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 241.
- ³ Jan Kott (trans. Boleslaw Taborski), "Hamlet and Orestes," *PMLA* 82:5 (1967), 303-313.
- ⁴ Gilbert Murray, "Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, (June, 1914) 1-24, most recently reported on by Earl Showerman, "Orestes and Hamlet: From Myth to Masterpiece," *Oxfordian* 7 (2004), 89-114.
- ⁵ H.D.F. Kitto, Jan Kott, Louise Schleiner and Martin Mueller have all published works on Shakespeare's knowledge of the Orestes tragedies of the Greek dramatists, which will be cited *infra* under Discussion.
- ⁶ Thomas Wheeler, *Macbeth: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, (1990), 442. T. Francis Glasson published "Did Shakespeare Read Aeschylus?" in the *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 173 (1948), 57-66. Text of Wheeler's abstract: "Glasson points to eight examples of *Macbeth* and Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*. Some are verbal, some based on similar situations (e.g., Orestes' knocking on the door of Aegisthus' house and the delayed response of the servant). Having surveyed the scholarship and evidence for and against Shakespeare's knowledge of Greek (Aeschylus had not been translated into English, and the Latin translation does not resemble *Macbeth* as much as the Greek original), Glasson concludes that the question posed by his title cannot be answered definitively. But he points out that, of all Shakespeare's plays, *Macbeth* most resembles a Greek tragedy."
- ⁷ J.A.K. Thompson, *Shakespeare and the Classics* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952), 119.
- ⁸ Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare Survey 19: Macbeth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 5.
- ⁹ Richard Moulton, "Shakespeare's *Macbeth* Arranged as an Ancient Tragedy," in *The Ancient Classical Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), 225-46.
- ¹⁰ A.W. Schlegel, *Shakespeare's Dramatische Werke* (1833) in *The Variorum Shakespeare Macbeth*, ed. Horace Howard Furness (Philadelphia: J.D. Lippincott, 1901), 429.

- ¹¹ Lord Campbell, *Legal Acquirements of Shakespeare* (1859) in *Variorum Macbeth*, 480. Italics added to emphasize the irony of Campbell's final observation.
- ¹² A. Mézieres, "Shakespeare: ses Oeuvres et ses Critiques" (1860) in *Variorum Macbeth*, 460.
- ¹³ J. Churton Collins, *Studies in Shakespeare* (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co., 1904), 72-73.
- ¹⁴ Collins, 73.
- ¹⁵ Collins, 87.
- ¹⁶ Collins, 52. *Macbeth* quotations will reference *The Oxfordian Shakespeare Series Macbeth*, ed. Richard Whalen (2007).
- ¹⁷ E.D.A. Morshead, trans., Aeschylus: *Agamemnon*, *The Choephoroi* and *The Eumenides* in *The Complete Greek Drama*, ed. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1938), 199.
- ¹⁸ Collins, 87.
- ¹⁹ Collins, 79.
- ²⁰ Collins, 91.
- ²¹ Collins, 61.
- ²² Collins, 54.
- ²³ Laura Jepsen, "Poetic Justice: The *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*," 8-31, in *Ethical Aspects of Tragedy: A Comparison of Certain Tragedies by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Seneca and Shakespeare* (New York: AMS Press, 1971, reprint of 1953 edition).
- ²⁴ Jepsen, 6.
- ²⁵ Jepsen, 31.
- ²⁶ Adrian Poole, *Tragedy, Shakespeare and the Greek Example* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987) 15. Chapter 2, "'The Initiate Fear': Aeschylus, Shakespeare" (15-53) includes an extended discussion of the similarities in the representation of prophecy, fear and the inevitability of suffering in the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*. Poole also co-edited *The Oxford Book of Classical Verse in Translation*.
- ²⁷ Poole, 19.
- ²⁸ Poole, 49.
- ²⁹ Mark Hughley, "OSF's Frenetic 'Macbeth' Should Prove Divisive," *The Oregonian*, March 16, 2009.
- ³⁰ Emphases added for comparative emphasis in passages from *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia*.
- ³¹ *Oxford English Dictionary* citations and quotes provided by Allen were confirmed by consulting the *OED* 2nd Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) Volume XVIII, 378-79.
- ³² Shakespeare's deadly net motif is further developed in Act 4 when Lady Macduff refers to different types of bird traps in a stichomythic passage where she laments the fatal vulnerability of her son: "Poor bird, thou'ldst never fear the net nor lime,/The pitfall nor the gin" (4.2.34-35).

- ³³ The stage directions from English translations of the *Oresteia* are the inventions of the translators themselves, for the Greek text has no such directions. Different translators, however, include stage directions with a reference to a “crimson-colored robe” (Shapiro & Burian, 2003), or “a rich crimson web” (Murray, 1920), and to Clytemnestra’s “bloody dagger” (Slavitt, 1998).
- ³⁴ Robert Fagles, trans., *The Oresteia: Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, The Eumenides* (New York: Penguin, 1975, reprint of 1966 edition), 160.
- ³⁵ Morshead, 214.
- ³⁶ Morshead, 214.
- ³⁷ Morshead, 263
- ³⁸ Morshead, 264.
- ³⁹ Marie Axton, ed. *Three Tudor Classical Interludes: Thersites, Jacke Juggeler, Horestes*, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer (1982), 102. Footnote text: “Mero was a nickname for Tiberius Claudius Nero,” 211.
- ⁴⁰ Lattimore (1953): “as fisherman cast their circling nets, I spread deadly abundance of rich robes,” Shapiro & Burian (2003): “a deadly wealth of robes, escapeless as a fishing net,” Murray (1920): “an endless web, as by some fisher strung, a deadly plenteousness of robe,” Grene & O’Flaherty (1989): “an encompassing net as might be for fish, all-entangling, an evil wealth of robe.”
- ⁴¹ Ray Embry considers that while the Greek dramatists may have intended for there to be props on stage, “Shakespeare would have had to imagine them, as you and I and (Robert) Fagles must as well.” Although no masks or props from Greek theater have survived, there is evidence for their use in Greek vase paintings and sculptures. The famous Boston krater painting, which pre-dates the *Oresteia*, shows Aegisthus killing Agamemnon who is depicted as trapped in a net-like robe.
- ⁴² Morshead, 202.
- ⁴³ Morshead, 206.
- ⁴⁴ Morshead, 230.
- ⁴⁵ Fagles, 179.
- ⁴⁶ Morshead, 231.
- ⁴⁷ Morshead, 216.
- ⁴⁸ Morshead, 249.
- ⁴⁹ Elizabeth Vandiver, *Greek Tragedy (Part 1 of 2)* (Chantily: The Teaching Company, 2000) 145. The Teaching Company publishes complete lecture transcripts and course guidelines for their audio and video educational programs. Vandiver’s course included twenty-four 30-minute lectures on Greek tragedy.
- ⁵⁰ Morshead, 209 & 217.
- ⁵¹ Muir, 46.
- ⁵² Plutarch, *The Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans*, trans. John Dryden and revised by Arthur Hugh Clough (New York: Modern Library, 1864 original publication)

1152.

⁵³ Plutarch, 1552.

⁵⁴ Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974) 1386.

⁵⁵ Peter Goodfellow, *Shakespeare's Birds* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1983), 7.

⁵⁶ Goodfellow, 28.

⁵⁷ Goodfellow, 55-56.

⁵⁸ Morshead, 172. Lines taken from the *epode* of the Chorus's *parados* in *Agamemnon*.

⁵⁹ 'For the space of six moneths together, after this heinous murther thus committed, there appeared no sunne by day, nor moone by night in any part of the realm....' Holinshed; taken from footnote in Furness' *Variorum Shakespeare Macbeth*, 169.

⁶⁰ Richard Whalen, ed. *The Oxfordian Shakespeare Series Macbeth* (Lumina Press, 2007), 106.

⁶¹ James Edmund Harding, *The Birds of Shakespeare* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1965) 120.

⁶² Horace Howard Furness, ed., *The Variorum Shakespeare Macbeth* (Philadelphia: J.D. Lippincott, 1901), 169.

⁶³ Furness, 429.

⁶⁴ Brents Stirling, "The Unity of *Macbeth*," *The Shakespeare Quarterly* 4 (1953), 391-92.

⁶⁵ G. Wilson Knight, "*Macbeth* and the Metaphysic of Evil," in *The Wheel of Fire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930, reprinted 1983), 155.

⁶⁶ Robert Miola, ed., *Macbeth* (New York: Norton Critical Edition, 2004), 272.

⁶⁷ Arthur McGee, "*Macbeth* and the Furies," *Shakespeare Survey 19: Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir (Cambridge University press, 1966), 55.

⁶⁸ McGee, 56.

⁶⁹ McGee, 56.

⁷⁰ McGee, 66.

⁷¹ Laura Shamas, "*WE Three*" *The Mythology of Shakespeare's Weird Sisters* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 9.

⁷² *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary* (New York: Random House, 1996), 2156.

⁷³ Shamas, 9.

⁷⁴ Shamas, 58.

⁷⁵ Shamas, 35.

⁷⁶ Shamas, 47.

⁷⁷ Shamas, 58.

⁷⁸ Root, 53.

⁷⁹ Alex Aronson, *Psyche & Symbol in Shakespeare* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 230.


⁸⁰ Marjorie Garber, *Profiling Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 2008) Chapter 3, "Macbeth: the Male Medusa," 76-109.

- ⁸¹ Garber, 85.
- ⁸² Morshead, 266.
- ⁸³ Morshead, 272.
- ⁸⁴ Garber, 89.
- ⁸⁵ Poole, 22.
- ⁸⁶ Morshead, 282.
- ⁸⁷ A.T. Johnson, "Aspects of the Supernatural in Shakespearean Tragedy," *Burrow Library Monograph No.3* (Southwestern at Memphis, 1959), 18.
- ⁸⁸ Johnson, 9.
- ⁸⁹ Charles and Michelle Martindale, *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2003), 41-42.
- ⁹⁰ Earl Showerman, "'Look Down and See What Death Is Doing': Gods and Greeks in *The Winter's Tale*," *The Oxfordian* 10 (2007), 55-56, and "Shakespeare's Many Much Ado's: *Alcestis*, *Hercules* and *Love's Labour's Wonne*," *Brief Chronicles I* (2009), 138-77; Sarah Dewar-Watson, "The *Alcestis* and the Statue scene in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60 (2009), 73-80; Jonathan Bate, "Dying to Live in *Much Ado about Nothing*," in *Surprised by Scenes: Essays in Honor of Professor Yasunari Takahashi*, ed. Yasunari Takada (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1994), 69-85.
- ⁹¹ Laurie Maguire, *Shakespeare's Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 98.
- ⁹² Maguire, 100.
- ⁹³ Maguire, 103-04.
- ⁹⁴ Bruce Smith, *Ancient Scripts & Modern Experience on the English Stage 1500-1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 203.
- ⁹⁵ Gilbert Murray, "Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, (June, 1914), 1-24.
- ⁹⁶ H.D.F. Kitto, *Form and Meaning in Drama: A Study of Six Greek plays and Hamlet* (London: Methuen, 1956).
- ⁹⁷ Kott, 308.
- ⁹⁸ Louise Schleiner, "Latinized Greek Drama in Shakespeare's Writing of *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41:1 (1990), 30.
- ⁹⁹ Schleiner, 32.
- ¹⁰⁰ Schleiner, 36-37.
- ¹⁰¹ Martin Mueller, "Hamlet and the World of Ancient Tragedy," *Arion* (1997) 22-45.
- ¹⁰² Discussed in detail in my previously published article in *Brief Chronicles I* (2009), "Shakespeare's Many Much Ado's: *Alcestis*, *Hercules* and *Love's Labour's Wonne*."
- ¹⁰³ Inga-Stina Ewbank, "'Striking too short at Greeks': The Transmission of *Agamemnon* to the English Renaissance Stage," in *Agamemnon in Performance 458 BC to 2004*, ed. Fiona Macintosh, Pantelis Michelakis, Edith Hall and Oliver Taplin (Oxford University Press, 2005), 51.

- ¹⁰⁴ John Tucker Murray, *English Dramatic Companies, 1558-1642* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963, original printing 1910), 345.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ewbank, 39. Lines 311-1066 and 1160-1673 are missing from Aeschylus' original text of *Agamemnon* in the Saint-Revy edition.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ewbank, 42.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ewbank, 49.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ewbank, 52.
- ¹⁰⁹ Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, "Shakespeare's' Tutor: Sir Thomas Smith," *The Oxfordian* 3 (2000), 20.
- ¹¹⁰ Katherine Lever, "Greek Comedy on the Sixteenth century English Stage," *The Classical Journal* 42:3 (1946), 169.
- ¹¹¹ Showerman, "Shakespeare's Much Ados," 137.
- ¹¹² Caroline Bowden, "The Library of Mildred Cooke Cecil, Lady Burghley." *Library*, ser. 7:6 (2005), 6.

***Commedia dell'arte in Othello:* a Satiric Comedy Ending in Tragedy**

Richard Whalen

 close reading of *The Tragedy of Othello* in light of the popularity of improvised *commedia dell'arte* in Italy at the time the play was written suggests that *commedia dell'arte* strongly influenced the composition of the play, but this influence has not been fully appreciated by Shakespeare scholarship. If this interpretation of the literary and historical evidence is persuasive, the play becomes a brilliant, satirical comedy derived from *commedia dell'arte* but with a disturbing, tragic ending, not the traditional romantic tragedy that has puzzled commentators. The question then becomes when and where the dramatist learned so much about the Italian *commedia dell'arte* to be able to draw on it so extensively in *Othello* and other plays.

In this new reading, the seven principal characters, from Othello the general to Emilia the maid, have their prototypes in characters of *commedia dell'arte*. Much of the action reflects the rough comedy of *commedia dell'arte*; and Iago's gleeful, improvised manipulation of the other characters mirrors the improvised performances of *commedia dell'arte*. Arguably, this reading also offers readers, theater directors and playgoers the promise of a new and deeper appreciation of the play as a bitter satire of human folly that entertains, disorients and unsettles, denying the audience the Aristotelian catharsis of tragedy.

Although a few Shakespeare scholars have noted traces of *commedia dell'arte* in several plays, notably *The Tempest*, its influence on *Othello* has been almost completely ignored. It's not discussed in the many scholarly, single-volume editions, including those by E. A. J. Honigmann, Michael Neill, Kim Hall, Russ McDonald and Edward Pechter. Nor is there anything on it in the collected works of Shakespeare, such as the Riverside, Norton, Pelican, Oxford or most recently the RSC edition from Random House. The focus is on other sources and influences, principally Cinthio's murder story, Vice of the morality plays and the comedies of Plautus.

At the same time, the seemingly inappropriate comedy in *Othello* and the strange manners and morals of the principal characters have frustrated critics, and provoked puzzlement, dismay, and even disparagement. A noted early critic called it a bloody farce. The comedy and carousing seem inappropriate for a tragedy. The male characters, especially Othello, often act in foolish ways. Iago's evil seems to be Coleridge's famous "motiveless malignity." The play makes light of serious issues, such as miscegenation, adultery, deceit, lying, cuckoldry, jealousy and loss of reputation.

In a well-regarded study, Bernard Spivack refers to "the mystery of iniquity" and a "hard and literal enigma."¹ In his edition of the play, Pechter says, "The critical tradition . . . has piled up a consistent record of appalled frustration."² Robert Hornback begins his article, "Emblems of Folly in the first *Othello*" by observing, "Critics have struggled to account for the disturbing comic elements in *Othello*."³

Philip C. Kolin, editor of *Othello: New Critical Essays*, compiles in his first twenty-eight pages a sampling of the critics' struggles and the unsettling effect of the play as performed.⁴ Critics and audiences, Kolin writes, have been "perplexed through its magic web of tangled uncertainties and implausible outrages." It's a "riotous text disturbing readers'/spectators' peace of mind, frustrating their desire for closure." "A paroxysm of paradoxes." "Most problematic" is Othello himself. He has been "excessively glamorized....as a romantic figure." Desdemona "has been polarized, valorized as a saint or vilified as a strumpet. She is 'victimized' by her husband, but she has been assailed for 'a host of wrongdoings,' beginning with her disobeying her father. Her sexuality 'is a hotly contested issue,' and she has been maligned by critics who search for her culpability to the end."

"In large part because of Iago," Kolin continues, "*Othello* bristles with contradictions, paradoxes, seeming truths and seeming lies....Iago's amorphous, indeterminate status is the subject of a myriad of critical views about who he is and why he delights in villainy." He has been portrayed on stage as a "jolly, gleeful Puck" and "tarred as the jealous husband himself, the lustful misogynist." He's been labeled a paranoid psychopath, a creative artist identified with his own creator—Shakespeare—and, to the contrary, not so evil after all, replaced by Othello as the purely culpable character. In addition, there are the problems of scripted improvisations (a seeming oxymoron) and a white actor playing the "noble" Othello in blackface, makeup that to Elizabethan audiences often signified a foolish character.

These frustrating perplexities and difficulties may evaporate, however, if *commedia dell'arte* is considered to have been a significant influence on the author of *Othello*. The play can then be appreciated as the work of a genius who crafted a satiric comedy that brutally underscores the folly of mankind with its violent, disturbing ending.

An analysis of the characters in *commedia dell'arte*, their improvised performances and their similarity to the leading characters in *Othello* may serve to illustrate the importance of its influence. The distinguishing characteristic of the genre was spontaneous improvisation of dialog and action by performers in the roles of stock characters enacting stock situations. They entertained their audience with improvised dialog, quick repartee, sham regional dialects, sly mockery, satire, obscene jokes

and raillery, witty asides to the audience, pantomimes, lively jigs to music, slapstick fights, acrobatics, juggling, and other comic bits of theater, all known as *lazzi*. As Karl Mantzius puts it in his history of the theater, the performers “had to find the proper words to make the tears flow or the laughter ring; they had to catch the sallies of their fellow actors on the wing and return them with a prompt repartee. The dialog must go like a merry game of ball or spirited sword-play with ease and without a pause.”⁵

Commedia dell'arte was at the height of its popularity in Italy in the late 1500s, when the Shakespeare plays were being written. The leading troupes performed for Italian dukes and princes, who were usually their patrons, and often in public squares or in hired halls or theaters. One troupe was even summoned to Paris for a royal command performance in 1577.

Performers in *commedia dell'arte* did not follow an author’s script. Drawing on a store of brief, narrative scenarios, wide reading, contemporary gossip and a well-developed imagination, they improvised the dialog and most of the action. The stock situations of the scenarios often involved disgraceful love intrigues, young lovers thwarted by their parents, ridiculous husbands being cuckolded, clever servants conning their masters, a bragging military officer being deceived by his servant, foolish old men being deceived by their wives or daughters, tricks to get money from simpletons, contrived eavesdropping episodes, beatings out of frustration, characters speaking comically at cross-purposes, mistaken identities causing comic confusions. Nearly all of these situations are found in *Othello*.

Commedia dell'arte, however, did not just portray the comical and the grotesque to amuse and delight. Its genius was to turn stock characters into recognizable humans by using comic deceptions and black humor that were, at bottom deadly serious satire exposing the folly of mankind. George Sand wrote that *commedia dell'arte* portrayed real characters in a “tradition of fantastic humor which is in essence quite serious and, one might almost say, even sad, like every satire which lays bare the spiritual poverty of mankind.”⁶

Othello probably had the same dramatic, satirical impact on its Elizabethan audience. Pamela Allen Brown of the University of Connecticut says, “*Othello* is painfully enigmatic now because it was originally closer to satire than tragedy. Time and critical tradition have effaced the satiric referents, but the mode of irony, mockery and attack still invades the play.”⁷ She suggests that English audiences (especially aristocratic audiences, one might add) would recognize that the Republic of Venice was the target of the bitter satire because of Londoners’ hatred of foreigners.

Among the principal stock characters in *commedia dell'arte* were the *Zanni*, the secondary *Zanni*, *Pantalone*, the *Capitano*, *Pedrolino*, the innocent woman, and her lady-in-waiting or maid. These seven stock characters are mirrored in the seven principal characters in *Othello*.

The *Zanni* was the most important character and the most disturbing. He was usually a servant who was ostensibly honest and trustworthy but was actually a cunning scoundrel who also loves making mischief for its own sake. He manipulates others with his ingenuity and devious insinuations. With improvised schemes, he drives the plot to advance his strategy. Witty and quick at repartee, he causes others to

laugh but never laughs himself. He deceives everyone else with elaborate schemes for his advancement but at the end he usually gets his comeuppance.

Here's how leading *commedia* scholars describe the *Zanni*. Andrea Perrucci, who was an actor and writer, says in his *Treatise on Acting, from Memory and by Improvisation* (as translated) that the *Zanni* "should be amusing, quick, lively, witty, and able to devise intrigues, confusions and stratagems, which might deceive the world. He must be mordant, but not to excess, and in such a way that his witticisms...are piquant, not oafish. His function is to devise the intrigue and to confuse issues."⁸ Iago relishes his talent for intriguing and confusing. In *Italian Popular Comedy*, K. M. Lea says the *Zanni* "manipulates intrigues....content to run greater risks than the Roman slaves [in classical comedy]....is in charge of the love affairs....[and] has to invent the circumstantial lies with which one employer is to be played off against the other."⁹

In *Commedia dell'Arte, a Study of Italian Popular Comedy*, Winifred Smith finds that the *Zanni* was "usually a servant and confidant of a principal character, sometimes a rascal, sometimes a dunce, oftenest a complex mixture of the two, almost always the chief plotter, his main function was to rouse laughter to entertain at all costs."¹⁰ Allardyce Nicoll describes the *Zanni* as an uncouth clown who "delights in cheating others," who bears grudges and who has a certain native wit but "displays no effervescent sense of fun."¹¹ Iago delights in deceiving others. The *Zanni* was "the most disturbing" in all Italian comedy, according to Pierre Louis Duchartre in his *Italian Comedy*; he was "extremely crafty [with]....mischievous ways....[and] ingenious and persuasive eloquence."¹² The *Zanni* in *Othello* is Iago.

The second *Zanni* in *commedia dell'arte* — an absurd, credulous buffoon — formed a contrast to the primary, clever *Zanni*. Perrucci says he "should be foolish, dumb and witless—so much so that he cannot tell his left hand from his right."¹³ Pier Maria Cecchini, a *commedia* performer-manager who wrote the first "manual" for *commedia dell'arte*, says the second *Zanni* should be an awkward booby "whose pretence of not understanding anything that is said to him gives rise to delightful equivocations, ridiculous mistakes and other clownish tricks."¹⁴ In *Othello*, he is the clueless Roderigo.

The *Capitano* was a boastful, swashbuckling mercenary, often a Spaniard, full of himself, who at times gets lost in a world of his own devising, and who tells tall tales about his military exploits, especially against the Turks. Iago addresses Othello as "general" and "captain," alluding to the *Capitano*, the braggart who is often duped in *commedia dell'arte*. As Duchartre puts it: "The Captain is a bombastic fellow and vastly tedious in his speech, but he manages to be amusing sometimes by virtue of his flights of fancy."¹⁵

Shakespeare scholar Frank Kermode notes "some celebrated criticisms of Othello's generally orotund way of speaking, which may be regarded as a sort of innocent pompousness or, if you dislike it, a self-regard that is not so innocent."¹⁶ His voice, says Kermode in the Riverside edition, "has its own orotundity, verging, as some might infer, on hollowness."¹⁷ In an influential essay in his *Wheel of Fire*, G. Wilson Knight says that Othello's "Where . . . chastity" speech (5.2.271-76) "degenerates finally in what might almost be called bombast" and that Othello "usually luxuriates in deliberate and magnificent rhetoric."¹⁸ "Othello's transports," says George Bernard

Shaw, “are conveyed by a magnificent but senseless music . . . in an orgy of thundering sound and bounding rhythm.”¹⁹

Throughout the play Othello comes up with florid and grandiose figures of speech. In his *Shakespeare Quarterly* article, Russ McDonald says that there is no question that Othello is histrionic and self-dramatizing.²⁰ In his introduction to the Penguin edition, he says, “Shakespeare invokes the language, the imaginative delirium, and the furious motion of the comic type in his creation of Othello.”²¹ He suggests that Othello has a “comic double” and cites the dramatist’s audacity at disorienting his audience by “confronting them with comic traits in a tragic environment.”²²

Outlandish bombast is Allardyce Nicoll’s descriptor for the *Capitano*. He describes two sides to the *Capitano*. He could be “a handsome man, well set-up, neatly and elegantly dressed in military fashion, wearing or holding his sword in such a way as to suggest that he is thoroughly familiar with its use. . . a dignified and indeed impressive person.”²³ He could also be an officer “in whose boasting resides a kind of grotesque magnificence—the magnificence of a man who, well-versed in all the famous records of conflicts mythological and historical [as is Othello], lives in a grandiose world of his own imagining, a creature whose visions are his only true reality.”²⁴ A few pages later, Nicoll elaborates: “The *Capitano* is at one and the same time a military man who may fittingly be . . . husband of a heroine [Desdemona], and a dreamer who at times allows himself to become lost in an imaginary world of his own devising.”²⁵ As does Othello, persuading himself that Desdemona has betrayed him. He loses himself in his world of unfounded, jealous rage and revenge.

Iago and Roderigo are Spanish names, and Othello the Moor can be seen as a Spanish Moor, recalling the Moorish occupation of Spain for centuries up to 1492. Othello the Spanish mercenary brags to the senators about his military exploits and they send him to fight the Turks. In her article in *Shakespeare and Race*, Barbara Everett of Oxford University finds Othello’s Spanishness “of striking relevance because in Italian learned comedy (and in popular comedy [*commedia dell’arte*] after it) this braggart who is often the deceived husband is also most characteristically a new national type [in Italy], the Spanish soldier of fortune.”²⁶

Winifred Smith also suggests that the *Capitano* character was inspired by the foreign mercenaries in Italy, and Duchartre says that “during the Spanish domination in Italy the Captain acquired the name of Matamoros,” that is, the Moor-Slayer. He was “decked out in an immense starched ruff, a wide plumed hat, and boots with scalloped edges at the top. His character was best delineated not so much by physical traits as by his pretentiousness and indigence.”²⁷ The *Capitano* was a self-styled warrior and military leader but an outsider who is easily duped. Othello is also an exceptional commander but a social outsider in Venice, no doubt ill at ease in sophisticated Venetian society, easily duped and unaware of the impropriety, almost absurdity, of his eloping with the young daughter of his aristocratic friend, host and senator.

In their book, *Commedia dell’Arte: A Documentary History*, Kenneth and Laura Richards, drawing on Perrucci, describe the *Capitano* role as “one rich in words and gestures, boastful about beauty, elegance and wealth, but in reality a monster, an idiot, a coward, a nincompoop, someone who should be chained up, a man who wants

to spend his life passing himself off as someone he is not, as quite a few do as they journey through the world.”²⁸ When Othello is unconscious in an epileptic fit, Iago alone, on stage with him, calls him a “credulous fool” (4.1.40). Iago never lies when he’s addressing the audience, even indirectly, as at this moment. And Emilia, the truth-telling maid, calls him a coxcomb and a fool at the climax of the play. A coxcomb was a fool or simpleton (OED obs.).

Othello the credulous fool would have been portrayed by a white actor in blackface, and in Renaissance England blackface was a laughable emblem of foolishness, madness and irrational folly. Hornback makes a persuasive case for this in *The English Clown Tradition from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare*. He found that “a marked association between blackface and folly was, though hardly ubiquitous, fairly widespread in late medieval and Renaissance drama.”²⁹ He includes interludes, the comic playlets performed at aristocratic banquets and at court. The demeaning, early blackface comedy, he argues, associated blackness with outsiders and “with degradation, irrationality, prideful lack of self-knowledge, transgression, and, related to all these, folly.”³⁰ For Elizabethan audiences, Othello’s blackface makeup would have reinforced the character of Othello as an exotic outsider, the foolish *Capitano* of the play. In her edition of *Othello* in the Plays in Performance series, Julie Hankey says that “anyone going to a play about a Moor in the early seventeenth century would have expected the worst from this apparition.”³¹

Commentators on *Othello* often discuss the possibility of racial prejudice in the play, the mindset of the audience, and whether a black or a white man should play Othello, which was a role written for a white actor in blackface. They rarely address the dramatist’s mindset about race and what that might have meant at the time. In any case, the fact that Othello the Moor was in blackface makeup and the villain Iago is prejudiced does not mean that their creator was.

In contrast to modern sensibilities, Elizabethan audiences might very well have chuckled at the swaggering, boasting, irrational, and potentially dangerous Othello while wondering how seriously they were supposed to take this commander of the Venetian military who is an exotic, bombastic outsider in blackface who seems to be quite foolish. Hornback finds in Shakespeare and other Renaissance drama this “intriguing blend of seriousness and laughter.”³² What seems laughable in *Othello* to Elizabethans would later appear not funny, or even offensive to later audiences more sensitive to the evils of slavery and racial prejudice.

Pantalone was a foolish, talkative, old man, usually a rich Venetian merchant, who is duped by his wife or daughter. He is often the butt of the *Zanni*’s jokes. Sometimes he is called the *Magnifico*. In *Othello*, he is the senator Brabantio, the father of Desdemona and the butt of Iago’s obscene jokes in Act 1. With barely veiled sarcasm, Iago calls him the *Magnifico*.

Andrea Perrucci says *Pantalone* “should be accomplished in the Venetian language, in all its dialects, proverbs and words, presenting the role of an aging old man who nonetheless tries to appear youthful.” He should have a store of platitudes and banalities “to raise laughter at opportune moments by his [supposed] respectability and seriousness.” He should be “all

the more ridiculous” because as a person of authority he behaves childishly.³³

Pantalone, says Smith, speaks Venetian patois and is “duped by young people.” His role varies; he is “is sometimes the husband, sometimes the father, of one of the heroines.” He can be “unmercifully baited by the hero and his servant.”³⁴ As is Brabantio by Iago and Roderigo in Act 1.

Nicoll views *Pantalone* as an elderly merchant who is one of the more serious and upright characters, a noble Venetian, although sometimes he can find “himself absurdly cuckolded by sprightlier gallants.”³⁵ “He can,” says Nicoll, “prove himself stinging, avaricious and credulous on occasion, and often overdoes the advice which he freely imparts to others.”³⁶ He can be so serious he’s laughable.

The Richards describe *Pantalone* as “a Venetian merchant, middle-aged or elderly, a father and housekeeper,” but they, too, note the wide range of scenario roles for the character “and the numerous possibilities offered for diverse interpretive emphases.”³⁷ And what was true for *Pantalone* was true to a lesser extent for all the stock characters in *commedia dell’arte*. They were not rigidly fixed. They were stock characters, but they took on various roles in the many different scenarios. Lea says that *Pantalone’s* role “admits of many variations.”³⁸ She says that if *Pantalone* has lost his wife, “he is an affectionate but an incredibly careless father. . . . He finds a marriageable daughter as perishable a commodity as fish.” When he’s a counselor, “he is less brief and more tedious than Polonius and has similar preoccupations.”³⁹

In her single mention of *Othello*, she sees Brabantio as a *Pantalone*. “The description of Brabantio as a *Magnifico* in *Othello*,” she writes, “is appropriate without any thought of Italian comedy, but his position as a frantic father is so like that of *Pantalone* that we can hardly avoid the double allusion.”⁴⁰

The similar but differing descriptions of characters in *commedia dell’arte* are testimony to the ingenuity of the performers. They appeared on stage as stock characters in stock situations that their audience would recognize. Their artistic challenge was to entertain their audience with ingenious, improvised dialog, improvised bits of comic theater (*lazzi*) and probably topical satire. Nicoll says they were cultured, “truly learned.”⁴¹ The result was entertaining new twists to familiar old stories.

Scholars of *commedia dell’arte* find descriptions of character roles and improvisations in various 17th century sources: principally Flaminio Scala’s book (1611) and Prologues (1619), anonymous manuscripts collected by Basilio Locatelli (1615-20), two essays by Pier Maria Cecchini (1614-15) and Andrea Perrucci’s book (1699). See Nicoll 224-26.

Pedrolino, a secondary figure in the 1500s, was also a trusted servant, usually portrayed as kind, personable and charming to the point of excess. He has a good and trusting nature; but he is naïve and is often easily tricked. He wears no mask but his face is powdered white. (In much later incarnations he will be famous as the French Pierrot, the whiteface mime.) Duchartre describes *Pedrolino* as having an “engaging simplicity and elegance,” and when the *Zanni* induces him to play tricks on the other characters “he is inevitably the only one caught and punished.”⁴² In *Othello*, the good and trusting Cassio is trapped by Iago, who gets him drunk, and Othello punishes him by demoting him.

Nicoll says *Pedrolino* “is a servant always, evidently one who has been attached to his master so long that he is trusted implicitly....Although at times he indulges his sense of fun by cheating others merely for the sake of a joke, his intrigues usually are directed in the interests of his employer.”⁴³ *Pedrolino* is fully aware of his abilities and at the end of a performance is often praised for his skill at stratagems. At the end of *Othello*, Cassio is made governor of Cyprus. Although initially surprising, this appointment makes sense since the position was more commercial than political or military. In Iago’s opening speech, he scorns Cassio as a Florentine “countercaster,” a bean-counter from Florence, a town known at the time for its expertise in commerce, not war.

The male performers were colorful, witty caricatures; they wore outrageous costumes and half-masks. The masks were not to hide the performer’s identity but to suggest the particular character. The performers drew laughter with their satiric lampooning of the vices and foolishness of mankind, but they elicited no sympathy from the audience. “Emancipation from all sympathetic concern is the essence of the *commedia dell’arte*,” says Lea,⁴⁴ and Smith says that the boasting *Capitano* chooses his *Zanni* “for an audience, unfortunately without finding the sympathy and support he might wish.”⁴⁵

As the female characters—which were played by women—were not caricatures and did not wear masks, the effect was to align themselves with the audience and against the usually ridiculous, male characters in masks.⁴⁶ The audience could sympathize with them. A few of the women performers, or *inamoratas*, became famous for their beauty, wit and erudition.

The *inamoratas* were long-suffering or outraged wives, rebellious daughters, fickle or flirting girlfriends, sometimes courtesans. Almost always young, they were often either seducing one of the men or the love object of one or more of them. They engage in romantic intrigues and are not shy about making their desires known and acting on them. They showed an independent spirit. To a large extent, they are reasonable and sensible, except when provoked beyond endurance. Lea says that in general the women have more courage and resources than the men.⁴⁷ Among their many characters—shrew, harridan, innocent, naïve—was a young, sweet, charming girl who gets caught in a love intrigue and tries to escape her father’s control.

Contrasting the women and the men in the play, Carol Thomas Neely describes in detail how the five leading male characters are “foolish and vain,” preoccupied with “rank and reputation.” She endorses Emilia’s condemnation of Othello as a “murderous coxcomb . . . such a fool” in her last words before Iago stabs her. Neely’s incisive contribution to *Critical Essays on Shakespeare’s Othello* also details the play’s “pervasive and profound resemblances” to Shakespeare’s comedies, calling the play “a terrifying completion of the comedies.”⁴⁸

Lea says that the behavior of the female characters “was to seem more modest, but their passions and their actions are quite as brazen” as those of practiced courtesans.⁴⁹ That’s Desdemona in her bawdy bantering with Iago in Act 2. Nicoll says *commedia* women are impetuous in their loves and hates and are more energetic than the men. Whether marriageable daughters or wives, he says, “they share that quality

possessed by Shakespeare's maidens of being more energetic and passion-wrought than their male companion" and suggests that they "exist in an independent world of their own."⁵⁰ In *Othello*, Desdemona and Emilia do not understand the agonizing world that Othello has devised for himself—until the climax of the play, when tragically it's too late.

Although she did not wear a mask, the maid or lady-in-waiting had a well-defined character trait in *commedia dell'arte*. She was almost always a bold, outspoken truth-teller. In *Othello* she is Emilia, Iago's wife and Desdemona's lady-in-waiting. Smith says that "the most outspoken in effrontery . . . was always the maid."⁵¹ Lea says that "no scruples or conventions restrict her wit and resource, so that in practical joking she scores more often than any other intriguer."⁵² For Nicoll, the maid "is intended to be a woman of ample experience of the ways of the world. . . . Light-hearted and loyal to her mistress she frequently ends by joining hands with *Harlequin* [a *Zanni*] or another." *Othello*, however, turns tragic, and Emilia, loyal to Desdemona to the end, does not join hands with Iago the *Zanni* but exposes his conning of Othello, and he kills her for it. The joking truth-teller comes to a tragic end.

These are the seven characters in improvised *commedia dell'arte*, drawn in turn largely from the scripted Roman comedies, that were prototypes for the seven leading characters in *Othello*. Iago, in particular, reflects the essence of *commedia dell'arte* with his seeming improvisations that drive the plot forward. Each of them, of course, was enriched by the dramatist's genius, making them more rounded, more human, and especially eloquent.

Several scenes illustrate the striking influence on *Othello* of the improvised style of *commedia dell'arte* performances. *Othello* begins as pure *commedia dell'arte* in a scene that would have been played for laughs in performances for aristocratic audiences in London. On a street in Venice, Iago (the scheming *Zanni*), whom Othello trusts as a loyal servant, and Roderigo (the secondary *Zanni* and witless, rejected suitor of Desdemona) wake up Brabantio (the foolish, old *Pantalone*) to taunt him at night from the street below his window. They shout obscene suggestions that his daughter, Desdemona (the innamorata), has eloped and is having sex in a bestial way with Othello the Moor (the mercenary, semi-Spanish *Capitano*).

The scheming Iago, who loves to make mischief to gain advantage, tells Roderigo to disguise his voice so that Brabantio will not recognize him. Seizing an opportunity for more mischief, Iago disguises his own voice, so that he, too, can shout obscene insults in a voice that could mimic Roderigo's disguised voice. When Roderigo stupidly identifies himself, Iago remains silent, unrecognized by Brabantio in the dark. Such elaborate, double trickery of fools was a regular feature of *commedia dell'arte*. The raucous humor of course depends on the actors' delivery and Iago's drive to amuse himself (and his audience) while practicing his deceptions. There's a great opportunity here for Iago to mug slyly at the audience in what might be called a "silent soliloquy" anticipating his later soliloquies that also take the audience into his confidence. Iago's quick-witted mimicry of Roderigo's disguised voice also primes the audience for his improvisations throughout the rest of the play and for the comic but sinister interplay between the two.

Minutes later, Iago, after having enlisted Roderigo as his ally in baiting Brabantio and in mock defense of Othello against Brabantio, turns on Roderigo, who must be astonished. A touch of *commedia dell'arte*. Othello stops any actual fighting, as Iago would have anticipated, but the aristocratic audience would have been amused to see the clever, courtier-soldier Iago start a brawl, betraying the clueless courtier Roderigo, in order to persuade Othello, falsely, of his (Iago's) allegiance.

In his orations to the Senate justifying his eloping with Desdemona, Othello is Duchartre's boasting *Capitano* as a bombastic fellow given to flights of fancy. Othello boasts of his battles, sieges, escapes from perils and adventures in "antars vast and deserts idle. . . . And of the Cannibals that each other eat,/ the Anthropophagi, and men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders" (1.3.140-45). Kermode writes of Othello's "archaic grandeur (as in the long speeches to the Senate in 1.3)"⁵³ and Stephen Greenblatt refers to "Othello's rhetorical extremism."⁵⁴

In Act 2, Iago the mischief-maker, and Desdemona, the young but not-quite-so-innocent, sophisticated, Venetian aristocrat and Othello's bride, engage in quick repartee of bawdy banter that is just like the improvised repartee of *commedia dell'arte* and is sure to draw laughter from audiences. At one point, Desdemona challenges Iago to show how he would praise women, and Iago responds with the famous passage:

Come on, come on. You are pictures out of doors. [From a French vulgarity, *vieux tableau*, for an aging, painted lady, a streetwalker.]

Bells in your parlors, [From hunting, alluding to the belling, or calling of stags in heat.]

Wild-cats in your kitchens,

Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,

Players in your housewifery, and housewives [pronounced "hussies," that is, loose women] in your beds. . . .

You rise to play and go to bed to work.

(2.1.109-12, 115)

The 19th century Shakespearean actor Edwin Booth said, "These lines should be spoken as though composed on the spur of the moment; not glibly as though studied beforehand."⁵⁵ The passage is simulated improvisation, scripted by the dramatist and sounding very much like the unscripted improvisation that is the hallmark of *commedia dell'arte*.

Later in Act 2, the cheerful, scheming Iago gets the personable Cassio drunk. Cassio, the trusting *Pedrolino*, is easily tricked. Iago then incites Roderigo to lure Cassio into a street fight that will disgrace him and, Iago lies, will clear the way for Roderigo to win Desdemona. While Iago and Montano are talking, Roderigo runs onstage pursued by an outraged Cassio shouting "You rogue! You rogue!" (2.2.122). The drunken courtier-soldier chasing and fighting a foolish fop of a courtier, the noise drawing Montano, the sober, upright governor of Cyprus, into the nighttime melee, would draw laughs from audiences. The dramatist leaves it to the actors to improvise

the fight scene, which is not detailed in the stage directions or dialog and was probably a slapstick fight, a regular feature of *commedia dell'arte*.

Iago, the scheming, quick-witted *Zanni*, has instigated the fighting, but as soon as it starts he immediately improvises, seizing the opportunity for even more mischief. He pulls his sidekick Roderigo out of the fighting and tells him to “go out, and cry a mutiny,” thus summoning Othello and others to see the drunken, brawling Cassio and advance Iago’s scheme to get Othello to demote Cassio, Iago’s rival, for being drunk on duty (2.3.131).

At the start of Act 3 Cassio has hired street musicians to awaken the newlyweds Othello and Desdemona with the traditional French *aubade* serenade. Instead, their music is the tuneless, raucous, “rough music” of England, *charivari* in France. (A marvelous opportunity here for some *commedia* burlesque music.) Rough music was traditionally played under a newlyweds’ bedroom window to interrupt their nuptial night and denounce their marriage as inappropriate.

One of Othello’s servants, a Clown, interrupts the music with bawdy slurs about their wind instruments and flatulence. He asks them if they have been to Naples because their music sounds nasal. In Italy, the Neapolitans had a reputation for their accent, a drawling nasal twang.

The Clown may also be alluding to syphilis, which sometimes attacks the nose. The Venetians called syphilis the Neapolitan disease. In *commedia dell'arte*, a Neapolitan clown, *Pulcinella*, often wore a half-mask with a big nose and spoke with a nasal twang. The dramatist certainly knew about the Venetians’ scorn of Neapolitans for their accent and for their reputation for contracting syphilis with their “instruments.” The bawdy intent of this short, comic scene is to condemn as inappropriate the marriage of Desdemona, a teenage Venetian aristocrat (played in London by a boy), and Othello, a much older, black Moorish warrior-general, with bawdy humor. The naïve Cassio seems unperturbed that the serenade he ordered turned into an insulting *charivari*.

For Edward Pechter, this Clown-*charivari* scene, unusual for a tragedy and often omitted in performances, is “an explosion of sexual and scatological puns.”⁵⁶ Such an explosion would be typical in *commedia dell'arte*, although Pechter, editor of the Norton Critical Edition of *Othello*, does not mention it.

In Acts 3 and 4 Iago begins to work on Othello’s naiveté and lack of self-confidence under pressure. “As everyone has noticed,” says McDonald, “Othello’s language throughout Acts 3 and 4 is extreme; he simultaneously laments and exults in ‘the pity of it.’ Comparison with comic figures here is inescapable.”⁵⁷

In Act 3 a scene of simulated improvisation heightens Othello’s frustration to the point of rage, a familiar *lazzi* of *commedia dell'arte*, which often climaxed in a comic beating. Iago (the *Zanni*) has set up Othello (the *Capitano*) by asking him whether Cassio knew Desdemona when Othello was courting her.

Othello. O yes, and went between us very oft.

Iago. Indeed.

Othello. Indeed? Ay, indeed. Discern’st thou aught in that? Is he not honest?

Iago. Honest, my lord?

Othello. Honest. Ay, honest.

Iago. My lord, for aught I know.

Othello. What dost thou think?

Iago. Think, my lord?

Othello. “Think, my lord?” By heaven, he echo’st me . . .

(3.3.103-9)

Othello turns a traditionally comic exchange that would end in a harmless, slapstick beating into bitter frustration that will culminate in fatal violence.

In Act 4 the manipulating *Zanni* Iago sets up Othello to eavesdrop on a conversation Iago will have with Cassio. He cleverly stages it so that Cassio thinks they are talking about his mistress, Bianca, while the foolish Othello, stuck in his suspicion of Desdemona, thinks he is overhearing them talking about Desdemona. Iago thus reduces the noble but credulous Othello to a farcical *Capitano* duped into ignominious eavesdropping to learn whether he has been cuckolded (4.1.89-150). Although Cassio laughs and laughs about Bianca, and although the eavesdropping scene could be right out of *commedia dell’arte*, Othello’s predicament is no longer funny. The play now begins to turn tragic; the tragic begins to emerge from behind the comic.

The pressure on Othello mounts when Desdemona innocently but naively tells Lodovico in Othello’s presence that she wants to reconcile him with Cassio “for the love I bear to Cassio.” Othello, suspecting her adultery with Cassio, becomes enraged and, unrestrained by Lodovico or anyone else, strikes her (4.1.203-13). “In comedy,” says McDonald, “the audience would be roaring with pleasure at the fool’s futile attempt to pummel his wife, as Shakespeare is well aware. But Othello succeeds, and the effect is chilling.”⁵⁸ He describes the so-called “brothel scene” (4.2) that follows as a “masterpiece built with familiar comic materials, but the effect here is excruciating.”⁵⁹

At the start of Act 5, in a scene of satiric comedy turned brutal, Iago quickly takes advantage of a nighttime encounter to stage-manage a brawl. He has incited Roderigo to ambush Cassio and kill him, but Roderigo botches the ambush, which starts out as another slapstick brawl typical of *commedia dell’arte*, but quickly turns vicious as Iago improvises to further his scheme. In the dark, he tries to kill Cassio and make it appear the work of Roderigo, but only wounds him. Then he fatally wounds Roderigo, his foolishly loyal sidekick who could expose his scheming. Iago the *Zanni* sows confusion, brilliantly manipulating everyone in this scene, including Othello and Lodovico, and even making himself the hero. The swordplay, the cries for help in the darkness, the confusion about who did what to whom—all improvised by the cunning Iago—draw on the mock melees and the *Zanni’s* improvised scheming of *commedia dell’arte*.

These episodes, influenced by *commedia dell’arte*, are not comic relief interludes, as is, for example, the Porter scene in *Macbeth*. *Commedia dell’arte* is integral to the play. It’s as if the dramatist was thinking, “I’ll make you laugh at these foolish, misguided people and the cheerful, scheming, psychopath Iago, but you’ll see that it’s no laughing matter for someone like Othello, an outsider, to believe insinuations that he has been

cuckolded and to fear that he will be made the laughing stock of the army and the sexually sophisticated Venetian aristocrats.”

At the end of the play, Othello wants someone to tell him why Iago “ensnared my soul and body” (5.2.299). Iago answers with his last speech: “Demand me nothing. What you know, you know. / From this time forth I never will speak a word” (5.2.300-01). As in *commedia dell’arte*, Iago, the witty, entertaining, scheming *Zanni*, gets his comeuppance and comes to an ignominious end. His clever manipulations of all the main characters got out of hand, and he’s been exposed by his own wife, the truth-telling maid.

Even when Othello, baffled and in despair, finally learns that Iago has tricked him into killing his innocent wife, themes from *commedia dell’arte* recur in a minor key, like the theme music in a tragic opera when the hero or heroine dies. In Othello’s final moments before his suicide, he stills thinks of himself in the grandiose terms of the *Capitano*, showing only a self-centered concern for his reputation and excusing himself for loving “not wisely but too well” (5.2.342). He expresses no regret that he killed Desdemona through stupidity and his unfounded suspicion that he had been cuckolded and his reputation ruined.

T. S. Eliot says, “What Othello seems to me to be doing in making this [farewell] speech is cheering himself up. He is endeavoring to escape reality, he has ceased to think about Desdemona, and is thinking about himself. Humility is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve; nothing dies harder than the desire to think well of oneself.”⁶⁰ Especially for a self-deluded fool. The Irish theater critic Fintan O’Toole says bluntly in his essay on *Othello*, “He is not tragic, merely pathetic.”⁶¹

Othello’s lofty farewell speech disturbingly recalls him as the Spanish *Capitano* of *commedia dell’arte*, the mercenary who serves the state and who boasts about his military exploits, especially against the Turks. Othello says, “I have done the state some service, and they know it....Speak of me as I am....,” concluding:

And, say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog
And smote him—thus.

(5.2.337-54)

Othello the boasting *Capitano* mercenary, born a Muslim like the Turks but now a loyal Venetian mercenary who has foolishly just killed his Venetian bride, identifies himself with the malignant Turk he killed in Aleppo while defending a Venetian, and then kills himself in the same way—“Thus.” In a few words, the playwright dramatizes Othello’s absurdly pitiful plight. *Finita la commedia*.

The seemingly strange comedy throughout *The Tragedy of Othello*, satiric comedy that is much more than comic interludes, has long been noticed by Shakespeare commentators. They are usually puzzled by the comedy in what they consider a romantic tragedy, a domestic tragedy, or a tragedy of intrigue, but not a mixed-genre

play. There may be two reasons for their puzzlement. As in classic tragedy, the hero dies at the end (and so does the heroine). That climax and the word “tragedy” in the title may have caused their perplexity and even outrage about the pervasive comedy in the play. In the earliest extended commentary on *Othello*, Thomas Rymer, the royal historian, drama critic, and Bardolator of the late 1600s, deplored the comedy that permeates the play and sensed *commedia dell’arte* behind it, but did not follow up.

He mocked the play scene by scene and found it “fraught with improbabilities” unworthy of the immortal Bard.⁶² He looked in vain for the “true, fine or noble” thoughts in *Othello*.⁶³ Othello’s “love and jealousy,” he said, “are no part of a soldier’s character, unless for comedy;” and Desdemona was a “silly woman.”⁶⁴ He concluded that “there is in this play, some burlesque, some humor and ramble of comical wit, some show and some mimicry to divert the spectators; but the tragical part is, plainly, none other than a bloody farce, without salt or savor.”⁶⁵ Shakespeare scholars generally have been nonplussed by this assessment of a tragedy. They quote “bloody farce” as a curiosity and move on.

T. S. Eliot, however, agreed with Rymer, saying that he “makes out a very good case.”⁶⁶ Echoing Rymer a century later, George Bernard Shaw, himself a deft practitioner of comedy and farce, called *Othello* “a pure farce plot.”⁶⁷

Rymer glances indirectly at two characters from *commedia dell’arte*. Actors in *Othello*, he says, use “the Mops and Mows [grimacing], the Grimace, the Grin and Gesticulation. Such scenes as this have made all the World run after *Harlequin* and *Scaramuccio*.”⁶⁸ The *Harlequin* of the 17th century descended from the earlier *Zanni*, and *Scaramuccio* from the *Capitano*.

In the most recent, fully annotated edition, E. A. J. Honigmann fully recognizes the comedy in the play: “In *Othello* the debt to comedy is pervasive, since Shakespeare so frequently falls back on comic routines.”⁶⁹ He suggests that the eavesdropping scene (4.1.76) derives from Plautus’s *Miles Gloriosus* (*The Braggart Soldier*). He says that “classical comedy and its derivatives [no doubt Italian comedy and *commedia dell’arte*] influenced *Othello*....[and] enriched the tragedy” of the play and that Iago’s character owes much to the deceitful, gleeful slaves of Plautus and Terence. He calls the dramatist “a master of emotional chiaroscuro [who] knew that the conventions of comedy can tone in with tragedy, a ‘mingle’ that enriched his work in many plays.”⁷⁰ In a footnote to this passage he cites without comment Barbara Heliodora’s article in *Shakespeare Survey* 21, “*Othello*, a Tragedy Built on a Comic Structure,” in which she describes the *commedia dell’arte* in the play in considerable detail, but Honigmann does not mention either *commedia dell’arte* or her interpretation.

Honigmann also footnotes Susan Snyder’s *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare’s Tragedies*, which argues that in *Othello* and in three other tragedies “traditional comic structures and assumptions operate in several ways to shape tragedy....I have in mind relationships more organic than that implied in the notion, much attacked of late but indestructible, of ‘comic relief.’”⁷¹ And, she continues, “comedy can become part of the tragedy itself, providing in its long-range leveling, anti-individual perspective the most radical change to heroic distinction.”⁷² She does not mention *commedia dell’arte*. Citing “several critics,” including Snyder, Kim Hall says in her Bedford/St. Martin’s

edition, that *Othello* “structurally begins as a comedy and turns into a tragedy,” and that Brabantio and Roderigo “are figures imported from classical comedy,” creating what she calls “generic hybridity.”⁷³ Again, no mention of *commedia dell’arte*.

Robert S. Miola also sees the comic structure in *Othello*, finding it strange. In *Shakespeare’s Reading*, he discusses *Othello* not in his chapter on the tragedies but in the chapter on the comedies, where he writes, “The classical comic conflict between father and lovers sets in motion tragedy as well as comedy, though here it undergoes stranger transformation still.”⁷⁴

Bucking the conventional view, Michael Bristol of McGill University reads the play “as a seriocomic or carnivalesque masquerade,”⁷⁵ and *Othello* not as a valiant and noble hero but as “an abject clown.”⁷⁶ Iago is a mirthless improviser who is very witty but whose “aim is always to provoke a degrading laughter at the follies of others.”⁷⁷ In his article, “Charivari and the Comedy of Abjection,” Bristol says that *Othello*, played by an actor in blackface, would probably have been seen as “comically monstrous,”⁷⁸ and that Desdemona’s being played by a boy actor would render “his/her sexuality as a kind of sustained gestural equivocation.”⁷⁹ His interpretation of the play as a “carnivalesque masquerade” is entirely consistent with *commedia dell’arte*, although he doesn’t cite it; and carnivals and masquerades were popular entertainments in Venice in the 1500s.

Today’s readers and theatergoers, he suggests, find it difficult to withdraw their empathy for *Othello* and Desdemona because of the way they have come to know the play. They should set aside their idea of *Othello*, Desdemona and Iago as individuals with personalities and recognize what Bristol calls the “absurdly mutual attraction between a beautiful woman and a funny monster.”⁸⁰ Bristol’s description of *Othello* identifies him as a “natural fool,” by nature a naïve buffoon who draws laughter with his foolishness and is exploited by others, not the fool who is the court jester and wise, witty, satiric commentator, such as Touchstone and Feste.

Othello editors and commentators often approach what seems to be the influence of *commedia dell’arte* in the play but then back off. In the Oxford edition of the play, Michael Neill reflects the tentative approach to this issue often found in traditional scholarship; he cites Bristol and Snyder among others in a footnote but without any comment on their bolder interpretations. He postulates, “If Brabantio is a figure whose antecedents can be traced back through Italian *commedia dell’arte* to Roman New Comedy, the same is true of Roderigo.”⁸¹ He leaves the “if” hanging, apparently unwilling to follow up on the trace of *commedia dell’arte* he sees in the play. He suggests that “contemporary criticism has been more sympathetic to what it sees as Shakespeare’s deliberate manipulation of comic conventions.”⁸²

Russ McDonald endorses studies suggesting that the author of *Othello* made extensive use of the conventions of “[Roman] New Comedy, Elizabethan and romantic comedy and *commedia dell’arte*.”⁸³ He recognizes the comic framework of act 1 and suggests that Brabantio behaves like the comic *senex iratus* of Roman comedy or *Pantalone*. For McDonald, Iago is the comic intriguer of mixed ancestry, descending principally from the Vice of the morality plays. Other “figures from romantic comedy,” he says, “are Emilia, the bawdy serving woman and Bianca the *meretrix* [prostitute or

courtesan].”⁸⁴ He wants to situate Othello somewhere between a self-deluded cuckold of comic satire and a genuinely dignified hero of tragedy. Shakespeare, he says, “created comic imaginary cuckolds to dramatize the peril and absurdity of the misdirected imagination. . . . But in *Othello* such a figure becomes the hero of a tragedy, and the conventional reaction, scornful laughter, is inadequate. Shakespeare thus contrives to disorient his audience. . . . In the tragic environment of the play, folly is transformed into crime, laughter into horror.”⁸⁵ On the other hand, he also suggests that “if we regard Othello initially as a bombastic self-deluded clown . . . we cannot understand the value of what is lost.”⁸⁶ McDonald comes very close to recognizing that *commedia dell’arte* was an important influence on the author of *Othello*, while seeming to want to retain Othello as a tragic figure throughout.

Five commentators not only appreciate the comedy in *Othello* but argue for *commedia dell’arte* as the most significant influence on the play’s composition. None, however, is a Shakespeare editor or prominent critic, perhaps freeing them from the powerful tradition that the play is preeminently a romantic tragedy. Three are from the theater world, which may have disposed them to be receptive to the influence of the Italian improvised theater. Two are professors trained in comparative literature, perhaps facilitating their productive “crossover” studies linking Shakespeare plays and Italian theater.

Barbara Heliodora C. de Mendonça is a Brazilian theater critic, translator and her country’s leading Shakespeare authority. In her article, “*Othello*: a tragedy built on a comic structure,” in *Shakespeare Survey* 21 (1968), she describes all of the principal roles in the play as having been inspired by stock characters of *commedia dell’arte*, except for Othello as the *Capitano*. Othello, she offers, has a passion for moral absolutes and an implacable sense of justice, and “the very essence of the conflict lies in the fact that he is not a super-subtle Venetian.”⁸⁷ She may have a point, but it is not incompatible with the view that Othello is the naïve, simplistic *Capitano* who gets lost in a moral world of his own devising. She suggests that Shakespeare (of Stratford) was at Court for the queen’s command performance in 1602 by *commedia dell’arte* performers from Italy, although there is, of course, no evidence for this most unlikely presence.

Louise George Clubb, professor emeritus of Italian and comparative literature at UC-Berkeley, has written widely on Italian comedy. For *Othello*, she says, the dramatist “employed the *dramatis personae* of a standard Italian scenario” [of *commedia dell’arte*]: Iago is the clever, scheming servant, “who creates the illusion in Othello’s mind that his situation is a stereotypical comedy of adultery, complete with stock figures and himself as the cuckold.” Othello is the *Capitano*, “here transformed in that his eloquent female-fascinating stories of military prowess are all true...Cassio and Roderigo are suitors, worthy and foolish,” and Bianca is a courtesan.⁸⁸ Desdemona is the *inamorata* and Brabantio the *Pantalone*. “Shakespeare,” she aptly concludes, “propels this farce into tragedy.”⁸⁹ Clubb astutely suggests how the dramatist transformed the stock characters of *commedia dell’arte* into larger than life actors in their own scenario.

Clubb sees *Othello* not as a tragedy but as one of the “mixed genres” plays, such as *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*, that have generated much study and debate. She describes *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* (both Italianate plays) as “structures

of comic units, movements and patterns, which are thwarted into tragedy.”⁹⁰ Although several Shakespeare plays are termed “tragicomedies,” this mixed-genre description almost always refers to plays that have tragic or even brutal elements but happy endings. *Othello* moves in the other direction, from comedy to tragedy, with unsettling results.

Pamela Allen Brown, professor of English at the University of Connecticut, who earned her MA and PhD in English and comparative literature at Columbia, reads *Othello* as a brutal, satiric, parody of *commedia dell’arte*. “On the level of literary genre,” she writes in her article, “*Othello* Italicized,” the play is an elaborate, though far from benign, parody of familiar Italian forms, the *commedia dell’arte* and the tragic *novella*.⁹¹ She goes on to suggest that the dramatist “chose to deploy stock devices from Italian comedy,” creating an obscene farce for the original, and xenophobic, audience with a play that “shows much indebtedness to *commedia* situations and speeches.”⁹²

Provocatively, she argues that the satirical *Othello* “is multiply [*sic*] cannibalistic, wreaking havoc with the masks and roles of the Italian *commedia* players and mutilating the Italian literary forms from which the play is constructed.”⁹³ *Othello*’s character, she suggests, blends aspects of the blustering *Capitano* at the start, the fearful *Pantalone* in the middle and a black-masked *Zanni* who kills himself at the end. Iago the *Zanni* is exposed and led away to be tortured. The innamorata Desdemona elopes with a black foreigner and is destroyed by him. Brabantio is a *Pantalone* who dies of grief (or shame). Roderigo is Iago’s foolish sidekick (second *Zanni*) whom Iago kills in cold blood. Whether the dramatist parodied, cannibalized and mutilated *commedia dell’arte* may be debatable, but Brown astutely points to the unexpected and disorienting fatal violence at the tragic climax of the play.

Graduate student scholars seem to have been especially open to the largely unexplored connections between *Othello* and the Italian *commedia*. Teresa J. Faherty was a graduate student at UC-Berkeley in 1991 when she published “*Othello dell’Arte: The Presence of Commedia in Shakespeare’s Tragedy*,” in *Theatre Journal* 43. She found the influence of *commedia dell’arte* “broad and deep. . . Shakespeare indeed borrowed from *commedia* in writing *Othello*, and, moreover, he did so in a nuanced and consistent way.”⁹⁴ She details the parallels: Iago the trickster *Zanni*, *Othello* the *Capitano*, Desdemona the *innamorata*, Brabantio the *Pantalone* et al. Of Iago she says, “Almost all of his scripted actions seem to unfold impromptu,” adding that “lies and improvisation are a predetermined and fixed behavior” of both the *Zanni* and Iago.⁹⁵

Another graduate student of theater and performance, Irene Musumeci, explores the connection in an Internet blog essay, “Imagining *Othello* as *Commedia dell’arte*.”⁹⁶ Her 2002 essay stemmed from her work with an Italian actor-director, Solimano Pontarollo, who produced *Othello* as *commedia dell’arte* in Verona, Italy. Musumeci is a PhD candidate at the University of Kent.

Regrettably, these interpretations of *Othello* as a play drawn from *commedia dell’arte* have received little or no attention from Shakespeare editors and commentators. Occasionally, they glance at *commedia dell’arte* as a possible influence, but do not discuss it further. Their focus is on the source for the plot, the other intertwined and overlapping influences on the dramatist, and the comedy that seems to be pervasive

in the play. There is general agreement that principal source for the skeletal plot of *Othello* was Cinthio's grim tale of a Moor and his ensign who arrange to murder the jealous Moor's Venetian wife, called "Disdemona." The story was one of a hundred tales in Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*, published in Venice in 1565.⁹⁷ It was translated into French in 1584, but not into English until 1753. In addition, details of Othello's murder of Desdemona reflect a wife-murder in Bandello's *Novelle*, published in 1554 in Italian.⁹⁸

For the principal influences on the composition of *Othello*, traditional scholarship propounds the Vice figure of the morality plays, the Devil of the mystery plays and the Roman comedies of Plautus. Vice was the leading character in the morality plays, which developed from the Devil of the Roman Catholic mystery plays. He was the villain, the devil's disciple, a mischief-maker and a comic entertainer whose role was to tempt the Everyman figure into sin. His comic side presumably was intended to draw audiences for an uplifting theatrical experience. Morality plays, performed well into the 1500s, used allegorical figures personifying virtues and vices as a way to entertain while preaching the need to resist temptation and seek redemption from sin.

The Vice figure is mentioned in several Shakespeare plays. He was often named for a sin, as in Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Richard, Duke of Gloucester (not yet king), says in an aside, "Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity, / I moralize two meanings in one word" (3.1.82-83). In *2 Henry IV*, Falstaff ridicules the skinny Shallow as a liar, lecher and "Vice's dagger [i.e. comically thin and wooden] become a squire" (3.2.319). See also Feste's song to Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (4.2.120-31).

McDonald gives Iago a mixed literary ancestry but calls the Vice figure "his most important ancestor," followed by the witty intriguer of "contemporary comic modes."⁹⁹ Both Iago and the witty intriguer, he says, descend from "the tricky servants of Roman and Italian comedy [presumably including *commedia dell'arte*] and Vice of the English morality [plays]."¹⁰⁰ Honigsmann also gives Iago a mixed ancestry, including the Devil, Vice and the "clever slave of classical comedy" (32-33). For Miola "Vice enlivens some villains, Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*, Edmund in *King Lear*, and Iago in *Othello*."¹⁰¹ For Maurice Charney, "the tremendous amiability of the villains in Shakespeare . . . is the true heritage of the Vice of the morality plays."¹⁰²

The Vice figure's chief rival as Iago's ancestor is the Devil. Frank Kermode says in the Riverside collected works that "over the ancient figure of the Vice—a familiar shape for abstract evil—Iago wears the garb of a modern devil."¹⁰³ "Iago... bears some affinity to both Vice and the devil," writes David Bevington.¹⁰⁴ Walter Cohen calls him a devilish figure derived from the Vice.¹⁰⁵

John Cox on the other hand describes both Iago and Richard III as "Vice-derived human beings" and exempts them from his study of *The Devil and the Sacred in English Drama, 1350-1642*.¹⁰⁶ Leah Scragg, however, argues in her *Shakespeare Survey 21* article that "the Devil's claim to be Iago's forefather is at least as good as that of the Vice."¹⁰⁷ In point of fact, Othello himself at his moment of terrible realization looks at Iago's feet half-expecting to see the devil's fabled, cloven hoof and then calls Iago "that demi-devil" (5.2.283, 298).

A long list of ancestors and siblings for Vice is suggested by F. P. Wilson in *The English Drama 1485-1585*, including the domestic fool or jester, the comic characters in

secular folk plays, the devils of the earliest morality plays, assorted fools and clowns, “the medieval sermon . . . its jests and satirical bent,” and the plotting servants of Plautus and Terence.¹⁰⁸

Although Vice of the morality plays, his many relatives and the Devil may well have been in the dramatist’s mind when he was writing *Othello*, the Vice figure cannot be considered as the sole or even the principal influence. He was primarily allegorical, depicting what Kermode terms “abstract evil” to encourage good morals. Bevington recognizes this aspect when he writes that despite his resemblance to Vice Iago “is no allegorized abstraction.”¹⁰⁹ Vice lacked the complexity of Iago and even his humanity, twisted though it is. Iago’s role is not to provide a bad example of sin in a drama preaching the need to live a moral life; his role is to entertain himself and expose the folly of mankind, and perhaps to enjoy a measure of revenge for having been, as he suspects, cuckolded.

As for the influence of Vice’s supposed improvisation, it’s not at all clear from the scant records of performance that it was much more than an actor’s ad-libbing incidental to the scripted plot. Scholars of the Vice figure do not suggest improvisation in the morality plays that is in any way similar to the improvisational tone of *Othello* and other Shakespeare plays. Moreover, Vice’s perceived influence is limited to one of the principal characters in the play, Iago. The rough comedies of Plautus appear to have had at least an equal influence on the personae and their interaction in *Othello*.

Scholars cite the comedies of Plautus (and Terence to much lesser extent) as an influence on several Shakespeare comedies and even on a few tragedies. In *The Nature of Roman Comedy*, George E. Duckworth finds traces of Plautine influence in nine Shakespeare plays, including two tragedies, *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, but not *Othello*.¹¹⁰ The title of Miola’s 1994 book is *Shakespeare and Classical Comedy: the Influence of Plautus and Terence*. In his final chapter, “Heavy Plautus,” he explores its influence on *Hamlet* and *Lear*, but not on *Othello*.¹¹¹

The author undoubtedly knew his Plautus. His *Comedy of Errors* is an adaptation and elaboration of Plautus’s *Menaechmi*. In *Hamlet* Polonius says “Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light” (2.2.400-01). Francis Meres paired Shakespeare with Plautus: “As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage.”¹¹²

Educated Elizabethans well versed in Latin literature had access to Plautus’ plays. Twenty were available to Elizabethans and many of them were performed in Latin at Oxford and Cambridge from 1564 to 1578.¹¹³ His plays were also performed by students at the Inns of Court, where young aristocrats studied law and produced plays in Latin for their own entertainment. There are no records, however, of Plautus being performed in English in the public theaters, such as the Rose and the Globe.

The only plays translated into English were *Amphitruo* (1562-63 rev. 1600) and *Menaechmi* in 1595, a year after it had been performed at one of the Inns of Court.¹¹⁴ The Latin of Plautus was not easy for Elizabethans to grasp and appreciate. Plautine comedy required a sophisticated knowledge of early, colloquial Latin. His vocabulary, grammar and syntax are considered very colloquial and idiomatic, with puns and

coined words; it is not standard Latin and not easy to translate. In his *Literary History of Rome*, J. Wight Duff says “Plautine emendation is one of the hardest fields to work in Latin,”¹¹⁵ and “Plautine prosody is notoriously hard.”^{116, 117}

The Elizabethan grammar schools, where Latin grammar and rhetoric were the core curriculum, taught Plautus and Terence, but Terence was given priority. His later and much more refined Latin was considered the standard. In his article, “What Did Shakespeare Read?” Leonard Barkan expresses the consensus view: “Terence formed one of the bases for Latin instruction all over Europe because his dialog was thought to give the fullest expression of the way classical Latin was actually spoken; but....there is small trace of Terence in Shakespeare and far more of Plautus, who was decidedly less popular in the schools.”^{118, 119}

It’s a challenge to unravel the overlapping, multiple strands of literary influences and try to judge their relative importance. As the Richards put it in their history of *commedia dell’arte*: “The close inter-relationship between some of the materials of the Italian drama *a soggetto* [improvised] on the one hand, and those of the Italian cinquecento scripted drama and the classical comedy on the other, makes identification of influences and borrowings virtually impossible.”¹²⁰ Miola describes Plautus and Terence as “possessors of a comedic gene pool that shapes in various mediated ways succeeding generations” and suggests that “exploration of these lineages can be rich and fruitful” while cautioning that “the lines of transmission from antiquity are....impossible to trace definitively.”¹²¹ The difficulty has not deterred scholars from devoting great efforts to try to trace them. T. W. Baldwin for example wrote an exhaustive, two-volume study solely on the probable influence of the Latin curriculum of a grammar-school education in Elizabethan England on the plays of Shakespeare.

The influence of Roman comedy in Latin, the Vice figure, the Devil, early English comedy, Italian comedy and *commedia dell’arte* must all be considered as having been of greater or lesser importance, in whole or in part, on the composition of *Othello*, but are usually viewed as separate influences that are mingled and difficult to disentangle so that one or the other can be identified as the primary or only influence. If, however, *commedia dell’arte* is seriously considered as a significant influence, it may well emerge as not only the primary influence of the satiric comedy in *Othello* but as perhaps the *only* credible influence of the improvisational elements that Shakespeare scholars find in the play.

No one can doubt that the author of the Shakespeare plays knew a great deal about *commedia dell’arte*. Two characters from it, the *Zanni* and *Pantalone*, are mentioned by name in four plays; and scholars have suggested that its influence on the composition of several plays was significant, although they are unsure how it happened.

In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Berowne describes “some carry-tale, some please-man, some slight zany . . . who knows the trick to make my lady laugh” (5.2.463-36). The zany of this play parallels the *Zanni* Iago, the trickster “carry-tale” who concocts up rumors of cuckoldry to vex Othello and jokes with Desdemona to make the lady laugh in 2.1. The OED gives this 1588 use of “zany,” derived from the Italian, as the earliest

usage in English; it turns up next in plays by Thomas Lodge and Ben Jonson. In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio refers to “zanies” (1.5.86).

Pantalone is mentioned in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *As You Like It*. In *Shrew*, Lucentio says he “will beguile the old Pantaloon” (3.1.37). Jaques in *As You Like It* says about the seven ages of man that “the sixth age shifts into the lean and slippered pantaloon” (2.7.156). The names *Pantalone* and *Zanni* are not in Plautus or Terence; they are from the dramatist’s knowledge of *commedia dell’arte*.

Significantly, his offhand mention of “slippered” suggests that he had seen a *Pantalone* wearing slippers on stage.¹²² If the fact that *Pantalone* wore slippers on stage in Italy appeared in the records in England aside from Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, the mention that has escaped notice.

The fourth age of man in *As You Like It* sounds very much like the *Capitano* (and Othello): “Then a soldier / Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard [a whiskered panther or tiger (OED)], / Jealous in honor, sudden, and quick in quarrel, / Seeking the bubble reputation / Even in the cannon’s mouth” (2.7.149-53). The soldier Othello is jealous of his honor and reputation.

But the author of *Othello* knew much more about *commedia dell’arte* than just the character names and types. In *The World of Harlequin* (1963), Allardyce Nicoll says *commedia dell’arte* “left a strong mark on Shakespeare, Lope de Vega and Moliere.”¹²³ He finds traces of it in *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and in *Romeo and Juliet*, the only tragedy on his list. Nicoll was chair of the English department at the University of Birmingham and founding director of the Shakespeare Institute there. His is the only book-length study of *commedia dell’arte* by a Shakespeare scholar.

Nicoll is most impressed by *The Tempest*. He suggests that it derives from several pastoral scenarios of *commedia dell’arte* that include a shipwreck, a magus-magician, spirits, and two rustic clowns that seem to have been prototypes for Stephano and Trinculo.

Then he tries to account for the influence of *commedia dell’arte* on *The Tempest*. “It is virtually impossible,” he says, “not to believe that Shakespeare had witnessed the performance of an improvised pastoral of this kind.”¹²⁴ He doesn’t say how or where. And in the last paragraph of his book, he backpedals, concluding that “whether Shakespeare [of Stratford] actually witnessed any performances given by the Italians we cannot say with certainty...but with assurance we can declare that the inner spirit of his early comedies closely approaches that of *commedia* scenarios, and we can reasonably guess that *commedia dell’arte* performances would have appealed to him.”¹²⁵

Lea had found *commedia dell’arte* in three of the Shakespeare plays that Nicoll would identify later in his work. They are *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Tempest* and what she calls a dramatic parallel in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Although *Errors* is generally taken to be the most Plautine of the Shakespeare plays, Lea argues at length that the Dromio twins are based on the servants of *commedia dell’arte*.¹²⁶ She speculates that for *Merry Wives* the dramatist might have picked up the idea for the main intrigue in that play “by asking friends who had more Italian than he; or . . . the hint of a tavern

anecdote would have been sufficient.”¹²⁷ This kind of unfounded speculation is typical.

In 1926, Winifred Smith, the first to write a book in English on *commedia dell'arte*, suggested the possibility of its influence on Shakespeare. Although she warned against giving *commedia dell'arte* “too prominent a place among the influences forming the English drama,” she added, “On the other hand it will not do to discount entirely the importance of the improvised plays in London.”¹²⁸ In the final sentence of her book, however, she declared that *commedia dell'arte* “spurred on Moliere’s genius and left not even Shakespeare untouched.”¹²⁹

Similarly ambivalent are the historians of *commedia dell'arte*, Kenneth and Laura Richards. Apparently stymied by the difficulty of determining how the dramatist learned so much about *commedia dell'arte*, they go so far as to conclude that it had no influence on him, even though they see “striking” details of it in three plays, including *Othello*. In their history of *commedia dell'arte*, they contend that “some extravagant claims have been made for Shakespeare’s knowledge and use of *commedia dell'arte* materials and techniques,” but they argue that the “faint similarities and correspondences can be accounted for without reference to the work of the Italian actors”¹³⁰ Then, granting that in a few plays, such as *Othello*, *The Tempest*, and *The Merchant of Venice*, “some details are indeed striking,” they conclude nevertheless that “in no respect are they conclusive as evidence that Shakespeare knew and used” *commedia dell'arte*.¹³¹

As noted above, Clubb recognizes how *commedia dell'arte* influenced the writing of *Othello*, but she can only speculate on how it could have happened. Without offering evidence, she asserts that the dramatist “had access to printed plays, to accounts of the *commedia dell'arte* from Italians in London and Englishmen who traveled on the Continent, among them his colleague Will Kempe; and to who knows how many actual performances.”¹³² She does not, however, identify the printed plays, presumably in Italian; or name the Italian visitors or English travelers, except for Kemp but without specifics; or describe any of the “many actual performances” in England, which would support her argument, if there were any that the dramatist might have seen. It is all conjectural.

The title of Ninian Mellamphy’s article in *Shakespearean Comedy* summarizes his endorsement of *commedia* as a Shakespearean source: “Pantaloons and Zanies: Shakespeare’s ‘Apprenticeship’ to Italian Professional Comedy Troupes.”¹³³ As did Lea, he argues that Italian improvised comedy was an important influence on *The Comedy of Errors*, whose main source was Plautus’s *Menaechmi*.¹³⁴ He says that scholars in the 20th century “showed that Shakespeare in his apprenticeship to the craft of comedy was able to avail himself of the well-established convention of Italian professional troupes.”¹³⁵ He suggests that Shakespeare (of Stratford) could have heard about *commedia dell'arte* scenarios, perhaps from the actor Will Kemp, who traveled on the Continent, and that he probably learned from the Italian “masters of improvised comedy when most he needed to,”¹³⁶ but he supplies no supporting evidence.

The 19th century scholar (and forger) John Payne Collier was the first to note a possible allusion to *commedia dell'arte* in *Hamlet*. When Polonius is speaking about the visiting “best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy....,” he concludes, “for the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men” (2.2.337). He probably

means best for scripted performances that are “writ,” i.e., *commedia erudite*, and for unscripted *commedia dell’arte*, in which liberties could be taken to improvise dialog.¹³⁷ The passage is usually glossed as possibly referring to a district in London called the Liberty, but Polonius was referring not to topography, but to “actors....men,” that is, Italian performers in *commedia erudite* (“writ”) and in *commedia dell’arte* (“liberty”).

“Liberty” is also used in a theatrical context in *The Comedy of Errors* to describe the unscripted performing of jugglers, mountebanks “and many such-like liberties of sin” (1.2.112). The OED cites the line in its definition of liberty as “being able to act in any desired way....without restraint.” See also Clubb in *Stories*, 36.

In the same passage in *Hamlet*, the dramatist may be alluding to some complex, mixed-genre scenarios of *commedia dell’arte* when he has Polonius praise the visiting actors as best for “tragical-comical-historical-pastoral.” See Nicoll, 117-18.

Barbara Everett sees a chain of inheritances for the comedy in *Othello*: “Roman comedy bequeathed to Italian learned comedy (which in time passed them on to the more popular *commedia dell’arte*) some of the most important elements we recognize in *Othello*.”¹³⁸ In his article on “Iago and the *Commedia dell’arte*” in *The Arlington Quarterly*, Richard B. Zacha states, “There is an enormous body of evidence that in his vocabulary, in his characterization and plots, Shakespeare owes a major debt to the improvised comedy as practiced by the Italian players.”¹³⁹

Eugene Steele, professor of Italian at the University of Benghazi, identifies verbal *lazzi* from *commedia dell’arte* that are found in Shakespeare’s plays. These include misplaced and made up words, pedantic and fanciful tirades, laborious puns, malapropisms and especially dialects, one of the main features of *commedia dell’arte*. “All these *lazzi* are echoed in Shakespeare’s plays,” says Steele, noting especially the Welsh dialects of Sir Hugh Evans in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Fluellen in *Henry V*.¹⁴⁰

Steele begins his article on “The Verbal *Lazzi* in Shakespeare’s Plays” in the literary journal *Italica* with the key question: “Did William Shakespeare ever attend a performance by players of the *commedia dell’arte*?” He notes that Shakespeare (of Stratford) did not arrive in London until about 1585 “and there are no records of *commedianti* appearing there at that time or later.”¹⁴¹ After some speculation that the few English actors traveling on the Continent could have encountered *commedia dell’arte* there, he says that “although our initial question must remain unanswered, Shakespeare’s knowledge of Italian literature is well documented....But he might equally well have heard such things recounted by someone else who knew the language.”¹⁴² He does not cite any of this historical documentation that describes the improvised *commedia dell’arte* in Italy, or suggest the identity of Shakespeare’s supposed informants. He asks the right question, but for an answer he, like other commentators, can only conjecture.

The difficulty in accounting for the *commedia dell’arte* in *Othello* that has bedeviled scholars results from a biographical conundrum, expressed by Steele, Nicoll, the Richards and others: how could the dramatist, without going to Italy, have seen any *commedia dell’arte* or acquired enough knowledge to appreciate its improvisational nature? There are no records of *commedia dell’arte* performances in England from the

1580s into the early 1600s when he was supposed to be writing the plays, except one command performance by a visiting troupe for Queen Elizabeth in 1602.

Italian performers were in England in the 1570s, when Stratford's Will Shakspeare (as it was spelled there) was six to fourteen years old, but not in the 1580s or 1590s. During the 1570s, Italians were paid for performances in several provincial towns and once at court. A Revels Account of 1573-74 reports that "Italian players" traveled with the Queen's Progress to Windsor and Reading and "made a pastime."¹⁴³ In 1575, an Italian acrobat performed at the Kenilworth festivities, with "feats of agility in goings, turnings, tumblings, castings, hops, jumps, leaps, skips, springs, gambols, somersaults, caperings, and flights; forward, backward, sideways, downward and upward, with sundry windings, gyrings and circumflexions; all with such lightness and easiness."¹⁴⁴ The visiting Italians were usually described as tumblers and dancers who provided "pastimes." The records give no indication that the pastimes might have been improvised *commedia dell'arte* as performed in Italy, and if there had been any dialog it probably would have been in Italian dialects difficult if not impossible for most of the English to understand.

The last record of Italian performers in England in the 1570s was in 1578. Drusiano Martinelli's troupe received permission to perform "within the City and the liberties" of London before Lent.¹⁴⁵ Drusiano's troupe was the last in England for more than a century, with the single exception of Flaminio Curtesse's troupe brought over from France for a single performance at court in 1602.¹⁴⁶

The Richards conclude that there was probably no *commedia dell'arte* in England when the Shakespeare plays were being written. They say that "apart from the visit of one Flaminio Curtesse in 1602, the visiting Italian players of the 1570s may well have been the last between them and the closing of the theaters in 1642, for no concrete evidence of their presence later has come down."¹⁴⁷ Writing about *The Comedy of Errors* as farce or comedy, Arthur Kinney of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst refers bluntly in passing to *commedia dell'arte* as "a contemporary form of comedy in Italy—but one posterior to Shakespeare in England."¹⁴⁸

Commedia dell'arte in Italy was mentioned in three booklets published in England. In 1581, Thomas Alfield belittled the acting of the Earl of Oxford's secretary Anthony Munday, saying only he would "omit to declare how this scholar new come out of Italy did play extempore."¹⁴⁹ George Whetstone, on his return from Italy the following year described "certain comedians of Ravenna . . . who are not tied to a written device, as our English players are, but having a certain ground or principles of their own, will, extempore, make a pleasant show of other men's fantasies."¹⁵⁰ Whetstone showed an exact knowledge of improvised *commedia dell'arte* in Italy but did not write about any in England, which would seem natural if there had been any.

The pseudonymous pamphleteer Cutbert Curry-knave, writing in 1590 on his return from Italy in epistle dedicatory to "Monsieur du Kempe," relates meeting in Bergamo an Italian Harlequin performer who asked if he knew "Signior Chiarlatono Kempino," and replying that he had "been oft in his company."¹⁵¹ This was no doubt the comedian Will Kemp, who had toured on the Continent, but Curry-knave provides no information on what Kemp may have learned of the *commedia* or what he did with

it. Kemp's talent seemed to be mainly for jigs and other stage business [see Smith (171) and the Richards (263)]. Two years later Thomas Nashe contrasts the English players with those "beyond the sea....a sort of squirting, bawdy comedians that have whores and common courtesans to play women's parts" and whose performances include "a pantaloon, a whore and a zany."¹⁵² It's possible these brief mentions by Alfield, Whetstone, "Curry-knave," and Nashe indicate some slight working knowledge of *commedia dell'arte*. More likely, the writers were merely mentioning it as a novel theatrical technique in Italy.

Louis Wright of the Folger Shakespeare Institute suggested that the author of the Shakespeare plays learned about *commedia dell'arte* from Kemp, who "came under the influence of *commedia dell'arte* clowns and probably added *commedia dell'arte* tricks to his repertoire of native clownery."¹⁵³ To cite just the physical "tricks," however, falls short of *commedia dell'arte's* distinctive pattern of rhetorical improvisation, and thirty-seven years later the Shakespeare scholar Allardyce Nicoll would conclude that "we cannot discern any change in histrionic style within England itself consequent upon the players' experience abroad."¹⁵⁴ Under scrutiny, it is difficult to give much weight to the arguments that an untraveled author of the Shakespeare plays would have gained enough knowledge in England of Italian *commedia dell'arte* and its distinctive improvisatory style to have influenced the writing of *Othello*. Moreover, even critics who acknowledge the central role of *commedia dell'arte* in *Othello* have overlooked or ignored the fact that Stratford's Will Shakspeare was not yet fifteen when Italian performers were in England. They do not provide historical evidence putting him anywhere near a *commedia* performance, nor is there any evidence that he traveled on the Continent.

Shakespeare scholars have found simulated improvisation, the hallmark of *commedia dell'arte*, in many plays, most notably *Othello*. In the opening sentence of her article, "Shakespeare's Rhetorical Riffs," Jane Freeman observes that "in play after play, Shakespeare's characters demonstrate their wit through various forms of rhetorical improvisation, and their improvisational skill is often highly admired and explicitly evaluated by characters who witness it. . . . [in] scenes of seemingly spontaneous wordplay."¹⁵⁵ Her focus is on the scripted improvisations in Shakespeare that were written so well that the actors could make them seem spontaneous. She quotes John Barton in *Playing Shakespeare*: "The words must be *found* or *coined* or *fresh-minted* at the moment you utter them. . . . they must seem to find their life for the first time at the moment the actor speaks them."¹⁵⁶ *Othello* has many such scripted improvisations that the actors, especially Iago, can make appear to be spontaneous.

Leading Shakespeare scholars stress not only the improvisation in the play but also how the dramatist made it central to the action. Harold Bloom of Yale says that "improvisation by Iago constitutes the tragedy's heart and center" and that Iago has "a genius for improvising chaos in others."¹⁵⁷ He describes at length Iago's improvisations but without mention of *commedia dell'arte*. Nor does Stanley Wells, when he says that Iago is "a surrogate playwright, controlling the plot, making it up as he goes along with improvisational genius."¹⁵⁸

Maurice Charney of Rutgers University describes Iago as a perfect *Zanni*-like improviser: "Iago's mind is idle and improvisatory. He is not at all diabolical in the sense of having a fixed purpose that he executes with relentless energy. . . . He is someone who plays games and who is intent on winning each round as it comes up. He is an innovator, a sleight-of-hand man who depends on the inspiration of the moment."¹⁵⁹ Charney argues that Iago's debt is to the allegorical Vice figure of the morality plays, but this debt is outweighed by the close and precise parallels he limns to an improvising *Zanni* in his description of Iago.

Russ McDonald also notes the importance of improvisation in *Othello*: "The comic intriguer thrives by means of the same methods that Iago—or the Vice—displays . . . above all else, improvisation."¹⁶⁰ Although he traces it to the comic intriguer of Plautus, to the Vice figure, to the morality plays and to Roman and Italian comedy, he does not provide any evidence or examples.

Stephen Greenblatt of Harvard says about *Othello* that "violence, sexual anxiety, and improvisation are the materials out of which the drama is constructed. . . . Shakespeare goes out of his way to emphasize the improvised nature of the villain's plot. . . . What I have called the marks of the impromptu extend to Iago's other speeches and actions through the course of the play."¹⁶¹ The chapter title of his book is "The Improvisation of Power," which he calls "a central Renaissance mode of behavior" with *Othello* "the supreme symbolic expression of the cultural mode."¹⁶² Neither the comedy in *Othello* nor the *commedia dell'arte* in it has any place in Greenblatt's cultural mode of improvisation.

Walter Cohen says that Iago, like the Vice figure, displays "improvisationally manipulative acting skills."¹⁶³ and Mellamphy says hopefully that "Shakespeare probably learned from the art and craft of masters of improvised comedy when most he needed to."¹⁶⁴

In the 19th century, Edwin Booth, who played Iago, sensed that Iago's bawdy bantering with Desdemona in Act 2 should be as if on the spur of the moment, not scripted. His view, of course, was theatrical, as were those of Heliodora, a theater critic, and Faherty, who published in *Theatre Journal*. The theatrical perception of the improvisation in *Othello* reinforces the academic view of its significance.

Improvisation is mentioned in three Shakespeare plays. The author calls it playing extempore. In *1 Henry IV*, when Falstaff is using his wit to deflect jibes, he calls on his tormenters to exercise good fellowship: "What, shall we be merry, shall we have a play extempore?" (4.2.279). And in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when Snug asks for the script for the lion's role, Quince tells him, "You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring" (1.2.68-69). In the final scene of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra fears that she and Antony, if captured by the Romans, will be held up to scorn and ridicule in Rome. She says, "The quick comedians extemporally will stage us . . . and I shall see some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness in the posture of a whore" (5.2.16-21).

Finding solid evidence for improvisation in English Renaissance drama beyond that in Shakespeare has challenged scholars. Commentators who suggest that Iago was derived from the Vice figure ascribe improvisation skills to the Vice but do not provide

much supporting evidence. A few scholars acknowledge this shortfall. In the foreword to his anthology, *Improvisation in the Arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Timothy J. McGee refers to “the paucity of detailed information which is the result of the very nature of the topic,” information that he calls “ephemeral” and that “often appears to be confused or even contradictory.”¹⁶⁵ Clifford Davidson’s article in this anthology is entitled, “Improvisation in Medieval Drama,” but he concedes that “improvisation is the most ephemeral aspect of performances from half a millennium ago and also the most vexed scholarly question.”¹⁶⁶ In his analysis of clowns’ antics, David Mann observes that “there is a double irony in attempting to put together written evidence of an unwritten tradition of clowning which is both highly physical and often dependent on the immediate humorous possibilities of a particular moment.”¹⁶⁷ All three, of course, are describing works in English about the drama in England, while the works in Italian on *commedia dell’arte*, all later than 1611, are rich in descriptions of its stock characters and their improvised dialog, action and music.

The author of the Shakespeare plays was not writing in a vacuum. His sources and the influences on his writing were multiple, varied and not easy to rank in importance. The comic Vice figure and the comedies of Plautus certainly seem to have influenced him. A close reading of *Othello* and the literature of the *commedia*, however, suggest that the most significant influence on the composition of *Othello* was probably *commedia dell’arte*, not only for its characters as models for the seven leading characters in *Othello*, but especially for the simulated improvisation in the play.

Improvised performing, which defines *commedia dell’arte*, could only be fully appreciated if seen in performance. By definition it was not scripted, not written down, not published to inspire playwrights, leaving nothing for scholars to emendate. Only by seeing performances of it in Italy could a dramatist such as Shakespeare have fully appreciated the subtleties and power of improvisation that leading Shakespeare scholars find in *Othello*. Improvisation drove the plot forward in *commedia dell’arte*, and Iago’s improvisation drives the plot in *Othello*. Considering the influence of *commedia dell’arte* and studying it in more detail could make a world of difference in reaching a clearer understanding of this and other plays.

In his article on “Shakespeare and Italian Comedy,” independent researcher and editor Kevin Gilvary surveyed Italian comedy, including *commedia dell’arte*, and considered how Shakspeare might have known about it. After considering translations and adaptations, the early visits by Italian performers, and the possibility of second-hand knowledge from English travelers to Italy or from the bilingual John Florio, he concluded that “no satisfactory explanation for the depth of Shakespeare’s knowledge of Italian comedy emerges from traditional biography.”¹⁶⁸

Oxfordians can point out that the English playwright whose profile fits the author of *Othello* was not Will Shakspeare of Stratford but Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, and that the improvised *commedia dell’arte* that pervades the play may well be among the most persuasive evidence marshaled by Oxfordian scholars. Oxford had easy access to the comedies of Plautus in print and at performances of them in Latin at the Inns of the Court in London, and the characters and plots of the Plautine comedies inspired *commedia dell’arte*.

Editions of Plautus were in the library of Oxford's tutor, William Smith, and in the library of William Cecil Lord Burghley, his guardian during his teenage years and then his father-in-law.¹⁶⁹ T. W. Baldwin in *Smalle Latine and Less Greeke* found it significant that the playwright's knowledge of Plautus is "frequently colored by the commentaries" in the Latin edition of it published in 1576 by Lambinus, a Parisian Latinist.¹⁷⁰ It is perhaps equally significant that the Lambinus edition was in the library of Oxford's guardian.

One of the leading characters in *commedia dell'arte* was the *Capitano*. In the Shakespeare play he is Othello, who is enraged by false reports that he had been cuckolded and his reputation ruined, as was Oxford on his return from Italy. The striking parallel between Oxford's life and Othello's predicament is discussed in the edition of the play by Ren Draya and this writer in the Oxfordian Shakespeare Series.¹⁷¹

Perhaps most importantly, Oxford was able to absorb the techniques of improvisation by stock characters in stock situations when he was in Italy, where performances of *commedia dell'arte* were popular not only in Venice, but in other northern Italian cities. He could hardly have missed seeing performances. He lived in Venice and traveled in northern Italy for about five months in 1575-76 when he was in his impressionable mid-20s and when *commedia dell'arte* was flourishing there.¹⁷² He had ample opportunity to see *commedia* performances in the public squares and in the palaces of the rich and the nobility.

Oxford even figures in a *commedia dell'arte* performance in Italy. A scenario in a rare collection of *commedia* skits describes a performance that satirized his skill at tournament jousting. It's a real-life topical allusion, although pure fiction, in a scenario called "Tirata della Giostra" ("Tirade on the Joust"), reported by Andrea Perrucci. In an exuberant tirade, the stock character *Dottore*, who often mangled names for comic effect, pretended to describe the tournament costume and sword of "Elmond Milord d'Oxford" and invented a tilt with "Alvilda Contessa d'Edenburg," perhaps an allusion to Scotland.¹⁷³ The topical allusion suggests that an audience of Italian aristocrats would have known about Oxford's travels in Italy and appreciated the satire. For Oxfordians, it's tempting to imagine that the Earl of Oxford was in the audience.

If the influence of *commedia dell'arte* on the composition of *Othello* were to be seriously considered and explained by editors of the play, readers and theatergoers might well enjoy a greatly enhanced appreciation of the author's intention and design for this disorienting comedy gone wrong. The perplexing aspects of the comedy throughout *The Tragedy of Othello* would disappear. The mystery of Iago's evil and his motivation would be dispelled. Othello's naïve inability to see through Iago's lies and scheming would make sense.

With a more realistic understanding of the play, *Othello* could be read and performed as the author probably intended, as a bitter, satirical comedy with a disturbing, frustrating, tragic ending that denies the audience its expected catharsis—a play inspired by satirical *commedia dell'arte* performances in Italy, instead of a romantic tragedy about a jealous military hero, who is black, and his aristocratic Venetian bride, who is white.

Othello, no longer a glamorized noble hero, would be understood as a boasting, insecure, delusional fool, the *Capitano* of *commedia dell'arte*, Michael Bristol's "abject clown." This reading purges the play of the sentimentality of traditional interpretations, which have been a disservice to this tough-minded dramatist. It would lead to a more rewarding appreciation of *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* as one of his greatest commentaries exposing the folly of mankind through laughter and the abrupt shift to the tragic shock of two murders and a suicide at the climax of the play.

Endnotes

- ¹ Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil, the History of Metaphor in Relation to His Major Villains* (New York: Columbia UP, 1958), 3.
- ² Edward Pechter, ed., *Othello: Authoritative Texts, Sources and Contexts, Criticism* (New York: Norton, 2004), ix.
- ³ Robert Hornback, "Emblems of Folly in the First *Othello*: Renaissance Blackface, Moor's Coat and Muckender," *Comparative Drama* (March 2001), 1. Hornback, professor of comparative literature and theater at Oglethorpe University, offers evidence not only for blackface fools on the Renaissance stage but also for the resemblance between a Moor's costume and a fool's coat and for a satiric contrast between Othello's handkerchief and the nose-wiping muckender of the fool's costume.
- ⁴ Philip C. Kolin, *Othello: New Critical Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1-28.
- ⁵ Karl Mantzius, *A History of Theatrical Art in Ancient and Modern Times*, trans. Louise von Cossel. (London: Duckworth, 1904), 2:213.
- ⁶ George Sand, "Preface" to *Masques et Bouffons (comédie italienne: texte et dessins)* by Maurice Sand (her son), (Paris: Michel Levy, 1860), vii. Quoted in Duchartre, 17.
- ⁷ Pamela Allen Brown, "Othello Italicized: Xenophobia and the Erosion of Tragedy," in *Shakespeare, Italy and intertextuality*, ed., Michele Marrapodi. (Manchester UP, 2004), 145.
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- ¹⁶ Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 180.

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- ²¹ Russ McDonald, ed., *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001) 1. His introduction grapples with the comedy in the tragedy.
- ²² McDonald, *Othello*, 11.
- ²³ Nicoll, 101.
- ²⁴ Nicoll, 98.
- ²⁵ Nicoll, 103.
- ²⁶ Barbara Everett, "'Spanish' Othello: The Making of Shakespeare's Moor," *Shakespeare Survey* 35 (1982); reprint in *Shakespeare and Race*, eds. Catherine M. S. Alexander and Stanley Wells (Cambridge UP, 2001), 76.
- ²⁷ Smith, 229-30.
- ²⁸ Richards, 133.
- ²⁹ Robert Hornback, *The English Clown Tradition from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2009), 42.
- ³⁰ Hornback, *English Clown*, 26.
- ³¹ Julie Hankey, *Othello* (Bristol UK: Bristol Classical Press, 1987), 14. A theater historian, she is co-editor of the Plays in Performance series.
- ³² Hornback, *Emblems*, 172.
- ³³ Richards, 132-33.
- ³⁴ Smith, 7.
- ³⁵ Nicoll, 50.
- ³⁶ Nicoll, 51.
- ³⁷ Richards, 118.
- ³⁸ Lea, 19-21.
- ³⁹ Lea, 20-21.
- ⁴⁰ Lea, 378-79.
- ⁴¹ Nicoll, 32.
- ⁴² Duchartre, 251-52.
- ⁴³ Nicoll, 89.
- ⁴⁴ Lea, 65.
- ⁴⁵ Smith, 8-9, 47-48.
- ⁴⁶ Richards, 113.
- ⁴⁷ Lea, 117-18.
- ⁴⁸ Carol Thomas Neely, "Women and Men in *Othello*," *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's*

Othello, ed., Anthony Gerard Barthelemy (New York: Hall, 1994), 71-78.

⁴⁹ Lea, 118-19.

⁵⁰ Nicoll, 112.

⁵¹ Smith, 49.

⁵² Lea, 121.

⁵³ Kermode, *Riverside*, 1200.

⁵⁴ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (University of Chicago Press, 1980), 235.

⁵⁵ Horace Howard Furness, *Othello* by William Shakespeare (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1886), 109. The actor Edwin Booth, who played Iago, gave Furness notes on his stage "business" in *Othello*, which Furness used for several footnotes he mistakenly attributed to J.B. Booth, Edwin's brother. In his Preface, however, Furness spells out Edwin's name as the source.

⁵⁶ Pechter, 51, fn 3-10.

⁵⁷ McDonald, *Othello*, 63.

⁵⁸ McDonald, *Othello*, 63.

⁵⁹ McDonald, *Othello*, 65.

⁶⁰ T. S. Eliot, *T. S. Eliot Selected Essays 1917-1932* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932, rev. ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1950), 111. See p. 121 for his footnote on Rymer that is quoted more often. Both footnotes appear to be strongly held asides in Eliot's essays on different topics. Each footnote is the only one on its page.

⁶¹ Fintan O'Toole, *No More Heroes* (Dublin: Raven Arts Press, 1990), rev. ed. *Shakespeare Is Hard But So Is Life* (London: Granta, 2002), 69.

⁶² Thomas Rymer, *A Short View of Tragedy* (London: 1693; reprint *The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer*, ed. Curt Zimansky (New Haven: Yale UP, 1956), 134.

⁶³ Rymer, 136.

⁶⁴ Rymer, 135.

⁶⁵ Rymer, 165.

⁶⁶ Eliot, 111.

⁶⁷ Shaw, 156.

⁶⁸ Rymer, 149.

⁶⁹ E. A. J. Honigmann, *Othello* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2002), 77. First published by Thomas Nelson, 1999.

⁷⁰ Honigmann, 75-77.

⁷¹ Susan Snyder, *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies: Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello, and King Lear* (Princeton UP, 1979), 4. She never mentions *commedia dell'arte*, or Heliadora's "comic structure" in the latter's 1968 article.

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⁷³ Kim Hall, ed. *William Shakespeare, Othello, the Moor of Venice: Texts and Contexts*. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), 16.

⁷⁴ Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare's Reading*, (Oxford UP, 2000), 94.

⁷⁵ Michael Bristol, "Charivari and the Comedy of Abjection in *Othello*," *Renaissance Drama* NS 21 (1990), reprint, in the Norton Critical Edition of *Othello*, ed.,

Edward Pechter (New York: Norton, 2004), 352.

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- ⁷⁷ Bristol, 359.
- ⁷⁸ Bristol, 351.
- ⁷⁹ Bristol, 357.
- ⁸⁰ Bristol, 350.
- ⁸¹ Michael Neill, ed., *Othello, the Moor of Venice* (Oxford UP, 2006), 28.
- ⁸² Neill, 5.
- ⁸³ McDonald, *Othello*, 57.
- ⁸⁴ McDonald, *Othello*, 57-58.
- ⁸⁵ McDonald, *Othello*, 52.
- ⁸⁶ McDonald, *Othello*, 59.
- ⁸⁷ Barbara Heliadora C. de Mendonça, "Othello, a Tragedy Built on a Comic Structure," *Shakespeare Survey* 21, ed. Kenneth Muir (Cambridge UP, 1968), 36. For a biography, see *Encyclopedia Itau Cultural: Teatro* at www.itaucultural.org.br. Her article was the first to detail the parallels between *Othello* and *commedia dell'arte* and its stock characters; it prompted the present article and informed our Oxfordian edition of the play. She also published "The Influence of *Gorboduc* on *King Lear*," in *Shakespeare Survey* 13 (1960).
- ⁸⁸ Louise George Clubb, "Italian Stories on the Stage," *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. Alexander Leggatt (Cambridge UP, 2002), 43.
- ⁸⁹ Clubb, *Stories*, 45.
- ⁹⁰ Louise George Clubb, "Shakespeare's Comedy and Late Cinquecento Mixed Genres," *Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. Maurice Charney (New York Literary Forum, 1980), 135.
- ⁹¹ Brown, 148.
- ⁹² Brown, 149.
- ⁹³ Brown, 150.
- ⁹⁴ Teresa J. Faherty, "Othello dell'Arte: The Presence of *Commedia* in Shakespeare's Tragedy," *Theatre Journal* 43 (1991), 179-94.
- ⁹⁵ Faherty, 184.
- ⁹⁶ Irene Musumeci, "Imagining *Othello* as *Commedia dell'arte*" (2002). Found with an Internet search for "Solimano Pontarollo Othello," last viewed March, 2011. The performance she describes was perhaps the first informed by *commedia dell'arte*.
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- ⁹⁸ Naseeb Shaheen, "Shakespeare's Knowledge of Italian," *Shakespeare Survey* 47 (2002), 164.
- ⁹⁹ McDonald, *Othello*, 57-58.
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- ¹⁰² Maurice Charney, "Comic Villainy in Shakespeare and Middleton," *Shakespearean*

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- ¹⁰³ Kermode, *Riverside*, 1200.
- ¹⁰⁴ David Bevington, Introduction to *Othello*, *Complete Works of Shakespeare* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 1119.
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- ¹¹⁰ George E. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy*, 2d ed. (Princeton UP, 1952), 415-17.
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- ¹¹² E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: a Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford UP, 1930), 2:194.
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- ¹¹⁷ See also A. W. Hodgman, "Verb Forms in Plautus," *The Classical Quarterly* 1.1 (1907), 42-52.
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- ¹²² Nicoll, 44.
- ¹²³ Nicoll, 9.
- ¹²⁴ Nicoll, 119.
- ¹²⁵ Nicoll, 223.
- ¹²⁶ Lea, 438-43.
- ¹²⁷ Lea, 432.
- ¹²⁸ Smith, 198-99.
- ¹²⁹ Smith, 239.


- ¹³⁰ Richards, 263.
- ¹³¹ Richards, 264.
- ¹³² Clubb, *Stories*, 35.
- ¹³³ Ninian Mellamphy, "Pantaloon and Zanies: Shakespeare's 'Apprenticeship' to Italian Professional Comedy Troupes," *Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. Maurice Charney (New York Literary Forum: 1980), 141. Mellamphy is professor emeritus at the University of Western Ontario.
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- ¹³⁷ John Payne Collier, *The History of English Dramatic Poetry in the Time of Shakespeare* (1879) (Chestnut Hill MA: Adamant Media, 2010), 3:399.
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- ¹⁴³ Lea, 352-33.
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- ¹⁵⁴ Nicoll, 160.
- ¹⁵⁵ Jane Freeman, "Shakespeare's Rhetorical Riffs," *Improvisation in the Arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Thomas J. McGee (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2003), 247. She is a professor at the University of Toronto and a member of the board of governors at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival.
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- ¹⁵⁹ Charney, 169.
- ¹⁶⁰ McDonald, *Othello*, 58.
- ¹⁶¹ Greenblatt, 232-33.
- ¹⁶² Greenblatt, 229, 232.
- ¹⁶³ Cohen, 2093.
- ¹⁶⁴ Mellamphy, 143.
- ¹⁶⁵ Timothy McGee, ed., *Improvisation in the Arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2003), x.
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- ¹⁶⁷ Mann, David. *The Elizabethan Player: Contemporary Stage Representation* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 68.
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- ¹⁶⁹ Eddi Jolly, "Shakespeare and Burghley's Library," *The Oxfordian* 3 (2000), 10.
- ¹⁷⁰ Baldwin, 673.
- ¹⁷¹ Ren Draya and Richard F. Whalen, *Othello, the Moor of Venice* (Truro MA: Horatio Editions-Llumina Press, 2010). The introduction to the play and the line notes describe the many correspondences between Oxford's life experience and the play, including the influence of *commedia dell'arte* throughout.
- ¹⁷² Anderson, chapters 4, 5.
- ¹⁷³ Ron Hess, pers. email comm. for "Tirade on the Joust" from *A Treatise on Acting, from Memory and by Improvisation*, compiled by Andrea Perrucci in 1699, trans. by Colin Wright, Concetta Thibideau and Hess, forthcoming in Hess' *Dark Side of Shakespeare*, vol. 3, app. H.

The Law in *Hamlet*:

Death, Property, and the Pursuit of Justice

Thomas Regnier

 *amlet* is not, on its face, a “legal” play in the way that *Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure* are legal plays. It has no trial scenes, no discourses on the purposes of law and punishment, and no critique, as such, of the legal system. But a closer look at the play shows that legal issues are integrated into the fabric of the drama at key points. The subtlety and accuracy of the law in *Hamlet* suggest that its author had sophisticated legal training of the sort that comes from formal study, not casual conversation. This casts doubt on the traditional theory that the man from Stratford wrote the plays of the Shakespeare canon.

As well as analyzing the law in *Hamlet*, this article will consider how the evidence of legal knowledge in the play impacts the hypothesis, believed by many, that Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, was the real genius behind Shakespeare’s plays.¹ We know that de Vere studied law from an early age with his tutor, Sir Thomas Smith. De Vere also enrolled at the Inns of Court—Gray’s Inn, to be precise—where the common law of England was taught. Of course, evidence of legal knowledge in Shakespeare’s plays does not prove that Oxford wrote the plays. Many noblemen of his day studied at the Inns of Court; and others, such as Francis Bacon, were greater legal minds than Oxford was likely to have been.

But *Hamlet* contains legal issues that parallel watershed events in Oxford’s life, particularly events that concerned homicide and property law. This article briefly explores aspects of law in *Hamlet*: ecclesiastical law, law of homicide, property law, and, more generally, law as an instrument of justice and revenge, and notes some of the parallels to legal issues that directly involved de Vere during his life.

I. Ecclesiastical Law: Ophelia’s “Maimed Rites”

R.S. Guernsey wrote in 1885 that *Hamlet* showed “the most thorough and complete knowledge of the [ecclesiastical] and statute law of England, relating to

the burial of suicides that has ever been written.”² The alert reader may well respond, “What does the law of England, whether ecclesiastical or statutory, have to do with *Hamlet*, which takes place in Denmark?”

The answer for *Hamlet* is the same as for all of Shakespeare’s plays: English law permeates the plays, even those set in foreign countries. The law of the foreign setting may be a factor in some plays, but most of the legal rules and jargon are from English law. This is the law with which Shakespeare’s audience, whether nobility or common folk, would have been most familiar.

A. Law of Suicide

Guernsey argued that *Hamlet* reflected the English law regarding suicides at the time of its writing, rather than the laws in Denmark at the time of the historical Hamlet’s life (about 700 CE, before Christianity was introduced in Denmark). Understanding the law of suicide is crucial to understanding the controversy regarding Ophelia’s burial rites. “Her death was doubtful” (5.1.182),³ as the priest tells Laertes, by which he means it is questionable whether Ophelia’s death was an accident or a suicide. This doubt created some thorny legal issues because of the tension that existed between statutory law and ecclesiastical law regarding suicides, especially when insanity was a factor.

Ophelia’s death was “doubtful” because, once she fell into the brook, she appears to have made no attempt to save herself. Instead, she “chanted snatches of old lauds [hymns], / As one incapable of her own distress” (4.7.182–83). This behavior is consistent with Ophelia’s having gone to the brook intending to kill herself. But given what the audience has already seen of Ophelia’s madness, insanity is the more likely explanation of her inaction.

B. Ecclesiastical Law versus Statutory Law

Under ecclesiastical law, a person who voluntarily caused her own death was not entitled to Christian burial, even if she were insane. The secular law, however, had by Shakespeare’s time developed a more nuanced understanding of voluntariness: an insane person could not, by definition, *voluntarily* kill herself because her mind was too disturbed for her to make any decision for which she could be held responsible. If the coroner, the official of the Crown who presided over the inquest, found that the deceased had been insane at the time of her death, then she could not have killed herself voluntarily and her death was, therefore, not a suicide.

The Church would grudgingly accept the coroner’s verdict and give Christian burial rites to the deceased—but only in the parish churchyard. Even so, the parish priest, who was the legal holder of the church lands, could decide where in the cemetery the deceased would be buried. Suspected suicides were often buried at the fringes of the churchyard.

C. "Make Her Grave Straight"

As Guernsey explains, those who received Christian burial were buried with their bodies lying along a "straight," or east–west axis, the same alignment on which the church itself stood. The head was to the west, the feet to the east. Any other positioning, such as north–south, indicated that the deceased person was not entitled to the full rites of Christian burial.⁴ Such "crooked" burials in unconsecrated ground went to stillborn infants and excommunicated persons, as well as to suicides.

Thus, when one gravedigger tells the other at the beginning of Act 5, "make her grave straight. The crowner hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial" (5.1.3), he is telling the other to dig the grave east–west.⁵ The thrust of the statement is that the coroner has ruled Ophelia's death involuntary, probably due to insanity, and that she therefore receives basic Christian rites.

If the coroner were to determine, however, that a person was sane at the time of the suicide (a rare finding), the deceased's personal property was forfeit to the Crown, and the coroner, rather than a priest, buried the body, often at a crossroads.

D. "What Ceremony Else?"

When Hamlet first sees a funeral procession in the churchyard, not knowing that it is Ophelia's funeral, he immediately recognizes the "maimed rites" and their significance: "This doth betoken / The corse [corpse] they follow did with desperate hand / Fordo its own life" (5.1.175–76). After an apparently perfunctory service by the priest, Laertes asks, "What ceremony else?" (5.1.180). The priest's response encapsulates the compromise between secular and holy law:

Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
As we have warranty. Her death was doubtful,
And but that great command o'ersways the order,
She should in ground unsanctified been lodged
Till the last trumpet....

(5.1.181–85).

The "great command" is the statutory law of England, which recognized the monarch as the head of the Church. It also bound the priest to abide by the coroner's verdict that Ophelia be accorded Christian burial. Thus, we know from the text that Ophelia's burial included some of the features of a full Christian burial, namely, an east–west ("straight") grave in consecrated ground.

But Guernsey notes that the funeral left out such optional trappings as torch bearers, cross bearer, sprinkling of holy water, singing of psalms or hymns, blessing, smoking censer, and Eucharist (Holy Communion, or Lord's Supper).⁶ The omission of so many potentially available signs of respect toward the deceased would naturally seem an insult to the mourning Laertes.

The priest goes on to hint that Laertes should be thankful that the “great command” has done as much as it has for Ophelia. Without it, “for charitable prayers, / Shards, flints, and pebbles, should be thrown on her” (5.1.185–86). Guernsey explains that this was a reference to the custom in some parts of England (derived from heathen Teutons’ method of executing criminals) of burying suicides at crossroads, driving a stake through the body, and allowing passersby to throw stones and flints at the stake.

The priest reminds Laertes that the Church has allowed the strewing of flowers for Ophelia and the use of garlands (a token of virginity). The priest has, as Guernsey says, “fulfilled the letter of the law, and rung the bell [a required part of the Christian ceremony, even for doubtful deaths] and . . . given her an honorable place of burial and a straight grave.”⁷

In other words, Ophelia received the bare minimum of Christian burial rites. Shakespeare’s use of a few key phrases—“make her grave straight,” “Christian burial,” “maimed rites,” “What ceremony else?,” “Her death was doubtful,” “great command,” “ground unsanctified”—shows that he perfectly understood the tension between statutory law and ecclesiastical law regarding the burial of suicides.

II. Law of Homicide: “King’s Lawful Subject” versus “Malice Aforethought”

Thomas Glyn Watkin’s 1984 article, “Hamlet and the Law of Homicide,” explores the law governing the many homicides in the play.⁸ Once again, English law rules. Watkin notes that homicide law in Shakespeare’s time had undergone a transformation since medieval times. Stated simply, medieval law focused on the legal status of the victim; the more modern view focused on the state of mind of the accused killer.

A. Law of Homicide: The Old Rule

Watkin explains that, under the medieval system, it was no crime to kill felons who fled or resisted arrest, prisoners who assaulted their jailers, highway robbers, burglars who broke into one’s house at night, or members of an unlawful assembly who resisted a justice of the peace’s order to disperse. The common denominator of all these victims is that none was “the King’s lawful subject.” By their actions they had forfeited the law’s protection; therefore, killing them was not a crime.

The medieval system meant that an accidental killing, however, usually *was* a crime. If one were chopping down a tree and an innocent victim happened to walk nearby and be killed by the falling tree, the woodcutter would be prosecuted. The dead person had done nothing to take himself outside the law’s protection, so he was still the king’s lawful subject and killing him was a crime.

Even more perplexing to the modern mind is that, under the old system, killing in self-defense during a sudden brawl was not protected under the law—even if one refrained from killing until his back was to the wall and he had no choice. Why, one might reasonably ask, would it be lawful for a citizen to kill the burglar who breaks

into his home, but not the public brawler who means to kill the citizen?

The answer is that the brawler has not yet committed a crime. Because he has not forfeited the law's protection, he is still the king's lawful subject. Additionally, the law assumed that when a quarrel arose, both parties must be at fault to some degree. A person found to have killed in self-defense, however, could seek, and would usually obtain, a pardon from the king, as provided by the Statute of Gloucester of 1278;⁹ but he had to forfeit his goods to the Crown for depriving the king of one of his lawful subjects.

A burglar, on the other hand, has already committed a crime by breaking into one's home and has thereby lost the law's protection. Killing the burglar was a lawful act even if he had not yet injured anyone or stolen any goods.

B. Law of Homicide: The New Rule

By Shakespeare's time, homicide law had gone through a series of gradual changes so that the legal analysis focused on the killer's state of mind, or *mens rea*, rather than the victim's legal status. In the 17th century, legal scholars, such as Sir Edward Coke (pronounced "Cook"), began to articulate the new state of the common law as it had evolved.

The new definition of murder was best expressed by Coke in his Third Institute, published in 1641: "Murder is when a man . . . unlawfully killeth . . . with malice fore-thought, either expressed by the party, or implied by law . . ." ¹⁰ Coke's definition brilliantly captured the change in the law: the focus was no longer on the victim, but on the defendant; not merely on physical acts, but on the intentions behind them. Indeed, one of the great advances of modern law over medieval law has been modern law's consideration of a defendant's intentions as well as his actions.

When Coke said in his definition that "malice fore-thought" (or "malice aforethought," as it is more commonly termed) could be expressed by the party or implied by law, he meant that the killer could state his intentions or the law could infer intent based on his actions. For example, malice aforethought was assumed in willful poisoning cases¹¹ and incidents of stabbing a victim who had no weapon drawn or had not struck first.¹²

Watkin argues that Shakespeare, who wove the theme of the deceptiveness of appearances into *Hamlet* ("That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain" [1.5.108]), found such legal shortcuts too superficial. As the play demonstrates, a smooth assassin like Claudius or a creative actor like Hamlet could get away with murder, at least for a while, by disguising his intentions.

The new understanding of murder meant that killings in self-defense or by accident were no longer crimes because the killer had no malicious intent. By the time of Coke's writing in the 1600s, juries who found that the defendant had killed in self-defense could simply acquit, and pardon from the king was no longer necessary. Insanity became a complete defense to murder because, as discussed earlier in regard to suicide, an insane person was incapable of forming an intent for which he could be

held responsible.

One might say that murder and manslaughter were distinguished by their hotness or coldness. Murder involved “cold” blood, the murderer having had time to reflect on his action; the punishment was death. Manslaughter was a sudden killing driven by “the heat of the blood kindled by ire,” as Coke said.¹³ Manslaughter was punished by imprisonment for up to a year and branding of the thumb.

Watkin’s article goes on to examine each of the killings in *Hamlet* in light of the changes in the law, demonstrating that Shakespeare had a keen appreciation of the subtleties of the law of homicide as it had developed in his time. This article summarizes several of Watkin’s analyses.

C. Hamlet’s Feigned Madness

Let us look at Hamlet’s “antic disposition” (1.5.172), his feigning madness. Why would he pretend to be insane? In Saxo Grammaticus’s *Amleth*, one of Shakespeare’s sources for the *Hamlet* plot, the young protagonist pretends to be a simpleton in order to appear harmless while he plots his revenge against his uncle.¹⁴ This may be a part of the strategy of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, but Hamlet also reaps legal benefits from his charade—benefits that accrue because of the new state of the law. After all, insanity was a complete defense to murder. By feigning madness, Hamlet would escape all punishment, even forfeiture of goods, for the planned murder of his uncle.

Although Hamlet’s pretended madness never becomes an issue in regard to Claudius’ death, it comes in quite handy when he mistakenly kills Polonius. “What I have done,” Hamlet later says of the killing, “I here proclaim was madness” (5.2.201–03). Gertrude backs up Hamlet’s pretense of madness by telling Claudius that Hamlet, when killing Polonius, was “Mad as the sea and wind when both contend / Which is the mightier” (4.1.7–8). Claudius accepts the fiction and passes it on when he tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that “Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain” (4.1.34). The courtiers would need no further explanation as to why Hamlet is not criminally prosecuted for Polonius’ death.

D. The Rat Behind the Arras

Even if the madness defense hadn’t worked in the killing of Polonius, Hamlet had a backup argument: he stabbed at the arras thinking a rat was behind it. While we know from the text that Hamlet hoped and believed Claudius was behind the arras, he cleverly shouted out, “How now? A rat? / Dead for a ducat, dead!” (3.4.27) as he stabbed, giving himself an excuse for the killing. Because the intent to kill a person is necessary for murder, a man who intends to kill a rat but accidentally kills a person instead is not guilty of murder.¹⁵

The rat-behind-the-arras excuse is a new twist that Shakespeare added to the plot. In the Belleforest version of the Hamlet story in *Histoires Tragiques*,¹⁶ the counselor who eavesdrops on Hamlet’s interview with his mother hides under a quilt; Shakespeare has Polonius, on the other hand, hide behind an arras.¹⁷ One can see that

this makes a difference from a legal standpoint because of the new state of the law. Under the medieval rule, Hamlet's guilt in killing Polonius would have depended on whether Polonius was the "King's lawful subject" at the time of the killing. Clearly, Polonius would qualify as a lawful subject no matter where he hid, and Hamlet would be culpable for the death.

But under the modern rule, Hamlet's guilt depends on his intent. If he attacked a person who was hiding under a quilt, as in the Belleforest version, it would have been difficult to deny that he knew it was a person, not a rat, underneath. When Shakespeare places Polonius behind the arras, however, the rat excuse becomes plausible. One might see the rustling of an arras and assume that a rat, climbing the arras, caused the disturbance. Then one might stab at the arras, only to find that a person, not a rat, was behind it. This would not be murder because there was no evil intent. Thus, Hamlet was fortified with two legal defenses for killing Polonius: insanity and accident. Neither defense would have saved him under the medieval rules.

Could Hamlet have argued his innocence by saying that his killing of Polonius was accidental because he had actually meant to kill Claudius? This would not have worked because of the doctrine of "transferred intent." If one intended to kill a human being but, in the course of attempting the killing, accidentally killed another human, one was still guilty of murder. The unlawful intent transferred to the unintended victim.

Nor could Hamlet have based a plausible defense on a pretense that he thought Polonius was a robber. For that defense to work, he would have to ascertain before the killing that his victim actually *was* a robber. A quick peek behind the arras would have immediately cured him of that notion.

E. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

One of Claudius' schemes to do away with Hamlet is to send him to England, accompanied by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, with a written commission authorizing the English authorities to execute Hamlet. The scheme shows Claudius' typical craftiness: by arranging for the killing to occur in another jurisdiction, Claudius ensures that he cannot be tried for it in Denmark.

As we know, Hamlet turned the tables by substituting the order for his death with an order for the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. For this act, Hamlet could have used a similar jurisdictional argument to Claudius': as Hamlet wrote the order while at sea, he was outside the jurisdiction of Denmark.

Hamlet could conceivably argue in the alternative that he killed in self-defense, but this is a weaker argument because self-defense usually requires an immediate threat to one's life. Watkin argues that Hamlet's situation subtly highlights the inadequacy of the law of homicide to "accommodate a killing done during the course of a protracted threat to the killer's own life."¹⁸

F. The Duel with Laertes

Claudius conspires with Laertes to kill Hamlet in a fencing match. Claudius suggests that Laertes use an unblunted sword. Laertes goes him one better and offers to put poison on the sword tip. Clearly, this will be a premeditated murder planned in cold blood with malice aforethought. Claudius assures Laertes that it will look like an accident.

But the always-clever Claudius, like Hamlet, has a backup legal justification: killing another as part of a *royally ordained* joust or tournament was not a felony. Since the duel will take place under the auspices of the King, Laertes (and Claudius, his co-conspirator) will have legal cover for their actions.

G. Poison, Poison, Poison

And in case the poisoned sword doesn't do the trick, Claudius has a backup for that as well: serve Hamlet some poisoned wine. Watkin points out that the play employs three of the four types of poisoning that Coke lists in his *Third Institute: gustu*, by taste, as with the poisoned wine; *contactu*, by touching, as with the poisoned sword used on Hamlet, Laertes, and Claudius; and *suppostu*, as with a suppository or the like, in this case, the poison that Claudius pours in his brother's ear before the action of the play begins.¹⁹ Coke declared poisoning to be the most detestable kind of murder.

As for the poisoned wine, it is Gertrude, not Hamlet, who eventually drinks it. Here the principle of transferred intent comes into play. Since Claudius intended a person's death when he poisoned the wine, his malicious intent transfers to unintended victims and he is accountable for any human death that results from the device.

H. Hamlet Kills Claudius

Hamlet kills Claudius after watching his mother die of poisoning and hearing Laertes reveal that Claudius is responsible for Gertrude's death and for the poisonous plot that has fatally wounded both Laertes and Hamlet. By this time, the audience, which also knows about Claudius' killing of his own brother and has been waiting for hours for Hamlet to wreak his vengeance, is likely to consider Hamlet's killing of his uncle long overdue. Watkin argues, however, that the law would not see it that way.

Although Hamlet kills Claudius in what most observers would agree was the "heat of the moment," one must recall that the law necessarily inferred malice aforethought in at least two situations: (1) stabbing a person who has no weapon drawn and (2) willful poisoning. Hamlet kills Claudius by first, stabbing him, although there is no indication that Claudius has drawn a weapon, and second, forcing him to drink poison. Under the law, the only possible verdict is cold-blooded murder,²⁰ although the audience can plainly see that the killing of Claudius was nothing of the kind.

Watkin concludes that "Shakespeare can well be taken to have constructed this outcome as a direct comment on the law's overemphasis on appearances . . ." ²¹

Considering how deftly Shakespeare combined a moment of overwhelming passion with two actions that the law deemed to be cold and calculating, we may agree with Watkin that Shakespeare's irony is deliberate.

I. Oxford and the Law of Homicide

Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, not only studied the law from an early age, he had a personal brush with homicide law at the age of 17. In 1567, he was practicing his fencing moves with Edward Baynam, a tailor, when a third person, Thomas Brincknell, a cook, joined them. We do not know exactly what happened, except that de Vere's sword somehow pierced the cook's femoral artery, killing him within minutes. If de Vere had not already studied the law of homicide, he had reason to do so now.

It seems unlikely that de Vere would have killed the cook with malice aforethought. Possibly, he and the cook quarreled and de Vere struck him in anger, which would have been manslaughter. Perhaps de Vere killed him accidentally in fencing practice, but this seems improbable, given the severity of the wound, which was four inches deep and an inch wide.

Or perhaps the cook attacked de Vere, who killed in self-defense. It is not clear whether the cook was armed. Although the Stabbing Statute was not enacted until 1603–04, it is unlikely that a jury of peers, even in 1567, would have accepted a self-defense argument for the armed killing of an unarmed man.

But whether de Vere's act was premeditated, provoked, accidental, or done in self-defense, he faced a penalty ranging from death (if it were murder) to imprisonment for up to a year (if it were manslaughter) to loss of personal property (if it were accident or self-defense). De Vere escaped all of these through a kind of legal hairsplitting that lawyer and Shakespeare commentator Daniel Kornstein has called "a metaphysical delight."²²

The coroner's inquest found that the cook, who was drunk, "not having God before his eyes, but moved and deceived by diabolic instigation . . . ran and fell upon the point of [the Earl of Oxford's] foil . . . [and] gave himself . . . one fatal stroke . . ."²³ This implausible conclusion made the death entirely the fault of the godless cook and absolved de Vere of any wrongdoing. Surely, it helped that de Vere was an earl and that his guardian, Sir William Cecil (later Lord Burghley), was an extremely powerful man.

De Vere, if he was Shakespeare, may have been satirizing the legal fictions that saved his own neck when he had the gravediggers in Hamlet discuss the rules of self-defense:

Second Clown [Gravedigger]. . . . The crowner hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

First Clown. How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defense?

Second Clown. Why, 'tis found so.

First Clown. It must be *se offendendo*, it cannot be else.

(5.1.3–5)

The first gravedigger means “*se defendendo*,” or self-defense, not “*se offendendo*,” but here the lower class characters misstate the law, as they usually do in Shakespeare’s plays.²⁴ The idea that one could drown oneself “in self-defense” (presumably to prevent oneself from killing oneself) is as zany a piece of illogic as to think that a man would commit suicide by running into another man’s sword.²⁵ It is also a parody on legal treatises of the time that analyzed suicide by the same formulae as homicide while completely ignoring that in suicide the “murderer” and “victim” were the same person.²⁶

De Vere may also have identified with both Claudius and Hamlet, who use their privileged positions, as well as some clever playacting, to get away with murder. Mark Anderson, a de Vere biographer who posits that de Vere was the man behind the Shakespeare plays, writes: “As with nearly all his crimes and misdemeanors, de Vere’s acknowledgment of his rash and destructive behavior came later in life—in the form of words that are performed today on stages around the world.”²⁷

Watkin notes that some incidents in *Hamlet* “seem to be based on examples contained in discussions of homicide in legal works—for example, Shakespeare’s introduction of the rat-killing pretext for the slaying of Polonius, not to mention the anticipation of Coke’s language and analysis with regard to poisoning . . .” Watkin says that Coke’s analysis “may have been based on contemporary Inns of Court readings and discussions on which Coke later drew.”²⁸

When one considers that Coke’s *Third Institute* was not completed until 1628 nor published until 1641, it is remarkable that the author of *Hamlet* (published in 1603–04) was so well-versed in Coke’s legal analysis of homicide. The playwright must have kept up with the law of homicide as it evolved through the enactment of statutes and the publication of court opinions. Or perhaps he heard readings on the subject at the Inns of Court.

The detailed understanding of law evident in *Hamlet* suggests an author with formal legal training, who understood the nuances of the law and could arrange fact patterns in the play so as to align with the law as it existed in his time. This profile fits what we know of de Vere more closely than it fits what we know of the man from Stratford.

III. Property Law: Hamlet’s Lost Inheritance

Property rights are a subtly recurring theme in *Hamlet*, as J. Anthony Burton demonstrated in an article published in the 2000–2001 *Shakespeare Newsletter*.²⁹ An understanding of English property law during Shakespeare’s time increases our understanding of many of the main characters’ actions and motivations.

A. King Fortinbras’ Lands

As Burton notes, property references run throughout the play, beginning in the first scene when Horatio explains the military threat to Denmark from Norway.

Part of the background of the potential hostilities is that many years before, Hamlet's father, King Hamlet, had agreed to a wager based on a challenge by King Fortinbras of Norway (father of the young Prince Fortinbras who appears in the play). The terms were man-to-man combat to the death, the winner to take all the lands owned by the loser. King Hamlet slew King Fortinbras and assumed ownership of his lands.

Young Fortinbras, whose spirit is now "with divine ambition puff'd" (4.4.49), seeks to exact vengeance for his father's loss of land by attacking Denmark. When Fortinbras' uncle quashes that scheme, the young prince apparently settles on some worthless land in Poland as a substitute target. Having secured the services of some "landless resolute"³⁰ (1.1.103)—possibly some impoverished younger sons who wish to make their fortunes in Fortinbras' army—he gains permission to march through Denmark. Perhaps in recognition of Fortinbras' claims on Denmark, Hamlet gives Fortinbras his "dying voice" (5.2.344) at the end of the play, as events come full circle and Norway reclaims its lost property, and more.

But immediately after Claudius murders King Hamlet, what happens to the lands that King Hamlet won in combat from King Fortinbras, as well as any other lands King Hamlet may have personally owned? Presumably, they would descend by inheritance to his eldest son, Hamlet. Hamlet would not have automatically inherited the crown because, in Denmark, the kingship was an elected position. (This is one of the few points of Danish law, rather than English, that figures into the plot.) Claudius managed, probably through superior political skills and his being at Elsinore when his brother died, to win the election over Hamlet.

The election would not, however, change Hamlet's inheritance rights to lands that his father had owned—lands that belonged to his family and did not go along with the crown. Hamlet should be living comfortably on the income from those lands, but the play suggests that he is living in genteel poverty. "Beggard that I am," he tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, "I am even poor in thanks" (2.2.250). When Claudius asks him how he fares, he replies, "Excellent, i' faith, of the chameleon's dish. I eat the air, promise-crammed" (3.2.82–83). This is a reference to the ancient belief that chameleons could live by eating air. Hamlet, a prince, cannot even afford good servants, for he tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that he is "most dreadfully attended" (2.2.247).

Hamlet may not be enjoying the income from his father's lands because of certain quirks in property law that could delay an inheritance. Burton argues that Claudius has skillfully manipulated the law so that Claudius, not Hamlet, is benefiting from Hamlet's inheritance and that Claudius' machinations threaten to delay Hamlet's inheritance indefinitely.

B. Gertrude's Dower

Under the Magna Carta, a widow had "dower" rights, which meant that when her husband died she was entitled to a life estate in one-third of the lands that he had owned during his lifetime. A "life estate" meant that the widow would possess the lands during her lifetime but she could not sell them or give them away during her life

or bequeath them to a person of her choice on her death. The widow's third would go to the heir, most often the eldest son, when she died.

After the husband's death, the widow was allowed to remain in her husband's house for 40 days (a period called the "quarantine," after the Italian word for "forty"), during which time her dower, i.e., her life estate in one-third of her husband's lands, would be assigned to her. The heir would take outright possession of the other two-thirds.

But something happened before the 40-day quarantine period was over: Gertrude married Claudius. As Hamlet laments:

Within a month,
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galléd eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed.
(1.2.155–58)

In addition to the disrespect the "o'er hasty marriage" (2.2.57) shows for the memory of Hamlet's father,³¹ it also leaves Hamlet with a legal difficulty. The marriage would give Claudius an arguable claim over Gertrude's lands—not of outright ownership, but of legal control—because, under the law, man and wife were one. Hamlet makes a bitter joke out of this legal principle in this repartee with Claudius:

Hamlet [to Claudius]. Farewell, dear mother.
Claudius. Thy loving father, Hamlet.
Hamlet. My mother. Father and mother is man and wife, man and wife is one flesh—so, my mother.
(4.3.50–51)

In theory, the remarriage should not have been a problem for Hamlet. His father's lands should have vested in him on his father's death, and Hamlet would have had the duty of assigning a third of the lands to Gertrude as her dower.³² But in Shakespeare's time, successful legal actions over property usually involved interference with *possession*, based on the legal maxim, "Possession is nine-tenths of the law."³³ Since Hamlet was in Wittenberg when his father died, he was not in a position to take possession of his lands right away.

Elsinore was at least a 200-mile trip from Wittenberg, some of it over water. When King Hamlet died, it would have taken some time for a messenger to get the news to Hamlet; then Hamlet would have had to make the trek to Elsinore. In the meantime, Gertrude, as the widow, would have had a stronger claim to the late king's property than anyone but Hamlet. As her dower lands had not yet been carved out of the estate, she had a *potential* possessory right to any part of those lands.

Before Hamlet arrived at Elsinore, the crafty Claudius probably wasted no time in sewing up the kingship and cajoling Gertrude into agreeing to marry him. Perhaps he even sent a few of his hired Switzer guards to "safeguard" Hamlet's lands and collect

the feudal rents, on behalf of his queen-to-be and her son, of course. Thus, Claudius might be in *de facto* possession, though not *de jure*,³⁴ of Hamlet's inheritance long before Hamlet arrives at Elsinore to assert possession. This would leave Hamlet, legally, in a weak position: he could not claim that Claudius interfered with his possession because Hamlet never had possession.³⁵

Furthermore, as Burton hypothesizes, Claudius may have made a premarital property settlement with Gertrude giving her a "jointure," a life estate in a predetermined portion of land that she would possess immediately upon Claudius' death. In exchange for the jointure, Gertrude would have waived her dower rights to one-third of Claudius' estate, if he should die before her.³⁶ The existence of a jointure agreement would explain Claudius' reference to Gertrude as a "jointress" (1.2.9), a term that scholars have perhaps been too quick to pass off as merely referring to Gertrude as a joint ruler or joint owner.³⁷ Literally, the word means a "woman who has a jointure."³⁸

Shakespeare's audience would have accepted the idea that Gertrude would trade dower for jointure because widows often had to fight for their dower rights in court, whereas jointure agreements were readily honored.³⁹ But the jointure was usually much less valuable than the dower would have been.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the jointure arrangement would be a signal to Hamlet of legal trickery afoot because Gertrude's waiver of dower in exchange for the jointure would make it easier for Claudius to sell off any lands he might later acquire.⁴¹

Claudius' claim to control, though not ownership, of King Hamlet's still-undivided lands, would have arisen when he married Gertrude. But wouldn't Hamlet's claim, which arose when his father died, precede Claudius'? Not necessarily, as we learn from a 1562 case called *Hales versus Pettit*.

C. *Hales v. Pettit*

The case revolved around the suicide of Sir James Hales, a judge who had drowned himself in 1554. The coroner returned a verdict of *felo de se* (suicide: literally, "felon of himself"). At the time of his death, Hales and his wife Margaret jointly possessed a lease for a term of years to an estate in Kent.

The suicide verdict meant that the lease was forfeit to the monarch, Queen Mary,⁴² and the Queen gave the lease to Cyriac Pettit, who took possession of the land.⁴³ Dame Margaret sued Pettit to recover the lands, claiming Pettit had trespassed. Her attorneys argued, ingeniously, that Sir James could not have killed himself in his lifetime:

the death precedes the forfeiture, for until the death is fully consummate he is not a *felo de se*, for if he had killed another, he should not have been a felon until the other had been dead. And for the same reason he cannot be a *felo de se* until the death of himself be fully had and consummate. For the death precedes the felony both in the one case and in the other, and the death precedes the forfeiture.⁴⁴

In other words, his act of jumping in the river was not suicide at the time the act occurred because no one had died from it at that moment; it did not become suicide, a felony, until he died. But at the exact moment of his death, the estate vested in his wife by right of survivorship. His attainder (the extinguishing of his rights for his committing a felony) did not occur until the coroner declared his death a suicide.

Cyriac Pettit's counsel countered that an act has three parts: the imagination, the resolution, and the perfection, or execution, and that the "doing of the act is the greatest in the judgment of our law, and it is in effect the whole."⁴⁵ The first gravedigger's pronouncement in *Hamlet* that "an act hath three branches—it is to act, to do, to perform" (5.1.8–9) is thus his garbled misstatement of the defense counsel's argument. Sir John Hawkins, Samuel Johnson's lawyer, appears to have been the first, around 1773, to notice that the gravediggers' discussion was a parody of *Hales v. Pettit*.⁴⁶

The court found for Pettit, holding that the forfeiture had "relation" to Sir James' act. In other words, his jumping into the river and the ensuing death and forfeiture were all part of one continuous act:

Sir James Hales was dead, and how came he to his death? It may be answered: by drowning; and who drowned him? Sir James Hales; and when did he drown him? in his life-time. So that Sir James Hales being alive caused Sir James Hales to die; and the act of the living man was the death of the dead man. And then for this offence it is reasonable to punish the living man who committed the offence, and not the dead man. But how can he be said to be punished alive when the punishment comes after his death? Sir, this can be done no other way but by [divesting] out of him, from the time of the act done in his life which was the cause of his death, the title and property of those things which he had in his life-time.⁴⁷

Because the death by suicide included the illicit act of jumping in the river, any property right that the widow acquired at the moment of Hales' death arose at the same moment as the forfeiture to the Crown as a result of Hales' suicide.

The court held that when claims by the monarch and a subject arise simultaneously, the monarch wins: "in things of an instant the King shall be preferred."⁴⁸ But what does this have to do with *Hamlet v. Claudius*? Doesn't Hamlet's claim, which arose when his father died, precede Claudius' claim, which arose later, when he married Gertrude? Not necessarily.

The *Hales* case is significant not only for the holding about simultaneous claims; it is also important as an example of the doctrine of "relation back," which is still alive and well in modern law.⁴⁹ "Relation back" is a legal fiction that treats an act done at a later time as if it had been done at an earlier time. Thus, retrospectively, Sir James Hales forfeited his lease the moment he threw himself in the water, even

though he hadn't yet died of it and the coroner had not yet pronounced him a suicide.

Could Claudius use this legal fiction to argue that his claim to King Hamlet's lands arose simultaneously with young Hamlet's? Yes, because Claudius' claim ultimately relies on Gertrude's claim. The moment King Hamlet died, Gertrude had a claim to his still-undivided estate through dower, just as Hamlet had a claim through inheritance. When Claudius married Gertrude, he gained the right to make the claim on Gertrude's behalf. Claudius could then "relate back" his claim to the time of King Hamlet's death. Gertrude's claim becomes, retrospectively, the new King's claim from the moment of inception. And, as *Hales* tells us, a king's claim trumps a simultaneous claim by a subject.⁵⁰

D. The Closet Scene: Gertrude's Child and the "Law's Delay"

Claudius' legal tricks do not deny Hamlet's inheritance for all time; they merely delay it. Gertrude's death would effectively end Claudius' claims, and Hamlet would inherit. But, as Burton explains, Claudius could play still another legal trump card: "tenancy by the curtesy." This provision in the law allowed that if Gertrude were to bear a child by Claudius, Claudius would then be entitled to a life estate in Gertrude's lands. In other words, Hamlet's taking of his inheritance could be further postponed even if his mother died. These circumstances give added meaning to Hamlet's fulminations about "the law's delay" (3.1.72) in the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy (3.1.56ff.).

But even more worrisome is the fact that Gertrude, after bearing Claudius a child, would be expendable. Claudius would no longer need her as the basis of his claim to Hamlet's inheritance. Perhaps this explains some of the significance in the mad Ophelia's saying, as she hands out herbs to members of the court, "There's rue for you, and here's some for me" (4.5.178–79). Arden editor Harold Jenkins has suggested that Ophelia speaks this line to Claudius because rue was a symbol of repentance.

Jenkins' reading is plausible, but might Ophelia be giving rue to Gertrude because common rue was thought to induce abortion? A little rue might save Gertrude's life and preserve Hamlet's inheritance at the same time. And perhaps Ophelia keeps some rue because she herself is pregnant, a possibility hinted at in her song about the "maid at your window . . . that out a maid / Never departed more" (4.5.54–55).⁵¹

At any rate, Gertrude's improvidence in marrying Claudius and thereby inadvertently delaying Hamlet's inheritance, is a subtext of the closet scene between Hamlet and Gertrude after the Mousetrap performance. When Hamlet tells her that Claudius killed her husband, she probably sees that Claudius has used her and that her life is in danger. When Hamlet tells her, "go not to my uncle's bed" (3.4.172), she understands that this is to ensure her own safety as well as to honor her late husband's memory.

E. Skull of a Lawyer

John Campbell, Lord Chief Justice of England, said in 1859 that the gravediggers' scene produces "the richest legal ore" in *Hamlet*.⁵² This should be no

surprise to the reader by now, as this legal analysis of *Hamlet* has referred repeatedly to the graveyard scene. It now returns to that locale, where the two overarching themes of death and property reach their symbolic climaxes.

A graveyard is the perfect setting for talk of death, with old skulls being cast about and bodies being buried in the dirt, where they may return to dust. It is coincidentally a perfect setting for talk of property. For what is ownership of land but ownership of the dirt to which we all return? With reminders of death so near at hand, squabbles over property rights seem meaningless. One will soon enough have all the real estate one will ever need.

Death and property are the simultaneous subjects of Hamlet's speech on the "skull of a lawyer." Many theatergoers may be unfamiliar with this speech, or at least less familiar than with the "Alas, poor Yorick!" speech (5.1.148ff.), which follows it by about 60 lines. This speech is often omitted from performances because its many legal terms make it unintelligible to most audiences. But because it is perhaps the most densely legal passage in all of Shakespeare, it is worth understanding. As Hamlet and Horatio stand by the open grave in which the gravedigger is working and singing, the gravedigger tosses out a skull. Hamlet muses upon it:

Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities [subtleties] now, his quillets [evasions], his *cases*, his *tenures*, and his *tricks*? . . . This fellow might be in's time a great buyer of land, with his *statutes*, his *recognizances*, his *fines*, his *double vouchers*, his *recoveries*. Is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? Will his *vouchers* vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of *indentures*? The very conveyances of his lands will scarcely lie in this box, and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?

(5.1.78–89, emphasis added)

For years, critics dismissed the "skull of a lawyer" speech as merely a mishmash of random legal terms. J. Anthony Burton, however, shines a spotlight on this previously underappreciated passage and explains how the speech ties in with the theme of lost inheritance that Shakespeare has woven into the plot since the first scene:

The legal terms in this passage . . . all describe elements of collusive lawsuits and procedures commonly used to defeat the rights of heirs in order to facilitate sales of real property by the present owners. In the vocabulary of these actions, a *fine* ("final concord") ended a lawsuit in which the defendant defaulted by prearrangement; it was "final" because it concluded the rights of all interested persons, and not just the parties to the action. The legal record of the *fine* was an *indenture*. The *recovery* (or common recovery, because its most frequent use was in collusive actions) was more expensive and more secure: it required a law suit to proceed through all its stages (with substantial

court fees for each party), upon pleadings which made ownership turn on the existence of a supposed warranty of title by a judgment-proof third party (usually the court bailiff) who was brought in as a witness by a *voucher*, but always failed to appear and testify. When there were multiple entails, fictitious witnesses were vouched in for each one; a *double voucher* added a second layer of protection to the rights acquired by the buyer, and so forth. A *recognizance* was a judicial acknowledgement of debt; and although not a lawsuit, it also lent itself to collusive misuse by placing a priority lien on the lands of the person giving it without requiring any proof that the obligation existed. A *statute* was similar, except that the acknowledgement of debt was not made in a court but before a mayor or chief magistrate. Hamlet's reference to *cases* and *tricks* embraces the entire arsenal of devices for leaving the inheritor with nothing at all.⁵³

As Hamlet says, "and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?" Claudius' legal shenanigans could mean that Hamlet's grave will be the only land Hamlet ever possesses. One might think that a court would see through Claudius' schemes and award Hamlet's inheritance to him. But this would overestimate the logic and predictability of the legal system: seemingly clear rules were often sidestepped through legal fictions. For example, the Statute *De Donis*⁵⁴ of 1285 expressly required "entailed" estates to remain within the family line. The inheritor could not sell or give away his estate; on his death it had to go to his lineal descendants. But the "fine and recovery" that Hamlet decries in the "skull of a lawyer" speech became a standard legal ruse for getting around the Statute *De Donis* and depriving heirs of their inheritance.

Still, one might ask: how did the litigants who used "fine and recovery" to defeat the rights of inheritors manage to fool the judges? The answer is that they didn't fool them. The judges knew exactly what was going on and were complicit in the deception.⁵⁵ Likewise, Claudius could, through a combination of questionable legal claims, brute force in the form of his guards, the intimidating power of the divinity that "doth hedge a king" (4.5.121), and the blessing of *Hales v. Pettit*, keep any claim by Hamlet tied up in court for years.⁵⁶

F. Shakespeare's Legal Knowledge

As with the law of homicide, the author of *Hamlet* shows a detailed knowledge of the law of property and an ability to weave it subtly into the text of the play. Again, this is evidence of formal legal training. Additionally, the author's knowledge of *Hales v. Pettit* suggests that he was familiar with Law French, the corrupted form of Norman French that was the primary language of the English legal system.⁵⁷

In Shakespeare's day, only two summaries of the *Hales* case included the court's holding regarding simultaneous claims: (1) the handwritten notebooks of the chief judge, Sir James Dyer,⁵⁸ and (2) Edmund Plowden's reports.⁵⁹ Both were written in Law French, a language not known to have been taught in the Stratford grammar

school. Dyer's reports were copied by hand and passed around in legal circles, but it is difficult to imagine how they might have come into the hands of a sometime actor from Stratford. They were finally translated into English and published in the 20th century.

Plowden's Reports were in published form in Shakespeare's time, but still not likely to be read outside of legal circles. Plowden's report on *Hales* is much longer and more legally dense than Dyer's (some sentences in the Plowden report are almost a page long), making it a difficult read for a mind lacking legal training, not to mention knowledge of Law French. Edward de Vere studied law at Gray's Inn, where Sir James Hales had been a member. It is possible that the lawyers there often discussed the *Hales* case, not only for its legal significance, but also for its connection to one of their own. De Vere would have thus been in a better position than the Stratford man to know about the case.

G. Oxford's Lost Inheritance

We have seen evidence in the plays of Shakespeare's legal training.⁶⁰ In addition, Shakespeare's works contain many correlations to Edward de Vere's life.⁶¹ Both add to the considerable body of circumstantial evidence suggesting that de Vere was the real Shakespeare. De Vere has been caricatured as a profligate who misspent his family fortune in a life of luxury, but recent research by Nina Green reveals another side of the story and an additional connection between de Vere's life and *Hamlet*. Much of de Vere's family fortune was siphoned off into the purses of people who were ostensibly protecting him or his family.⁶²

As Green explains, the trouble began in 1548, two years before de Vere was born. The Duke of Somerset, then Protector of the Realm during Edward VI's minority, abused his powerful position to extort most of the family lands from de Vere's father, the 16th Earl of Oxford, under the pretext of a marriage contract for the Earl's daughter.

Since the Oxford estate was entailed, and therefore by law required to remain within the Oxford bloodline,⁶³ Somerset had to resort to some fancy legal footwork to undo the entailment. He forced the 16th Earl to enter into an *indenture* and a *recognizance* binding the Earl to marry his daughter to one of Somerset's sons and to transfer the lands of the Oxford earldom to Somerset by means of a *fine*, i.e., a "final concord" of the kind that concluded collusive lawsuits depriving heirs of their inheritance. Thus, Somerset's actions exemplify the very type of behavior, and employ many of the same legal devices and terminology, that Hamlet rails against in his "skull of a lawyer" speech.

The damage to the Oxford estate was only partially undone by two private Acts of Parliament in 1552, after Somerset fell from power and was beheaded. For reasons that are not entirely clear today, the lands emerged from the legal maneuverings as no longer entailed, but as held by the 16th Earl of Oxford in trust.

Ten years later, in 1562, the 16th Earl died unexpectedly, shortly after having contracted a future marriage for his then twelve-year-old son, Edward de Vere. Because the intended bride was to be one of the Hastings sisters of Sir Robert Dudley's wife's

family, the 16th Earl appointed Dudley (later Earl of Leicester, and Queen Elizabeth's longtime favorite and reputed lover) as one of three trustees who would hold the lands of the Oxford estate in trust. The 16th Earl also named Dudley as a "supervisor" of his estate under a will that he wrote only five days before his death.

Dudley's appointments as trustee and supervisor left him with enormous power over the estate of Edward de Vere, who was now the 17th Earl of Oxford, but a ward of the Queen until age 21. Dudley was not rich at the time, but the 16th Earl's death and Dudley's positions as trustee and supervisor gave Queen Elizabeth an excuse to grant Dudley the Oxford lands during de Vere's wardship.

Green details how Elizabeth gave the predatory Dudley more power over the Oxford estate than the law allowed. Dudley quickly rose in prominence, becoming the Earl of Leicester in 1564. De Vere's lands appear to have been mismanaged under Leicester's stewardship, and the Queen repeatedly favored Leicester's financial interests over de Vere's.

An anonymous book, later known as *Leicester's Commonwealth*, was published in 1584, accusing Leicester of being an expert poisoner with designs on the crown. Might Leicester thus be a partial model for King Claudius, who poisons his brother to gain the crown? Is it possible that Leicester poisoned the 16th Earl of Oxford for his lands? "A poisons him i' th' garden for his estate" (3.3.248), as Hamlet says during the Mousetrap performance. Note that Hamlet says, "estate," not "crown" or "queen." We will probably never know the truth about the 16th Earl's death; but, as Green notes, if de Vere even suspected Leicester of having a hand in his father's death, casting Leicester as the rapacious, poisoning villain in the greatest play of all time would be a suitable revenge. What is certain is that Leicester spoiled de Vere's inheritance, just as Claudius usurped Hamlet's.

And if there is something of Leicester in Claudius, there may be something of Queen Elizabeth in Gertrude.⁶⁴ When the twelve-year-old Edward de Vere became the Queen's ward in 1562, her legal position towards him was analogous to that of a mother to a son. A mother would be expected to do all she could to preserve her son's inheritance, but the doting Queen was so eager to advance Leicester that she was blind to de Vere's well-being.

Similarly, Gertrude rushed into a marriage with the smooth-talking Claudius, almost oblivious to the fact that her hasty marriage seriously jeopardized Hamlet's hopes of inheritance. Perhaps the closet scene, in which Hamlet turns Gertrude's eyes into her "very soul" (3.4.95), is de Vere's fictionalization of the frank talk he always wanted to have with Queen Elizabeth ("Mother, you have my father much offended" [3.4.10]), but never could because his advancement depended so much on her good favor.

IV. Hamlet's Imperfect Justice

Legal scholars have studied *Hamlet* not only for its understanding of substantive law; they have also considered its implications regarding the broader issues of law and justice. Daniel Kornstein and Richard Posner, for example, have analyzed *Hamlet* as

an instance of revenge literature. Kornstein notes that the law may benefit society as a way of channeling the passion of revenge, which might otherwise go unchecked. He cites Francis Bacon, who said, "Revenge is a kind of wild justice, which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out."⁶⁵

Kornstein is one of the few commentators to suggest that Hamlet's delay in avenging his father's death is not a sign of cowardice or indecisiveness, but rather a noble sign of resistance to the primitive urge for revenge. Hamlet should elicit our respect because he does not sweep to his revenge in the unquestioning way that Laertes and Fortinbras pursue theirs. "The outcome of Hamlet's war with the primitive moral code is less important than the war itself," writes Kornstein. "The crucial point is that Hamlet was won to the side of violence only after a long inner struggle."⁶⁶

Richard Posner, a judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals and a leading light of the "law and economics" discipline, notes that private revenge is not a cost-effective system. The net benefits of exacting revenge seldom outweigh the costs of time and effort spent on it, not to mention the increased chance that the friends and family of the object of one's revenge will retaliate against the revenger.

Posner notes that there can be no better illustration of the costliness of revenge than the unnecessary deaths of so many more-or-less good people in *Hamlet*. Although Claudius says, "Revenge should have no bounds" (4.7.133), the play demonstrates that it should. Posner argues that *Hamlet* represents Elizabethans' ambivalence toward revenge, based on the New Testament's rejection of it. "But if so sympathetic, so ultimately admirable a character as I think we are intended to find Hamlet . . . cannot negotiate the shoals of a revenge culture, it tells us a lot about such a culture."⁶⁷

Both Kornstein and Posner find a lawyer-like quality in Hamlet's reflectiveness, his ability to see both sides of an issue, a trait found in outstanding legal minds. Posner sees the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy as epitomizing "the mind in equipoise."⁶⁸ Like a good lawyer, Hamlet does not merely accept the Ghost's word that Claudius killed his father: he seeks additional evidence.

Kenji Yoshino, a professor at New York University Law School, sees Hamlet's attempt to corroborate the Ghost's story as part of Hamlet's intellectual commitment to "perfect justice."⁶⁹ Yoshino makes Hamlet's delay in exacting revenge intelligible by pointing out that there are really two delays, both attributable to Hamlet's quest for perfect justice.

First comes the guilt phase, in which Hamlet must convince himself of the Ghost's truthfulness. Elizabethan audiences would have been instinctively skeptical of any ghost, knowing it might be a manifestation of the devil. Hamlet finds Claudius guilty by the evidence of his reaction to the Mousetrap performance. So far, so good. Hamlet knows he will not be taking revenge on an innocent man.

Next comes the punishment phase. But here again, Hamlet wants it to be perfect: the punishment must exactly match the crime. Hamlet forgoes the chance of killing Claudius at his prayers because Claudius, who had sent Hamlet's father to purgatory, would then be sent to heaven. As Yoshino says, "Perfect justice requires not just a life for a life, but a soul for a soul."⁷⁰

Hamlet's perfect justice comes at the end, as Gertrude dies and Laertes reveals

Claudius' treachery. Knowing his own death is near, Hamlet must act immediately. By stabbing Claudius and then making him drink poison, Hamlet achieves poetic justice in having Claudius die by the same means as himself (poisoned sword) and Gertrude (poisoned wine), while ensuring that Claudius will not be saying any prayers that might get him into heaven. Because the poisoned sword and wine were Claudius' own traps for Hamlet, the poetic justice is all the more complete, as Claudius is "Hoist with his own petar[d]" (3.4.222).

But Hamlet's "perfect" justice comes at great cost: the many deaths, including Hamlet's, that would not have occurred if he had acted more swiftly. Yoshino criticizes Hamlet for adhering so stubbornly to his intellectual vision that he loses sight of the consequences to others. Hamlet's wild justice is a warning to all that revenge is never so sweet in the tasting as in the anticipation.

Conclusion

Laurence Olivier said of *Hamlet*, "You can play it and play it as many times as the opportunity occurs and still not get to the bottom of its box of wonders."⁷¹ This analysis has attempted to show that, by exploring the rich legal ore in *Hamlet*, we may better understand the great debt that this wonder of a play owes to the subject of law. But if *Hamlet* can inspire legal scholars such as those cited here to consider the deeper meanings of law and justice, then it is a debt that *Hamlet* continues to repay.

Endnotes

- ¹ See, e.g., Ramon Jiménez, “The Case for Oxford Revisited,” *The Oxfordian*, 11 (2009): 45–64, <http://shakespeareoxfordsociety.wordpress.com/2011/03/08from-the-oxfordian-excellent-article-summarizing-the-case-for-oxford-as-shakespeare-now-available-online/>; Mark Anderson, *“Shakespeare” by Another Name: The Life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man Who Was Shakespeare* (New York: Gotham Books, 2005); Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time* (New York: Free Press, 1997); Richard F. Whalen, *Shakespeare—Who Was He? The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994); Charlton Ogburn, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: the Myth and the Reality* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1984); J. Thomas Looney, *“Shakespeare” Identified in Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1920).
- ² R.S. Guernsey, *Ecclesiastical Law in Hamlet: The Burial of Ophelia* (New York: Brentano Bros., 1885), 5.
- ³ Quotations from *Hamlet* are from the soon-to-be-published Oxfordian Shakespeare Series edition, Jack Shuttleworth, editor (Truro, MA: Horatio Editions, 2012). A condensed version of this article appears in the Oxfordian edition.
- ⁴ The English antiquarian, Thomas Hearne (1678–1735), left orders that his grave be made “straight” east and west, by a compass. T.F. Thiselton Dyer, *Folk-lore of Shakespeare* (London: Griffith & Farran, 1883), 359.
- ⁵ Samuel Johnson interpreted “straight” as east–west in his 1765 edition of *Hamlet*. Many modern editions define “straight” merely as “straightaway,” “immediately,” or the like.
- ⁶ Guernsey, 43–44.
- ⁷ Guernsey, 45.
- ⁸ Thomas Glyn Watkin, “*Hamlet* and the Law of Homicide,” *Law Quarterly Review*, 100 (1984), 282–310.
- ⁹ 6 Edw. I, c. 9 (1278).
- ¹⁰ Edward Coke, *Third Institute* (London, 1641), 47.
- ¹¹ 1 Edw. VI, c. 12 (1547) (“[A]ll willful killing by poisoning of any person or persons . . . shall be adjudged, taken, and deemed willful murder of malice prepensed

[aforethought].”) (spelling modernized).

- ¹² 1 Jac. I, c. 8 (1603–04) (“[E]very person . . . which . . . shall stab or thrust any person or persons that hath not then any weapon drawn, or that hath not then first stricken the party which shall so stab or thrust, so as the person or persons so stabbed or thrust shall thereof die . . . although it cannot be proved that the same was done of malice forethought, yet the party so offending, and being thereof convicted . . . shall . . . suffer Death as in case of Willful Murder.”) (spelling modernized).
- ¹³ Coke, 55.
- ¹⁴ Saxo (Grammaticus), “Amleth, Prince of Denmark,” in *The Danish History of Saxo Grammaticus* (c. 1185), trans. Oliver Elton (London: David Nutt, 1894).
- ¹⁵ As legal commentator William Lambard wrote, “And if a man lay poison for rats, and another taketh it unawares, and die thereof, this is not any ways to be laid to the other’s charge.” *Eirenarcha* (London, 1581), 218, quoted in Watkin, 300 (spelling modernized).
- ¹⁶ François Belleforest, “The Hystorie of Hamblet” in *Histoires Tragiques* (1570), trans. anon (London, 1608).
- ¹⁷ In Belleforest’s French version (1570), the counselor hid under a quilt; in Saxo’s Danish version (c. 1185), he hid in some straw. The anonymous English translator of Belleforest, in 1608, modified the story to follow Shakespeare’s version (1603–04) by placing the counselor behind an arras and having Hamlet cry, “A rat! a rat!” Thus, the placing of Polonius behind an arras appears to be Shakespeare’s original device. Israel Gollancz, *The Sources of Hamlet* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 319–20.
- ¹⁸ Watkin, 309.
- ¹⁹ Coke’s fourth type of poisoning was “*anhelitu*, by taking in of breath, as by a poisonous perfume” (Coke, 52).
- ²⁰ Members of the court cry out that Hamlet is guilty of treason for killing the King, but they are unaware that Claudius himself was a traitor for killing his brother, the previous king. Hamlet could have argued that killing a traitor is not treason.
- ²¹ Watkin, 307.
- ²² Daniel J. Kornstein, *Kill All the Lawyers? Shakespeare’s Legal Appeal* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994), 104.
- ²³ The National Archives KB 9/619, Part 1, Item 13 (trans. Nina Green).
- ²⁴ In a sense, the gravedigger backs into the truth of the matter because suicide is in fact self-offense.
- ²⁵ In Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* (5.5), Brutus commits suicide by running on his own sword—held, at Brutus’s request, by Strato. But Brutus, in defeat, was acting on his Roman sense of honor. We have no reason to believe that Brincknell was acting on such motives.
- ²⁶ Watkin, 291.

²⁷ Anderson, 37.

²⁸ Watkin, 310.

²⁹ J. Anthony Burton, "An Unrecognized Theme in *Hamlet*: Lost Inheritance and Claudius' Marriage to Gertrude," *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, 50 (2000–2001): 71–106.

³⁰ In keeping with an awareness of the ubiquity of property themes in the play, the Oxfordian edition follows Burton and others in preferring the First Folio's "landless" to the Second Quarto's "lawless."

³¹ Audiences in Shakespeare's day would have found Gertrude's behavior shocking: widows were expected to mourn their husbands for at least a year. Carla Spivack, "The Woman Will Be Out: A New Look at the Law In *Hamlet*," *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities*, 20 (2008), 45.

³² C.C. Langdell, "Classification of Rights and Wrongs," *Harvard Law Review*, 13 (1900): 544 ("Another ancient instance is the duty imposed by the common law upon the heir of a deceased person to assign dower to the widow of the latter. Here, again, the enforcement of this duty was the widow's only resource, as the title to all the land of which her husband died seized vested in the heir, both at law and in equity.").

³³ Burton, "An Unrecognized Theme in *Hamlet*," 82, note 17.

³⁴ "*De facto*" means, "Actual; existing in fact; having effect though not formally or legally recognized;" "*de jure*" means, "Existing by right or according to law." *Black's Law Dictionary*, 9th ed. (St. Paul: West Publ., 2009), 479, 490.

³⁵ Possession is one of the most important, but also one of the most ambiguous concepts in law. "In common speech a man is said to possess . . . anything of which he has the apparent control, or from the use of which he has the apparent power of excluding others." Possession does not necessarily coincide with legal title or ownership. Frederick Pollock and Robert Samuel Wright, *An Essay on Possession in the Common Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), 1–2.

³⁶ The Statute of Uses, 27 Hen. VIII, c. 10 (1535), required waiver of dower in exchange for a jointure.

³⁷ Burton, "An Unrecognized Theme in *Hamlet*," 104, notes 7, 8.

³⁸ *Black's Law Dictionary*, 915.

³⁹ Sue Sheridan Walker, "Litigation as Personal Quest: Suing for Dower in the Royal Courts, circa 1272–1350," in *Wife and Widow in Medieval England*, ed. Sue Sheridan Walker (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Mich. Press, 1993), 81–108; Eileen Spring, *Law, Land, & Family: Aristocratic Inheritance in England, 1300 to 1800* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of N.C. Press, 1993), 49.

⁴⁰ After the Statute of Uses (1535), the jointure was usually calculated so as to be worth 10% to 20% of the value of the marriage portion, i.e., the wealth that the woman brought to the marriage from her own family. The value of the husband's lands, which could be great, dropped out of the equation. Spring, 49–58. A woman who accepted a jointure would know at the time of marriage

exactly which lands would comprise her jointure. If she took dower instead, she couldn't be sure which lands she would get until after her husband's death. Even then, she might have to go to court to get her dower. Consequently, a woman was often willing to trade the potentially valuable, but uncertain, dower for the less valuable, but known, jointure.

- ⁴¹ A widow's dower rights were interpreted to include a claim to one-third of the lands her husband owned during his life, *even lands he had sold*. Janet Senderowitz Loengard, "Rationabilis Dos: Magna Carta and the Widow's 'Fair Share' in the Earlier Thirteenth Century," in *Wife and Widow in Medieval England*, ed. Walker, 62–68. Buyers were therefore hesitant to buy lands that might later be subject to a widow's dower claim. But if the wife had already waived her dower rights, buyers could purchase with greater peace of mind. Spring, 48–49.
- ⁴² Note that the penalty for suicide was forfeiture of chattels, i.e., goods, not land. But Hales did not own the land in *fee simple* (i.e., outright ownership), but rather leased it. A lease was considered a *chattel real*, which was inferior to a real property interest. Thus, it was subject to forfeiture along with other "chattels."
- ⁴³ Spivack argues that Ophelia's burial represents an inversion of the *Hales* case: whereas in *Hales*, a male's suicide leads to his forfeiture of land to a female monarch, Ophelia's suicide and burial "allow Hamlet to reclaim his kingdom and identity through a symbolic forfeit of land by the female Ophelia." Spivack, 35, 58–60.
- ⁴⁴ *Hales v. Petit*, 1 Plowden 253, 258, 75 Eng. Rep. 387, 395 (C.B. 1562).
- ⁴⁵ *Hales v. Petit*, 1 Plowden 253, 259, 75 Eng. Rep. 387, 397 (C.B. 1562).
- ⁴⁶ Burton, "An Unrecognized Theme in *Hamlet*," 71. Shakespeare satirizes the lawyers' arguments and the court's reasoning in the first gravedigger's further explanation: "If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes, mark you that. But if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself; argal [ergo], he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life." (5.1.12–15).
- ⁴⁷ *Hales v. Petit*, 1 Plowden 253, 262, 75 Eng. Rep. 387, 401 (C.B. 1562).
- ⁴⁸ *Hales v. Petit*, 1 Plowden 253, 264, 75 Eng. Rep. 387, 404 (C.B. 1562).
- ⁴⁹ For example, Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 15(c), allows that an amended pleading may be treated as if filed at the same time as the original pleading, even if the amended pleading is filed after the statute of limitations has passed.
- ⁵⁰ My analysis diverges here from my earlier interpretation in "Could Shakespeare Think Like a Lawyer? How Inheritance Law Issues in *Hamlet* May Shed Light on the Authorship Question," *University of Miami Law Review*, 57 (2003): 377–428, and from Burton's interpretation, both of which posit that Claudius' and Hamlet's claims arise when Gertrude marries Claudius. I believe my current interpretation is more in line with English custom and law. See Langdell, *supra*, note 32.
- ⁵¹ Spivack, 52–53.

- ⁵² John Lord Campbell, *Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements Considered* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1859), 104.
- ⁵³ Burton, "An Unrecognized Theme in *Hamlet*," 104 (emphasis added).
- ⁵⁴ 13 Edw. I, c. 1 (1285).
- ⁵⁵ Thomas F. Bergin and Paul G. Haskell, *Preface to Estates in Land and Future Interests*, 2nd ed. (Brooklyn: Foundation Press, 1984), 31–32.
- ⁵⁶ In a separate article, Burton discusses Laertes' concerns that Claudius may be attempting to usurp Laertes' inheritance as well as Hamlet's. J. Anthony Burton, "Laertes's Rebellion as a Defense of His Inheritance: Further Aspects of Inheritance Law in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Newsletter*, 52 (2002): 60.
- ⁵⁷ *Black's Law Dictionary*, 964.
- ⁵⁸ *Hales v. Petyt* (1562), *I Reports from the Lost Notebooks of Sir James Dyer* 72, ed. J.H. Baker (London: Selden Society, 1994).
- ⁵⁹ *Hales v. Petit*, 1 Plowden 253, 75 Eng. Rep. 387 (C.B. 1562).
- ⁶⁰ Regnier, "Could Shakespeare Think Like a Lawyer?" 405–28.
- ⁶¹ See generally, Anderson; see also Sobran, 181–204; Whalen, 85–94, 103–12.
- ⁶² Nina Green, "The Fall of the House of Oxford," *Brief Chronicles I* (2009), 41–95.
- ⁶³ Specifically, by the aforementioned Statute *De Donis*, 13 Edw. I, c. 1 (1285).
- ⁶⁴ See Spivack, 37–40, 44–52, for extensive parallels between Gertrude and Queen Elizabeth.
- ⁶⁵ Kornstein, 94, quoting Bacon, "Of Revenge," in *Essays*, 18.
- ⁶⁶ Kornstein, 95.
- ⁶⁷ Richard A. Posner, *Law and Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, rev. 1998), 84.
- ⁶⁸ Posner, 83.
- ⁶⁹ Kenji Yoshino, *A Thousand Times More Fair: What Shakespeare's Plays Teach Us About Justice* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 185–86.
- ⁷⁰ Yoshino, 201.
- ⁷¹ Laurence Olivier, *On Acting* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 76–77.

On the Authorship of *Willobie* *His Avis*

Robert R. Prechter, Jr.

In September 1594, someone calling himself Hadrian Dorrell and claiming to write “From my chamber in Oxford” edited a volume of verse titled *Willobie His Avis* (also labeled *Willobies Avis* or just *Avis*), which he attributed to “M. Henry Willobie.” Dorrell claims that his “very good friend” Willobie had left the country in “her Majesties service” and “chose me amongst the rest of his friends” to give “the key of his study, and the use of all his bookes till his returne.” Dorrell says that he discovered the manuscript among Willobie’s papers and decided to name it and “publish it without his consent.”¹

Intriguing facts attend this book, not the least of which is that state authorities saw fit to order it removed from circulation. Henry Willobie, moreover, never wrote anything aside from this impressively intricate project. These and other mysterious circumstances have long intrigued and befuddled critics.

A Tangle of Mysteries

Scholars agree that the three names of writers whose material prefaces the first edition of *Avis* are probably pseudonymous. Researchers cannot find a body to go with the editor’s moniker, so “The name of Hadrian Dorrell was apparently assumed. No Oxford student bearing that appellation is known to the university registers.”² “Abell Emet” and “Contraria Contrariis,” whose names appear beneath commendatory poems, are too fantastic to be other than pseudonyms.

On the other hand, most scholars have assumed that the name Henry Willobie indicates a real person by that name. In his preface to *Avis*, Dorrell says that his close friend Willobie was until recently his chamber-fellow at Oxford University. Seemingly

supporting this claim is a marginal note by “W.C.,” published the following year in *Polimanteia*, naming “Willobie” as one of the poets emerging from Oxford University. But the marginal note suggests an afterthought, so it seems likely that W.C. picked up this association simply from having read the preface to *Avisa* rather than from any personal knowledge of the author. Scholars propose as a candidate one “Henry Willoughbie,” who “matriculated as a commoner from St. John’s College, Oxford, on 10 Dec. 1591 at the age of sixteen.”³ But if this young man is Willobie, he would have written his one and only publication at the age of 18 or 19. Given the maturity of *Avisa*’s verse and the intimate court knowledge its narrative suggests (see discussion below), this scenario borders on the impossible. Some biographers have concluded that Henry Willobie is the same as a Henry Willoughby whose father was a country gentleman from Wiltshire. The 1605 edition of *Avisa* contains a poem signed “Thomas Willobie,” and “a nineteen-year-old Henry Willoughby at West Noyle in Wiltshire had a younger brother Thomas.”⁴ But, again, tagging a teenager as the author does not fit the sophistication of *Avisa*.

Contradictions regarding authorship and subject matter attend the prefatory material in the first two editions of *Avisa*. In preface to the 1594 edition, Dorrell tells readers that Willobie is a “yong man.” But in contrasting the story’s time to “This wicked age, this sinfull tyme,”⁵ Abell Emet implies that the poem is of another era. In the 1596 edition, Dorrell supports Emet’s earlier implication by stating, “This Poeticall fiction was penned by the Author at least for thirty and five years sithence.”⁶ This new assertion contradicts his original claim that the author was his “very good frend and chamber fellow [at Oxford] M. Henry Willobie, a yong man.”⁷ It also dates the genesis of the poem to circa 1561. If we were to accept this chronology, it would preclude suggested authorship candidates from the 1590s named Willoughby. Scholars have mostly ignored Dorrell and Emet on this dating point. Dorrell also spends a good deal of space in his 1594 epistle “To the gentle & courteous Reader” speculating—ultimately in vain—upon whose real-life stories the poems narrate. But in 1596 he insists that the poem is a “Poeticall fiction,” contradicting his earlier contemplative analysis. As a result of these altered claims, scholars have summarily dismissed everything Dorrell says: “Dorrell’s general tone suggests that his two accounts of the origin and intention of the book are fictitious.”⁸ But this is not quite correct. His tone is earnest in both accounts; it is his statements which indicate the presence of falsehood.

Contradicting both Dorrell’s authorship claims and scholars’ conjectures are Peter Colse’s comments in *Penelopes Complaint*, published two years after *Avisa*, in 1596. In the dedication to “Ladie Edith” Colse says, “an unknowne Author, hath of late published a pamphlet called *Avisa*...” and in his address “To the Readers” he reiterates that *Avisa* is “by an unknowne Author.”⁹ Since Dorrell had discussed and prominently displayed Henry Willobie’s name, Colse’s comment unequivocally implies knowledge that it is fictitious.

As for *Avisa*’s identity, Colse hammers on the idea of *Avisa*’s lack of desert, calling “vaine glorious *Avisa*...the meanest [among] praiseworthy matrons.”¹⁰ Along these lines, one “S.D.,” writing in Latin in the preface to Colse’s book, includes a curious line that scholars have interpreted to mean that *Avisa* was “the wife of an innkeeper,

the daughter of an innkeeper.”¹¹ These comments led researchers to pore over the scant records of various inns and taverns of the Elizabethan era to try to locate a hint of Avisa among the hostesses and innkeepers’ daughters of Wessex, because Henry Willoughby, one of the teenagers who supposedly wrote the book, was from Wiltshire, within Wessex.

Two scholars rescued orthodoxy from pursuing such dead ends. The story of *Avisa* contains enough specific allusions to indicate who “Avisa” was. In 1968, Akrigg in *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton*¹² postulated that the lady in question is Queen Elizabeth and that the suitors in the book were hers in real life. He noted, for example, that Avisa’s motto, “Always the same,” is an English translation of the Queen’s motto, *Semper Eadem*. In 1970, de Luna’s *The Queen Declined* fleshed out the argument. As de Luna pointed out, S.D.’s Latin reference in Colse’s book can also be interpreted to say that Avisa was “the wife of a shopkeeper [England], the daughter of a harlot [Anne Boleyn].”¹³ Supporting the case that Abell Emet is a pseudonym, she interpreted the name to mean “Abell reincarnated,” Thomas Abell having published a book in 1532 “tacitly defending the chastity of a Queen.”¹⁴

Dorrell’s own apparent curiosity regarding the subject matter of *Avisa* in the 1594 epistle is fully convincing. One is hard pressed to explain why Dorrell would muse so elaborately and realistically about the possible truth behind *Avisa* if he were trying to obfuscate its meaning. Unlike either someone trying to advertise Elizabeth’s heroic chastity or someone trying to hide her identity, he says, for example:

when I do more deeply consider of it, & more narrowly weigh every particular part, I am driven to thinke that there is some thing of trueth hidden under this shadow...there is some thing under these fained names and shows that hath bene done truely.... me thinkes it a matter almost impossible that any man could invent all this without some ground or foundation to build on.¹⁵

He carefully lists reasons for this surmise and discusses what he thinks of each suitor in turn. He muses about the real-life identification of Avisa and her suitors. He comments, as a virginal reader would upon encountering the epithet “Henrico Willobego,” “It seemes that in this last example the author names himselfe and so describeth his owne love, [yet] I know not....”¹⁶ On the subject of the poem Dorrell initially seems truly in the dark.

Peter Colse’s comments in the preface to *Penelopes Complaint* are obviously what spurred Dorrell to rush to press his new edition, dated June 30 of the same year, to issue a reply to “P.C.” His treatise, “The Apologie, shewing the true meaning of *Avisa*,” is notably anxious in tone, so he must have learned by then that *Avisa* was a political hot potato. A careful reading of his 1596 preface shows that he reacted emotionally to every detail of Colse’s commentary.

In the 1594 edition he had said, “Concerning the name of Avisa, I thinke it to be a fained name, like unto Ovids Corinna.”¹⁷ In “The Apologie” within the 1596 edition, he reiterates no fewer than seven times that Avisa is a “fained” (or “fayned”) name. Of

course, that the name is feigned is irrelevant to whether it stands for a real person. But in the 1596 “Apologie” he vigorously opposes that idea as well: “For I dare pawne my life, that there is no perticular woman in the world, that was eyther partie or privie to anye one sentence or word in that booke.”¹⁸ As this claim directly counters his seemingly honest deliberations about Avisas’s identity in the 1594 edition, we may surmise that Dorrell in the meantime had discovered the true meaning of *Avisa* and was writing this “Apologie” in consternation over having published a book that prompted Colse’s negative reaction and S.D.’s perhaps clever, if disrespectful, allusion to Avisas’s true identity. In response to Colse’s statement that the author is unknown, Dorrell continues to insist that the author’s “true name,” Henry Willobie, was on “everie Page” of the manuscript—a possibility even if Willobie were a pseudonym of the true author. Rather conveniently, he also announces that “the Author [has] now of late gone to God.”¹⁹

The hubbub of Colse and Dorrell’s exchange over a book about Elizabeth and her suitors provides sufficient reason to explain the book’s fate: “[T]he authorities disliked the book strongly, and there was doubtless good reason why, in June 1599”²⁰ the Stationers’ Register recorded that “Willobies Advizo [was] to be Called in.”²¹ Official upset may also explain why there are no extant copies of the 1596 edition, whose content we must surmise from the 1596 date attending “The Apologie” in the extant 1605 edition.

This final, “Augmented” edition from 1605 contains a lengthy poem signed “Thomas Willobie Frater Henrici Willobie nuper defuncti,”²² i.e., “Thomas Willobie, brother of Henry Willobie, lately deceased.” This tag handily supports Dorrell’s claim that the author had died between 1594 and 1596. Yet the style and content of Thomas’ verse give no reason to doubt that whoever is behind the name Dorrell also wrote Thomas’ poem. Its very title—“The victorie of English Chastitie, under the fained name of Avisas”—continues Dorrell’s mission of assuring readers that hers is a “fained name,” and the body of the poem repeats the phrase twice more. Dorrell had spent more than eight pages in 1596 answering Peter Colse’s comments, and this poem continues that orientation by turning the tables on Colse’s celebration of Odysseus’ wife Penelope over Avisas by celebrating Avisas over Penelope. In the poem Juno says, “Avisas, both by Sire and spouse,/ Was linckt to men of meanest trade,”²³ supporting S.D.’s line about Avisas’s relations but in a fictional context, seemingly another attempt at misdirection. Needless to say, there is no record of the death of Henry Willobie or Willoughby, or of the fine education of his poetic brother. Obviously, the man behind Dorrell added yet a fifth name to his list of pseudonymous writers by inventing a phony literary brother for his phony author.

Despite this seeming Gordian knot of statements and claims, I hope to show three things: (1) that most of Dorrell’s testimony is trustworthy; (2) that we can identify which parts are not; and (3) that there is a good reason, in light of the proper context, for the falsehoods that appear.

The List of Suitors Identifies the Time of Composition

Willobie's poem tells the stories of five of *Avisa's* suitors. De Luna identified the first suitor as Thomas Seymour, who pursued the teenaged Lady Elizabeth Tudor in the 1540s. The second she identified as King Philip II of Spain, who communicated his desire for marriage soon after the death in 1558 of his first wife, Elizabeth's half-sister, Mary Tudor. The proposal was made "sometime before 1565,"²⁴ when Elizabeth made reference to it. The third is Francois de Valois, Duc d'Alençon, whose "courtship"²⁵ of Elizabeth began "As early as 1570"²⁶ but petered out "in 1576,"²⁷ though he pressed a second marriage suit from 1578 to 1582. The fourth she postulated as a combination of knight and courtier Sir Christopher Hatton, who pursued the Queen from 1564 to 1575, and to a lesser degree Archduke Charles Hapsburg of Germany, who pressed a suit for marriage between 1559 and 1568. It is important to note that the author would have been able to describe at least the first four of the five courtships described in *Avisa* by 1576.

Interest from an Oxfordian perspective escalates with the narrative of the fifth suitor. His initials are H.W., his code name is "Henrico Willobego," a Spanish version of the name Henry Willobie, and he is described as "Italo-Hispalensis."²⁸ At the start of this portion of the book, we discover that H.W. has a friend, the first and only such instance in the book. And look who it is:

[He] bewrayeth the secrecy of his disease unto his familiar frend W.S. who not long before had tried the curtesy of the like passion, and was now nearly recovered of the like infection; [and to] see whether an other could play his part better then himselfe [in] this loving Comedy, he determined to see whether it would sort to a happier end for this new actor, then it did for the old player. But at length this Comedy was like to have growen to a Tragedy....²⁹

The initials W.S. and the theatrical references in Willobie's narrative have prompted many scholars to interpret this person to be William Shakespeare. William Jaggard, in his *Shakespeare Biography*, "called the portrait of W.S. in Willobie's poem 'the most convincing vision of [Shakespeare's] personality known throughout all literature,' and many others have expressed their concurrence, more or less qualified."³⁰ Never mind that W.S. is depicted, with no apparent motivation, as a faux friend and a callous advisor who urges H.W. into folly for his own sport, hardly a flattering portrait of William Shakespeare. Never mind that W.S. "had tryed the curtesy of the like passion"³¹ and that H.W. speaks of "my faythfull frend,/ That like assaultes hath often tryde,"³² thereby naming W.S. as one of *Avisa's*—and therefore, by the theory at hand, one of Queen Elizabeth's—former suitors, a position in which young William Shaksper of Stratford, born in 1564, could not possibly have been. Orthodox scholars have not resolved these issues.

The identification of W.S. as William Shakespeare and the publication of *Avisa* in 1594, after Shakespeare's print debut the preceding year, have muddied the waters as to

the identification of the fifth suitor. Stratfordians' default that Shakespeare is William Shaksper has forced them to try to match the fifth suitor to a real-life person active in the 1590s, when the name William Shakespeare first appeared in print and when their candidate for authorship would have been of an age to appear as H.W.'s acquaintance in the book. De Luna tried to make a case that the fifth suitor is a composite figure comprising Elizabeth's earlier lover, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and her then-current young favorite, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. But the poem concludes with *Avisa* ending the one-sided courtship. The courtship with Leicester was hardly one-sided, so Leicester is out. And Essex's relationship with Elizabeth—according to de Luna's own notes—was "still in process"³³ in 1594, when *Avisa* was published, thereby jettisoning Essex. Some writers have proposed that H.W. is Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. Ogburn asked, "But can it be believed that Southampton had conceived a burning desire for a woman forty years his senior?"³⁴ Indeed, the idea of a 20-year-old Southampton wooing the 60-year-old Queen in 1593-94 is ludicrous. These inquiries meet a dead end, and there are no other qualifying suitors of the time.

Hess came to the rescue with a crucial insight. Based on "the only clear clue about 'Mr. H.W.' that WHA gives,"³⁵ i.e., his description as being "Italo-Hispensis," an Italianate Spaniard, Hess proposed that H.W. is Don Juan of Austria. He observed:

from about 1574 to as late as Feb. 1578 there were secret efforts by emissaries from both sides to negotiate marriage between Queen Elizabeth and Don Juan. [There is] evidence that Oxford's travels to Italy in 1575-76 were an elaborate mission to contact, probe, engage, and ultimately betray Don Juan of Austria, the heroic half-brother of Philip II of Spain."³⁶

Don Juan, despite being born in Bavaria, was of Spanish descent and upbringing and associated with the Earl of Oxford in Italy, thus justifying Willobie's moniker.

Identifying W.S. as Oxford fits the poem's circumstances. The book depicts W.S. as a former suitor to *Avisa*, and Ogburn³⁷ gave evidence of a courtship between Oxford and Elizabeth during the years 1572 to 1574. In February 1575, Oxford traveled to the continent with Elizabeth's blessing and stayed away for 14 months. If, as Hess conjectures, Oxford had undertaken a state mission to insinuate himself as an advisor to Don Juan of Austria and encourage him to take the ill-fated course of pursuing Elizabeth, he would have acted in a misdirecting manner much like that of W.S. toward H.W. in *Avisa*. Nelson's biography of Oxford provides evidence connecting the earl to Don Juan three times in the 1570s.³⁸ So Oxford's activities in the 1570s are compatible with *Avisa*'s W.S. character.

Although not immediately apparent, Willobie's omission of W.S.'s story from the accounts of Elizabeth's loves of the 1570s also fits Oxford's identification as W.S. The author knows that W.S. had tried "like assaults,"³⁹ yet he declines to narrate his courtship of *Avisa*. We may discern a possible reason for this omission from the fact that the story of Robert Dudley, who courted the Queen during the years covered in *Avisa*, also fails to appear in the poem. The author, then, omits narratives involving still-living English noblemen, a decision likely borne of prudence.

Thus, on all counts, only in the Oxfordian context does the identification of W.S. as Shakespeare make any sense. Compatibly, there are wisps of evidence consistent with Oxford's identification as W.S. as early as 1577. Oxfordians make a case that Gabriel Harvey's Latin address to Oxford at the University of Cambridge the following year includes a phrase that can be interpreted as "your will shakes spears," implying that Oxford by then was already associated with the Shakespeare moniker. So, Oxford may have been known among literati as W.S. by this time.

According to Ron Hess, identifying the fifth suitor as Don Juan of Austria "locks in Oxford as 'Mr. W.S.,' the man who went to Italy in 1575-76 to 'advise' DJ on how to woo 'England's Avisá,' [which] all but certainly indentifies Oxford as Shakespeare."⁴⁰ No doubt this identification is useful to those seeking to tie Oxford to William Shakespeare's initials, and it helps cement the identification of H.W. as Don Juan and W.S. as Oxford. But what matters to our authorship quest is that identifying W.S. as Oxford supports the otherwise indicated time period for H.W.'s story and thus the general termination time of all the other stories in *Avisá*. Oxford's real-life courtship of Elizabeth was over by 1574. And her real-life courtship by Don Juan, who stands behind the fifth and final section of Willobie's poem, ended no earlier than 1576 and no later than 1578. This dating fits the progressive timeline of all the other courtships and confirms that the real-life machinations constituting the author's subject matter came to an end in 1577, plus or minus a year. Therefore, Emet in 1594 and Dorrell in 1596 were accurate in assigning the poem an earlier composition date.

Did Oxford Write *Avisá*?

At least one Oxfordian⁴¹ postulates that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, authored *Avisá*. If so, it is hardly likely that Oxford would have begun writing it in 1561 when he was only twelve years old, so to make a case for Oxford's authorship we would have to jettison Dorrell's dating claim from 1596.

Some aspects of writing style in *Avisá* seem consistent with Oxford's authorship. There are plenty of classical references, instances of alliteration and words and phrases typical of Oxford's writing. In relating the fourth and fifth courtships, the poet uses several "authentic legal metaphors,"⁴² as does Shakespeare, and of course Oxford had a legal education. One of the marginal notes refers to a spa in Italy with details suggesting personal experience: "In Italy is a certaine water that falleth into the River Anion, of colour white, and at first seemes to bee wonderfull colde, but being a while in it, it heateth the body more extreemely."⁴³ Oxford, of course, had traveled to Italy. The last three words of Willobie's line, "Though now by brothers bought and solde," meaning betrayed, as Judas betrayed Jesus, is "an expression used five times by Shakespeare."⁴⁴ *Avisá* scolds her second suitor, "Is't filthy love your worship meanes?/ Assure your selfe your labor's lost,"⁴⁵ giving us the title of one of Shakespeare's early plays. The fourth suitor says, "And if I seeke your spoile, or shame,/ Then raze me out, and blot my name."⁴⁶ The Bard uses the word "blot" four times in the Sonnets, and this feared fate is the same one that Shakespeare laments in his Sonnets, e.g., "My name be buried where my body is" (72).

The book ends with a poem titled “The Praise of a Contented Mind,” which has nothing to do with the story. Oxford wrote a poem, published in 1573 under his own name, titled “In Praise of a Contented Mind.” The two poems are in the same meter: an unusual eight iambic beats per line. Might Oxford have written a second version of his earlier verse and tacked it onto the end of *Avisa*?

And look! The final three words in the entire book, placed after this very poem as a signature in extra-large italic type, are “Ever or Never.”⁴⁷ Might this be one of Edward de Vere’s self-references?

These tempting items seem initially to favor a case for Oxford’s authorship. But it is also apparent that most of them involve serious contraindications. The cumulative weight of certain stylistic aspects attending *Avisa* and a related fact undermines the case for Oxford’s involvement. Here is a short list:

- 1) The rhymed tetrameter is a different meter from anything by Shakespeare or Oxford.
- 2) One of H.W.’s poetic letters to *Avisa* is rendered in hexameters, another meter that Oxford and Shakespeare avoided.
- 3) Many references and phrases in the poem, such as “Old Asues grandame,” “Our Moab Cozbies,” “Queene Joane of Naples,” “devoide of crime” and “Gorgeous shewes of Golden glose,” not found in either the Bard’s writing or Oxford’s acknowledged corpus.
- 4) A number of terms and spellings in the poetry of the fifth section not found in either the bard’s writing or Oxford’s acknowledged corpus — for example *fainty*, *frize*, *wourth*, *wanny*, *boren*, *shoe* (for show), *vernant*, *fewtures*, *lave*, *fors’t*, *savadge*, *groes*, *mule*, *ful-fed*, *lust*, *lustlesse*, *sworen*, *sance*, *raines* (for reins), *mell*, *chamfered*, *cryme*, *wel-fare* and *farder*.
- 5) Willobie uses “very” as an adverb, as in “A heavy burden...seemes very light” and “great sorrowes very neere.”⁴⁸ This word is filler, and Shakespeare used it rarely. In all of Shakespeare’s sonnets, he used the word but once in this manner, in Sonnet 90: “the very worst of fortune’s might.”
- 6) Contrary to Oxford and Shakespeare’s persistent secularism, the author of *Avisa* makes many religious references. “The facility with which *Avisa* cites Biblical authority is indeed surprising”⁴⁹; “*Avisa* had so free a flow of Scriptural illustration, all ready in hand in rhymed stanzas, with which to overwhelm her adversaries....”⁵⁰ Oxford knew the Bible, but he did not use religious conventions in his compositions, and Shakespeare’s heroic characters are not prone to relying primarily on the Bible for communicating the truth of their positions in debate.
- 7) It is atypical of Oxford and Shakespeare to pile on such pulpit phrases as “God prosper this,” “Of wicked lust,” “praise from God above,” “where filthy life/ Hath stained the soile,” “Serve God,” “filthy pleasure,” “sinfull flesh,” “which God doth hate,” “Gods revenging ire,” “Let love of God such lust remove,” “When God shall take your husbands life” and “Noblemen gentlemen, and Captaynes by idlenesse fall to all kind of vices,” and lines

such as “What filthy folly, raging lust,/ What beastly blindnes fancy breeds?/ As though the Lord had not accurst,/ With vengeance due, the sinfull deeds?”

- 8) The subject matter of Willobie’s “The Praise of a Contented Mind” is entirely different from that of Oxford’s “In Praise of a Contented Mind.” Willobie’s version is full of religious references, and it praises a mind that is content with the idea that God put things in a certain order. Oxford does not make a single religious statement in his poem.
- 9) The author of *Avisa* draws “remarkable natural parallels” between his story and seventeen lines from “the Tale...of Patient Griselda...told by Chaucer’s Clerk of Oxenford, which poem...was not far from Willobie’s thoughts as he worked on *Avisa*.”⁵¹ The poet even uses numerous Chaucerian forms, including the spelling of certain proper names, the “syllabic e” and “passages which are Chaucerian both in form and substance...suggest[ing] that Willobie had recently been reading....the Canterbury Tales.”⁵² Chaucer was the source of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, so we know that Oxford knew his Chaucer, but Shakespeare never evokes Chaucer as strongly in stylistic matters as does the author of *Avisa*.
- 10) The relatively plain style of the poetry in *Avisa* differs from the euphuism that Oxford was using under the name T.H. as early as 1560⁵³ and throughout the writing of Shakespeare. Peter Colse in the preface to *Penelopes Complaint* recognized that *Avisa* was written in “so plaine a stile.” Simple lines such as these, from the poem’s fifth section, certainly bear out his charge: “I often said, yet there is one,/ But where, or what I could not tell,/ Whose sight my sence would overcome,/ I feard it still, I knew it well”;⁵⁴ likewise in the case of “If you will speake, pray speake it playne,/ Lest els perhaps you lose your payne.”⁵⁵ The dearth of poetic artifice in *Avisa* flags it as being the product of a pen other than Oxford’s.
- 11) There is no passion in the poem. As de Luna says “*Avisa* is essentially not a romantic but a ‘realistic’ poem...”⁵⁶ If Oxford is consistent about anything, it is his passion and romanticism. Shakespeare did not write dispassionate narrative poems about lovers.
- 12) Within the context that W.S. is Shakespeare and Shakespeare is Oxford, it makes no sense to posit that the negative portrayal of W.S. in *Avisa* is a self-appraisal by Oxford.

These observations contradict the idea that Oxford is behind *Avisa*. One scholar opined that Dorrell’s statement, “It seemes that in this last example the author names himselfe and so describeth his owne love, [yet] I know not...”⁵⁷ refers to W.S., making W.S. the author. But Dorrell’s phrase “this last example” clearly refers to Henrico Willobego, not to W.S. So we cannot assign authorship to W.S. and therefore to Oxford on this ground.

As Stratfordians’ misidentification of W.S. as William Shaksper leads to a dead end, some Oxfordians’ misidentifications of *Avisa* and of H.W. have led to some bizarre

theories. At least two writers^{58,59} have postulated that Avisa is Elizabeth Trentham, Oxford's second wife, and that Oxford as "W.S." encouraged H.W., the young Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton—who, according to one of these theorists, was homosexual—to have sex with her, producing Henry de Vere, who is therefore a bastard and not Oxford's son, as their offspring. Our solution will require no such far-fetched scenarios.

Unraveling the Authorship Mystery

The seeming contradictions in the evidence attending the authorship and editorship of *Avisa* have confounded Stratfordians and Oxfordians alike. Yet all the mysteries and inconsistencies listed above are facts not to ignore or dismiss, but to explain: Who is the author of *Avisa*, who is Hadrian Dorrell, and what is the story behind the publication?

A list of questions will help direct us toward who wrote the famous poem relating the chaste Avisas adventures in love. Who

- 1) was a poet and storyteller?
- 2) was alive in 1576, the earliest year for the narrative's end, but dead, as Dorrell claims, in 1596?
- 3) was old enough to have been writing in 1561, the year Dorrell claims the book was started?
- 4) was (ideally) of an age to have known, at the time of the events, about Elizabeth's relationships with Thomas Seymour, King Philip of Spain, duc d'Alençon, Archduke Hapsburg (and/or Christopher Hatton), and Don Juan of Austria?
- 5) was close enough to the court to be privy to this information?
- 6) was a self-appointed champion of Elizabeth?
- 7) is on record as having written poetry praising Elizabeth's chastity?
- 8) was educated in the law?
- 9) included legal metaphors in his writing?
- 10) praised and emulated Chaucer?
- 11) indicated some knowledge of Italy?
- 12) used marginal notes in his publications?
- 13) wrote verse in iambic tetrameter?
- 14) set in italics poetic missives appearing within his stories?
- 15) was publicly accused of being "a common rhymer and a deviser of slanderous pasquils against divers persones of great calling?"⁶⁰
- 16) is on record having written an apparently fictional story that some scholars believe is based on a real-life love relationship...
- 17) in which the heroine coolly rejects her would-be lover, just as Avisas does all five of hers...
- 18) using language very like that in the prose of the fifth section of *Avisa*?
- 19) used initials in referring to characters in that fiction?
- 20) specifically used the initials H.W. to represent a contemporary person?

- 21) had a known reason to refrain from publishing *Avisa*?
- 22) had a known reason not to have published *Avisa*?
- 23) wrote so much like Oxford that people have confused the two men's work...
- 24) but wrote in a plainer style, with religious references and without euphuism and passion?
- 25) wrote material that the editor, posing as Hadrian Dorrell, would have read?
- 26) signed poems "Ever or Never." and signed his clandestine fiction "Ever or never?"

The answer is: George Gascoigne.

George Gascoigne was born in 1535. According to testimony penned in "A Remembraunce of the wel employed life and godly end of George Gaskoigne, Esquire," by his friend and bedside comforter, George Whetstone, Gascoigne died on October 5, 1577, after an illness lasting three months. He was 26 years old in 1561, the year that Dorrell claims the author began working on *Avisa*. He was therefore old enough to be a reasonably accomplished poet at the time when Dorrell says the author began writing what would have been the first section or two of *Avisa*, depicting the Queen's relationship with Thomas Seymour and that of the concurrently ardent King Philip II of Spain.

In concert with the case that *Avisa*'s author composed his narrative poem over a period of time is Gascoigne's own explanation in a dedication written for another narrative poem, *The complaint of Phylomene*. He says he wrote it in two periods, the first some "twelve or thirtene yeares past,"⁶¹ meaning in 1562 or 1563, and the second in "this present moneth of April 1575,"⁶² when he finished it. Combining Dorrell's testimony and de Luna's and Hess' dates for the subject matter, we can see that *Avisa* was written over almost precisely the same period. Dorrell's dating claim may be false, but the identification of Gascoigne as the author powerfully supports the case that it is accurate.

No fact appears to upset the case that *Avisa* was completed before October 1577, when Gascoigne died, or even before July 1577, when he fell ill. It does not matter that d'Alençon undertook a second marriage suit in 1578; Gascoigne need only to have covered the first one, which failed in 1576. As for the final section of *Avisa*, Hess speculated that Don Juan's courtship of Elizabeth ended sometime between 1576 and February 1578. It was, however, almost certainly over by the earlier part of that span. Oxford disengaged himself from Don Juan in 1576, and Don Juan spent the latter part of that year and all of 1577 immersed in political struggles on the continent. At the dawn of 1577, when he requested naval transport of his army from Luxembourg, "The States General, urged by a suspicious Queen Elizabeth who knew Don John's ambitions [to] invade England and liberate the Queen of Scots...demurred and insisted they depart overland."⁶³ The cat was surely out of the bag by then regarding Elizabeth's lack of interest in a marriage alliance. Don Juan's death in October 1578 had nothing to do with pining away for a lover, either; he died of typhus in a battle camp. Therefore, Don Juan's pursuit of Elizabeth almost surely ended well in time for Gascoigne to have penned the entire fifth section of *Avisa*.

At least two comments from scholars suggest that the poem postdates 1577, but neither bears scrutiny. De Luna saw Willobie's condemnation of the second suitor "downe to fierie lake"⁶⁴ as a reference to "the fate of th[e] Armada...in 1588"⁶⁵ under Sir Francis Drake's fire ships. But it is clearly a conventional reference to Hades. From the final prose text in the fifth section, Hess concluded, "Mr. H.W. was clearly dead by the end of the series of cantos,"⁶⁶ meaning that Don Juan by then had died, an event that did not occur until October 1, 1578. But the text in question in fact indicates that H.W. was still alive. It reads: "H.W. was now *again* stricken so dead, that *hee hath not yet any farder assaid, nor I think ever will, and where he be alive or dead I know not, and therefore I leave him*"⁶⁷ (italics added). On five counts relating to these italicized words, we may rest assured that Willobie is not reporting on the death of H.W. One cannot be stricken dead twice; much less are there degrees of death. So, the narrator's comment that H.W. was stricken so dead again refers to his relapsing into his previously described state of miserable prostration at failing to attain *Avisa*. A dead man cannot attempt anything, either, yet Willobie confers upon H.W. the continued ability to further assay, lasting through his life for ever. Finally, the narrator states that he doesn't know if H.W. is alive or dead, thus establishing that the preceding clauses do not say that he died. To conclude, nothing requires a composition date after 1577.

De Luna noted that Willobie omits mention of Sir Walter Raleigh, a consort of the queen's in 1581-82, from the list of the queen's known suitors. The reason, she speculated, is chiefly that "the poem seems to have emanated from Raleigh's own faction,"⁶⁸ but her reasoning was prompted by the assumption that the author was alive in 1582. A better reason for Raleigh's absence from the poem is that by the time he was on the scene the author was dead.

Gascoigne obtained a legal education from Gray's Inn. His books refer to several of his friends from Gray's Inn. As noted above, Willobie presents legal metaphors, for example, "Ah woe is me, the case so stands,/ that sencelesse papers plead my wo..."⁶⁹ and "For farther triall of my faith...And though I be by Jury cast...And though I be condemned at last."⁷⁰ Likewise, the entirety of "At Beautyes barre" from Gascoigne's *A Hundreth sundrie Flowres* (1573) is an extended legal metaphor: "At Beautyes barre as I dyd stande,/ When false suspect accused mee," etc.⁷¹

Gascoigne praises and refers to Chaucer throughout his many works. Indeed, "He acknowledged Chaucer as his master...."⁷² In the prefacing material to the F.J. story within Gascoigne's *A Hundreth sundrie Flowres* (see further discussion below), the unnamed contributor G.T. (who I believe is Gascoigne himself⁷³) lauds Chaucer.

Although Gascoigne's foreign adventures seem to have been confined to the Low Countries, his "The Tale of Mistress Frances" in the second version of his F.J. story, published in 1575, is set in Venice, and he reveals therein a tidbit of knowledge of Italy when he mentions a coin "in Italie called a Caroline."⁷⁴ This comment is akin to the lone reference to the spa in Italy in one of the marginal notes in *Avisa*.⁷⁵

Aspects of *Avisa*'s literary construction fit Gascoigne's authorship. Marginal notes attend Gascoigne's long poems "Dan Bartholomew of Bath" and "Dulce bellum inexpertis," his plays *Supposes* and *Jocasta*, and some of his briefer poems such as "At Beautyes barre." Gascoigne uses tetrameter for several poems, including "Gascoignes

good morrow,” “The deadly drops,” “The fable of Philomela” within *The Complaint of Philomene* and “In praise of Phillip Sparrow,” which appears within his F.J. story. In the latter story, poetic missives from lover to lady are set off in italics, as are those in *Avisa*.

In 1572, Gascoigne’s creditors succeeded in having him denied a seat in Parliament based on several charges, most notably his being “a common rhymer and a deviser of slanderous pasquils against divers persones of great calling.”⁷⁶ *Avisa* is precisely in this mold: It is rendered in rhyme; it is about persons of great calling, i.e., royalty and courtiers; and it may be construed as slandering Mr. W.S. if not others among *Avisa*’s suitors as well as even the Queen herself.

Gascoigne was probably close enough to the court to have knowledge of Elizabeth’s relationships, having “first went to court as a replacement for his father as almoner at Elizabeth I’s coronation.”⁷⁷ He contributed substantially to the festivities honoring the Queen at Kenilworth in 1575, including, at Leicester’s command, the farewell address, in which, “clad like unto Sylvanus [he] spake ex tempore....”⁷⁸ He met personally with the Queen on New Year’s Day 1575. Gascoigne’s *The Tale of Hemetes the Heremyte Pnounced before the Q. Majesty att Woodstocke* (1575) is addressed to Queen Elizabeth and contains a woodcut of his kneeling before her and presenting to her his book. Gascoigne thus clearly saw himself as, or at least aspired to be, a literary champion of Elizabeth, fitting the role of the author who wrote the ringing defense of *Avisa*’s—and Elizabeth’s—chastity. Gascoigne also dedicated *The Grief of Joye* (1576) “To the highe and mightie pryncesse, Elizabeth,” and he “subsequently received a royal commission in 1576 to work as her agent or spy in France and the Low Countries.”⁷⁹ To some degree, then, he succeeded in his desired role as the Queen’s defender.

Gascoigne, most tellingly, is also on record as having written, in 1575, two years before *Avisa* was concluded, a lengthy, ringing tribute, in verse, to Queen Elizabeth’s chastity. *The Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth Castle*, published on March 26, 1576, records entertainments for the Queen from the summer of 1575. It includes Gascoigne’s masque in which the goddess Diana seeks out a maid chaster than she and finds none other than Zabeta, a character that all scholars recognize as Elizabeth. Clearly we have found an authorial candidate who demonstrates an interest in precisely the subject that *Avisa* covers. (If we put the two heroines’ names together, moreover, we essentially have the Queen’s full name: *Avisa* = *Elisa*, and *Zabeta* = *zabeth*.)

One might suggest that Gascoigne refrained in 1577 from publishing his extensive narrative poem about the Queen’s adventures in love because he would have feared authorities’ negative reaction to it. After all, the publication of *Flowres* in 1573 apparently aroused the ire of certain “divines,” which required an “Apologie” from Gascoigne in the 1575 edition (see further discussion below). This explanation, however, is insufficient; after all, whatever happened with respect to the 1573 book did not stop Gascoigne from writing, or at least continuing, *Avisa*. A better, and in this case irrefutable, reason that Gascoigne did not take this narrative poem to press is that he died just as he would have completed the fifth section. One must also understand that just because *Avisa* comes down to us in apparently finished form does not mean that it was in fact finished. Ultimately, the reason why Gascoigne would not have rushed the poem to the printer’s becomes obvious once we think about it: The story

of Elizabeth and her suitors was—as history proves—a work in progress, one that the author, in concert with Dorrell’s testimony, would have updated over the years as new would-be husbands entered the scene. Surely Gascoigne viewed *Avisa* as a lifelong project that was as yet incomplete. He may or may not have intended to publish it, but he surely intended to keep writing it. Dorrell’s 1596 assertion that after the author’s death the poem “lay in wast papers in his studie, as many other prettie things did, of his devising”⁸⁰ is likely accurate.

The observation that *Avisa* has some Shakespearean qualities fits Gascoigne’s authorship, because the similarity of Gascoigne’s and Oxford’s poetic styles is already a matter of record. Their writing styles are so similar that it has become traditional in some circles to assert that Oxford wrote all or at least a portion of *A Hundreth sundrie Flowres*, or even brought it to press. But a close inspection of that book and Gascoigne’s other works⁸¹ confirms that, despite a few Shakespearean parallels, Gascoigne consistently wrote simple verse lacking in Oxford’s artifice, euphuism and passion, the poetic qualities we find in *Avisa*.

Twice Willobie uses the phrase “trickling teares,”⁸² one of Oxford’s common expressions. From my reading, this phrase is absent from almost all other Elizabethan poets’ bags of tricks. An exception I have found is Gascoigne, who uses the phrase four times: in “Dan Bartholomew:” “Yet shed mine eyes no trickling teares”;⁸³ in *Jocasta* (V, ii): “The trickling teares raynde downe his paled chekes”;⁸⁴ in *The Droomme of Doomes Day*: “he will sigh and grone, and shed trickling teares”;⁸⁵ and in the autobiographical “Gascoignes voyage into Hollande,” which includes this line: “Well, on our knees with trickling teares of joye,/ We gave God thanks.”⁸⁶

Gascoigne’s writings also embrace religion naturally and at times forcefully. His works from late in life—*The Glasse of Governement* (1575), *The Steele Glas* (1576), *The Droomme of Doomes Day* (1576) and *The Grief of Joye* (1576)—all treat moral and religious themes, fitting the strong Biblical tone of *Avisa*.

The first edition of Gascoigne’s *Flowres* contains seven poems signed “Ever or Never,” capitalized, italicized and concluded with a period in exactly the form appearing after the poem at the end of Willobie’s book. An eighth poem in *Flowres* is signed identically but with a lower-case *n* beginning never. In the second edition, titled *The Posies of George Gascoigne*, the same phrase, with a lower-case *n*, appears along with an added ninth poem and at the end of Gascoigne’s F.J. story, which (as discussed below) closely resembles the fifth section of *Avisa*.

Gascoigne was a prolific writer. From 1573 to 1577, he issued hundreds of pages of poetry, stories, plays and essays. A number of them he had written in earlier years, for example his plays, which date from 1566. An author this active could have produced *Avisa* as well as his other works.

Connections between *Avisa* and Gascoigne’s “The Adventures [of] Master F.J.” and Other Writings

Gascoigne’s famous prose story, “The Adventures Passed by Master F.J.,” published initially in *A Hundreth sundrie Flowres*, details a doomed love affair. The main character

is identified only by the initials F.J., thereby being compatible with *Avisa's* D.B., D.H., W.S. and H.W. Many of Gascoigne's contemporaries—at least twenty by his own count, as related in the preface to his second edition—suspected that his F.J. story, under the cover of purported fiction, depicts the adventures of real people. If their charges are accurate, then Gascoigne's F.J. story clandestinely celebrates the sexual incorruptibility of a real-life lady in a veiled drama of her personal life, which is exactly what the author of *Avisa* does. If the charges are inaccurate, then Gascoigne still authored a fictional story with the same underlying theme as *Avisa*.

In the second edition of *Flowres*, titled *The Posies of George Gascoigne*, Gascoigne corrected the first edition's multiple authorship claim and emphatically denied that its prose and verse story was about real people. The editing and publishing events attending *Avisa* essentially repeat this sequence, showing that the subject matter had a similar effect upon readers, which is consistent with both books having issued from the same pen.

Gascoigne's F.J. story comes after an "Epistle from H.W. to the Reader" and "The letter of G.T. to his very friend H.W. concerning this work." The author's choice of H.W. as the initials of a supposed fellow writer is compatible with the name that Dorrell says he found associated with the *Avisa* poem: Henry Willobie.

The fifth section of *Avisa* is laid out much as Gascoigne designed "The Adventures of Master F.J." The main difference is that F.J. is rendered mostly in prose, with verses interspersed, whereas the fifth section of *Avisa* is mostly in verse, with prose interspersed. In each narrative, initials indicate the wooer(s), whereas a name—Elinor in F.J. and *Avisa* in *Avisa*—attends the beloved. In both works, lovers send poetic notes, printed in italics. In the end, after much entreaty and interplay, Elinor leaves her suitor unrequited, as *Avisa* does all of hers.

Willobie's use of vocabulary in the brief prose portions within the fifth section of *Avisa* conforms to Gascoigne's in both the preface to and the body of F.J. Take, for example, Henry Willobie's famous words in the introduction to the fifth section of *Avisa*: "H.W....*bewrayeth* the secrecy of his disease unto *his familiar friend* W.S. who not long before had tryed the curtesy of the like passion..."⁸⁷ In but a few pages of F.J., Gascoigne employs all four of these highlighted terms. The first sentence in the preface to F.J., titled "H.W. to the Reader," speaks of "*my familiar friend* Master G.T." and a few lines later we read of "*my familiar friendes*."⁸⁸ Early in the story, Gascoigne speaks of "M. Elinor of hir *curtesie*"⁸⁹ and says, "without cause of affection the *passion* is easie to be cured" and "the stile this letter of hers *bewrayeth* that it was not penned by a womans capacitie."⁹⁰

The poetic missives from the male wooer to his beloved in the two narratives of H.W. and F.J. likewise begin with similar introductions. Willobie in the second prose passage in *Avisa* writes that H.W. "in a melancolike passion wrote *these verses following*";⁹¹ Gascoigne in F.J. writes, "he...there in this passion compiled *these verses following*."⁹² Willobie in the third prose passage in *Avisa* writes that H.W. "fell...into such *extremity of passionate affections*";⁹³ Gascoigne in F.J. has F.J. write, "Such is then the *extremitie of my passions*."⁹⁴ This passage about H.W. ends, "he takes his pen & *wrate, as followeth*";⁹⁵ Gascoigne in F.J. says that he "did *write unto hir as followeth*."⁹⁶ The letters

that F.J. writes in F.J. also have much the same construction and poetic terminology as those that H.W. writes in *Avisa*.

In *Avisa*, H.W. sends a note to *Avisa* beginning, "Like wounded Deare, whose tender sydes are bath'd in blood..."⁹⁷ This metaphor appears in "Now have I found the waie" from Gascoigne's *Flowres*: "For as the stricken Deare, that...feeles himselfe to bleede."⁹⁸ Gascoigne's narrative poem "Dan Bartholomew" includes another metaphor involving "The stricken Deare."⁹⁹ In all three cases, moreover, Deare is rendered identically in spelling and capitalization.

De Luna noted many ampersands in his fifth section of *Avisa*, concluding that Dorrell had meddled with it. Dorrell does use many ampersands in his prefatory material, but Gascoigne in F.J. also uses them; a single page (beginning "This sonet was highly commended...") has five; others have none. Some of his poems feature them as well; "Beautie shut up thy shop" has five of them, while others have none. Gascoigne went back and forth in using this shortcut, a pattern consistent with that found in *Avisa*. While it is possible that Dorrell or the printer transcribed Gascoigne's manuscript for the fifth section and substituted ampersands where Gascoigne had spelled out "and," he more likely switched to using more ampersands when he shifted style, perhaps after having left the book unattended for a while, in presenting the new story of H.W. I am unable to confirm, from ampersands or any other stylistic matters, various scholars' suspicions that *Avisa* was "revamped circa 1585-86" or "revived and modified in 1593-94."¹⁰⁰ Instead, in my view, all of the text fits Gascoigne's authorship.

The poetic language in both books is essentially the same as well. For example, phrases such as "flowing teares" and "scalding sighes" in F.J. echo those such as "trickling teares" and "silent sighes" in *Avisa*. Willobie's escalating references to H.W.'s death from pining, as in "Then farewell life, my glasse is runne," "I die in feeld," "my death shall be your gaine" and "by disdain she sought mine end," echo many of Gascoigne's like expressions, such as "With desperate death thou sleast the lovers heart" and "I pin'd for deadly paine," which are from poems in F.J.; "most like the panges of death,/ That present grieffe now grypeth me," which is from the "Spreta tamen vivunt" series in *Flowres*; and "greedely I seeke the greedy grave...But death is deafe" from his "Dan Bartholomew of Bath." Just as Willobie offers several aphorisms, such as "Excessive griefes good counsell want,"¹⁰¹ so does Gascoigne in F.J., as in the line, "no smoke ariseth, where no cole is kindled."¹⁰² Willobie's favorite metaphor of love is battle, as in "If now I yeeld without assault"¹⁰³; and so is Gascoigne's in F.J., as in "The firste blowe thus profered and defended..."¹⁰⁴ The stylistic details within Willobie's *Avisa* fit those of Gascoigne's F.J.

A footnote in de Luna's book compares two passages, one from Canto I of *Avisa*: "Full twentie yeares she lived a maide,/ And never was by man betrayde"¹⁰⁵; and the other from 1.1 in a masque from Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth Castle*, in which "Diana, Goddess of Chastity," confirms of Zabeta, "Full twentie yeeres I marked still hyr mynde,/ Ne could I see that any sparke of lust..."¹⁰⁶ These are identical points, made with identical beginning words about the same person: Queen Elizabeth, who in each case is called by a nickname compatible with part of her name. Soon thereafter, Zabeta is described as "a peerless maide,"¹⁰⁷ even "a better maide" and "a worthier

maide”¹⁰⁸ than Diana, fitting Willobie’s use of the same word in the same context. De Luna derives no authorship conclusion from this parallelism. But under the scenario that Gascoigne wrote about Elizabeth in *Avisa* as well as in *Princely Pleasures*, we should not be surprised to find parallel language in the two compositions.

“The Adventures Passed by Master F.J.” then, appears to be the first of Gascoigne’s three treatments of the same theme: the chastity of a heroine. The second is his masque of Diana and Zabeta for the Kenilworth entertainments, and the third is *Avisa*. They were completed in 1573, 1575 and 1577, respectively.

Willobie often uses *y* in place of *i*, for example in *quyet*, *shryned*, *advyse*, *aryse*, *wysect*, *dyvers*, *sometymes*, *pyning*, *cryme*, etc. Gascoigne’s poems are likewise packed with such words. Over the course of two pages in his “Weedes” section of *Posies*, we find *lustye*, *dyd*, *foyle*, *hyr*, *lyst*, *rejoice*, *byrdes*, *lye*, *fayre*, *myne* and *soberlye*. In a single page from *Flowers* are *wyll*, *trye*, *styll*, *kyl*, *lyving*, *lyke* and *daye*. In a short paragraph from the “Epistle” to *Posies*, we find *desyre*, *wyll*, *wyouth* and *publikelye*. So, this spelling tendency is common to both texts.

I have little doubt that an exhaustive study of Gascoigne’s canon would turn up virtually every phrase, term and idea attending *Avisa*. But with the non-stylistic circumstantial evidence so strongly favoring his authorship, these examples should suffice to make the connection on stylistic grounds.

Did Anyone Else Contribute to *Avisa*?

Originally under the influence of what I now consider to be an Oxfordian myth that Oxford contributed to Gascoigne’s *Flowres* and brought it to print, I initially wondered if Oxford might have stepped in to finish and publish Willobie’s book as well. But my investigation into this question demonstrates, at least to my full satisfaction, that Oxford had nothing to do with *Flowres* or anything else that Gascoigne wrote.¹⁰⁹

As noted earlier, some stylistic considerations, such as the rash of ampersands, have led scholars to suggest that the editor, Dorrell, “meddled” with the fifth section of *Avisa*. De Luna also noted format changes in the form of a different heading, failure to start on a new page and the omission of “the breathing space, large type, and ornamental border normally heralding the appearance of a new suitor.”¹¹⁰ The introduction of a third party in the story is also new, as are the prose interjections “written from a point of view completely exterior to the rest of the work.”¹¹¹ The fifth suitor’s name, Henrico Willobego, is nearly identical to the supposed author’s, another difference from the other sections, even though, as de Luna and others confirmed, “the author and the fifth suitor are clearly meant as separate persons.”¹¹² H.W. writes many poetic letters to *Avisa*, and is the only suitor to do so. H.W.’s story takes up three times the space of any of the others. These myriad differences prompted de Luna to state, “Various aspects of this fifth suit, in short, suggest that parts of it may well be an interpolation by some writer other than Willobie himself.... The likeliest suspect is ‘Hadrian Dorrell’, the self-admitted filcher of Willobie’s poem.”¹¹³

But Gascoigne’s clustered use of ampersands, Dorrell’s convincing indications in 1594 that he was independent of the material and had no idea who *Avisa* was, and the

myriad verbal parallels between Gascoigne's structure and writing in F.J. and those in the fifth section of *Avisa*, as far as I am concerned, sew up the case for Gascoigne's authorship of the entire book. This conclusion that Gascoigne is the sole author of *Avisa* is consistent with Dorrell's flat statement in his 1594 preface: "I have not added nor detracted any thing from the worke it selfe, but have let it passe without altering any thing."¹¹⁴

Authorship of the Concluding Material

Dorrell explains, "in the end I have added to fill up some voyd paper certaine fragmentes and ditties...which I found wrapped altogether with this, and therefore knew not whether it did any way belong unto this or not."¹¹⁵ These fragments and ditties comprise "The Authors conclusion" and two song poems: "The resolution of a chaste and constant wife" and "The Praise of a Contented Mind." All three poems are Gascoigne's. The first poem proceeds in exactly the same manner as the preceding material. The second poem contains religious language, and its phrase "web of wylie kind,"¹¹⁶ echoes Canto 51's "you spring of savadge kynd"¹¹⁷ and 74's "of dame Chrysiedes kind."¹¹⁸ In *Flowres*, Gascoigne twice uses like phrases: "kit[e]s of Cressides kind"¹¹⁹ and "tricks of Cressides kynde."¹²⁰ The religious aspect of the third poem, "The Praise of a Contented Mind," we have already discussed. Its terms *frizen*, *sildome*, *floating* and *sliu'd* seem peculiar to Gascoigne's vocabulary. Its signature, *Ever or never*, appears under eight of Gascoigne's other poems, as printed in his *Flowres* and again in *Posies*.

To conclude, Henry Willobie is a pseudonym of George Gascoigne, the true author of *Avisa*. Who, then, is the book's editor and publisher, the man hiding behind the names Hadrian Dorrell, Abell Emet, "Contraria Contrariis," and Thomas Willobie?

Authorship of the Prefatory and Subsequent Material

Dorrell's preliminary address "To the gentle & courteous Reader" of 1594 is written in a direct, unadorned style. It contains references to the Emperour Theodosius and Pelagius of Laodicea, along with prudish comments about "Heathen Poets" and Ariosto's "lewd" tales. It praises "godly preachers" and uses heated Calvinist language such as "sinnefull gaine of a filthy carkasse" and "cry to the Lord for vengeance against us." Dorrell's "Apologie" in the 1596 edition continues the same type of language, so we may be confident that the same writer is at work.

Abell Emet's poem in hexameters continues in the same vein, speaking of "This wicked age, this sinfull tyme." The Biblical reference to Susan in the poem by "Contraria Contrariis" is consistent with the other prefatory materials. Its tetrameter is like the verse in *Avisa* itself.

The poem signed by Thomas Willobie in the 1605 edition, which came out after Oxford died, features phrases such as "filthy lust" and "lewde Desires," linking it to the prefacing material from the earlier editions. To conclude, the consistency in style and theme throughout the introductory material strongly suggests that one man wrote it

all.

It is impossible that George Gascoigne wrote any of this prefatory material, because Dorrell refers to Philip Sidney as “Astrophell” (from his *Astrophel and Stella*) and to Edmund Spenser’s “Fayry Queene”; and Contraria Contrariis refers to “Shakespeare” and his *Lucrece*. All three of these referenced books postdate Gascoigne’s death.

Nevertheless, one clue to authorship is the striking similarity between the prefatory material in Gascoigne’s F.J. story and that attending *Avisa*. The pretense that Dorrell gives for *Avisa*’s publication is very like that attending the prose story of F.J. in *Flowres*. In *Flowres* persons identified only by initials claim to have brought the shadowy story of a formally conducted love suit to print without the knowledge or permission of the author (Gascoigne), who in real life was out of the country. In *Avisa*, a person identified only by a pseudonym claims to have obtained the author’s shadowy story of five formally conducted love suits and “to publish it without his consent”¹²¹ while he was out of the country. In *Flowres*, H.W. claims, “I...have presumed of my selfe to christen it by the name of *A hundredth sundrie Flowers*.”¹²² In *Avisa*, Dorrell claims, “I have christened it by the name of *Willoby his Avisa*.”¹²³ In *Flowres*, the closing of H.W.’s epistle reads, “From my lodging nere the Strande the xx. of January, 1572,”¹²⁴ and that of G.T.’s letter reads, “from my Chamber this tenth of August, 1572.”¹²⁵ Similarly, the closing of Dorrell’s preface to *Avisa* reads, “From my chamber in Oxford this first of October.”¹²⁶

Similarities extend to Gascoigne’s second edition. His preface to *Posies* is plainly written and peppered with religious references. Dorrell’s preface to *Avisa* is likewise straightforward and contains religious references. The dedications in *Posies* are to groups: “To the reverend Divines,” “To al yong Gentlemen” and “To the Readers generally.” The dedications in *Avisa* are similarly addressed “To all the constant Ladies & Gentlewomen of England that feare God” and “To the gentle & courteous Reader.” None of the commendatory poems in either preface is signed by the name of a person; those in *Posies* appear above initials and an abbreviation, and those in the preface of *Avisa* appear above pseudonyms.

G.T.’s letter in *Flowres* has another point of interest relating to Dorrell’s preface to *Avisa*. Speaking of the unnamed author, G.T. says,

And to be playne (with you my friend) he hath written (which as farre as I can learne) did never yet come to the reading or persuinge of any man but himselfe: two notable workes. The one called, the Sundry lots of love. The other of his owne invencion entituled, The clyming of an Eagles neast. These thinges (and especially the latter) doth seeme by the name to be a work worthy the reading. And the rather I judge so because his fantasie is so occupied in the same, as that contrary to his wonted use, he hath hitherto withhelde it from light of any his familiers, untill it be finished, you may gesse him by his Nature.¹²⁷

G.T., then, expresses knowledge of two unpublished works by the unnamed author, who we later learn is George Gascoigne. These works are presumed lost, but

I would propose that “Sundry lots of love” is an early working title for the book that eventually came out as *Avisa*, which deals with “sundry lots of love” (two of which “lots” were concluded and two more started by 1573). The statement, “he hath hitherto withhelde it from light of any his familiers, untill it be finished,” moreover, fits precisely the scenario I have painted with respect to Gascoigne’s probable treatment of *Avisa* as an unfinished, ongoing project on the courtship of England’s Virgin Queen.

What ties this passage to Dorrell is that the preface to *Avisa* contains a similar commentary in mentioning an unpublished work by Willobie, who we now see is Gascoigne. He says that *Avisa*

lay in wast papers in his studie, as many other prettie things did, of his devising, and so might have continued still (as his Susanna yet doth) had not I, contrary to his knowledge, with paine collected it; and (in consideration of the good ende, to which it was directed, published it.¹²⁸

Any story of Susanna, by the way, would have the same theme as *Avisa*: a woman’s rejection of suitors, suggesting why it came to Dorrell’s mind when discussing *Avisa*. (I am unaware of any verse about Susanna—such as Robert Roche’s 1599 poem—that could qualify as Gascoigne’s.)

Given all these parallels, we may conclude that whoever packaged *Avisa* and wrote Dorrell’s preface was intimately familiar with Gascoigne’s *Flowres* and *Posies* and used them as a model. This is useful information.

Whoever we identify as Hadrian Dorrell, the editor of *Avisa*, must fit everything we know about him. Whoever wrote the prefacing material

- 1) was alive in 1605, when the final edits to *Avisa* appeared in the fourth edition;
- 2) was a poet capable of writing the verses by Abell Emet, Contraria Contrariis and Thomas Willobie;
- 3) attended Oxford University;
- 4) was religiously inclined;
- 5) had access to George Gascoigne’s papers and might have been the person whom Gascoigne “chose,” as Dorrell puts it, to possess those papers;
- 6) used ampersands, as Dorrell did in his 1594 preface and his 1596 apology;
- 7) knew Gascoigne’s *Flowres* well enough to imitate aspects of its preface;
- 8) was (ideally) old enough to have brought *Flowres* to press in 1573;
- 9) wrote prose and poetry that sounds like Dorrell’s;
- 10) can (ideally) be linked to the name Henry Willobie.

To my knowledge, the only man who fits this description is Nicholas Breton, who was born in 1545 and did not die until 1626. A prolific writer, he composed in a “variety of different literary genres, including pastoral and religious verse, prose tales, imaginary letters, essays, and satires. He was born in London, England. He was a stepson of the

English poet George Gascoigne and studied at the University of Oxford.”¹²⁹ One could hardly ask for a better summary of a plausible editor for *Avisa*.

Although Breton does not appear on the college rolls, “a casual notice in the Diary of the Rev. Richard Madox (Sloane MS.5008) under 14th March 1582 [pertains to] ‘Mr. Brytten, once of Oriell Colledge, which made wyts wyl.’”¹³⁰ His identification as the author of *Wits Will* confirms this “Mr. Brytten” to be Nicholas Breton, and the only Oriell College in England is at Oxford University. So Breton did attend Oxford and therefore would have been right at home as Dorrell writing from, or pretending to write from, a chamber in Oxford. Supporting the connection is Breton’s address “To the Gentlemen studients and Scholers of Oxforde” in his poetry book, *The Pilgrimage to Paradise* (1592).

Breton shared his stepfather’s poetic inclinations, his extensive writing, and his religious fervor as well, suggesting that their sentiments were closely allied. For all these reasons, as well as the two men’s kinship by marriage, Gascoigne could well have chosen Breton as the protector of his papers during his absence abroad in the early 1570s, and Breton would have been the most likely heir of Gascoigne’s papers upon his death in 1577, through a will, or because they were already in his possession or because he was simply the most interested party.

Breton was a passionate admirer of virgins, whom he enthusiastically extolled in *The Good and the Badde* (1616), so he would have approved of *Avisa*. He was also a devoted admirer of Elizabeth, whom he eulogized in his manuscript, “Character of Queen Elizabeth” (undated, but written after her death in 1603). If Dorrell’s goal in bringing *Avisa* to press, as de Luna proposes, was to come to the defense of the Queen’s chastity at a time when her “reputation could use a little defending,”¹³¹ Breton qualifies on both counts. On the other hand, if we take Dorrell’s original preface as genuine, as I believe we should, it is clear that he was unaware of the grenade he was handling and therefore was not out to defend the Queen at all but merely to publish a celebration of the chaste *Avisa*. His later denial that *Avisa* was anyone of import seems to have been an act taken to protect the Queen and his own skin.

Breton, moreover, is well known as a careful student of Gascoigne’s work. Grosart elaborates:

It is interesting, because of the biographic fact...that Breton’s mother in her widowhood married George Gascoigne, to find that his step-son paid him the most flattering of all homage, of walking in his footsteps. There are various evidences that the poems of Gascoigne were familiar to Breton. Thus, in the Floorish upon Fancy, the “Dolorous Discourse...” echoes Gascoigne’s “Passion of a Lover” [in which] Lines 7-8 are taken in substance from it.... So too the opening of “A Gentleman talking on a time,” etc., is nearly verbatim from Gascoigne, “When first I thee beheld in colours black and white.” It is thus clear that in his earliest book, the Floorish upon Fancy, the influence of Gascoigne was deeper than that of any other in his after-books....¹³²

This is precisely the description we would hope to find when searching for an author who could imitate, at times nearly verbatim, aspects of Gascoigne's *Flowres* and *Posies*.

Breton's use of religious and moral language fits Dorrell's as well. In the preface to *Avisa*, Dorrell talks of "wicked and dissolute behavior"¹³³; in *An olde Mans Lesson* (1605), Breton speaks of "drunkennes, wantonnesse, or wickednes."¹³⁴ Dorrell fears for those who "are become wilfully desperate in the performance of all kind of impiety"¹³⁵; Breton in *Maries Exercise* (1597) says of such men, "wilful were such a blinde-nesse [as] would seeke paradise in hell,"¹³⁶ and in *Wits Private Wealth* (1607) he adds, "he that delighteth in sinne is the Devill incarnat."¹³⁷ Dorrell speaks of "the holy scriptures," "godly preachers" and "the glory & praise"; in *Maries Exercise* Breton speaks of "the Holy Scriptures," "Thy comfortable preaching" and, within a few words of each other, "praise" and "glory." Dorrell speaks of "the ripenesse of our sinne"¹³⁸; Breton in *I Would, And would not* (1614) speaks of "the foule delight of sinne"¹³⁹ and in *Maries Exercise* of "the evill part of sinne."¹⁴⁰ Dorrell lists "the foure moral vertues": Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance and Justice¹⁴¹; Breton in *Divine Considerations* (1608) offers a similar list: humilitie, charitie, chastitie, patience, labour, love and pity; in *An olde Mans Lesson* he calls Patience the "greatest...vertue" and lists six moral vices: Pride, Sloth, Glotony, Lecherie, Envie and Vanities; and in *Characters upon Essaies Morall, and Divine* (1615) he covers an even more extensive inventory of such terms. Dorrell fears for those "that tremble not at the remembrance of Gods judgements";¹⁴² Breton in *Maries Exercise* says, "the aungells tremble at Thy presence,"¹⁴³ and in *Wits Private Wealth* he condemns "he that is fearelesse of GOD."¹⁴⁴ Dorrell talks of "a filthy carkasse" and "such filthy freedome"¹⁴⁵; Breton in *Divine Considerations* speaks of "a filthy hole," "substances so filthy" and "the filth of sinne."¹⁴⁶ In his 1596 "Apologie," Dorrell says, "I pray God some other have not eternized their follies, more waies then one"¹⁴⁷; Breton in *Divine Considerations* says, "Oh what a swarme of follies hath this ignorance begotten in this worlde?"¹⁴⁸ Breton in *A Murmurer* (1607) and "An Invective against Treason" (1614) offers pages of heated pulpit-language not unlike that in Dorrell's paragraph ending "... all kind of impiety."¹⁴⁹ Thus, Breton's religious and moralistic terminology is consistent with Dorrell's.

For the record, Breton is not as liberally minded as his stepfather. Gascoigne's foreword in *Flowres* titled "The Printer to the Reader" says admiringly, "He that wold laugh at a prety conceit closely conveyed, let him peruse the comedie translated out of Ariosto,"¹⁵⁰ indicating *Supposes* and perhaps also "The devises of sundrie Gentlemen," which is billed as "A translation of Ariosto allegorized," both of which are in *Flowres*. Dorrell's preface to *Avisa*, on the other hand, summarily dismisses Ariosto's tales as "lewd." This difference in attitude maintains throughout the two men's known material as well as that from *Avisa* which I assign here to Gascoigne and to Breton.

I find similarities in Dorrell's and Breton's non-religious language as well. Dorrell closes his address, "From my chamber in Oxford this first of October."¹⁵¹ Breton in *A Floorish upon Fancie* (1577) closes his address, "From his Chamber in Holbourne, this xx. of February."¹⁵² Dorrell repeats that *Avisa* is a "fained name." Breton in *A Dialogue Full of Pithe and Pleasure* (1603) speaks of "fained love."¹⁵³ Dorrell defends women's constancy against others' charges: "This false opinion bred those foule-mouthed

speeches of Frier Mantuan, that upbraides all women with fleeting unconstasy,”¹⁵⁴ and he offers three (unnamed) contrary examples from antiquity. Breton in “The Praise of Vertuous Ladies and Gentlewomen” (1599) does the same thing: “Some will say women are unconstant; but I say not all: for Penelope, and Cleopatra, Lucretia, with divers more too long to rehearse, shall stand for examples of such constancie....”¹⁵⁵ Recall that *Contraria Contrariis* likewise mentions Lucrece. Reflecting Dorrell’s inquiry into whether there is “some thing of trueth hidden under this shadow,” Breton in *An olde Mans Lesson* advises, “their best vertue, is in finding out a falsehood or maintaining a truth.”¹⁵⁶

Both of Dorrell’s addresses use ampersands, and Breton likewise uses them liberally. In “The Forte of Fancie,” for example, he employs three of them within nine lines. Breton’s writing even provides us with parallels to Dorrell’s phony story of having come across *Avisa* among the papers of his young friend at Oxford who left him the keys to his study upon departing England to serve the Queen. The same type of framing device accompanies the preface to *An olde Mans Lesson* (1605) and especially his explanation for *A Poste with a Packet of Mad Letters* (original date unknown), in which Breton gives transparently implausible explanations for his coming across the materials that he is publishing. In the first instance, he claims, “I have met of late with a discourse written by I know not whom.”¹⁵⁷ In the second instance, speaking of a passing postman, he says,

...it was his hap with lack of heed, to let fall a Packet of idle Papers, the superscription whereof being only to him that finds it, being my fortune to light on it, seeing no greater style in the direction, fell to opening of the inclosure, in which I found divers Letters written, to whom, or from whom I could not learne.¹⁵⁸

Thus, we have found in our candidate a penchant for exactly the type of red herring that Dorrell initially tossed out regarding where he found the packet of papers that he published as *Avisa*. In that case, though, given our authorship analysis, he really did obtain someone else’s papers, just not in the way he describes.

Identifying Dorrell as Breton provides yet another reason to suspect that Gascoigne’s original composition remains intact: Breton’s voluminous canon contains no marginal notes. While Breton could have gone to the trouble of continuing Gascoigne’s practice of appending marginal notes if he wrote the fifth section of *Avisa*, it is more likely that Gascoigne wrote all of it.

It is also important to our conception of events that Breton’s works contain nothing like Dorrell’s lengthy introduction to *Avisa*. In other words, he pens no intricate ruse that would serve to overturn the idea that his musings of 1594 about the book and its meaning are entirely genuine.

Stylistic links to Breton extend to *Avisa*’s pseudonymous poet-contributors. Breton’s first publication,¹⁵⁹ *A Smale handfull of fragrant Flowers*, attributed to N.B. (1575), contains a prefacing poem, “The Author to his Lady,” which speaks of “Lucrece chaste,” “Collatinus wyfe” and “Susan,” just as “*Contraria Contrariis*” prefacing poem

in *Avisa* mentions “poore Lucrece,” “Collatine...wife” and “Susan.” Although most of N.B.’s references are Biblical, he mentions Diana, whom Abell Emet also mentions in his prefacing poem to *Avisa*.

Yet further, Breton is well known to have hidden frequently behind pseudonyms and to have employed others in framing prefacing addresses, exactly as I postulate he does in *Avisa*. The address “To the Reader” in *Pasquils Mad-cappe* is signed only “Pasquill,” yet the publication is universally recognized as Breton’s. In his follow-up, *Pasquils Fooles-Cap* (1600), the purported author is Pasquil, a contributor is Morphorio, and N.B.’s dedication is “To my very good friend, Master Edward Conquest,” thereby employing three obvious pseudonyms, much as we find with *Avisa*’s Hadrian Dorrell, Abell Emet and Contraria Contrariis. N.B.’s ensuing dedication in *Pasquils Passe, and passeth not* (1600) “To my very loving and undeserved good friend M. Griffin Pen”¹⁶⁰ employs yet another probable pseudonym. Breton’s *The Passionate Shepheard* (1604) is signed “Bonerto,” another pseudonym, and his address “To the Reader” in *I Would and would not* is signed B.N., reversing Breton’s initials and obfuscating his authorship. So, Breton’s practices in this regard mirror those of the editor of *Avisa*.

I found these similarities between *Avisa*’s prefacing material and Breton’s writing with only a cursory review of Breton’s dozens of lengthy works. (Searchable electronic copies of Breton’s prose, which would have streamlined this exercise, are as yet unavailable.) A dedicated investigation likely would turn up many more such parallels. Although a thorough study of late Elizabethan prose might show that someone else is a better candidate than Breton for the elusive Dorrell, I can think of no other obvious place to look.

Gascoigne was probably the person, as Dorrell implies, who invented the name Henry Willobie to pose as the author of *Avisa*, perhaps thereby explaining why that name fits the initials H.W. that attend Gascoigne’s F.J. story in *Flowres*. But a wisp of external fact may link Breton to Dorrell’s claimed friend Henry Willobie and his brother Thomas. Recall that scholars unearthed a pair of brothers—Henry and Thomas Willoughby—in the county of Wiltshire. Breton’s ancestors had ties to Wiltshire. In the 1400s, one branch of his family “removed to Monchton-Farley in Wiltshire...”¹⁶¹ and “The ‘Visitation of Wilts, 1565’ (College of Arms, G.8.fo.50)” refers to “Henrye Breton of Moncton Farley in coun. Wiltes....”¹⁶² This Henry Breton, who married and had four children, was brother to Nicholas’s father, William. With an aunt, uncle and cousins in Wiltshire, Breton surely would have visited there and could have met young Henry and Thomas Willoughby. He might have met them in or before 1594, in which case he could have chosen Henry’s name as cover for his publishing project. (Perhaps this Henry Willoughby did leave the country in “her Majesties service,” as Dorrell says.) Or, if Gascoigne created the pseudonym (the more likely scenario), Breton might have had the good fortune to have met the brothers before 1605, in time for Thomas’ name to serve his course of authorial misdirection. Whether Gascoigne or Breton introduced the name, at least both of our proposed candidates could have done so given their independent links to it.

Thus, two known facts relating to Nicholas Breton—his attendance at Oxford University and a link via relatives in Wiltshire to Henry and Thomas Willobie—fit

Dorrell's only hints of self-identification. So, until a better candidate comes along, Nicholas Breton seems to be the best choice for the man behind the names Hadrian Dorrell, Abell Emet, Contraria Contrariis and Thomas Willobie.

Breton Was Gascoigne's Agent for *Flowres*

A *Hundreth sundrie Flowres* came to press while Gascoigne was serving in the army in Holland. Upon his return, he apologized for certain aspects of the collection when issuing the slightly revised version in 1575 titled *The Posies of George Gascoigne*.

Gascoigne states three times in the material prefacing *Posies* that he arranged ahead of time for *Flowres* to be printed while he was away on military assignment. Gascoigne does not name his agent, but in the prefacing material of *Flowres* G.T. is the deliverer and H.W. the receiver. Gascoigne himself is the best candidate for G.T., and Nicholas Breton became so entangled in his stepfather's literature that he seems a highly probable candidate for H.W., the man who took *Flowres* to press. Since Breton would have read (or perhaps even wrote) H.W.'s letter claiming to have coined the title, it is fitting the he coined a like title—*A Smale handfull of fragrant Flowers*—for his own first work two years later.

Scenario for the Gascoigne Publishing Projects

To summarize: Nicholas Breton, at his stepfather's request, brought the collection of George Gascoigne's work—*A Hundreth sundrie Flowres*—to print in 1573, while Gascoigne was on the continent. As part of that effort, he might have written the material by H.W. and G.T. prefacing the F.J. story, but it is more likely that Gascoigne wrote it, calling himself (the compiler) "G.T." and Breton (the receiver) "H.W." Gascoigne had begun work on *Avisa* around 1561, but he left that work out of *Flowres* because, as G.T.'s letter says, the author did not wish his poem on "Sundry lots of love" released until it was finished. Gascoigne wrote the fifth section of *Avisa* in 1576-77 but had no designs to publish the book yet, given the still open-ended nature of the subject matter. He attached the name Henry Willobie to the work, possibly reflecting the initials H.W. attending the receiver's persona in the preface of *Flowres*; or, if Breton came up with the name, it might be an allonym derived from an acquaintance—"a yong man"—from Wiltshire named Henry Willoughby. Conforming to Dorrell's description, Gascoigne wrapped up *Avisa* with three other poems, leaving this collection behind in manuscript form upon his death in 1577. Breton obtained his stepfather's papers, and in early 1594 turned his attention to publishing *Sundry lots of love*.

Either because he adopted the name or out of courtesy to Gascoigne's notations and therefore his apparent wishes, Breton either imposed or maintained the name Henry Willobie as the purported author and "christened it by the name of *Willoby his Avisa*." He wrote prefacing material under the names Hadrian Dorrell, Abell Emet and "Contraria Contrariis," and published the volume shortly after completing his contributions in September 1594. In 1596, Peter Colse disparaged *Avisa* in his preface "To the Readers" in *Penelopes Complaint*, a poem "answering" *Avisa*. He penned a Latin

poem by S.D. providing a false clue—though perhaps with a double meaning for the entertainment of insiders—to throw readers off the trail of Avisá’s true identity. Colse made it clear that he knew that “Henry Willobie” was a pseudonym by remarking that the author was in fact “unknown.” By 1596, either before or upon reading Colse’s treatise, Breton had become acutely aware of why Gascoigne had cloaked the identities of the heroine and her suitors, as well as, perhaps, of why he posted the fictitious name Willobie as author. Breton rushed out a response to Colse in a new edition of *Avisa*. In his haste, he contradicted his original authorship attribution to “yong man” Willobie by adding over three decades to his age, thereby approaching the truth. He also pronounced the author deceased, which was accurate, although he was forced to lie that the author was “lately” deceased because of his original phony attribution of the book to a living friend at Oxford. Nine years later, after Elizabeth was dead, Breton extended his defensive maneuvers with a poem in the 1605 edition over another assumed name, Thomas Willobie, billed as Henry’s brother. Thomas was either the fictional or the real-life brother of Henry Willoughby of Wiltshire, an acquaintance of Breton’s, whether he had known him all along or fortuitously met him in the interim. Table 1 summarizes these attributions.

Table 1

Gascoigne wrote:

The entirety of *Avisa*
 “The Authors conclusion”
 “The resolution of a chaste and constant wife”
 “The praise of a contented mind”

Nicholas Breton wrote:

The preface “To the gentle & courteous Reader” by Hadrian Dorrell and the commendatory poems by Abell Emet and Contraria Contrariis in the 1594 edition
 “The Apologie” by Hadrian Dorrell in the 1596 edition
 “The victorie of English Chastitie” by Thomas Willobie in the 1605 edition

The scenario outlined here allows both of Dorrell’s addresses to have much truth to them. In the first version of his story, he says that author had left England and “at his departure, chose me amongst the rest of his frendes, unto whome he reposed so much trust, that he delivered me the key of his study, and the use of all his bookes till his returne.”¹⁶³ Gascoigne traveled to Holland in 1572 and returned in 1574, so it is likely that he left his papers at that time with Breton, who in the meantime brought *Flowres* to press. In the second version of his story, he says that the poem had been around for

a long time, that the author was deceased and that he discovered *Avisa* and its three accompanying poems among the author's papers. It would be entirely reasonable for Breton to have resumed his perusal of Gascoigne's papers after Gascoigne's death and to have found these earlier-written works among them, just as he says. It may be true as well that the name Henry Willobie, as a pseudonym of Gascoigne, was on "everie Page," perhaps reflecting the initials H.W. that appear in Gascoigne's book, *A Hundreth sundrie Flowres*.

We may also account for some of Dorrell's falsehoods, which the sensitive situation required. Given the difference in text and tone between his two addresses, Breton must have found out in the meantime about *Avisa's* meaning, so he chose the safest course by swearing in 1596, "thus much I dare precisely advouch, that the Author intended in this discourse, neyther the description nor prayse of any particular woman, Nor the naming or ciphering of any particular man."¹⁶⁴ In 1594, he did not swear any such thing because, as he clearly indicated at the time, he did not know whether or not it was true. In 1596, he lied because the truth was dangerous. In 1605, he wrote a poem under the name Thomas Willobie to extend the pretense.

The story of *Avisa* and her wooers so well shrouds the real-life actions of Elizabeth and her suitors that the true subject of the poem went undetected by outsiders for nearly 400 years. H.W.'s words to *Avisa* serve well as a solemn promise from Gascoigne to Elizabeth:

Your name by me shall not be crackt,
 But let this tongue from out my jawes,
 Be rent, and bones to peeces rackt,
 If I your secrets doe disclose.¹⁶⁵

Gascoigne was true to his word. Even though we know that *Avisa* is about Elizabeth, we can glean no secrets about her from its pages.

Endnotes

Unless otherwise noted, all references to *Willobie His Avis* are to the 1594 edition.

- ¹ Henry Willobie, *Avisa or The true Picture of a modest Maid...*, Hadrian Dorrell's "To the Reader," (London: John Windet, 1594).
- ² Elizabeth Heale, s.v., "Willoughby (Willobie), Henry (1574/5–1597x1605)." *The Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 21. Stephen, Sir Leslie and Sir Sidney Lee, eds. (London: Oxford University Press, 1921-1922), 506-07.
- ³ Heale, "Willoughby," *DNB* 21, 506.
- ⁴ B.N. de Luna, *The Queen Declined, an Interpretation of Avis*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 28-fn.
- ⁵ Willobie, *Avisa*, "Abell Emet in commendation of Willobies Avis."
- ⁶ Henry Willobie, *Avisa or The true Picture of a modest Maid...*, "The Apologie," (London: John Windet, 1605).
- ⁷ Willobie, *Avisa*, "To the Reader."
- ⁸ Heale, "Willoughby," *DNB* 21, 506.
- ⁹ Peter Colse, *Penelopes complaint: or, A mirrour for wanton minions*. Taken out of Homers Odisea, and written in English verse (London: Printed by [Valentine Simmes for] H. Iackson, 1596).
- ¹⁰ Colse, 6.
- ¹¹ Colse, 5.
- ¹² G.P.V. Akrigg, *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton*, (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 216-17.
- ¹³ de Luna, 8.
- ¹⁴ de Luna, 101.
- ¹⁵ Willobie, *Avisa*, "To the Reader."
- ¹⁶ Willobie, *Avisa*, "To the Reader,"
- ¹⁷ Willobie, *Avisa*, "To the Reader."
- ¹⁸ Willobie, *Avisa*, "The Apologie," (1605).
- ¹⁹ Willobie, *Avisa*, "The Apologie," (1605).
- ²⁰ G.B. Harrison, *Shakespeare at Work*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958, 188). Quoted in B. N. de Luna, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 14.
- ²¹ de Luna, *The Queen Declined*, 2-fn.
- ²² Heale, "Willoughby," *DNB* 21, 506.
- ²³ Henry Willobie, *Avisa or the true picture of a modest maide, and of a chaste and constant wife Wherento is added an apologie, shewing the true meaning of Avis: with the victorie of English chastitie, neuer before published*, (London: Iohn Windet, 1605), 66: 51-52.

- ²⁴ de Luna, 56.
- ²⁵ Sir John E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Pelican Reprint of 1952 edition, 1962), 241. Quoted in B. N. de Luna (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 62.
- ²⁶ de Luna, 62.
- ²⁷ Neale, 241.
- ²⁸ de Luna, 46.
- ²⁹ Willobie, *Avisa*, 41.
- ³⁰ de Luna, 107.
- ³¹ Willobie, *Avisa*, 41.
- ³² Willobie, *Avisa*, 42.
- ³³ de Luna, 95.
- ³⁴ Charlton Ogburn, Jr., *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (McLean, VA: EPM Publications, 1984), 739.
- ³⁵ Ron Hess, E-mail message to 'list,' July 13, 2007.
- ³⁶ Ron Hess, "Tempest's Red Herrings: Does 'Bermoothes' = Bermuda or 'Caliban' = Cannibal?" In *The Dark Side of Shakespeare trilogy*, Sections 3.B, 4.A.6, B.5.6, and C.3, (Internet, Willyshakes.com), <http://willyshakes.com/hesstext.htm>, (accessed March 9, 2009).
- ³⁷ Ogburn, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, 511-13.
- ³⁸ Alan H. Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford* (Liverpool: University Press, 2003), 120, 171, 205.
- ³⁹ Willobie, *Avisa*, 42.
- ⁴⁰ Ron Hess, E-mail message to 'list,' April 5, 2005.
- ⁴¹ Ron Hess, "Another Rare Dreame: Is This An 'Authentic' Oxford Poem?" *The Oxfordian VIII* (2005), 61.
- ⁴² Hess, "Dreame," 76.
- ⁴³ Willobie, *Avisa*, 34.
- ⁴⁴ de Luna, 41-fn.
- ⁴⁵ Willobie, *Avisa*, 16.
- ⁴⁶ Willobie, *Avisa*, 40.
- ⁴⁷ Willobie, *Avisa*, 65.
- ⁴⁸ Willobie, *Avisa*, 43-44.
- ⁴⁹ de Luna, 14.
- ⁵⁰ Harrison, *Shakespeare at Work*, 188.
- ⁵¹ de Luna, 27.
- ⁵² de Luna, 96-97.
- ⁵³ Robert Prechter, "Did Oxford Make his Publishing Debut in 1560 as 'T.H'?" *The Oxfordian*, Vol. X (October 2007), 111-20.
- ⁵⁴ Willobie, *Avisa*, 45.
- ⁵⁵ Willobie, *Avisa*, 46.
- ⁵⁶ de Luna, 40.
- ⁵⁷ Willobie, *Avisa*, "To the Reader."
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She Will Not Be a Mother: Evaluating the Seymour Prince Tudor Hypothesis

Bonner Miller Cutting

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

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

In an article published in 2006 in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Richard Whalen cogently summarized the pros and cons of these two theories. Whalen noted that both theories contain the seductive elements of a good story, including "a possible love affair, potential adultery and bastardy, political intrigue, royal succession, clandestine surrogate parents, changeling children."⁴ Looking at these themes from the perspective of the Shakespeare authorship mystery brings a new depth to the interpretation of Shakespeare's literary work, most especially the *Sonnets*, making this

inquiry one that is well worth pursuing in spite of the dismay that it engenders in some quarters.

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

A Princess' Child?

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

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

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

Seymour's character is a significant component of this narrative. He is described by historian Susan James as "an omnivorous lover whose taste in women seems to have been thoroughly eclectic." Tracy Borman states that "his name had been attached to various other ladies of standing at court."¹⁴ Starkey, among others, concurs, remarking that Seymour was "irresistible to women."¹⁵ John Strype reports in his *Ecclesiastical Memorials* that in 1543, a "lewd woman" is on record accusing him of debauchery, a quaint term for wicked behavior.¹⁶

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

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

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

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

If Elizabeth had been seduced sometime in December of 1547 or early January of 1548 – quite possibly during the London visit – by the spring she would be about four months pregnant and starting to show. Queen Katherine had become pregnant in this same time frame, and her baby was due in early September.³⁰ Maybe Queen Katherine didn't hear the gossip or was reluctant to believe it, but after a few months it became apparent that there might be something to the rumors that her husband was involved with the young Princess. In an attempt to explain Katherine's collusion in the garden scene and the various tickling sessions, David Starkey suggests that the effects of her first pregnancy had "unbalanced her judgment."³¹ It's scant notice of the oddness of this behavior, particularly for a woman who had kept her cool during the turbulent years of her marriage to King Henry VIII.³² A better explanation is that she was disturbed by the rumors that something was going on between her husband and the Princess. Perhaps she was enraged.

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

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

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

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

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

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

But even though the exact date of his death is uncertain, there is no doubt that the discreet Sir Anthony was indispensable to his King. In addition to membership in the Privy Council, he was the Keeper of the Palace, and controlled the dry stamp, the facsimile of the King's signature used often in the last years of the King's life. Denny was also the Keeper of the Privy Purse, an office in which he facilitated the King's personal expenditures.⁵⁴

With regard to Elizabeth, it's possible that the Denny had been overseeing her care for a long time, as his sister-in-law, Katherine Champernon, became her governess upon the birth of Prince Edward. When the time came for Katherine to marry, he found a suitable match in his friend John Ashley, whom he knew from St. John's College, Cambridge.⁵⁵ It is this very Katherine Champernon who entered the

history books as Elizabeth's beloved Kate (or Kat) Ashley, the woman whose devotion to Elizabeth would be sorely tested during the 1548 scandal.

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

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

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

In a society where a woman's honor "rested solely with her sexual chastity," had Elizabeth succumbed to the advances of the Admiral, it was a dishonor to the House of Tudor and everyone associated with it.⁶⁵ As Mary Hazard notes in her book *Elizabethan Silent Language*, the physical presence or absence from important occasions within the royal household was scrutinized in the 16th century. Absence indicated disgrace. Mary Hazard goes on to say that by the time Elizabeth became a Queen herself, she "had suffered first-hand some of the psychological and political manipulations of presence."⁶⁶

In his book *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom*, Charles Beauclerk posits September of 1548 as the time when Elizabeth's could have given birth.⁶⁷ Clearly, the May to December time out of public view provided an adequate window for her to bear a child.

To support this proposition, Beauclerk quotes a report from the Memoires of Jane Dormer. As this gossipy account is taken from a narrative decades later and ultimately published in 1887, it lacks the credibility of spontaneity.⁶⁸ A more credible piece of correspondence is a letter written by Roger Ascham, dated July 8, 1548. Ascham notes that a young woman came to Chelsea, and that if he had been there, he would have introduced this person to the “illustrious Lady,” who is certainly Princess Elizabeth. It has been suggested that Ascham’s letter indicates that Elizabeth could not have been pregnant, as no visitors would have been allowed around her at that time. But the letter clearly states that the meeting with the “illustrious Lady” did not occur.⁶⁹

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

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

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

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

My Lord,

You needed not to send *an excuse* to me, for I could *not mistrust* the *not fulfilling* of your promise to proceed for *want of goodwill*, but *only the opportunity serveth not*, wherefore I shall desire you to think that *a greater matter than this could not* make me impute any *unkindness* in you. For I am a friend *not won with trifles*, nor *lost with the like*. Thus

I commit you and all your affairs in God's hand, who keep you from *all evil*. I pray you make my humble commendations to the queen's highness (emphasis added).⁷³

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

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

By December of 1548, the Princess and her household had settled at Hatfield House. They may have thought the storm had passed. Now a widower, Seymour interrupted his mourning long enough to start the process for the hand of Elizabeth in marriage.⁸⁰ Using Elizabeth's cofferer Thomas Parry as a go between, Seymour gathered information about Elizabeth's landholdings, inquiring about their location, value, and condition: "if it were good lands or no;" "what state she had in the lands, for terme of life, or how;" and "whether she had out her letters patentes or no."⁸¹ The discussion of property was a usual preparation for marriage.⁸² Seymour also offered Elizabeth the use of his own house in London.⁸³ But Seymour's plans came to a halt with his sudden arrest on January 17, 1549. Kate Ashley, Thomas Parry and others who were connected to either the Princess or the Admiral were arrested the next day.⁸⁴ Ashley and Parry were subsequently questioned, and as their depositions are the basis of the historical account of the relationship between Elizabeth and the Admiral, the circumstances surrounding these depositions deserve some consideration. While Elizabeth was grilled by Lord Tyrwhit at Hatfield in the early months of 1549, Ashley and Parry were questioned in London.

Interestingly, it appears that their depositions were taken by Sir Thomas Smith, the accomplished Cambridge University academic who, at this time, was serving as the clerk of the Privy Council.⁸⁵ They were in friendly hands with Smith.⁸⁶ The capable Sir Thomas was another Cambridge associate of Sir Anthony Denny's, and an adherent

to the Protestant Reformation. The presence of Sir Thomas Smith suggests that the prisoners would be treated gently, and spared the full force of the brutality that might have been used against them.⁸⁷

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

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

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

Straightaway, the House of Lords passed a guilty verdict, but the unruly Commons asked questions. Seems there were some members who thought that the charges were not commensurate with the Attainder that would result in Seymour's execution *without a trial*. The Commons were right to balk. Bishop Latimer noted that Seymour was known for his "moral profligacy,"⁹⁶ but this unwritten charge would only

have been an issue of state if the Princess had been involved. In the end enough votes were mustered in the Commons to pass the Act of Attainder, though there were still a few holdouts.⁹⁷ Thomas Seymour was executed on March 19, 1549, without a trial, which in turn denied him the opportunity to speak in his own defense.

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

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

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

Was this child the 17th Earl of Oxford?

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

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

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

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

The idea of a changeling carries some romantic mystique generations later, but exchanging a child born in the fall of 1548 for a child reportedly born to the 16th Earl of Oxford in April of 1550 has some practical considerations. Are the 16th Earl and his Countess going to explain to their friends, neighbors and household that they simply *forgot* to inform them of the birth of their son and heir eighteen months earlier? Or did they just expect that servants and others would not be able to tell the difference between an infant and an eighteen-month-old toddler?

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

The Privy Council’s gift of the baptismal cup, as noted above, shows that the birth of a nobleman’s son was an event of import. Another contemporaneous notice of John de Vere and his son appears in the Calendar State Papers Foreign.¹¹⁴ Dated August 18, 1562, the letter is calendared from Somers to Throckmorton. At this time, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton was the ambassador to France, and John Somers was

his London correspondent.¹¹⁵ The letter is both informational and gossipy.¹¹⁶ After a lengthy paragraph reporting recent court events, he notes that “The Earl of Oxford has departed to God, leaving a son about twelve years old.” Obviously, the death of a peer and the age of his son are newsworthy. John de Vere died on August 3, 1562, so by August 18th – the date of this letter – the word is getting around. Viewed in context, this is the kind of spontaneous chatter that the death of a grandee should generate. An opposing position might hold that the twelve year age of the future 17th Earl was adhered to just on general principles, but at a minimum, this letter supports the view that the information was noticed.¹¹⁷

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

Still another historical circumstance serves as an indicator that Edward de Vere was *not* a royal changeling. After Elizabeth’s ascendancy, she never took him into the Royal Order of the Garter. Then as now, membership in the Garter was highly coveted. A candidate would be voted upon by the members, but the final selection was made by the monarch. Peter Moore examined the Garter records to ascertain where the 17th Earl of Oxford fits into this picture. He found that Elizabeth was partial to her favorites over the years, selecting the Earl of Leicester, the Earl of Essex and Sir Christopher Hatton for membership. In the Garter voting of 1572, the 17th Earl of Oxford had adequate votes for admission, and this was the time frame in which he was considered a court favorite.¹²¹ It is puzzling that she passed him over for two peers of lower rank.¹²² It seems that she would have chosen him for membership if he had been her son or if she had been romantically involved with him.¹²³

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

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

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

Conclusion

As aficionados of television crime shows are aware, it takes three components to make a circumstantial case: motive, means and opportunity. With respect to the question of Princess Elizabeth's alleged pregnancy, these three elements are found here in abundance, and add up to a compelling circumstantial case that Elizabeth had a child with the Admiral. She was living in Seymour's house for approximately a year, providing him with ample opportunity for the seduction. Seymour's sexual interest in her is historically documented in letters, depositions and state papers. The Dowager Queen Katherine Parr ultimately grasped the situation and sent the Princess Elizabeth to live elsewhere.

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

After her dismissal, Elizabeth was cloistered at Cheshunt where she was out of public view from May through December, providing ample time for a pregnancy. Had she made a public appearance *anywhere* during this time, the rumors of her own possible pregnancy would have vanished. Moreover, she was sheltered at Cheshunt by Sir Anthony Denny, one of the most loyal and capable of the Tudor counselors. These circumstances provide the means with which the pregnancy was contained

within the Protestant inner circle. The matter was further contained by the beheading of the Admiral in accordance with the Act of Attainder, an act that could be seen as retribution for what was a treasonable offense against the House of Tudor. If Elizabeth did not have a child, then there is inadequate motive for her six-month confinement at Cheshunt and the Admiral's execution.¹³²

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

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

In closing, Sir Anthony Denny is the linchpin of the story, though it is a story not fully told in this paper, nor has it been fully explored by historians.¹³³ Initially, Denny played a crucial role in rescuing Elizabeth from the Seymour debacle. However, Denny died within the year, and it may well have been the ameliorating presence of a new man in the Tudor court who brought the Seymour matter to a close. This new man was William Cecil, and he was every bit as discreet and capable as Sir Anthony. After Elizabeth became Queen, Cecil provided his royal mistress with invaluable service in numerous posts including that of her Principal Secretary and her Lord Treasurer. The power that he wielded behind the scenes as Master of the Royal Wards also remains to be fully recognized by orthodox historians.¹³⁴ Had there been any changelings, Cecil would be the one to know. Thus it is instructive to look at one of his last letters to his son, Robert Cecil. Written in his own hand, he describes a recent visit from the Queen:

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

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

Endnotes

- ¹ Hank Whittemore, *The Monument* (Massachusetts: Meadow Geese Press, 2005). Whalen notes that Whittemore's book provides by far the most comprehensive explication of the Sonnets supporting the PT Theory of Southampton's birth. Helen Heightsman Gordon concurs in *The Secret Love Story in Shakespeare's Sonnets*. The Southampton Prince Tudor hypothesis had been proposed by Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn in *This Star of England* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1952), 812-938.
- ² Paul Streitz, *Oxford, Son of Queen Elizabeth I* (USA: Oxford Institute Press, 2001). More information on the Seymour PT Theory can be found on Nina Green's website at <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/documents.html>. It was offered in a manuscript circa 1950 by Walter Freeman, and published in 1991 by Dr. Peter Sammartino as Vol. XIX of the Fairleigh Dickinson University Archival Series.
- ³ Charles Beauclerk, *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom* (New York: Grove Press, 2010). The film *Anonymous* incorporates both theories as they are put forth by Beauclerk in this book.
- ⁴ Richard Whalen, "The 'Prince Tudor' Hypothesis: A Brief Survey of the Pros and Cons," *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter* 42:2 (Spring 2006), 10-11, 17-18, 32.
- ⁵ Henry VIII's fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, was the last of his six wives to die, but she and the King were divorced.
- ⁶ Susan E. James, *Kateryn Parr The Making of a Queen* (England: Ashgate, 1999), 91-94. Alison Weir, *The Life of Elizabeth I* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 14-15. Carolly Erickson, *The First Elizabeth* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 65.
- ⁷ David Starkey, *Elizabeth: The Struggle for the Throne* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 66.
- ⁸ Antonia Fraser, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 397 – 405. Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 67.
- ⁹ James, 298.
- ¹⁰ Starkey, *Elizabeth*. 42-46.
- ¹¹ Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, Mary Beth Rose, eds. *Elizabeth I Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 6-7, 10-13. This relationship manifested itself in the Queen's encouragement of Elizabeth's literary activities. Marcus, et al publish in full the two dedicatory letters that accompany the translations that the young Princess gave as New Year's gifts to her stepmother. The letters are dated December 31, 1544, and December 30, 1545, respectively.

The earlier letter is published by Frank A. Mumby in his book *The Girlhood of Elizabeth* (London: Constable & Company, LTD, 1909), 24-25. Starkey provides a discussion, 47-49.

- ¹² Starkey, *Elizabeth*. 65, 335. As per Rymer's *Foedera XV*, p. 116, Queen Katherine was well provided for under Henry's will with money and property. Of her two principal country seats, Hanworth and Chelsea, the latter was her favorite.
- ¹³ The major source of the historical narrative is Samuel Haynes, *A Collection of State Papers Left by William Cecil, Lord Burghley* (London, 1940), 95-101. It should be noted that Lord Burghley was hardly a nonpartisan observer, and was highly sensitive to what was reported in the public record. His son Robert Cecil shared his father's vigilant eye. In addition, it should be factored in that Elizabeth enjoyed a forty-five year reign in which she (and her great counselor) controlled the primary records of the era. These circumstances suggest that the Burghley papers (edited nearly two hundred years later by Haynes) are highly sanitized and should be evaluated with caution.
- ¹⁴ Tracy Borman, *Elizabeth's Women* (United Kingdom: Vintage, 2009), 108.
- ¹⁵ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 66. Further elaborating on the Admiral's attraction to women, Starkey notes "*devote, bluestocking or politique, they gladly gave up religion learning and prudence at his beck and call.*"
- ¹⁶ James, 298. Strype's report, as presented by James, is in his *Ecclesiastical Memorials*. The accusation of the Admiral's misconduct was made shortly before Kateryn became Queen (c. 1543). The unfortunate "lewd woman" was executed. For further information: John Strype, *Ecclesiastical memorials, relating chiefly to religion, and the reformation of it, and the emergencies of the Church of England, under King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Mary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1821), 197.
- ¹⁷ Starkey, 69. The source for these reports is Haynes' *A Collection of State Papers ... Left by William Cecil, Lord Burghley*, 99-100. See below for further discussion.
- ¹⁸ Starkey, 69.
- ¹⁹ Starkey, 69.
- ²⁰ Carolly Erickson, *Bloody Mary* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1978), 42-43. Queen Katherine of Aragon consulted the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives to design a strict plan of study for Mary. Vives regarded women as inherently sinful and in dire need of protection. As Erickson states, this protection was to guard "more securely and safely Mary's virginity." Erasmus concurred that the preservation of modesty was paramount, and that the primary value of education for girls was to impart the understanding that their chastity was "an inestimable treasure."
- ²¹ Mandell Creighton, *Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1899), 5-11. Although hailed as an account of the Queen's life that supposedly ushered in a more objective outlook on her reign, Creighton glosses over the scandalous events at Chelsea. He mentions briefly the "familiarity" that led to Elizabeth's dismissal from her stepmother's home. He further notes that after she moved to

Cheshunt, “everything was done to repair past indiscretion and let it sink into oblivion.” He doesn’t give details of what “everything” might have been. If this represents a progressive trend among Elizabethan biographers, it was quickly dashed several years later, with Jacob Abbott’s rendition, also titled *Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1900). Calling up more sycophantic language, Abbott writes that “mysterious circumstances produced a somewhat unfavorable impression in regard to Elizabeth, and there were some instances, it was said, of light and trifling behavior between Elizabeth and Seymour, while she was in his house during the lifetime of his wife.” He notes that they “got into frolics” (55).

²² Frederick Chamberlin, *The Private Character of Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1922), 3. By Chamberlin’s account, the Queen “saw no harm in the proceedings,” but after the situation was called to her attention, presumably by Elizabeth’s governess Kat Ashley, the Queen “thereafter accompanied her spouse upon these pleasant visits, except upon one occasion where she appears to have been too tardy, for by the time she reached Elizabeth’s apartment, Katherine, to quote her own words, found her husband “having her [Elizabeth] in his arms.” Chamberlin is quick to point out that “there was, however, no greater guilt than these words exactly state...”

²³ Marcus et al., 28. The source of this story is the deposition of Kate Ashley herself, and her statement is not corroborated by accounts of other witnesses. In his book *The Girlhood of Elizabeth*, Mumby reiterates the relevant parts of Ashley’s deposition without comment. 34-35. Agnes Strickland notes that Ashley “remonstrated with the Admiral” in her 1904 book *The Life of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Hutchinson & Co.), 14. Chamberlin, 3.

²⁴ Creighton, 7. Creighton puts forth the harsh accusation that Ashley was an accomplice, noting that the governess “discussed with Elizabeth the attentions of her admirer, and connived at water-parties by night on the Thames.” This interpretation appears to be an effort to transfer blame from Elizabeth for her actions, to Ashley for dereliction of duty.

²⁵ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 69. Starkey supplies all of the citations from the Burghley Papers, p. 335. Additional authorities for the same information are Frank Mumby, Agnes Strickland, and, more recently, the *Collected works of Elizabeth I* edited by Marcus et al., previously cited.

²⁶ Weir, 14-15. Starkey (69) concurs with the assessment that the occurrence was an innocent prank.

²⁷ Fraser, 404. Historians acknowledge that Queen Catherine accompanied the Admiral on his visits to Elizabeth’s bedchamber and participated in other “tickling” incidents. Fraser calls these reports “sexy horseplay.”

²⁸ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 69. These are the “pleasant visits” mentioned by Chamberlin, cited above. 3.

²⁹ Starkey, 69.

- ³⁰ Some authorities place the date of the child's birth on September 1, 1548. It is given as August 30, 1548, in the *DNB*. Starkey and Fraser concur with the latter date. This minor variance is of no import in placing the time frame of the Queen's conception in late November or early December, 1547.
- ³¹ Starkey, 70. Borman agrees with this assessment in her book *Elizabeth's Women*, suggesting that "perhaps the hormonal disruption had clouded her accustomed judgment" (116).
- ³² David Loades, *The Politics of Marriage: Henry VIII and His Queens* (United Kingdom: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1994), 140, 136-137. Loades characterizes Queen Katherine as "a benign presence rather than a power" in King Henry's court. In his thoughtful and well informed chapter on her, Loades further notes that "it may well have been her dignity and self-possessed calm which first aroused his interest."
- ³³ Elizabeth Jenkins, *Elizabeth the Great* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc, 1959), 26-27. Jenkins' account of the "romps" follows the story and timeline that is accepted by the historical consensus. She calls the scene in the garden "startling horseplay," and notes that "Seymour indulged in a practice often heard of in police courts." Jenkins does not give a citation for this statement, which is a "startling" comment in and of itself.
- ³⁴ Marcus, 28. Posterity knows about the dress cutting incident through Kate Ashley's deposition taken in February of 1549 when the Admiral's trial was in the offing. The deposition is in Ashley's own hand, and she states that the incident occurred at the Queen's manor house of Hanworth.
- ³⁵ Starkey, 70.
- ³⁶ P. S. Crowson, *Tudor Foreign Policy* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1973), 64-66, 78, 89-91. The marriage of Arthur and the daughter of King Ferdinand and Isabella was a result of ten years of diplomacy. Henry VII's older daughter Margaret married the King of Scotland. In 1514, his son Henry VIII married off his younger sister Mary to the King of France.
- ³⁷ Carolly Erickson, *Bloody Mary* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1978), 30-33. Styling this marriage as "an alternative to war" with France, a treaty accompanied the marriage vows in the proxy wedding. The plan was to consummate the match when the Dauphin turned fourteen. "Through her betrothal to the dauphin Mary had become the living embodiment of peace between England and France" (35).
- ³⁸ Erickson, 52-55. The marriage was scheduled to take place when Mary turned twelve, but after five years, the Emperor chose to endure the obligatory diplomatic wrangling with Cardinal Wolsey and broke the engagement. For Charles, the marriage had been "a minor detail of a diplomatic alliance."
- ³⁹ Erickson, 67-72. It was not long after the broken engagement with Charles V that Henry and Wolsey were negotiating another marriage for Mary. This time the proposed groom was the French King Francis I, rather than his son.

- ⁴⁰ Erickson, 193-94. Even though he bastardized daughter Mary, Henry VIII continued to use her as a tool in his foreign policy. “From Henry’s point of view, the diplomatic rivalries generated by Mary’s availability were far more important than any betrothal that might be concluded.” 194-95. After Mary became Queen, she legitimized herself in her first Parliament, in which it was declared that she had been born “in a most just and lawfull matrimony” (*DNB*, 1228).
- ⁴¹ Eric Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 83. In spite of the loss of legitimate status, Mary retained a more desirable position as an available princess than Elizabeth did, as in the eyes of the Catholic church, the offspring was legitimate if the marriage was entered into in good faith (*bona fide*). The marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon passed the test of good faith, certainly on Catherine’s part.
- ⁴² Starkey, 30-33.
- ⁴³ Loades, 141. Mary herself lamented that no husband had been found for her, saying that she would be “only the Lady Mary, and the most unhappy lady in Christendom.” Loades cites *The Lisle Letters*, p. 169.
- ⁴⁴ Erickson, 224-32. Erickson provides a good discussion of the intrigue surrounding the last years of Henry’s reign. In these last years, Mary was treated well by her father, though he still made no progress in procuring a marriage for her. She turned thirty-one just after his death in January, 1547.
- ⁴⁵ Hutchinson, Robert. *The Last Days of Henry VIII* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), 96-97.
- ⁴⁶ It is noteworthy how many of the men who surrounded Princess Elizabeth had matriculated to St. John’s College, Cambridge, where, according to the *DNB*, “many of the fellows in Cardinal Wolsey’s time privately studied the scriptures and the works of Luther” (Vol IV, 178). In addition to Sir Anthony Denny, its fellows included the influential educators Roger Ascham, William Grindal, and Sir John Cheke, and the latter counted among his students Sir William Cecil and William Bill (whose brother Dr. Thomas Bill was a physician to King Edward VI).
- ⁴⁷ Robert Hutchinson, 152-55. Though Denny officially entered the King Henry’s service in 1536, he garnered the King’s endorsement for election to Parliament the year before. By 1538, he had replaced his own mentor, Sir Francis Bryan, and was “privy to Henry’s innermost thoughts and changing moods” (151).
- ⁴⁸ Starkey, 78.
- ⁴⁹ Hutchinson, 154.
- ⁵⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004. A comparison of Denny’s biography as it appears in the new *ODNB* with that of a century ago (*Dictionary of National Biography, Volume V*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1968. 823-24) reveals that some of the gaps have been filled in, yet the sources for the later version are not impressive. These sources include several PhD dissertations and articles in esoteric journals. The *ODNB* provides more details on Denny’s accumulation

of wealth and his ascendancy in King Henry's court, yet no mention is made of his sister-in-law Katherine Champerton Ashley, a connection that is difficult to overlook. In the earlier version of Denny's biography, he is described as an "excellent scholar" at St. John's College, Cambridge, and a "zealous promoter of the Reformation." He mellowed a bit in the century between biographies and is described as a "moderate in the expression of his religious views." The endowment of the Sedbergh school in Yorkshire is an important achievement acknowledged in both biographies. In addition to financing the rebuilding of the school, he made monetary arrangements to ensure that the school had a stable future. The earlier DNB relates that the date of death has been put at 1551, 1550 and 1549, though the last date is supported by compelling circumstances. It states that "it appears that he was buried at Cheshunt."

- ⁵¹ The ODNB biography notes that he provided for nine children in his will. The earlier version states that he and his wife Joan had six children. Robert Hutchinson reports twelve children in his book *The Last Days of Henry VIII*, 154. If this report were true, then Mrs. Denny would have borne twelve children in their eleven-year marriage. The ODNB gives the date of their marriage as February 9, 1539, and Denny's death on September 10, 1549. Bearing nine surviving children in this time frame is asking a lot, and the accomplished Joan Denny even had time to participate in Queen Katherine Parr's religious studies at court and befriend Anne Askew, a notable Protestant martyr.
- ⁵² Hutchinson, 152. This remarkable document is from the archives at Longleat House; Hutchinson provides the citation on p. 297.
- ⁵³ The entry in the earlier DNB notes that the date of Denny's death has been variously reported as occurring in 1551, 1550 and 1549, though the last date is supported by compelling circumstances; most notably, Mrs. Denny took reversionary possession of his Westminster property at this time, an action that would indicate that his Will had gone through probate. As to his burial, it is stated in the DNB, again somewhat equivocally, that "it appears that he was buried at Cheshunt."
- ⁵⁴ Hutchinson, 154-56. Alison Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and His Court* (New York: Ballantine Books), 467.
- ⁵⁵ Erickson, 42. The well connected John Ashley was a cousin of the Boleyns, and Elizabeth made him Master of the Jewel House upon her ascendancy in 1558. Weir, 24.
- ⁵⁶ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume III* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press), 1220-21. In July, Queen Katherine removed her household to Sudeley Castle for her "lying in," and a room there is known to this day as "Queen Catherine's nursery." As Sudeley was a considerable distance from Cheshunt – and a far greater journey than Chelsea — it could be argued that Sudeley was too far a distance for the Princess to travel.
- ⁵⁷ DNB, 1218. In her official biography, Queen Katherine is credited with procuring the restoration of both Henry's daughters Mary and Elizabeth from the bastardy into

which they had been put by the King. The Queen obtained a pardon for Elizabeth for which she composed “a very grateful epistle” to her step mother.

- ⁵⁸ Failing in his accustomed thoroughness, Starkey does not mention the fact that Lady Jane Grey stood godmother to the Queen’s child in either his account of the Elizabeth’s early life or in his *Six Wives*. Wier and Erickson also take no note of it; Fraser does mentions it (406).
- ⁵⁹ Borman, 121. Fraser, 406. James, 330.
- ⁶⁰ James, 309-12. Both the Dowager Queen and Seymour conducted a letter-writing campaign to obtain the approval of the royal court for their union. Mary resisted the pressure, responding to the Admiral’s solicitation (at Katherine’s behest) that “my letters shall do you but small pleasure...” and noting that she was “not to be a meddler in this matter.” Mary’s refusal should have been a disappointment to Katherine. Her endorsement would have been helpful, as the marriage was not well received, but publicly greeted with “surprise, disgust and anger.” In the most recent biography of the Dowager Queen, Linda Porter describes Mary’s “clinical detachment” and her response to Seymour as a “carefully implied reprimand.” Porter, Linda. *Katherine the Queen: The Remarkable Life of Katherine Parr, the Last Wife of Henry VIII* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2010), 291-292, 301.
- ⁶¹ If the Queen had just wanted to pass over Elizabeth without the added snub of naming her baby for Elizabeth’s older sister, she might have considered Katherine (her own name) as well as that of her good friend Katherine Willoughby, the Duchess of Suffolk, who shared her Protestant Reformist faith.
- ⁶² James, 332. In her comprehensive biography of Queen Katherine, James does not give the exact date of the funeral but notes that the Admiral departed Sudeley immediately after she died, thereby leaving the funeral preparations to others. That it took place soon after her death may be extrapolated from the fact that the Queen’s body was located in 1782 and her skin (which had been properly wrapped in layers of cerecloths and encased in lead) was still “white and moist,” indicating she was prepared for interment with alacrity (*DNB*, 1221).
- ⁶³ Starkey, David. *Six Wives The Queens of Henry VIII* (New York: Perennial, 2004), 765. Starkey indicates that the dying Queen Dowager, in her delirium, “sometimes railed against Seymour and his betrayal of her with Elizabeth.” Not all historians go quite this far as Elizabeth is not named in Lady Tyrwhit’s statement regarding Katherine’s accusations as she lay dying in the days following the birth of her daughter. However, Queen Katherine made various accusations against her husband, most notably an implication that he poisoned her. Though reported somewhat vaguely in the testimony of Lady Tyrwhit, it is implied that the Queen realized that her death would leave Seymour free to pursue Elizabeth. Lady Tyrwhit’s Confession, as it is called, is reported in the *Haynes State Papers*, 103-104. Frazer, 407. James, 331. Porter, 321-22. As Porter comments, “Her [Katherine’s] reproofs also suggest strongly how devastated she had been by his behavior with Elizabeth” (322).

- ⁶⁴ Erickson, 79. Lady Jane Grey was the chief mourner at Queen Catherine's funeral held at Sudeley. The conscientiousness of the ten-year-old Jane is noteworthy as she watched "hour after hour beside the candlelit bier" and made "the traditional offerings of money to the alms box at the funeral." James includes this information without comment. 332. Eric Ives follows James in his recent biography of Jane Grey: *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery* (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 45.
- ⁶⁵ Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England* (London: Longman, 1999), 32-33, 77.
- ⁶⁶ Hazard, Mary E. *Elizabethan Silent Language* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 231-35. In her intriguing chapter on Absent/Present, Present/Absence, the author examines the rules and conventions that governed public appearances. "From the earliest moments of her reign, Elizabeth dramatized her appearances so as to render them both politically useful and historically memorable."
- ⁶⁷ C Beauclerk, 39. In endorsing both Prince Tudor theories, Beauclerk believes "if Elizabeth did give birth, it most likely was in September of the previous year [1548], just before she left her seclusion at Cheshunt to go to Hatfield, and could easily have been hushed up among her inner circle." Although Beauclerk does not spell it out, the May to December window is adequate for a pregnancy. If Elizabeth were four months pregnant in May, she would have given birth in late September or early October. Even factoring in a margin of error of a month or so, there is time for her recovery and for arrangements to be made to set her up with her own household at Hatfield House by December.
- ⁶⁸ *The Memoires of Jane Dormer, the Duchesse of Feria* (1538-1612) can be accessed on the internet. She was the wife of Count de Feria and spent her adult life in Spain. As she was a partisan of Queen Mary, the objectivity of her memoirs with regards to Queen Elizabeth's reign might be questioned.
- ⁶⁹ Christopher Paul, "The 'Prince Tudor' Dilemma: Hip Thesis, Hypothesis, or Old Wives Tale?" *The Oxfordian* V, (2002), 51. A letter from Roger Ascham to William Ireland, dated July 8, 1548, has drawn some comment. This correspondence has import as it deals with the Princess during the time of her possible pregnancy. According to Starkey, Ascham became Elizabeth's tutor upon the death of William Grindal "in early 1548" (82). The *DNB* puts Grindal's death from the plague in the summer of 1548 (VIII, 708). If this is the case, then Ascham may *not* have been with Elizabeth at Chelsea, Grindal was. This means that Ascham's account is not first hand. Starkey puts him in Elizabeth's service "immediately" after Grindal's death, but exactly when this was is lost in the vagaries between "early" 1548 and the "summer" of 1548. It is possible that Grindal went with her to Cheshunt in May, though perhaps he took a hiatus from her service. Perhaps Ascham came and went at Chelsea as well as Cheshunt. The record does not say. Moreover, Ascham cannot be looked upon as a disinterested observer. As another graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge, he had earned his stripes in

the inner circle of Denny's Protestant Reformation group. There should be no doubt of his loyalty to the Protestant cause, the House of Tudor, and most of all, to the Princess whom he served. In this letter he mentions one "Katherine R," a "most charming and honorable girl" who "has been with me." He also notes that "I was at court on the day when she came to Chelsea, but if I hadn't been, I would have taken her to my most illustrious Lady." This sentence is put forth as an indicator that Elizabeth could not have been pregnant, as Ascham would not have invited a guest to an audience with her under those circumstances. There are several things to consider: 1. The "illustrious Lady" is Princess Elizabeth, but the charming (and unidentified) Katherine R. came to Chelsea, not Cheshunt (unless this is a mistake in the transcription of Ascham's handwriting). 2. Ascham is writing retrospectively in July of something that took place earlier. 3. He wasn't at Chelsea but at court at the time that Katherine R. came to Chelsea. 4. The meeting with the "illustrious Lady" did not occur. Ascham may have been making a deliberate effort to create the impression that a normal ebb and flow of people and events had surrounded the Princess while at Chelsea.

⁷⁰ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume VI* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1968), 623. The rumors ultimately played a part in the "examinations and confessions" of Elizabeth's principal servants.

⁷¹ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume III* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1221. Queen Katherine's household is reported to have numbered 120 gentlemen. Assuming that the number of women servants was on a par with this, the Queen could easily have had 200 or so people with "argus eyes" witnessing the events of the household.

⁷² Marcus et al., 17-18. The editors have dated this letter to June, 1548, though it has been incorrectly given as December, 1547 in the PRO Calendar. Mumby dates it to June of 1547. It is clearly written after Elizabeth's departure from the Queen in May of 1548 as it notes that the Queen is "undoubtful of health," a reference to her pregnancy. Mumby, 35-36.

⁷³ Marcus, 19. The letter is in Elizabeth's hand, but the date is conjectural. She is ostensibly responding to correspondence from the Admiral. It appears that the Admiral was trying to patch things up between them. But the extraordinary negativity in Elizabeth's reply indicates deep hurt, and her "commendations" to the Queen his wife carry a veiled reprimand. The letter is now archived in The Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.

⁷⁴ Mumby, 26-28. Examples of polite contemporaneous correspondence are Prince Edward's letter to Elizabeth December of 1546 (the prince was eleven years old), and Roger Ascham's undated letter to Mrs. Ashley. In Appendix I to her biography of Queen Katherine, Susan James has published all of love letters between Katherine and Seymour (403-412).

⁷⁵ Marcus, 21-22. Two additional letters from the aftermath of this timeframe shed light on Elizabeth. Both are dated conjecturally but clearly are from the fall of

1548. In writing to her brother the King, she claims illness. "For an affliction of my head and eyes has come upon me, which has so sorely troubled me since my coming to this house that, although I have often tried to write to your majesty, I have until this day ever been restrained from my intention and undertaking. The which condition, having somewhat abated..." Now really! She had been at Cheshunt for at least four months (from the end of May to the end of September). One would think this sufficient time to get off a paragraph or two to her brother. The second letter is to the Lord Protector Somerset (Edward Seymour). She thanks him for being "careful for my health, and sending unto me not only your comfortable letters but also physicians as Doctor Bill, whose diligence and pain has been a great part of my recovery." It can be readily extrapolated that Elizabeth's condition was known at court, and a trusted court doctor (or doctors as Elizabeth uses the plural) were sent to ascertain the state of her health and speed her "recovery" from her headaches. The "Dr. Bill" to whom Elizabeth refers is Dr. Thomas Bill, physician to both King Henry VIII and Edward VI. His brother was the eminent Dr. William Bill, dean of Westminster and graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge. At Cambridge, he had been a student of both John Cheke and Sir Thomas Smith.

- ⁷⁶ Fraser, 404-408. In her account of Queen Katherine, Fraser endorses the interpretation that these letters are a show of affection, and that the Queen sent Elizabeth away to preserve decorum. Chamberlin notes that "she and her former hostess remained *upon the best of terms* until the death of the latter, three months later" (3).
- ⁷⁷ Marcus, 5-7, 10-13. Compare this to the three letters to her step mother written when Elizabeth was about 10 years old, at which time she could affect a fluid style with lengthy praise.
- ⁷⁸ Marcus, 20. This last piece of correspondence between Elizabeth and Katherine was archived in the Cottonian collection at the British Library, and "shows damage from the 1742 fire." (BL, MS Cotton Otho C.X., fol.236v)
- ⁷⁹ Borman, 120-121.
- ⁸⁰ Maclean, John. *The Life of Sir Thomas Seymour, Knight* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1869), 72-76.
- ⁸¹ Bernard, G. W. *Power and Politics in Tudor England* (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000), 138.
- ⁸² Bernard, 138. That Seymour planned to propose marriage to Elizabeth is indicated by "a complex serried of letters and messages between Elizabeth, Seymour, Ashley and Thomas Parry," as well as boasts that Seymour is supposed to have made to Lord Russell.
- ⁸³ Bernard, 138, 155. The Admiral's interest in Elizabeth's property and his offer of his London house for her use is reported in Haynes' *State Papers*.
- ⁸⁴ Maclean, 75. Starkey, 78, 336. Starkey reports that Parry and Ashley were arrested by

Sir Anthony Denny and William Paulet, Lord St. John. The circumstances of the “arrest” are of interest. After arriving “unexpectedly” at Hatfield, first they dined. After dinner, they arrested Parry and Ashley, who “were able to agree on tactics to cope with their forthcoming ordeal.” Starkey cites A. Jefferies Collins’ *Jewels and Plate of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1955), 202-203.

- ⁸⁵ Marcus, 28–30. One of the most capable of the Protestant scholars at Cambridge, Smith’s services were invaluable to the Royal Court of Edward VI.
- ⁸⁶ Marcus, 25-26, 28-29. Marcus provides information identifying the handwriting and additional notes about the people who are referenced in the depositions.
- ⁸⁷ Starkey, 79. As noted above, Sir Anthony Denny was one of the two councilors who came to Hatfield to take Ashley and Parry into custody; his presence suggests he continued to oversee the situation.
- ⁸⁸ Foyster, 32-33. Elizabeth is referring to her sexual behavior; a woman’s “honour” depended exclusively on her sexual chastity.
- ⁸⁹ Marcus, 23-24.
- ⁹⁰ Smith, Alan Gordon. *William Cecil : The Power Behind Elizabeth* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1934), 47.
- ⁹¹ Marcus, 25-30. The editors provide Kat Ashley’s depositions in full with illuminating details on the handwriting.
- ⁹² Mumby, 45-49. The deposition of Thomas Parry is not included in the letters published by Marcus et al. The source of this deposition, which appears to be given in full by Mumby, is the Haynes edition of the *Burghley State Papers*. Parry’s deposition deserves careful study. Dated February of 1549, Parry recalls “I do remember also she told me that the Admiral loved her but too well, and had done so a good while: and that the Queen was jealous of her and him in so much that one time the Queen, suspecting the often access of the Admiral to the Lady Elizabeth Grace, came suddenly upon them, where they were all alone (he having her in his arms); wherefore the Queen fell out, both with the Lord Admiral, and with her Grace also.” The gravity of the situation is apparent as Parry reports “and likewise, in bidding me to do her [Ashley’s] commendations and good will to the Admiral, she required me great secrecy. And I did likewise promise her, and said I had rather be pulled with horses, or such like words, than I would tell it to any.”
- ⁹³ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume XVII*, 1270
- ⁹⁴ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume XVII*, 1337-1338. Seymour’s partner in crime was Sir William Sharington, vice-treasurer of the mint at Bristol, who was attainted along with the Admiral. Although Sharington used his position at the mint to perpetrate extensive frauds as well as support the Admiral’s misdeeds, he was pardoned within a year and repurchased his forfeited estates. The restoration of Sharington’s status and fortune further suggests that something more serious was behind the charges against Seymour.

⁹⁵ Porter, 336.

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

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

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

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

¹⁰⁰ Bernard, 151-52. The men of the Privy Council were, as always, involved in the power struggle for dominance. The faction led by John Dudley, the Earl of Warwick, sought to rid the Council of both Seymour brothers, not just the Admiral. He accomplished this within a year.

¹⁰¹ Marcus, 33. The editors note that no proclamation from early March is extant, but a local order may have gone out to this effect. On October 30, 1549, the Council did issue a declaration against rumors.

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

¹⁰³ Marcus, 36.

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

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

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

- ¹⁰⁷ Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*. Abridged edition (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1967), 253.
- ¹⁰⁸ Stone, 249.
- ¹⁰⁹ It should be noted that Sir Anthony's Denny's Cheshunt seems to be an exception. Such silence surrounds the discreet Sir Anthony that, as previously mentioned, even the exact date of his death and place of burial are uncertain.
- ¹¹⁰ Joel Hurstfield, *The Queen's Wards Wardship and Marriage under Elizabeth I*. (London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1958), 158- 170.
- ¹¹¹ Paul, 61. The Privy Council's gift to the 16th Earl of Oxford on April 17, 1550, in recognition of the birth of "Edw, Co. Oxon natus" is found in SP 13.142.
- ¹¹² Streitz, 63-65.
- ¹¹³ Beauclerk, 39. Beauclerk provides no historical information to support his use of the Seymour PT theory, preferring to use literary allusions to illegitimacy and bastard children in the Shakespeare Canon.
- ¹¹⁴ I am indebted to Martin Hyatt for calling my attention to this notice in the Calendar State Papers Foreign.
- ¹¹⁵ *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume XIX*, 810- 14.
- ¹¹⁶ *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth, Volume 5: 1562* (1867), pp. 240-58. Web. Abstract as it appears in the CSP: "Has forwarded his letters to Randolph M. De Vielleville has been thrice at the Court and very well received, and the second time dined there, the same being purposely prepared for him, accompanied with divers Lords and counselors. Lord Robert, Lord Hunsdon, and Mr. Secretary accompanied him one day into St. James park, where they hunted, and he killed a fat buck with a crossbow from a standing, but it was at two shots. Lord Chandos accompanied him to Gravesend. Sir Thomas Smith is willed to be ready. All the members appointed are ready and in good order, Master Woodhouse has gone to the sea with five great ships attending the Queen's pleasure. Mr. Henry Knolles has gone to Almain to know the intents of the Princes Protestants. The Queen and all the Lords of the Council are in good health. The Earl of Oxford has departed to God, leaving a son about twelve years old. Greenwich, 18 Aug. 1562."
- ¹¹⁷ Arthur Golding's son, Percival Golding, wrote an encomium about his noble relative in which he gives Oxford's date of birth as April 12, 1550. He also notes that Oxford's death is in June of 1604, oddly leaving out the day. Archived in the Harleian, Golding's notice is helpful, but neither contemporaneous nor spontaneous.
- ¹¹⁸ Ward, B.M. *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* (London: John Murray, 1928. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, 1979), 7-9.
- ¹¹⁹ Nina Green, "The Fall of the House of Oxford." *Brief Chronicles, Volume I* (2009), 41-48.
- ¹²⁰ Louis Thorn Golding, *An Elizabethan Puritan* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1937), 2,6,23,32, 37-46. Golding provides a detailed and well documented discussion

of the “bitter family quarrel” between the descendents of the 16th Earl’s two marriages.


- ¹²¹ Ward, 56-60. William Segar’s *Book of Honour* provides an account of Oxford’s tournament success. Contemporaneous correspondence from Georges Delves to the Earl of Rutland, dated May 14 and June 24, 1571, reports that “Lord Oxford has performed his challenge at tilt, tournay, and barriers, far above expectation of the world...;” and “There is no man of life and agility in every respect in the Court but the Earl of Oxford.” 61. Next, the oft quoted letter from Lord St. John that the Earl of Oxford hath gotten him a wife – or at least a wife has caught him....” is indicative of his stature at court as it speaks of the “great weeping, wailing, and sorrowful cheer of those that had hoped to have that golden day.” 78. Most informative of Oxford’s status with the Queen is Gilbert Talbot’s letter to his father, dated May of 1572, in which he writes that “the Queen’s Majesty delighteth more in his personage and his dancing and his valiantness than any other.” It’s well known that the letter goes on to comment on his “fickle head,” but this minor drawback did not deter William Cecil from matching Oxford and his daughter Ann..
- ¹²² Peter R. Moore, “Oxford and the Order of the Garter.” *Report My Cause Aright: Fiftieth Anniversary Anthology, The Shakespeare Oxford Society 1957-2007* (USA: The Shakespeare Oxford Society, 2007), 24 - 25. This article is also published in *The Lame Storyteller, Poor and Despised* by Peter R. Moore (Germany: Verlag Uwe Laugwitz, 2009), 263-74. As Moore reveals in his comprehensive article, the final selection for membership after the votes were cast rested with Queen Elizabeth, and she could be capricious in her choice. She was influenced by family, status, and service to the crown. “Mere rank was not enough,” and “family connections helped.” Her choices included her favorites the Earls of Leicester, Earl of Essex, and Sir Christopher Hatton. In 1572, both the Earl of Oxford and Lord Grey of Wilton each received seven votes. The Queen chose Lord Grey and Viscount Hereford (who only had four votes) to fill two of the three the vacancies. The additional place, understandably, went to Lord Burghley. Oxford had family history of Garter membership: both the 15th and 13th Earls of Oxford were K.G.
- ¹²³ Moore, 24. It could be argued that Viscount Hereford and Lord Grey had provided the crown with more “service,” but the Queen controlled the opportunities for royal service as well.
- ¹²⁴ Green, 67-71. As described by Green in this well documented paper, “The cavalier manner in which the Queen abrogated her responsibilities, and even prevented de Vere’s own mother and friends from at least partially protecting him from financial disaster, is shocking.” 73.
- ¹²⁵ Green, 67. “The grant [of the core de Vere lands] had given him the stature which was the prerequisite enabling the Queen to bestow further largesse on him.”
- ¹²⁶ Green, 68. Green provides documentation from wardship records for this shocking explication of events.

- ¹²⁷ These issues include the seizure of more than the one-third interest to which the Queen was legally entitled in the de Vere lands, a grant of the core de Vere lands to Sir Robert Dudley, lawsuits against de Vere for the remainder of the revenue from the lands which has constituted his mother's jointure, a 2,000 pound fine against de Vere in the Court of Wards, the Queen's failure to adhere to the clause in the 16th Earl's will which would have provided sufficient funds for his son to pay the fine for his livery when he came of age, and several additional irregularities which were not beneficial to the financial or future well being of Edward de Vere.
- ¹²⁸ Ward, 355-58. Though Ward's book was published in 1928, it still contains one of the best discussions of the thousand pound annuity that the Queen granted to Oxford on June 26, 1586. That Elizabeth denied him preferments that routinely went to her favored courtiers, and withheld property from him that was rightfully his by ancient entails, *and then* granted him an unusually large annuity for no apparent reason, presents a financial schema that has yet to be adequately examined by established historians or explained by Oxfordians. It should be remarked that the annuity, though quite large, was not adequate to support his position as a nobleman in her court, but a preferment, had she chosen to distribute one to him, would have sufficed.
- ¹²⁹ Alan H. Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 394, 397, 337, 355-356. Nelson provides transcripts of the many letters in which Oxford beseeched her Majesty for various offices and sinecures that would have provided him with financial relief.
- ¹³⁰ Nelson, 420-21, 423. The story of the Essex forest lands is a long and involved one. The property had been "taken" from the 16th Earl of Oxford by King Henry VIII with the understanding it would be returned, though Elizabeth refused the 17th Earl's pleadings for the return of his ancestral property. The situation was remedied by King James.
- ¹³¹ E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield. *The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 248-50. This monumental study relies heavily on parish registers to provide information and trends in fertility and mortality. According to the authors, "England is exceptionally fortunate in having several thousand parish registers that begin before 1600" (2-4). Using reconstitution data from twelve parish registers that are sufficiently complete, it appears that childhood mortality (death before age nine) was approximately 40% in the period of 1550-99. As baptismal records are a major source of information, this percentage does not include stillbirths or unrecorded births of infants who died within days.
- ¹³² Bernard, 134-60. In his essay "The Downfall of Sir Thomas Seymour," historian Bernard makes the case that the Admiral's execution was based on his "activities and ambitions" in seeking to accumulate men, arms and wealth, which in turn provoked jealousy and "fratricidal bitterness" (152).

- ¹³³ Hutchinson, 152. “Denny became a discreet sounding board” [for King Henry], and “rapidly became the true authority lurking behind the throne, a role only recently identified by historians.”
- ¹³⁴ Hurstfield, 241. In summing up Burghley’s service as wardship Master, Hurstfield notes that “the Mastership was also an office of power, which bestowed upon its holder immense reserve of patronage – and therefore political influence – throughout the realm. It was also an office of profit, potentially vast profit, to a Master who knew how to exploit the opportunities at his disposal.”
- ¹³⁵ Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965), 545. The letter dates from July, 1598. Lord Burghley died the following month on August 4th.

Shakespeare's Antagonistic Disposition: A Personality Trait Approach

by Andrew Crider

ny personality assessment of William Shakespeare of Stratford is constrained by the paucity of biographical material relevant to questions of character and motivation. Shakespeare appears to have left no notes, diaries, memoirs, or personal correspondence that would facilitate such an assessment.¹ Nor, with one important exception, do we have any elaborated descriptions of Shakespeare the man derived from personal acquaintance. The exception is an unflattering portrayal of Shakespeare appearing in *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), a pamphlet attributed to Robert Greene and appearing shortly after his premature death at the age of 34. The testimony of *Groatsworth* is potentially compromised because it is delivered in the form of a dying writer's disparaging commentary on actors in general and Shakespeare in particular. Yet an accurate personality assessment does not necessarily depend on a positive attitude toward the subject, and we cannot assume that Greene's rhetoric invalidates his testimony. The following analysis aims to demonstrate that Greene's depiction of Shakespeare, however forcefully expressed, is nonetheless credible. The assessment appears to be internally consistent, congruent with contemporary trait theory, and corroborated by several subsequent events in Shakespeare's life history.

Greene's Groatsworth of Wit

Although Robert Greene is the putative author of *Groatsworth*, the text may be at least partially the work of Henry Chettle, the printer and writer who oversaw its publication.² Chettle admitted only to having edited and produced a fair copy of the manuscript, but extensive scholarship has pointed to his deeper involvement in its production. However, the question of attribution does not necessarily diminish the

biographical importance of *Groatsworth's* unique assessment of Shakespeare early in his career as a member of the London theater community.³ To simplify matters, I adopt the traditional practice of referring to the author of *Groatsworth* as "Greene" in this discussion.

The greater part of *Groatsworth* is devoted to a repentance tale of a young man named Roberto, whom Greene ultimately identifies as himself. After a series of turbulent experiences Roberto takes up writing play scripts for an acting company. Soon "famous for an arch playmaking poet," he nonetheless falls into a life of dissipation and licentiousness, for which he repents at length on his deathbed. Greene concludes his story by appending two items directly pertinent to the question of Shakespeare's character: an open letter to three fellow writers and a retelling of the ancient fable of the ant and the grasshopper.

The open letter exhorts the three writers to find better occupation than to "spend their wits in making plays" at the risk of falling prey to disreputable actors, particularly one who considers himself "the only Shake-scene in a country":

...Base-minded men all three of you, if by my misery you be not warned, for unto none of you (like me) sought those burrs to cleave, those puppets (I mean) that spake from our mouths, those antics [*dumb show performers*] garnished in our colours. Is it not strange, that I, to whom they all have been beholding, is it not like that you, to whom they all have been beholding, shall (were you in that case as I am now) be both [*both you and I*] at once of them forsaken? Yes, trust them not, for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers [*cf. Aesop's pretentious crow adorned in peacock feathers*], that with his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide supposes he is as well able to bombast out [*inflate, augment*] a blank verse as the best of you, and, being an absolute Johannes factotum [*Johnny do-all*], is in his own conceit [*conception*] the only Shake-scene in a [*the*] country. O that I might entreat your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses, and let those apes imitate your past excellence, and nevermore acquaint them with your admired inventions. I know the best husband [*most frugal*] of you all will never prove an usurer, and the kindest of them all [*actors*] will never prove a kind nurse; yet, whilst you may, seek you better masters, for it is pity men of such rare wits should be subject to the pleasure of such rude grooms [*coarse servants*].⁴

The passage begins with a general indictment of actors as mere parasites ("puppets that spake from our mouths; antics garnished in our colours"), whose art depends on exploiting the creativity ("rare wits") of writers. Greene then quickly focuses the charge of exploitation on one specific actor, "an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers." Further, this upstart arrogantly imagines himself to be an accomplished showman ("the only Shake-scene in a country") and able to devise ("bombast out") a blank verse equal to "the best of you." Finally, and more bitterly, he is a man with a "tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide." The line itself suggests duplicity, while "tiger's

heart” served as a contemporary metaphor for both deceit and cruelty.⁵

How to account for Greene’s thinly disguised attack on Shakespeare’s character? The internal evidence of the passage points to a connection between Greene’s feelings toward Shakespeare and his perception of having been abandoned in a time of need. The lengthy sentence depicting “Shake-scene” follows immediately on the word “forsaken,” which appears to have served as an associative trigger for the angry outburst. The theme of abandonment is subsequently reinforced by an allusion to the futility of finding a “kind nurse” among actors.

As if to cement his complaint of abandonment, Greene follows the open letter with his version of the fable of the industrious ant and the improvident grasshopper. Here Greene likens himself to the hedonistic grasshopper, inviting the reader to identify the ant with Shakespeare.⁶ The grasshopper scorns “needless thrift” in summer while rebuking the ant as a “greedy miser” whose “thrift is theft.” But with the onset of winter, the grasshopper – hungry, weak, and uncared for – approaches his acquaintance for help. Hoping for charity, the grasshopper is instead coldly rebuffed and abandoned to die a “comfortless” death. This allegory of the circumstances of Greene’s final illness thus connects the callous ant to Greene’s previous indictment of a tiger-hearted Shakespeare, while also adding “greedy miser” to the portrayal.

Dispositional Antagonism

Taking the open letter and the fable together, and casting Greene’s language in terms of contemporary personality descriptors, Greene portrayed Shakespeare as *exploitative* (beautified with our feathers), *arrogant* (as well able to bombast out; the only Shake-scene) *callous* and *deceptive* (tiger’s heart in a player’s hide; cruel ant), and *greedy* (greedy ant). Although this assessment may appear to be little more than a series of discrete epithets angrily delivered, it in fact betrays a psychologically coherent underlying structure: Greene’s characterizations are correlated markers of dispositional antagonism, one pole of the bipolar personality dimension of agreeableness-antagonism. Characteristic adjectives describing agreeableness include among others trusting, open, generous, cooperative, humble, and kind, whereas characteristics of antagonism include skeptical, deceptive, greedy, exploitative, oppositional, arrogant, and callous (see Table 1). Agreeableness-antagonism is a robust component of the empirically derived five-factor model of personality, which also includes the bipolar dimensions of extraversion-introversion, neuroticism-stability, conscientiousness-undependability, and openness-closedness to experience.⁷ The five-factor model is generally considered to be a reasonably comprehensive taxonomy of individual variation in personality dispositions. Each of the five major dimensions, or *domains*, can be decomposed into several component traits, or *facets*, which are in turn defined by the empirical clustering of specific personality descriptors, or *characteristics*. In sum, agreeableness-antagonism denotes a major personality dimension that appears to have provided the evaluative structure informing Greene’s portrayal of Shakespeare.

FACETS	CHARACTERISTICS
Trust	trusting, naive, gullible versus skeptical, cynical, suspicious, paranoid
Straightforwardness	honest, open, confiding versus shrewd, cunning, manipulative, deceptive
Altruism	generous, self-sacrificing versus stingy, selfish, greedy, exploitative
Compliance	cooperative, docile, meek versus oppositional, combative, aggressive
Modesty	humble, self-effacing, self-denigrating versus confident, boastful, arrogant
Tender-mindedness	kind, empathic, gentle, soft-hearted versus tough, callous, ruthless

Table 1. *Facets and Characteristics of Agreeableness-Antagonism*⁸

Corroborating Evidence

Greene's consistent use of markers of five-factor antagonism to describe Shakespeare attests to his intuitive grasp of this personality disposition. Nevertheless, Greene may have erroneously applied the concept of antagonism to the specific case of Shakespeare, whether deliberately or inadvertently. The validity of Greene's assessment therefore requires corroboration from independent sources of information. Contemporary interpretations of Shakespeare biography in fact strongly suggest that evidence of dispositional antagonism can be found in the biographical record beyond *Groatsworth*.⁹

Shakespeare biography is anchored in a relatively small number of public records generated by various contacts with legal and civil authorities.¹⁰ The majority of these documents concern property transactions, business investments, and minor litigation with no obvious bearing on the question of five-factor agreeableness-antagonism. The remaining documents are absent any indication of actions reflecting agreeable tendencies. However, three civil actions brought against Shakespeare – a restraining order to insure the peace, two citations for tax evasion, and an instance of commodity speculation – do lend themselves to interpretation in terms of dispositional antagonism. In addition Shakespeare's last will and testament is an important personal statement that reveals less than generous intentions toward members of his immediate family. Although these four documents are well known to Shakespeare biographers, they have not heretofore been collectively examined as evidence for a specific personality disposition. The following review therefore aims to determine the extent to which the behavior and attitudes revealed in each of these documents are

consistent with characteristics of five-factor antagonism. Specific characteristics from Table 1 identified in each document are indicated by italics.

The Wayte Affair

In November of 1596 William Wayte of London, affirming under oath to be in fear of his life, sought court protection against William Shakespeare, Francis Langley, Dorothy Soer, and Anne Lee. The court in turn issued a writ of attachment to the sheriff of Surrey, whose jurisdiction included the south bank environs of the Thames where the incident occurred. There is no record of follow-up, but in the normal course of events the named individuals would have been arrested and required to post bond to insure against further breeches of the peace.¹¹ Because Wayte did not allege battery, the form of the assault was most likely an admonition to take or desist from some action, coupled with the intimidating threat recognized in the writ. Shakespeare's primacy of place in the complaint suggests that he was no innocent bystander.

The two named women have never been identified and probably had no important relationship to either Langley or Shakespeare. But Langley was well known as an unscrupulous entrepreneur and loan broker with a propensity towards violent behavior.¹² Indeed, Wayte's complaint was but one episode in a continuing personal feud between Langley on one hand and Wayte and his employer on the other.¹³

We do not know precisely how Shakespeare came to be involved with Langley in this affair. However, in the fall of 1594 a convergence of interests developed between Langley and the Lord Chamberlain's Men, the acting company to which Shakespeare was attached. Langley was in search of an acting company to occupy his newly constructed Swan theater; at the same time, the Lord Chamberlain's Men were experiencing difficulties with extending the lease on their usual venue.¹⁴ Shakespeare may have been the point man for negotiations with Langley regarding the company's possible use of the Swan. Whatever the case, Shakespeare evidently befriended Langley to the extent of joining him in an *oppositional* and *aggressive* confrontation with Wayte serious enough to prompt judicial intervention.

Tax Evasion

In 1597 the London tax commissioners certified that William Shakespeare, a resident of London's Bishopsgate ward, had defaulted on an occasional personal property tax levied by Parliament in 1593. A similar certification a year later found that Shakespeare had also defaulted on a second personal property tax levied in 1597. Both defaults were reported to the royal exchequer, which in turn instructed the local sheriff to take remedial action. At some point during this period Shakespeare moved his lodgings to a different jurisdiction south of the Thames. There is no record that the taxes were ever paid.¹⁵

It is implausible that the two tax defaults were due either to ignorance or inadvertence on Shakespeare's part. All evidence suggests that he was a successful businessman and investor sensitive to financial issues.¹⁶ The defaults involved two

separate tax levies, stimulated a good deal of bureaucratic activity, and caused the Bishopsgate tax commissioners to mount active searches for him on both occasions. Nor were the defaults motivated by economic hardship: the sums involved were small, and at the time of the second levy Shakespeare was wealthy enough to purchase an imposing residence in Stratford. Thus the infractions appear to have been deliberate and purposeful.

From the perspective of the rational economic actor of mainstream economics, tax evasion involves a calculation that the benefits of noncompliance outweigh the costs of possible detection and sanction.¹⁷ Shakespeare obviously misjudged the probability of detection on both occasions, which implies that the infractions were driven, at least in part, by personal idiosyncrasy. Because tax evasion comes at others' expense, the infractions suggest a sense of entitlement consistent with Greene's depiction of an *arrogant* Shakespeare; given the relatively small amounts involved, they also echo Greene's portrayal of the *greedy* ant, whose "thrift is theft."

Grain Hoarding

Shakespeare was cited by Stratford authorities in 1598 for holding a quantity of grain, presumably malted barley, that greatly exceeded household requirements.¹⁸ The citation was a result of successive failures of the grain crop during 1594-96 in Warwickshire. The dearth of wheat and barley led to widespread famine and civil unrest, as well as to speculative withholding of grain from the market in anticipation of selling at higher prices. In an attempt to alleviate the suffering by forcing withheld supplies to market, the Queen's Council directed local authorities to conduct a census of private grain holdings, castigating hoarders as "wycked people in condicions more lyke to wolves or cormerants than to naturall men."¹⁹ Shakespeare was cited for holding eighty bushels of grain on his premises, which violated a government prohibition of several years standing.

Greene had upbraided Shakespeare for exploiting the talents of others for his own aggrandizement. The grain hoarding incident reveals a rather more tragic *exploitation* of a mass famine for financial gain. Shakespeare's apparent absence of fellow-feeling in this instance has been aptly described as "ugly evidence of man's *callous*, cold social indifference in modern times."²⁰

Last Will and Testament

Shakespeare died in Stratford in late April of 1616. An initial version of his will, probably taken down by a local lawyer in January of that year, was amended and executed in March.²¹ The will addresses the three members of his immediate family—his wife and two married daughters—with markedly different degrees of favor. Elder daughter Susanna Hall inherited the bulk of the estate, including substantial holdings in buildings, lands, and personal property. The transfer of this large legacy was accomplished with little qualification or commentary, save for a somewhat overbearing set of instructions for entailing the estate to a male heir in succeeding generations.

In contrast, younger daughter Judith Quiney received a much smaller and more restrictive legacy, an apparent consequence of Shakespeare's dissatisfaction with her marriage in February 1616 to the somewhat disreputable Thomas Quiney.²² In the second version of the will Judith received the modest sum of £100, which was initially intended as a marriage dowry to be paid to a future husband. Shakespeare also withdrew the initial bequest to Judith of his domestic silver, which he awarded instead to Susanna's eight-year-old daughter. In addition Judith was given the interest, but not the principal, on a second sum of £150. Clearly antipathetic toward Thomas Quiney, Shakespeare structured the will to deprive him of access to Judith's money and even speculated that Judith might find another spouse. His intentions towards Judith were ambivalent: although her legacy was protected from a presumably unreliable husband, the amount was insufficient to guarantee financial security. As it happened, Judith remained married to Quiney, and the couple indeed went on to lead "a fairly penurious existence."²³

If Shakespeare was manipulative and stingy toward Judith and Quiney, he was unreservedly callous toward his wife, Anne. The initial draft of the will conspicuously failed to acknowledge his marriage to her in any manner. The silence is exceptional and unconventional; comparable wills left by members of the London theater community in the same era are typically solicitous for the financial security of spouses, often including moving testimonials of affection and appreciation.²⁴ By excluding Anne from his estate, Shakespeare abandoned her to the kindness of others, not unlike the fate Robert Greene had railed against a quarter century earlier.

Shakespeare biographers often adopt Chambers' conjecture that Anne would have been a beneficiary of the common law practice of assigning one-third of an estate to the widow.²⁵ But there is no evidence that this practice was observed in Warwickshire at the time, nor would such assignment be compatible with Shakespeare's explicit conveyance of the great majority of his estate to Susanna. As if to cement his intention, Shakespeare added to the March revision the infamous interlineation: "Item: I give unto my wife my second best bed with the furnishings." This dismissive but specific amendment had the effect of reducing the likelihood of any future claim for a more reasonable portion of the estate.²⁶

Shakespeare's will is a businesslike document devoid of evidence of caring or warmth toward his wife and daughters. The large legacy to Susanna, taken in context with his disregard for Judith and Anne, can be read as a unsentimental device to entail his estate intact in an anticipated male line of descent. Judith's bequest was structured to express Shakespeare's disapproval of her recent marriage and to deny her more than a meager existence from the inheritance. The humiliation of Anne betrays a marked antipathy and lack of obligation toward the mother of his children and overseer of his domestic life in Stratford for more than three decades. Shakespeare's will reveals a dying man who was nonetheless capable or reacting to those near to him in the *manipulative, callous, and stingy* manner described many years earlier in *Groatsworth*.

Summary

Several public documents were examined to test the validity of Robert Greene’s identification of an antagonistic tendency in Shakespeare’s personality. Shakespeare’s last will, as well as three civil actions brought against him, revealed attitudes and behavior consistent with specific characteristics of five-factor antagonism. These findings are summarized in Table 2 in terms of the associated second-level facets; Shakespeare’s antagonistic propensity appears to have been most reliably expressed in the facets of low altruism and tough-mindedness. A limitation of this method of validation is that each of these documents was generated by actions in a specific context, such that each document taken separately is subject to alternative interpretation in terms of immediate situational factors. When jointly considered, however, the documents show a cross-situational consistency of antagonistic behavior in accord with Greene’s initial portrayal.

	Groatsworth	Wayte Affair	Tax Evasion	Hoard- ing	Last Will
Low Trust					X
Low Straightforwardness	X				X
Low Altruism	X		X	X	
Low Compliance		X			
Low Modesty	X		X		
Tough-mindedness	X			X	X

Table 2. *Facets of Dispositional Antagonism in Five Documents.*

The character information gleaned from these four documents is also pertinent to perennial questions regarding the identification of the player Greene dismisses as an “upstart crow” and as “Shake-scene.” Although the present discussion follows mainstream scholarly opinion in identifying William Shakespeare as the target of these pejorative allusions,²⁷ alternative candidates continue to be debated.²⁸ Nevertheless, the antagonistic tendencies revealed in the public records discussed here are clearly consistent with Greene’s earlier portrayal of “Shake-scene” and therefore support the conventional view that Greene’s nemesis was William Shakespeare of Stratford.

Discussion

The documents examined here are standard items in Shakespeare biography, although their psychological implications are not typically at issue. For example, Robert Greene's comments on Shakespeare are often cited as evidence of Shakespeare's entry into the rough-and-tumble world of the Elizabethan theater, rather than for what they reveal about his character.²⁹ In contrast, the psychologically focused interpretations of *Groatsworth* and other biographical materials by Honigmann³⁰ and Price³¹ reveal an often disagreeable Shakespeare consistent with the findings presented here. The present analysis adds to this earlier work the concept of dispositional antagonism, which assumes that phenotypically diverse attitudes and behavior reflect the operation of a common latent trait. The dispositional approach therefore facilitates a unitary psychological interpretation of what might otherwise be regarded as a disparate set of biographical events.

Although five-factor antagonism appears to be a prominent component of Shakespeare's personality, this information carries no predictive implications regarding the remaining five-factor domains of extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. A complete personality assessment following the five-factor scheme requires assessment of the five major domains, each decomposed into several more specific facets. Unfortunately, the limited documentary evidence directly pertinent to Shakespeare psychobiography undoubtedly precludes any comprehensive assessment. The five-factor model may nevertheless provide potentially useful insights into at least some of the extant biographical materials. For example, Shakespeare's successful career as a businessman may have been influenced by dispositional conscientiousness, which the five-factor model opposes to undependability. Shakespeare rose from an economically distressed family background to become a wealthy member of the Stratford gentry through judicious investments in two London theaters, real estate in Stratford and London, and income-producing land in the environs of Stratford.³² This successful investment career is consistent with the planfulness, persistence, and self-discipline of conscientiousness rather than the disorganization, negligence, and carelessness of undependability. Although we cannot assume that personality factors influenced Shakespeare's financial success, the concept of conscientiousness-undependability does suggest a plausible hypothesis for further psychobiographical inquiry. Other five-factor concepts may suggest similar analytical strategies.

The notion of an antagonistic Shakespeare must contend with the continuing biographical tradition of describing him as a modest, retiring, and agreeable individual.³³ This view was in place by 1709 when Nicholas Rowe, an early editor of the collected works, wrote that Shakespeare was reputed to have been "...a good-natur'd Man, of great sweetness in his Manners, and a most agreeable Companion."³⁴ Honigmann attempted to reconcile the divergence between this "gentle" Shakespeare tradition and his own identification of "ungentle" elements in the documented history by arguing that a presumably complex personality was capable of expressing contradictory tendencies

at different times. However, this conjecture is not compatible with the structure of bipolar traits, in which the degree of expression of one tendency is inversely related to the degree of expression of the opposite. In the case of agreeableness-antagonism, a conspicuously antagonistic disposition necessarily implies a correspondingly weaker expression of agreeable behavior and attitudes. Shakespeare's antagonistic tendencies would therefore tend to reduce the likelihood of concurrent agreeableness.

The persistence of the "gentle" Shakespeare tradition is remarkable in the absence of any contemporaneous depictions of Shakespeare's agreeableness analogous to the antagonistic individual described by Greene, or of any public documents consistent with agreeable behavior. Several years following Shakespeare's death in 1616, his acquaintance Ben Jonson did allude to "gentle Shakespeare" in a short poem and a longer eulogy introducing the First Folio of the collected plays. But "gentle" was a common device in eulogies of the period and is in accord with the poem's generally hyperbolic tone.³⁵ Whatever Jonson intended by the usage, his two allusions to an agreeable Shakespeare remain idiosyncratic. The available evidence points consistently in the opposite direction toward a man with markedly antagonistic tendencies.

Endnotes

- ¹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 2004), 13.
- ² Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 28-30.
- ³ D. Allen Carroll, ed., *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*. (Binghamton NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1994), 132.
- ⁴ Modern spelling version from Nina Green, ed., *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (1996), [http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/Greene/Greene'sGroatsworth.](http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/Greene/Greene'sGroatsworth.;); parenthetical glosses after Carroll.
- ⁵ Price, 48.
- ⁶ E. A. J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare's Impact on His Contemporaries* (Totowa NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1982), 5.
- ⁷ Robert R. McCrae and Oliver P. John, "An Introduction to the Five-Factor Model and Its Applications," *Journal of Personality* 60 (1992): 175-215.; Stephenie N. Mullins-Sweatt and Thomas A. Widiger, "The Five-Factor Model of Personality Disorder: A Translation Across Science and Practice," in *Personality and Psychopathology*, eds. Robert F. Krueger and Jennifer L. Tackett (New York: Guilford Press, 2006), 39-70.
- ⁸ Adapted from Thomas A. Widiger, "Personality Disorder Diagnosis," *World Psychiatry* 2 (2003), 131-35.
- ⁹ Honigmann, "Shakespeare's Impact"; Price.
- ¹⁰ See compilation in E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems, Vol. II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930); an additional writ of attachment (1596) is the subject of Leslie Hotson, *Shakespeare Versus Shallow* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1931).
- ¹¹ Hotson; William Ingram, *A London Life in the Brazen Age: Francis Langley, 1548-1602* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).
- ¹² Ingram.
- ¹³ Hotson.
- ¹⁴ Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 226.
- ¹⁵ Chambers, 87-90.

¹⁶ Price.

¹⁷ Gary S. Becker, "Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach," *Journal of Political Economy* 104 (1968), 169-217.

¹⁸ Chambers, 99-101.

¹⁹ Chambers, 100.

²⁰ Honan, 244.

²¹ Chambers, 169-74.

²² E. A. J. Honigmann, *Myriad-minded Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan Press, 1998), 223-24.

²³ Honan, 400.

²⁴ E. A. J. Honigmann and Susan Brock, *Playhouse Wills 1558-1642: An Edition of Wills by Shakespeare and His Contemporaries in the London Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

²⁵ Chambers, 176-77.

²⁶ Honan, 396-97.

²⁷ Carroll.

²⁸ For example: Daryl Pinkson, "Was Robert Greene's 'Upstart Crow' the Actor Edward Alleyn?," *The Marlowe Society Research Journal* 6 (2009): 1-18.; A. D. Wraight, *Christopher Marlowe and Edward Alleyn* (Chichester UK: Adam Hart Publishers, 1993).

²⁹ Honigmann, "Shakespeare's Impact," 1.

³⁰ Honigmann, "Shakespeare's Impact."

³¹ Price.

³² Chambers; Honan.

³³ Honigmann, "Shakespeare's Impact," 14-19.


³⁴ Chambers, 264.

³⁵ Honigmann, "Shakespeare's Impact," 16; Price, 184.

The Sternhold and Hopkins *Whole Booke of Psalms*: Crucial Evidence for Edward de Vere's Authorship of the Works of Shakespeare¹

Richard M. Waugaman



he Sternhold and Hopkins translation of the *Whole Booke of Psalms* (*WBP*) is an important but underestimated source for Shakespeare's plays, Sonnets, and *The Rape of Lucrece*.² Richmond Noble, a pioneer of scholarship on the Bible's influence on Shakespeare's works, wrote that Shakespeare echoed the Psalms more often than any other books in the Bible.³ Like many others since him, he believed it was the Coverdale Psalm translation that most influenced Shakespeare. Close examination, however, reveals the *WBP* to be a much richer source of Shakespearean sources than previously acknowledged. Psalm 51, for example, is echoed in Lady Macbeth's "Out damned spot" speech. Our awareness of this allusion to the chief penitential psalm provides a biblical measure of Lady Macbeth's state of mind, which then sharpens our awareness of her lack of full contrition. "That Muse" in Sonnet 21 appears to be the psalmist, not a contemporary poet, when we register the sonnet's repeated echoes of Psalm 8.

This article provides further examples of echoes of *WBP* in Shakespeare's works. As I will explain below, it was Edward de Vere's annotations of 21 psalms in his copy of *WBP* that led to these discoveries. The fact that de Vere's annotated copy uncovered what may be the largest literary source for Shakespeare's works that has been found in years helps validate the Oxfordian authorship hypothesis.

WBP went through many early editions.⁴ Unlike the Coverdale translation that was used in the *Book of Common Prayer*, its regular meter (still called "common meter" in hymnals today) allowed the Psalms to be set to popular music, providing something of an Elizabethan hymnal for congregational singing. Richmond Noble,⁵ Peter Seng⁶ and

others have explored the unusual importance of music in the works of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's dozens of echoes of *WBP* were thus explicitly textual, while implicitly musical, just as hearing the words to a well-known song still evokes its music for us. The "common meter" ("fourteeners," often divided into alternating lines of four and three iambs) of nearly all the *WBP* translations was the same as that of contemporary ballads, and "Some of the tunes associated with [*WBP*] remained in continuous use for more than four centuries and thus represent one of the most enduring English musical traditions."⁷ Despite this widespread contemporaneous influence, C.S. Lewis spoke for many modern critics in derogating both the edition's literary value and influence. Beth Quitslund has speculated that the long history of attacks on *WBP* was originally based on theological objections, not the later stylistic complaints.⁸

Psalms translation was a popular early modern literary exercise, as well as a statement of both religious and political views.⁹ In addition to the many manuscript translations, there were printed versions by Thomas Wyatt, William Hunnis, Francis Seagar, John Hall, Robert Crowley, and others (many of these only included the seven penitential psalms: 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). Archbishop Matthew Parker published a metrical psalter in 1567.¹⁰ As Hannibal Hamlin notes, "The greatest French metrical psalter was principally the work of Clément Marot and Théodore de Beze, and their Psalms were the most important influence on English practice," including *WBP*.¹¹ Rivkah Zim believes Nicolas Denisot may have been the principal source for the influence of French poetic styles on Sternhold. The most popular early modern English translations, next to *WBP*, were the Coverdale translation that was incorporated into the *Book of Common Prayer*; the closely related Bishops Bible; and the Geneva translation. Naturally, the wording in the various translations is often similar. But even where the Coverdale, Geneva, or Bishops Bible translations have limited parallels, the echoes of the *WBP* in Shakespeare are repeatedly more extensive, and they have deeper significance for the meaning of Shakespeare's works. Only one minor source in *WBP* is noted in the index of Shaheen's comprehensive list of Shakespeare's biblical allusions in his plays, and there are a few further unindexed (but also minor) echoes in the body of his text. Unfortunately, his book does not address the Sonnets or narrative poems.

Rivkah Zim, Hannibal Hamlin, and Beth Quitslund suggest several possible reasons for the immense early popularity of *WBP*; their observations in turn may illuminate Shakespeare's unusual interest in this translation. Making a strong claim indeed, Zim asserts that *WBP* "was probably the most familiar English verse known to the majority of Englishmen" for some 150 years.¹² This familiarity must have contributed to de Vere's preference for this translation as a source for his work, since it was far better known to his audience than were other translations. Its regular meter and musical settings made it easier for the psalms to be memorized, increasing the likelihood that early audiences would have recognized even some of de Vere's more subtle allusions to *WBP*.

WBP had its origins in Thomas Sternhold's metrical translations of 37 psalms for use at the courts of Henry VIII and Edward VI, offering "guidance in both temporal and spiritual affairs... [He] emphasized the doctrinal value of the Psalms."¹³ Zim writes

that Sternhold intended his psalm paraphrases to serve “godly recreation” at court as well as “popular edification and enjoyment.”¹⁴ Their dual religious and secular intent may have added to their appeal as literary sources for Shakespeare.

Like Shakespeare, Sternhold favored iambs, monosyllables, alliteration, and pairs of alliterative synonyms. He wrote his psalm translations to be sung – including to popular secular melodies, as Quitslund observes. Hamlin notes that the regular meter of *WBP* made this translation better suited for congregational singing than translations with irregular meters such as Coverdale. He speculates that its enduring popularity reflected not only its intrinsic musicality but also its “having established itself first, perhaps taking on the presumed authority of age and tradition,”¹⁵ in addition to the popularity of the tunes to which it was set. Zim observes that, unlike John Hall and other contemporaries who wrote metrical psalm translations, Sternhold saw no conflict between sacred and secular lyrics.

Shakespeare was typically eclectic in his use of a wide range of source material. Some of the examples discussed below illustrate his blending echoes of *WBP* with echoes of the Geneva Psalms, within a given passage. The discovery of the significance of *WBP* as a literary source for Shakespeare is thanks to de Vere having annotated 21 of those psalms. He marked 14 with marginal manicules (pointing hands). Each manicule is strikingly different, reflecting de Vere’s unusual interest in these psalms. According to William H. Sherman,¹⁶ most early readers used unvarying, characteristic manicules; de Vere did not follow this sort of consistent pattern. Similarly, he seems to have been much more variable in his spelling even than other early modern writers.

As noted above, recent evidence indicates that *WBP* may have been the most significant Psalm translation in influencing the works of Shakespeare. This evidence suggests that the impact of *WBP* on Shakespeare’s works is not restricted to isolated words and phrases. *WBP* sometimes offers pivotal sources that will supplement previous interpretations of Shakespeare’s works. Frequently, the intertextuality of Shakespeare’s allusions to the Psalms underscore an ironic contrast between their ideals on the one hand, and characters in the plays, the speaker of the Sonnets, or the Fair Youth, on the other (leaving aside examples where the Sonnets instead emulate the many human failures that are recounted in the Psalms).¹⁷ Many psalm allusions compare the Youth to God in a way that may have led one early reader of a 1609 Quarto of the Sonnets to write his memorable critique at the end of them: “what a heap of wretched Infidel Stuff.”¹⁸

To be sure, making a convincing argument for a given literary allusion in Shakespeare is no easy matter. There is always an irreducible degree of subjectivity in each reader’s assessment of whether a given phrase or speech in the plays constitutes a specific biblical allusion on Shakespeare’s part. Our underlying assumptions as to whether or not Shakespeare was significantly influenced by the Bible inevitably affect our judgment of possible allusions. Rare words or uncommon phrases are more convincing, especially when thematic parallels enrich our reading of Shakespeare. The evidentiary value of *WBP* allusions is cumulative, and many such echoes have now been documented.

Even if a given allusion seems plausible, there is the further question of whether de Vere made that allusion consciously, or whether it instead reflected his intimate knowledge of literature, and what Richard D. Altick has called Shakespeare's "exceedingly well developed sense of [verbal] association."¹⁹ Thus, we sometimes sense we are watching de Vere's mind at work. If the allusion was deliberate, was de Vere attributing to the character who speaks it an awareness of that allusion? There is a range of possibilities here, and these questions cannot always be settled with certainty.

Roger Stritmatter has shown that marked passages in de Vere's Bible are often echoed in Shakespeare's works.²⁰ The more times a biblical verse is echoed in the canon, the more likely it is to be annotated in de Vere's Bible. Naturally, some unmarked verses are also echoed. That is the case for *WBP*. Most of my discoveries of Shakespeare's allusions to *WBP* are to psalms that de Vere annotated. The current article includes allusions to three psalms marked with large manicules (Psalms 25, 65, and 103), as well as to one unmarked psalm (Psalm 63).

Echoes of Psalm 25 in Shakespeare's Works

Psalm 25 seems to be one of de Vere's favorites, judging from the frequent allusions to it in Shakespeare. It contains not only a marginal manicule, but also the only marginal fleur-de-lis (a large one, at that) in de Vere's copy of *WBP*, next to verse 11. It is one of eight alphabetical acrostics in the Psalms, with each verse beginning with a different consecutive Hebrew letter. De Vere showed greater interest in Psalm 25 than in the other acrostic psalms. Psalm 25 was a source, for example, of Sonnet 83 ("I never saw that you did painting need").²¹

There are, moreover, many prominent allusions to the psalm in the plays. Although it is overlooked by both Noble and Shaheen, Act 4, scene 3 of *1 Henry IV*, for example, echoes Psalm 25. These echoes portray King Henry, through his emissary Sir Walter Blunt, as offering God-like mercy and forgiveness to Hotspur. Hotspur, in turn, reverses the roles of penitent and merciful, as he reminds Blunt that his father had earlier shown forgiveness to the King, when the "faults" of Bolingbroke's youth included his deposition of Richard II. These pointed reminders ironically contrast with the pleas of 25:6: "Remember not the fautes, and fraylty of my youth:/ Remember not how ignoraunt, I have ben of thy truth." There are some sixteen key echoing words in this scene (see *infra*). In addition, the spirit of the psalm is reflected in the content of the scene – many other words and phrases from the psalm that are not echoed literally are still captured in the scene's ethos. The net result of these psalm echoes is to increase our sympathy for Blunt, as his credibility is enhanced by the nature of his biblical echoes. Blunt brings Hotspur "gracious offers from the King," "God" himself is mentioned three times in the psalm, and four times in this scene. The summary of the psalm states that "The Prophet... *prayeth to God...* to have his sines forgeven." Blunt ends the scene by telling Hotspur, "*Pray God you do*" accept the King's forgiveness.

The psalm's final verse entreats God: "Deliver Lord thy folke, and send them some relief... from al their paine and *grief*."²² Similarly, Blunt asks Hotspur to "name your *griefs*" so that the King can grant relief by giving Hotspur his "desires with

interest.” Verse 5 speaks of God’s “mercy *manifold*”; in Verse 6, the psalmist asks “Nor after my *deserts*, let me thy mercy find.”²³ Blunt inverts the meaning of these two words in the psalm when he tells Hotspur, “If that the King/ Have any way your good *deserts* forgot,/ Which he confesseth to be *manifold*...” The psalm confesses “manifold” and sinful “deserts,” asking that they be forgotten; Blunt uses “confesseth” to point instead to Hotspur’s “manifold” virtuous “deserts.”

I have mentioned only a few of the verbal parallels in this scene. Other echoed (or similar) words in the scene and the psalm are: *name*; *stand*; *enemy/ies*; *defend*; *peace*; *cruel/ty* (from the psalm’s summary); *poor*; *unminded (mynd)*; *heart*; and *pity*. Once again, I would emphasize the value of this intertextuality in enhancing our sympathy for Blunt.

The next play of the Henriad also has a scene that echoes Psalm 25. In *2 Henry IV*, Act 4, scene 5, when the Prince begs his father’s forgiveness— “O, *pardon* me, my liege!” the King’s reply echoes the psalm: “God put it *in thy mind* to take it hence.” Psalm 25:6 reads “Nor after my *deserts*, let me thy mercy find:/ But of thine owne benignity, Lord have me *in thy mynd*.”²⁴ The King continues, a few lines later, “*God* knows, my son,/ By what *by-paths* and indirect *crook’d ways*/ I met this crown.” Verse 3 says “Therefore thy *pathes* and thy *right wayes*, unto me Lorde descry.” As is so often the case, the biblical echo introduces a crucial contrast between God’s “right ways” and the play’s “crooked ways.” Shakespearean biblical allusions often serve in just this manner to highlight the gulf between human frailties and spiritual ideals.²⁵ Henry IV closes this scene with further echoes of Psalm 25. He asks for the *name* of the place where he lodged. When he is told it is called Jerusalem (a theme of many psalms), he answers “Laud be to *God*! Even there my *life* must end,” echoing the theme of the opening verses (10-12)²⁶ of the second part of Psalm 25: “Now for thy holy *name*, O Lord I thee intreat:/ To graunt me pardon for my sinne, for it is wondrous great/ Who so doth feare the Lorde, the Lord doth him direct:/ To lead his *life* in such away, as he doth best accept... His sede and his posterity, inherite shal the *land*.” We can safely hypothesize that these specific verses of Psalm 25 took on special importance for de Vere, since he drew the large, unique fleur-de-lis in the margin next to them.

The King’s words here enact the psalm’s ideal of acceptance of the Divine will. The King’s final words express his gracious submission to God’s wishes, even at the moment when he realizes the Jerusalem where he is to die is not the one he thought had been prophesied— “in Jerusalem,/ Which vainly I suppos’d the Holy *Land*” (this echo of “land” in Psalm 25:12 is enhanced by its coming at the end of the line in both works).

Although many biblical allusions in *Measure for Measure* are well known, Noble and Shaheen both overlooked Psalm 25 as a source for one scene in the play (2.3). This is the scene where the Duke, disguised as a friar, visits Juliet in prison after she and Claudio were charged with “lechery.” Psalm 25:1 reads “now suffer me to *take no shame*, for in thee *do I trust*.”²⁷ In lines 35-36, Juliet says to the Duke, “*I do* repent me as it is an evil,/ And *take* the *shame* with joy.” The Duke, as the ostensible friar, then announces Claudio’s death sentence to Juliet. Angelo has perverted the central message of this psalm, and of much of the Bible, by responding to Claudio and Juliet’s repentance

not with mercy but with draconian vengeance (the play's title famously echoes Jesus on mercy in Matthew 7:2, "With what measure ye mete, it shalbe measured to you"). The impression that de Vere is here echoing Psalm 25 is strengthened by the Provost's earlier words, when he is telling the Duke about Juliet, "falling in the *flawes* of her owne *youth*..." (2.3.11). A central message of the psalm is 'Remember not the *fautes*, and frailty of my *youth*' (Psalm 25:6). ('Flaw' is a near metathesis of "fault.")

"Offense" is used as a synonym for sin in both passages. Psalm 25:17 reads "Remit my *sinne* and mine *offence*";²⁸ the Provost speaks of Juliet's impregnation as "such *offence*" (II. iii. 14), and the Duke later refers to Juliet's "most *offencefull* act" (II. iii. 26). In this scene, the Duke refers to Juliet's "sin" three times. Psalm 25:7-8 says "the Lord *wil* sinners *teach*.../ The humble he *wil* *teach*." The Duke says to Juliet, "I'll *teach* you how you shall arraign your conscience" (2.3.21). Psalm 25:15 says "For I am poore and desolate, and *comfortles* alone."²⁹ Juliet echoes this sentiment in her final words of the scene, "Must die tomorrow! O injurious love,/ That respites me a life whose very *comfort*/ Is still a dying horror!" (2.3.40-42).

These multiple allusions to Psalm 25 underscore the contrast between God's mercy and forgiveness, and the Duke's seeming lack of mercy, which echoes the draconian and corrupt actions later taken by Angelo, whom the Duke has chosen to rule temporarily in his stead.

The summary of Psalm 25 suggests one possible reason that it was such a fertile source for this play and for some of de Vere's other works — "The Prophet [i.e., the psalmist] touched with the consideration of his sinnes, and also greved with the cruell malice of his enemies, prayeth to God most fervently to have his sinnes forgeven, especially suche as he had committed in his youth." I suspect those words affected de Vere deeply, reminding him of his remorse over his own transgressions, such as killing a servant when he was seventeen, and his pathological jealousy of his first wife.

Psalm 65 is a Source for Sonnet 135

WBP is an important source for Shakespeare's Sonnets: "Both contain overlapping themes—despair and consolation; man's sinfulness and hopes for mercy; supplication and thanksgiving; complaints about enemies and suffering."³⁰ Helen Vendler called Sonnet 135 ("Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*") a "perplexing, even maddening sonnet."³¹ Exploring this sonnet in the light of Psalm 65's hitherto unnoticed influence may reduce these vexingly enigmatic qualities. Vendler noted that Sonnet 135 "quickly becomes... a prayer... Such echoes of liturgical prayer make the sonnet one of several blasphemously parodying an alternate discourse. Against the discourse of divine generosity Shakespeare sets a mercantile discourse of addition... and surplus." She cited Stephen Booth's conjecture that the sonnet's "proverbial" phrase "the sea, all water; yet receives rain still" mediates between a divine and a mercantile level of discourse. Vendler wondered if Shakespeare's reference to the sea might come from two verses in Ecclesiastes.

An additional, previously unknown biblical allusion in this pivotal phrase in the sonnet is Psalm 65. Some of the very features that Vendler highlighted in Sonnet 21 have parallels in the psalm. Verses 7 and 9 use the sea and rain as tropes of surplus: “The swelling *seas* thou doost asswage, & make their streames ful *stil*/ Thou doost restrayne the peoples rage, and rule them at thy wil... When that the earth is chapt and dry, and thirsteth *more* and *more*,/ Then with thy drops thou doost apply, & much encrease her *store*.”³² Note the parallel here with de Vere’s “The *sea*, all water, yet receives rain *still*,/ And in abundance addeth to his *store*” (and “*more*” occurs in line 12). *Sea/s*, *still*, and *store* occur in the same order in both psalm and sonnet. The content as well as some of the words of the psalm are echoed in the sonnet. This source confirms Vendler’s surmise that lines 9 and 10 of the sonnet are not merely proverbial, but biblical. They are the most obvious echo of Psalm 65 in the sonnet, and they help direct us to further, more subtle echoes of this same psalm.

For example, rhymed words in the sonnet echo those of the psalm. Notoriously, six lines of the sonnet end with -ill: *Will* (thrice), *still* (twice), and *kill*. Similarly, six versets of the psalm share this rhyme, in the six different words *hil*, *fulfil*, *stil*, *wil*, *fil*, and *distil*.³³ And, in fact, “thy will,” which occurs twice in the sonnet, also occurs in the psalm as already quoted. As Booth so thoroughly catalogued, many words in the Sonnets have obscene meanings. Such is the case with “will” in this sonnet—it can mean *lust*, *penis*, or *vagina*. Shockingly, de Vere seems to be making obscene puns on the psalm’s allusion to the Divine Will.

To the extent that de Vere was thinking of Psalm 65 when he composed Sonnet 135, it is likely that he was primed to find indecent double-entendres in the psalm. For example, de Vere may have thought of the Dark Lady’s sexual intimacies with his rival as he read in verse 4: “The man is blest whom thou doost chuse, within thy court to dwel:/ Thy house and temple he shal use, with pleasures, that excel.” Likewise, de Vere may have thought of his rival when he read in verses 10-11 that God “doth guide the thing/ With wheate thou dost her furrowes fil.” At least as far back as Chaucer’s “Wife of Bath’s Tale,” “thing” could be a euphemism for the genitals (OED, meaning 11c). Thinking of “the thing” as the penis, “with wheate [think, *seed*] thou dost her furrows fill” easily assumes a sexual connotation. Such a reading of verse 10 restores pre-Christian connections between the fertility of the earth, and human sexuality and fertility. Literary intertextuality is bidirectional, so that the later work is both enriched by *and* glosses the earlier text. Tempting the reader to co-construct such sexual innuendoes in the Psalms may enact de Vere’s wish to corrupt him (I leave to one side here the many overt sexual allusions in the Bible).

Verse 10, in another image of surplus, states “The floud of God doth *overstow*, and so doth cause to spring” the sown seed. “Overstow” rhymes with “sow.” As early as 1456, *stow* could mean to *store* or *keep in reserve*. John Hopkins, the translator, presumably intended an intensification of this meaning of *stow* in his “overstow.” This unusual word in the psalm is echoed in de Vere’s “will in *over-plus*” in the second line of the sonnet. “Over-plus” means excess (it can also mean “that which remains in the mind; a conclusion”).

“Will” occurs in abundance in Sonnet 135. Its 12 occurrences are an extreme example of a recurrent feature of many sonnets, where one or more words are repeated two, three, or more times in a given poem. This may reflect a broader stylistic influence of the Psalms, whose poetic structure includes frequent verbal repetition, often for the purpose of intensification. For example, the second half of a verse may repeat or paraphrase words from the first half; the end of a psalm frequently echoes its beginning.

Psalm 63 is a Source for Sonnet 29

Commentators have noted some biblical echoes in Sonnet 29 (“When, in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes”). G. Blakemore Evans compared line 3 with Job 30:20—“When I cry unto thee, God, thou dost not hear me.”³⁴ In fact, he understood the first four lines of the Sonnet 29 as alluding to Job. Booth found that a “Christian distinction between material and spiritual well-being functions as a hyperbolic metaphor throughout this sonnet.” Further, Booth maintained that “the beloved’s love functions as the love of the deity does in Christian theology.”³⁵ In view of the many echoes of the psalms in several sonnets, Booth’s point is of central importance for all the first 126 sonnets.

A further noteworthy biblical echo in Sonnet 29 that underscores Booth’s latter point is of Psalm 63. The psalm specifies “material and spiritual well-being” in its first verse: “my soule and body both, do thirst of thee to tast.” For the remainder of the psalm, bodily needs are treated solely as a trope for spiritual needs, as the latter are fulfilled and the former needs are ignored. Just as Evans speculated that the opening lines of Sonnet 29 allude to the story of Job, so does the psalmist begin with allusions to life-threatening dangers—“in this barren wilderness, where waters there are none:/ my flesh is parched for thought of thee” (verse 2). He speaks of “this lyfe and wretched dayes” (verse 3). The psalm then turns in the fourth verse, to a promise to lift up the psalmist’s hands to worship God. In a hopeful tone reminiscent of the sestet of the sonnet, the final seven verses of Psalm 63 celebrate the many benefits of God’s protection. Words and sentiments from the psalm match up closely with those of the sonnet, in a way that does indeed turn the Fair Youth into a deity.

Lines 10-14 of Sonnet 29 most clearly echo Psalm 63. Line 10, “Haply *I think on thee, and* then my state” echoes verse 6: “When as in bed *I think on thee, and* eke al the night tyde.”³⁶ This is an unusual example, as five consecutive words from *WBP* are echoed in Shakespeare. *EEBO* lists *WBP* as the first instance of this phrase. The second is in the 1573 *A hundreth sundrie flowres*,³⁷ attributed to George Gascoigne. Gascoigne’s poem is titled, “An absent lover doth thus encourage his Lady to continew constant.” Its fourth stanza is:

What said I? soone? yea soone I say againe,
I will come soone and sooner if I may:
Beleue me now it is a pinching payne,
To thinke of loue when louers are away.

Such thoughts I haue, and *when I thinke on thée*,
My thoughts are there, whereas my bones would bée.

It is noteworthy that Gascoigne, like de Vere, echoes *WBP*. The repetition of this phrase in Sonnet 29 supports the hypothesis that de Vere may have written some of the work of “Gascoigne” pseudonymously.

Here, as elsewhere, the sonnet’s psalm echo implicitly compares the Youth with God. Line 11, “Like to the lark at break of *day arising*” might make one think of “wings” in verse 7: “For under cover of thy wings, thou art my joyful guide.”³⁸ Line 12, “From sullen earth, *sings* hymns at heaven’s gate” echoes verse 5, “my mouth therfore, shall *sing* such songs, as are for thee most mete.”³⁹ We should also ponder the clear allusion to the Psalms in that phrase “sings hymns at heaven’s gate.” In de Vere’s day, *WBP* were in fact the liturgical hymns that were sung to heaven. Line 14 alludes to not wishing to change the poet’s state “with *kings*.” Verse 11 also refers to a “king.” The psalm preface alludes to David being endangered by Saul, the king he did go on to replace — with whom he did “change his state,” so to speak. De Vere may have been thinking of that dimension of the psalm in the final line of Sonnet 29.

Psalm 103 is a Source for Sonnet 103

Psalm 103 is a rich source for several of Shakespeare’s sonnets (e.g., 21, 69),⁴⁰ as well as for *Edward III*.⁴¹ Here, I explore its influence on the sonnet bearing the same number—103 (“A Lack, what poverty my Muse brings forth”). This numerical parallel may have been deliberate on de Vere’s part, drawing attention to his source in the Psalms (and thus supporting the 1609 ordering of the Sonnets). De Vere may have grasped an aspect of Psalm 103 that was recently noted by a contemporary scholar. Robert Alter observes that, in Psalm 103, “The speaker’s exhortation to his inner self or essential being ... to bless the Lord is an unusual rhetorical move.”⁴² This inner self is evoked by a phrase in verse 1— “all the secrets of my hart.” This focus on the inner self parallels the Sonnets as lyric poetry, which Vendler describes as the “representation of inner life.”⁴³

The first echoed word, *praise*, only occurs in 103.4. Yet the first quatrain subtly alludes to the laudatory goal of Psalm 103 (as well as many other psalms). The emphasis on *lack* and *poverty* in the sonnet’s first line contrasts with the tropes of overwhelming abundance of praise in the psalm. Other sonnets (such as Sonnet 21) suggest the poet is competing with the psalmist, claiming to praise the Youth more effectively than the psalmist praises God. In Sonnet 103, however, de Vere compares himself unfavorably with the psalmist.

Sonnet 103 locates itself with respect to two poetic frames of reference — the poet of Psalm 103 and the rival poet alluded to in Sonnet 102. That preceding sonnet gestured toward Shakespeare’s previous “lays” to the Youth. They are compared to Philomel’s “hymns,” “music,” and “song,” which evoke the many echoes of the musical *WBP* in the previous sonnets. That covert allusion to the psalms in Sonnet 102 prepares

the Youth for a return to psalm allusions in Sonnet 103. These references to earlier sonnets, and also to the Psalms, further enact what Vendler called “the discourse of reminiscent nostalgia”⁴⁴ of Sonnet 102. Implicitly, Shakespeare asks the Youth to compare his current dearth of love poems not with the work of the rival poet, but with Shakespeare’s earlier poems, and with the psalms to God which they repeatedly echo.

The second quatrain of Sonnet 103 ushers in more specific echoes of the psalms. Lines 5 and 6 allude to Psalms 31 and 56. Psalm 31, a psalm of supplication, says in verse 17, “Lord let *me not* be put to *blame*, for that on thee I call:/ But let the wicked beare their shame, and in the grave to fal.”⁴⁵ This verse is echoed by “*O blame me not*” in Sonnet 103. This allusion to 31:17 thus adds an implicit imprecation against Shakespeare’s “wicked” enemies, including the rival poet. Psalm 56 also calls upon God to protect the psalmist from his enemies. 56:8 is “Thou seest how oft they [those enemies] make me flee, and on my teares doost *looke*/ Reserve them *in a glas* by thee, and *wryte* them in thy booke.”⁴⁶ This is one of only two uses of “write,” and one of three uses of “glass” in *WBP*. Shakespeare divides God’s role in this verse between himself and the Youth in saying “*O blame me not* if I no more can *write*!/ *Look in your glass*...”

The second quatrain ends with “Dulling my lines, and *doing me disgrace*.” This last phrase, “doing me disgrace,” occurs nowhere else in *EEO*,⁴⁷ but “Do me” followed by a verb (*persecute, hurt, scorn, forsake, and keep*) occurs six times throughout *WBP*. *Disgrace* occurs only twice in *WBP*. Psalm 103:15-16 reads “And how the tyme of mortal men, is lyke the withering hay:/ Or like the floure right fayre in field, that fades ful soone away./ Whose glosse & beauty stormy winds, *do* utterly *disgrace*.”⁴⁸ The use of nature tropes here to emphasize human transience is close to the language of many of the first 126 sonnets. So the occurrence of “disgrace” in this passage of Psalm 103 may be relevant to its use in Sonnet 103. More specifically, it alludes to the act of damaging the beauty of something in both poems—the flower in the psalm, and the “lines” of poetry in the Sonnet (and, as Vendler noted, the disgrace of the poet himself, based on “the substitution of the poet’s self for his art”⁴⁹). Psalm 103 contrasts this trope of human mortality in the next verse with compensatory references to God’s eternal goodness to one’s descendants.

Here, the intertextuality with Psalm 103 serves as an implicit “gloss.” In a sonnet that is ostensibly devoted solely to praise of the Youth’s beautiful appearance, the subtle allusion to Psalm 103 whispers a contrasting reminder of the transience of all mortals, including both the poet and the Youth. The Youth’s mirror may indeed accurately reflect his beauty, but that beauty will soon be lost, if it is not recorded for posterity by the poet.

The sestet opens with a reference to sin. “Sinful” occurs only here among the first 126 sonnets. “Sin” occurs in three of them. Most notably, in an earlier rival poet sonnet — Sonnet 83 declares that the Youth has imputed “sin” to Shakespeare for his poetic reticence. That earlier sonnet offers several parallels with Sonnet 103. Both justify the poet’s silence, in contrast with the productivity of the rival poet. Words used in both sonnets include *show, worth, praise, and barren/bare*. As in Sonnet 83, Sonnet 103 does not acknowledge any sin on the part of the poet. On the contrary, it argues that the poet is avoiding the sin of marring the Youth’s actual reflection with

what are doomed to be inadequate poetic reflections of it.

Psalm 103:9 says “He chides not us continually, though we be ful of *stryfe*:/ Nor kepes our faultes in memory, for al our *sinful* lyfe.” This may contribute to the first line of the sonnet’s sestet, “Were it not *sinful* then, *striving* to mend” [“Mend” occurs in a prayer bound with *WBP*]. The couplet of Sonnet 103 begins “And more, *much more*, than in my verse can sit.” Psalm 103:11 reads “But as the space is wondrous great, twixt heaven and earth above/ So is his goodness *much more* large, to them that do hym love.”⁵⁰ The psalms often use tropes of measurement in their praise of God’s mercy and might. Shakespeare uses both explicit as well as implicit comparisons in his praise of the Youth. In fact, Sonnet 105 will soon allude to these psalm echoes, in rejecting the charge of idolatry in his “songs and praises” to the Youth.

Sonnet 103 explicitly compares the limitations of de Vere’s verse with the superior qualities of the Youth’s reflected beauty. Implicitly, de Vere has constructed a running commentary on his sonnets to the Youth in his intertextuality with the psalms. The recurrent psalm allusions in the sonnets have encouraged the Youth’s inflated self-regard, as he has thereby been deified. Sonnet 103, like several others, celebrates the Youth’s narcissism, along with his physical beauty. Now, though, de Vere uses parallels with the psalms more ironically than hyperbolically. The “much more” of the couplet indirectly reminds the Youth that he is “much less” than divine. The Youth especially falls short of the divine model in his loyalty and, in the words of Psalm 103:11, “goodness... to them that do him love.”

Conclusion

De Vere’s echoes of *WBP* serve many functions. Sternhold believed the Psalter “comprehendeth the effecte of the whole Byble,”⁵¹ thus functioning as a sort of literary hologram. De Vere’s creative gifts (especially in the Sonnets) included his extraordinary skill in compressing a seemingly infinite world of meanings into just a few words. Echoing the already compressed psalms multiplies his meanings. Some might ask if de Vere’s fondness for the Protestant *WBP* sheds light on the question of his religious preferences. Perhaps. However, our dichotomizing categories are often too narrow to capture de Vere’s astonishing complexity. He regularly looked at polarizing questions from multiple points of view, avoiding the trap of false dichotomies. This contributes to his universal appeal. Since the Psalms are the most personal book of the Bible, it is likely that they had compelling personal meaning for him. In particular, one senses that he suffered from deep and persistent feelings of guilt, which many of the psalms helped him address.

In the effort to draw attention to *WBP* as a source for Shakespeare’s works, this article may have inadvertently created the misleading impression that there are not other sources for the cited passages. Of course there are. Many of the words and phrases attributed here to echoes of *WBP* have many other possible sources. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that considering *WBP* as one important literary source for Shakespeare can open up new interpretive possibilities that enrich our literary comprehension. Shaheen worked under the assumption that a secular source,

if available, would make it unlikely the Bible served as Shakespeare's source for the passage in question.⁵² Ironically, Shaheen's methodology thus embodies something of an anti-biblical bias. Following his method helps avoid making inaccurate attributions to biblical sources; but it simultaneously increases the risk of overlooking valid biblical sources. Shaheen is aware of the danger of projecting the scholar's own religious beliefs onto Shakespeare. In our secular era, however, there is also the opposite danger of underestimating the extent to which Shakespeare was influenced by the Bible and its Psalms.

In his history plays, the Psalm allusions subliminally hint at a providential interpretation of English history, comparing the English to the Israelites as God's Chosen People. Just as Caroline Spurgeon observed of his use of imagery,⁵³ de Vere used both single psalm allusions, and also repeated allusions to one psalm, that contribute to the overarching structure of a play (as is the case for Psalm 137 and *Richard II*, and Psalm 103 and *Edward III*). De Vere created multiple plot lines in all his plays to powerful effect, as one plot line echoes or contrasts with another. The echoes of the Psalms in his Sonnets offer a similar sort of intertextual reverberation, expanding the Sonnets' extraordinary complexity. Restoring readers' familiarity with the repeated allusions to the Psalms offers a "constant subtext," in Marjorie Garber's phrase — a running counterpoint to the words of the Sonnets, as the poet and his beloved are compared and contrasted with the psalmist and his God. Like the centuries of soot that obscured the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel until the 1980s, our unfamiliarity with *WBP*'s echoes has deprived us of a potentially richer enjoyment of de Vere's artistry.

I would like to raise some questions about de Vere's annotations. I do not pretend to know the answers to these questions, but it is my hope that studying the intertextuality between the *Whole Book of Psalms* and Shakespeare's works will give us some leads. Why did he choose to annotate *WBP* in the unusual way that he did? Beth Quitslund, who had already examined some 50 other early copies of *WBP* before she saw de Vere's copy, told me she had never before seen one whose early owner took such apparently deep interest in it.

Why did de Vere draw the 14 distinctly different manicules in the margins of his *WBP*? Why do they always point to the first verse, even when he was forced to draw an awkward fist with a pointing thumb in the gutter (inner margin) for Psalm 51? De Vere only drew one manicule in the rest of his Geneva Bible,⁵⁴ but he often used marginal fleurs-de-lis (simple drawings of flowers, which varied much less than his *WBP* manicules). Why did he draw the one, large fleur-de-lis in his *WBP* (next to verse 11 of Psalm 25)? Marginal flowers were a medieval method of annotation, connected with *florilegium* ('reading for flowers') and with the 12th-century book, *Libri deflorationum*, a guide to picking the choicest passages from a book.⁵⁵

Why did de Vere draw the unique bracket and three dots next to Psalm 31? And why did he make the curious, large 'C'-shaped drawing next to Psalm 130? Psalm 130 is one of the seven penitential psalms; de Vere marked two others (6 and 51) with manicules. It is reasonable to hypothesize that his various annotations reflected something specific about his interest in the psalm in question. William H. Sherman gives examples of early readers who had simple or complex systems of marginal

annotation. It would be of immense interest if someone could decipher de Vere's system. A tentative conjecture is that de Vere may have used manicules to mark psalms he especially wanted to echo in his literary works. There is a much higher number of echoes of the maniculed psalms in the works of "Shakespeare" than there is for non-maniculed but otherwise marked passages elsewhere in his Geneva Bible.⁵⁶

Roger Stritmatter encouraged me to pursue my research on these psalms, by confirming that my findings were hitherto unknown. Previously, Stritmatter noted that some psalms that Shaheen identified as sources for Shakespeare are marked in de Vere's *WBP*. Stritmatter prophetically concluded that "Should there turn out to be a correlation of any kind between these references [in Shakespeare's works] and the markings found in de Vere's Sternhold and Hopkins, it would constitute a level of confirmation of the present thesis [that de Vere wrote Shakespeare's works] involving a multiplication of several independent factors which would be almost beyond belief."⁵⁷ Since the marked psalms in de Vere's copy of *WBP* have yielded dozens of important sources for the works of Shakespeare, Stritmatter's prediction has been amply fulfilled.

De Vere's echoes of the Psalms illustrate the power of literary allusion, which Alter rightly calls "an essential modality of the language of literature."⁵⁸ De Vere was so familiar with *WBP* that some of its echoes in his works probably reflect the associative process that was integral to his creative genius. He may not have been conscious of each allusion. As Shaheen put it, "Shakespeare may have echoed Scripture without being aware of it, since the thought had become his own."⁵⁹ Each of these allusions would not have registered consciously for every early modern reader or audience member. In fact, allusions to *WBP* often exemplify Alter's point that "a good deal of allusion is either meant to have or ends up having a subliminal effect." Yet noticing and reflecting on them deepens our understanding of de Vere's creative method. These echoes also support Alter's argument that "The evoked text becomes a fundamental ground of reference for the alluding text."⁶⁰ In some instances, "the allusion is a key to the work not merely through strategic placement... but through being a recurrent thread in the formal design of the imaginative definition of character, theme, and world."⁶¹

We might re-examine our interpretation of many of de Vere's works, in view of his repeated allusions to the Sternhold and Hopkins *Whole Booke of Psalms*. Further, the fact that it was an Oxfordian who stumbled upon the significance of *WBP* as an overlooked literary source for Shakespeare's plays and poems should bring renewed attention to the ongoing study of the Folger library copy of the de Vere Geneva Bible, and the correlation between marked verses in that volume and the Biblical allusions in the works of Shakespeare.



Tables

WBP from 1569 copy that belonged to Edward de Vere, now at Folger Shakespeare Library

Psalm 25

[Summary:] The Prophet touched with the consideration of his sinnes, and also greued with the cruell malice of his enemies, prayeth to God most feruently to haue his sinnes forgeuen, especially such as he had committed in his youth. He begynneth euery verse accordyng to the Ebrue letters two or three except.

[verse 1] I Lift mine hart to thee, my God & guide most iust, now suffer me to take no shame, for in thee do I trust.

[verse 2] Let not my foes reiocyte, nor make a scorne of me, and let them not be ouerthrown that put their trust in thee.

But shame shal them befall, which harme them wrongfully:

[verse 3] Therefore thy pathes & thy right wayes, vnto me Lord descry.

[verse 4] Direct me in thy truth, and teach me I thee pray:
Thou art my God and sauour, on thee I wayt alway.

[verse 5] Thy mercyes manifold, I pray thee Lord remember:
And eke thy pitie plentiful, for they haue ben for euer.

[verse 6] Remember not the fautes, and fraylty of my youth:
Remember not how ignoraunt, I haue ben of thy truth:
Nor after my deserts, let me thy mercy find,
But of thine own beningnity, Lord haue me in thy mynd.

[verse 7] His mercy is ful swete, his truth a perfect guide
Therefore the Lord wil sinners teach, & such as go aside.

[verse 8] The humble he wil teach, his preceptes for to kepe:

He wil direct in al his wayes the lowly and the meke,

[verse 9] For al the wayes of God, are truth & mercy both,
To them that kepe his testament, the witnes of his troth.

The second part.

[verse 10] Now for thy holy name, O Lord I thee intreat,
To graunt me pardon for my sinne, for it is wondrous great.

{a large, marginal fleur-de-lys is drawn next to verse 11 in de Vere's copy}

[verse 11] Who so doth feare the Lord, the Lord doth him direct.
To lead his life in such a way, as he doth best accept.

[verse 12] His soule shal euermore, in goodnes dwel and stand,
His sede and his posterity, inherite shal the land.

[verse 13] Al those that feare the Lord, know his secret intent:

And vnto them he doth declare, his wil and testament.

[verse 14] Mine eyes and eke my hart, to him I wil aduaunce:
That pluckt my feete out of the snare, of sinne & ignorance.

[verse 15] With mercy me behold, to thee I make my mone:
For I am poore and desolate, and comfortles alone.

[verse 16] The troubles of mine hart, are multiplied in dede:
Bring me out of this misery, necessity and nede.

[verse 17] Behold my pouerty, mine anguish and my payne
Remit my sinne & mine offence, & make me cleane agayne.

[verse 18] O Lord behold my foes, how they do stil increase:
Pursuing me with deadly hate, that faine would liue in peace.

[verse 19] Preserue and kepe my soule, and eke deliuer me:
And let me not be ouerthrowen, because I trust in thee.

[verse 20] Let my simple purenes, me from mine enmies shend:
Because I looke as one of thine, that thou shouldst me defend.

[verse 21] Deliuer Lord thy folke, and send them some relief:
I meane thy chosen Israel, from al their paine and grief.

Psalm 63

[Summary:] Daudid after he had bene in great daunger by Saule, in the deserte Ziph, made this Psalme: wherin he geueth thanks to God for his wonderful deliuerance, in whose mercies he trusted, euen in the midst of his miseries: prophecying the destruction of gods enemies, & contrarywise happenes to al them that trust in the Lord.

[verse 1] O God my God, I watch betyme to come to thee in hast:
For why? my soule and body both, doth thirst of thee to tast

And in this barren wildernes, where waters there are none:
my flesh is partcht for thought of thee, for thee I wish alone

[verse 2] That I might see yet once agayn, thy glory, strength, and might:
As I was wont it to behold, within thy temple bryght.

[verse 3] For why? thy mercies far surmount, this lyfe and wretched dayes:
My lips therefore shal geue to thee, due honor, laude, and prayse.

[verse 4] And whilst I lyue, I wil not fayle, to worship thee alway:
And in thy name I shal lift vp, my hands when I do pray.

[verse 5] My soule is filled as with marow, which is both fat and swete:
my mouth therefore, shal sing such songs, as are for thee most mete.

[verse 6] When as in bed I think on thee, and eke al the night tyde:

[verse 7] For vnder couert of thy wings, thou art my ioyful guide.

[verse 8] My soule doth surely stick to thee, thy right hand is my power:

[verse 9] And those that seke my soule to stroy, them death shal sone deuoure.

[verse 10] The sword shal them deuour ech one, their carcasses shal fede

The hungry foxes which do run, their pray to seke at nede.
[verse 11] The king and al men shal reioyce, that do profes Gods word:
For liers mouthes shal then be stopt, which haue the truth disturbe.

Psalm 65

[Summary:] A praise and thanksgiving unto God by the faithful, who are signified by Sion and Jerusalem, for the choosing, preservation and governance of them, and for plentiful blessings poured forth upon all the earth.

[verse 1] Thy praise alone, O lord, doth reign, in Sion thine own hill:
their vowes to thee they do maintain, & their behests fulfil.

[verse 2] For that thou dost their prayer hear, and dost thereto agree:
Thy people all both far and near, with trust shall come to thee.

[verse 3] Our wicked life so far exceeds, that we should fall therein:
But Lord forgive our great misdeeds, and purge us from our sin.

[verse 4] The man is blessed whom thou dost choose, within thy court to dwell:
Thy house and temple he shall use, with pleasures, that excel.

[verse 5] Of thy great justice heare us God, our health of thee doth rise:
The hope of all the earth abroad, and the sea coasts likewise.

[verse 6] With strength thou art beset about, and compassed with thy power:
thou makest the mountains strong and stout, to stand in every shower.

[verse 7] The swelling seas thou dost assuage, and make their streams full still:
Thou dost restrain the people's rage, and rule them at thy will.

[verse 8] The folk that dwell full far on earth, shall dread thy signs to see:
which morn and even in great mirth, do pass with praise to thee.

[verse 9] When that the earth is chapt and dry, and thirsteth more and more.
Then with thy drops thou dost apply, and much increase her store.

[verse 10] The flood of God doth overstow [overflow], and so doth cause to spring:
The seed and corn which men do sow, for he doth guide the thing.

[verse 11] With wheate thou dost her furrows fill, where by her clods do fall:
Thy drops to her thou dost distill, and bless her fruit withal.

[verse 12] Thou deckest the earth of thy good grace, with fair and pleasant crop:
Thy clouds distill her dew apace, great plenty they do drop.

[verse 13] Wherby the desert shal begin, full great increase to bring:
The little hills shal joy therein, much fruit in them shall spring.

[verse 14] In places plaine the flock shall feed, and cover all the earth:
The valleys with corn shall so exceed, that men shall sing for mirth.

Psalm 103

Argument: This is a Psalme most excellent, wherin the Prophet doth prouoke men and angels, and al creatures to prayse the Lord for his fatherly mercies, and deliuerance of his people from al euils for his prouidence euer al things and the

preseruatiō of the faithful.

[verse 1] MY soule geue laud vnto the Lord, my sprite shall do the same: and all the secrets of my hart praise ye his holy name.

[verse 2] Geue thanks to God for al his gifts, shew not thy self vnkind, & suffer not his benefites to slyp out of thy mynde.

[verse 3] That gaue thee pardon for thy faults, and thee restord again:
For al thy weak and frayle disease, and heald thee of thy paine.

[verse 4] That did redeme thy life from death, from which thou couldst not flee
His mercy and compassion both, he did extend to thee.

[verse 5] That fild with goodnes thy desire, and did prolong thy youth:
Like as the Egle casteth her bil, wherby her age renueth.

[verse 6] The Lord with iustice doth repay, al such as be opprest:
So that their suffrings & their wrongs, are turned to the best.

[verse 7] His wayes & his commaundements, to Moyses he did shew:
His counsels and his valiant actes, the Israelites did know.

[verse 8] The Lord is kind and merciful, when sinners do hym greue:
The slowest to conceyue a wrath, and rediest to forgeue.

[verse 9] He chides not vs continually, though we be ful of stryfe:
Nor kepes our faultes in memory, for al our sinful lyfe.

[verse 10] Nor yet according to our sinnes, the Lord doth vs regard:
Nor after our iniquities, he doth not vs reward.

[verse 11] But as the space is wondrous great, twixt heauen and earth about
So is his goodnes much more large, to them that do hym loue.

[verse 12] God doth remoue our sinnes from vs, and our offences al:
as far as is the sunne rising, ful distant from his fal.

The second part.

[verse 13] And looke what pitie parents deare, vnto their children beare:
Like pitie beares the Lord to such, as worship him in feare:

[verse 14] The Lord that made vs knoweth our shape, our mould & fashion iust:
how weake and frayle our nature is, and how we be but dust.

[verse 15] And how the tyme of mortal men, is lyke the withering hay:
Or like the floure right fayre in field, that fades ful soone away.

[verse 16] Whose glosse & beauty stormy winds, do vtterly disgrace:
and make that after their assaults, such blossoms haue no place.

[verse 17] But yet the goodnes of the Lord, with his shal euer stand:
their childrens children do receyue his righteousnes at hand.

[verse 18] I meane which kepe his couenant, with al their whole desyre:
and not forget to do the thyng, that he doth them requyre.

[verse 19] The heauens hye are made the seat, and footstoole of the Lord:
And by his power imperial, he gouernes al the world.

[verse 20] Ye angels which are great in power, prayse ye and bles the Lord:
Which to obey and do hys wyl, immediatly accord.

[verse 21] ye noble hostes and ministers, cease not to laud him stil:
Which ready are to execute, his pleasure and hys wil.

[verse 22] ye all his works in euery place, prayse ye his holy name:
My hart, my mynd, and eke my soule, prayse ye also the same.

Sonnet 29

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Sonnet 103

A Lack, what poverty my Muse brings forth,
That having such a scope to show her pride,
The argument all bare is of more worth
Than when it hath my added praise beside.
Oh blame me not if I no more can write!
Look in your glass and there appears a face,
That over-goes my blunt invention quite,
Dulling my lines, and doing me disgrace.
Were it not sinful then striving to mend,
To mar the subject that before was well,
For to no other pass my verses tend,
Than of your graces and your gifts to tell.
And more, much more than in my verse can sit
Your own glass shows you, when you look in it.

Sonnet 135

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy Will,
And Will to boot, and Will in over-plus;
More than enough am I that vexed thee still,
To thy sweet will making addition thus.
Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious,
Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?
Shall will in others seem right gracious,
And in my will no fair acceptance shine?
The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,
And in abundance addeth to his store;
So thou, being rich in Will, add to thy Will
One will of mine, to make thy large will more.
Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill;
Think all but one, and me in that one Will.

[The author is grateful for the support of Gail Paster and the staff of the Folger Shakespeare Library, without whose help this article could not have been written.]

Endnotes

- ¹ Some readers may be interested in the prior saga of this article. The editor of a major mainstream journal apologized that it took his journal nearly two years to reject the article. When it was first submitted, one peer reviewer wrote, “its thesis is sound and its detail convincing.” The author was asked to expand the article. He did so, and submitted a second draft. A few weeks later, the editor wrote that the first peer reviewer “thinks it can be published as it stands.” The second reviewer wrote, “this reader is haunted by the suspicion that there’s something to the argument.” But he asked for extensive revisions. Alas, the second reviewer never approved the third, fourth, or fifth revisions. Only at the end of the process did the author reveal his Oxfordian authorship opinion to the editor. (He self-censors manuscripts he sends to mainstream English literature journals; he looks forward to the day when that will no longer be necessary.)
- ² Richard M. Waugaman, “The Sternhold and Hopkins *Whole Booke of Psalms* Is a Major Source for the Works of Shakespeare,” *Notes & Queries* 56:595-604 (2009); “Echoes of the ‘Lamed’ Section of Psalm 119 in Shakespeare’s Sonnets,” *Shakespeare Matters* 8:1-8 (2009). “Psalm Echoes in *1 Henry VI*, *Richard II*, and *Edward III*,” *Notes & Queries* 57:359-364 (2010); “The Discovery of a Major New Literary Source for Shakespeare’s Works in the de Vere Geneva Bible,” *Brief Chronicles II*:109-120 (2010); “*Titus Andronicus*, the Psalms, and Edward de Vere’s Bible,” *The Oxfordian* 13:34-49 (2011); “An Oxfordian Quark, or a Quirky Oxfreudian? Psalm Evidence of de Vere’s Authorship of Shakespeare’s Works,” *The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* (in press). (Most of the author’s publications on Shakespeare are available at www.oxfreudian.com.)
- ³ Richmond Noble, *Shakespeare’s Biblical Knowledge* (New York: Macmillan, 1935).
- ⁴ Beth Quitslund, *The Reformation in Rhyme* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). *WBP* was often bound with a Bible or prayerbook. This article uses the 1565 edition from the University of Illinois (STC 2434; available on EEBO). Unless otherwise specified, all psalm allusions in this article are from *WBP*.
- ⁵ Richmond Noble, *Shakespeare’s Use of Song* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).
- ⁶ Peter Seng, *The Vocal Songs in the Plays of Shakespeare: A Critical History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).
- ⁷ Rivkah Zim, *English Metrical Psalms: Poetry as Praise and Prayer, 1535-1601*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 143.

⁸ Beth Quitslund, *The Reformation in Rhyme*.

⁹ See, for example, Margaret P. Hannay, ‘“Wisdom the Wordes”: Psalm Translation and Elizabethan Women’s Spirituality.’ *Religion and Literature* 23 (1991), 65-82.

¹⁰ But his wording seldom corresponds to the wording of the examples below.

¹¹ Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 23.

¹² Zim, 143.

¹³ Zim, 115.

¹⁴ Zim, 144.

¹⁵ Hamlin, 43.

¹⁶ *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

¹⁷ As Antonio observes in *The Merchant of Venice*, ‘The devil can cite Scripture to his purpose./ An evil soul producing holy witness/ Is like a villain with a smiling cheek.’ (1.3.96-98).

¹⁸ Quoted in Robert Giroux, *The Book Known as Q: A Consideration of Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (New York: Atheneum, 1982), 225.

¹⁹ Richard D. Altick, in his ‘Symphonic Imagery in *Richard II*,’ in Jeanne T. Newlin, *Richard II: Critical Essays* (London: Garland Publishing, 1947/1984), 278.

²⁰ Roger A. Stritmatter, *The Marginalia of Edward Vere’s Geneva Bible: Providential Discovery, Literary Reasoning, and Historical Consequence* (Northampton, MA: Oxenford Press, 2001), 225.

²¹ See Waugaman, 2009.

²² The Geneva [G], Bishops [B], and Coverdale [C] translation do not use “grief” here.

²³ G, B, and C do not use “manifold” or “deserts” here.

²⁴ G, B, and C do not use “in thy mind” here.

²⁵ Hannibal Hamlin, personal communication, October 24, 2008.

²⁶ As noted, de Vere showed special interest in Psalm 25:10.

²⁷ G, B, and C do not use “take shame” here.

²⁸ G, B, and C do not use “offence” here.

²⁹ G, B, and C do not use “comfortless” here.

³⁰ Waugaman, 2009.

³¹ Helen Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

³² G, B, and C do not use “still,” “more,” or “store” here.

³³ G, B, and C (unrhymed) translations of Psalm 65 also lack any final words ending in -ill.

³⁴ G. Blakemore Evans, *The Sonnets*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 141.

³⁵ Stephen Booth, *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 180.

³⁶ G, B, and C do not include this phrase. “I think on thee” occurs only five other times in EEBO before 1600.

- ³⁷ George Gascoigne, *A hundreth sundrie flowres bounde vp in one small poesie. Gathered partely (by translation) in the fyne outlandish gardins of Euripides, Ouid, Petrarke, Ariosto, and others: and partly by inuention, out of our owne fruitefull orchardes in Englande: yelding sundrie svveet sauours of tragical, comical, and morall discourses*, ... (At London : Imprinted [by Henrie Bynneman and Henry Middleton] for Richarde Smith, [1573]), ESTC S105691.
- ³⁸ Athanasius' "treatise," often printed with *WBP* (including its 1569 edition), says of this psalm, "If to auoyde persecution thou flee into the desert, feare not as though thou were there *alone* and desolate: but hauyng God, and in the dawning of the *day arising* to him, sing the 63d psalm." "Alone and desolate" are echoed not only by the sense, but also by one of the words of the second line of the sonnet ("I all *alone*").
- ³⁹ G, B, and C do not use "sing" here.
- ⁴⁰ Discussed in Waugaman, 2009.
- ⁴¹ Discussed in Waugaman, 2010.
- ⁴² Robert Alter, *The Book of Psalms* (New York: Norton, 2007), 358.
- ⁴³ See Vendler, 438-40 for discussion of this sonnet.
- ⁴⁴ Vendler, 435
- ⁴⁵ G, B, and C do not use the highlighted words here.
- ⁴⁶ Once again, G, B, and C do not use the highlighted words here.
- ⁴⁷ Early English Books Online (EEBO) has fully searchable texts of some 22,000 books.
- ⁴⁸ G, B, and C do not use "do disgrace" here.
- ⁴⁹ Vendler, 440.
- ⁵⁰ Neither of these highlighted words is used in G, B, or C.
- ⁵¹ Zim, 115.
- ⁵² Shaheen, "If the passage in Shakespeare over which there is uncertainty also occurs in one of Shakespeare's sources... then we can reasonably conclude that Shakespeare was not making a biblical reference" (7).
- ⁵³ Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935).
- ⁵⁴ Next to 2 *Maccabees*, chapter 3.
- ⁵⁵ Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).
- ⁵⁶ This comparison has some limitations, since de Vere tended to mark entire psalms in *WBP*, and single verses elsewhere in his Geneva Bible.
- ⁵⁷ Stritmatter, 225.
- ⁵⁸ Alter, 111.
- ⁵⁹ Shaheen, 70.
- ⁶⁰ Alter, 124.
- ⁶¹ Alter, 125.

Reviews, Interviews, and Communications



Shakespeare Suppressed: The Uncensored Truth About Shakespeare and His Works A Book of Evidence and Explanation

by Katherine Chiljan

San Francisco: Faire Editions, 2011

reviewed by William Ray



his book marks the advent of a new standard in Shakespeare scholarship. It can be a mistake to review newly published books, when there has been no time to fully assimilate their content. In the interests of topicality one writes from first instincts. Certainly the reviews of *Contested Will* by James Shapiro had the breathless, hectic character of an all-night-typing tomorrow's term paper. Former *New York Times* cultural editor William S. Niederkorn wrote a more considered evaluation in the *Brooklyn Rail* much later. *Contested Will* is on this study's topic, the dubious authorship of the Shakespeare canon by William Shakspeare of Stratford. Professor Shapiro found nothing questionable but the competence of the questioners, among them Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, James, Clemens, Keller, Chaplin, Freud, Galsworthy, Joyce, and an assembling host in modern law, arts, and letters. By contrast Chiljan faces the issue fully, historically, after twenty-five years of historical and textual research.

An employed academic could not have written this book. Not one biographically-focused English PhD dissertation on Shakespeare has been approved since 2001, and none before then. Investigating Shakespeare's historicity is an industry-wide taboo. In compliance with the doctrinal proscription, there is neither personal time nor university support for this embargoed area of work—work which Ralph Waldo Emerson described as “the first of all literary questions.” The precise question: who actually wrote the works of Shakespeare? The crown prince of English literature continues to be a ghost in the house of knowledge.

Chiljan states in her introduction that she is certain the identity “Shakespeare” should be traced to the prodigal Renaissance genius Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, but adds, “This book however will not present his case for the Shakespeare authorship.” Rather, she sets out to prove that Shakspeare of Stratford was not “Shakespeare,” and

to distinguish between the reputed and actual author. In the end, the reader knows by default who wrote the works.

Shakespeare Suppressed utilizes established historiographic methods, especially relying upon previously ignored records and texts. They were not considered relevant under the paradigm of an unlettered figure exploding upon English literature in the early 1590s, only to recede c. 1612. The carefully documented descriptive Elizabethan history is convincingly corroborated by the author's at times astounding knowledge of Tudor and Jacobean literature.

The best proof of that lies in her list of *ninety-three* contemporary references to Shakespearean plays, occurring far earlier than the conventional chronology, which is based on the available dates of Shakespeare of Stratford in London. That chronology relies on the assumption that the plays were written by him immediately before the performance dates in the 1590's through 1612. This notion eventually sank into the cultural consciousness as an instructive political parable, that Everyman can accomplish wonders if he just applies himself. The parable contains a preceptive truth. The question is whether the facts confirm Shakespeare's exemplification of it.

Some "too-early" listings appear in the text and then are consolidated in an appendix. There are additional appendices for critical dedications and contemporary texts. The book shows practiced skill at pictorial analysis. The plates are superior to those usually available in the major publishing industry. The name index is excellent. Literary works are italicized, including several recondite titles. Each chapter has a conclusion section, as do the five major divisions of the study. For summary purposes, one could read these as an overview of the argument. Most unusually, there is a final section, "Conjectures and Dares," wherein the author writes more freely about what must have happened, given previously presented data, but recognizes much may never be proven to a certainty. In this, she tends toward the disciplined wing of historiography, telling the story without succumbing to the usual occupational pitfalls, presumption, interpolation, and unwarranted generalization. Such a cautious temperament produces a more credible account. Limitation exists as a realistic anchor, not an obstruction to inquiry.

As readers, we should note the magnitude of the author's intention. The persona and works of Shakespeare are the most prestigious symbols of art and artist in world literature. A diverse industry across two continents labors to foster access to that work. That the Stratford legend of its author may be a lie, owing to a Jacobean political fabrication that became the paradigm, conveyed with priest-like dignities and patronizing commentary from the august towers of learning, is still too much shock for our conditioned intelligentsia and trusting public to absorb. Shifting the paradigm would have reverberations throughout the culture. But if this apostasy is fact, then records and texts of the time will verify it.

I. Using Texts and Records

I have referred to neglected texts as the key feature of the book's argument. The skeptic may ask why they have not been referenced before now. *Shakespeare Suppressed*

states no view how the contemporaneous references occurred or why they have not been recognized. The fact they exist is enough. In my opinion, because of ignorance about the practice of middle-class Elizabethan authors to convey forms of deference or satire through allusion, prior researchers have not noted embedded encomia referring to the high personage and great works of someone we have conflated into the pseudonymous identity “Shakespeare.” The contemporaneous allusions honored him as a great author and as a high nobleman. The information slipped below scholarly focus for lack of a context within which to understand it. Asides, digs, and sly allusions also characterized the charged exchanges between and among members of the Elizabethan writing class, and allusive quotations served as notice that one knew the underground messaging system. Some contextual meaning inevitably fades, and only focused attention uncovers an era’s evocations before that happens.

Chiljan has no trouble finding such allusions. She compiled her “too-early” examples with line-to-line or phrase-to-phrase parallels between Shakespearean language and the contemporary references. It made sleuthing the greatest mystery in literature look fairly obvious. But to get to the plateau of knowledge required, there must have been an extensive foreground, reading a great deal of Elizabethan literature and official State records.

The “too-early for Shakspeare” results illuminate an important question: when could have Shakspeare written the plays? The Stratfordian answer necessarily compresses the entire career of the unheralded genius into twelve years (1592-1604) or twenty years (1592-1612), with virtually nothing published in quarto to document the later works.

But if the plays were confirmed to be dated earlier than the putative author had been able to write them, the Stratford narrative fails. The Shakespeare establishment finds itself asserting circular reasoning, interpolating backwards from a necessary result to an assumed but undocumented genesis.

As an example among the ninety-three “too-early for Shakspeare proofs,” let us read a famous passage in *Hamlet*, the archetypal Shakespearean play traditionally dated to 1600-01. “The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals; and yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?” (2.2.315-17) No one doubts it is Shakespeare. An anonymous play, *Histrion-mastix* (c. 1589) contains the light-hearted language: “One of the goodliest spaniels I have seen. –And here’s the very quintessence of ducks.” “Spaniel-Spaniard” satirically alluded to Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* and its lead actor Edward Alleyn: “O sweetheart, the Spaniards are come!” Then the dig at the Spanish Armada disaster in “Here’s the very quintessence of ducks,” using Hamlet’s lofty language to jeer again. As Thomas Nashe had written that year of “whole Hamlets of speeches,” this sequence may be typical of the “Hamlets” he meant—freely altered repeats of recently known vivid phrasing. The significant point is the play *Hamlet* existed, and was widely known in its essential dramatic form, three to five years before the putative debut of the Stratford Shakspeare. We need not go into the hypothetical that a twenty-three-year-old countryman of no known education had to have written a courtly play, oddly mirroring the life of de Vere, that ranks in grandeur with Sophocles’ last tragedies. Another popular notion is that he stole from the never-seen and then forever-lost and

forever-convenient “Ur-Hamlet.” Neither defense withstands abundant evidence to the contrary. The facts support a much earlier *Hamlet*. Chiljan lists no less than eleven additional too-early *Hamlet* references besides “the quintessence of ducks.”

The default position which the Shakespeare establishment takes with this anomaly is that Shakespeare was the greatest thief in literary history as well as, simultaneously, the greatest author. The proposition offends plausibility, as does the associated rationalization that the Gentle Master “would surely have” copied many [ninety-three?] lesser writings, and not the opposite, that they copied him as a cherished literary and aristocratic icon. (The honorific Gentle in that post-feudal era of “ruthless and gigantic caste” referred to high rank, not mild temperament. Neither Oxford nor Shakspeare was saintly.)

The reader may wonder, if the truth is that “Shakespeare,” whoever he was, did not rob his peers, how then did the legend of plagiarism begin? There is always a germ of truth in legend. First, as we have just seen, plagiarism, though self-contradictory to our concept of the Shakespeare persona, is still a handy fig-leaf to explain inexplicably early versions of the plays.

But Chiljan locates the legendary plagiarism as definitively as has ever been done in Shakespeare criticism, with Shakspeare, not “Shakespeare.” She proves he was an imposter known to publishers and printers, as the pseudonym and the imposter’s name were nearly identical verbally and graphically. Her proof lies not in sordid contracts but in the artful words of Ben Jonson. Shakspeare is immortalized in *Every Man Out of His Humor* as Sogliardo (fool in Italian and an anagram for “O’s liar dog”) as well as Sordido, the grain-dealer. His arms, motto, his fallacious Gentleman status, all get the knife. He is the plagiarizing country/town-gull Stephen/Mathew in *Every Man in His Humor*. *Return From Parnassus*, Part II, refers to Gullio, another gull--the name also pointedly resembling Gulielmus, Latin for William. John Weaver levels the insult of gross weight at “fat Gullio.” We get a hint of Shakspeare’s intimidating physical presence, not unlike the powerful looking figure of his father at the first version of the Stratford Shakespeare Monument, as sketched by Dugdale in 1634.

Shakspeare also is Crispinus in *The Poetaster*, Crispinus denoting “curly” in Latin, a derogation related to Shakspeare’s wool-broker background. Jonson wrote explicitly, “Crispinus, alias Cri-spinas, poetaster [star dogging the poet] and plagiary” (5.3). The hyphenated name refers sardonically to pseudonymity, as in Shake-speare. Spinus is a Latin word alluding to the thorn bush. There are too many direct hits here for the watchman to report all’s well at the border. I don’t remember having seen this powerful a collection of iconoclastic damage in any other work on the authorship question.

Chiljan also found unmistakable satire of Shakspeare in the Shakespeare oeuvres themselves. The reader is referred to William in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, to Clown and Shepherd in *The Winter’s Tale*, William in *As You Like It*, William the thieving cook and William Visor the intentionally overlooked criminal in *2Henry IV*, and to the murderous Stephano in *The Tempest*. This last reference, to Stephano nearly murdering Prospero in order to take over the island, alludes all the way back to a word usage in Oxford’s first published essay, wherein he said not sponsoring Bedingfield’s translation of *Cardanus Comforte* would be “to have murdered” it “in the wast bottomes

of my chestes.” The true Shakespeare suffered spiritual murder, in part through the mendacity of the fool he had immortalized. Shakspeare’s cheerful petty theft was tolerated, if we trust the repeated “countenance” language in *The Winter’s Tale*, because any diversion away from the true author maintained his public anonymity. The coup de grace to Oxford the artist occurred with the First Folio. It both hailed Shakspeare as “Shakespeare”/Shake-speare and, for clever posterity, signaled the true author, too. One should not forget Oxford’s own farsighted puns scattered through the works, for instance that *The Winter’s Tale* translated to French is *Le Conte d’Hiver*, homonymic to *Le Comte d’Ever*, the Count de Vere (the rank of count, not used in England, was the equivalent of that of earl). This is one possible reason for the choice of title.

I have given examples of proof here, but I have not captured the scale of probative investigation that characterizes each chapter of the study. Its level of erudition may be judged by an impromptu list of unfamiliar sources: *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series of the Reign of James I (1603-10)* (1857); John Nichols, *Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First* (1828); T.B. Howell, *A Complete Collection of State Trials and proceedings for high treason and other crimes and misdemeanors* (1816); *Correspondences of King James VI of Scotland with Sir Robert Cecil and Others in England, during the Reign of Elizabeth* (1861), et al. Remarkable to me in the bibliography is how few cited monographs date from 2000. Other than portrait literature, only the works of Marcy L. North on anonymity stand out as recent. This buttresses the point below that there really isn’t much of value from the departments recently, due to doctrinal strictures.

II. Institutional Implications

Two implications arise from Chiljan’s traditional textual and historical methodologies, dovetailed to near-universally neglected contemporary literature. First, it highlights that the Academy has hamstrung any possible intellectual advance in this subject matter, producing in effect historical fiction about the wrong man rather than fostering verifiable Shakespearean biography. The cause rests at least partly with the departmental approach to research, which is intrinsic to higher education. That division of educational labor, begun to provide trained professional employees for a mass economy, combines with Shakespearean Academy’s embarrassing avoidance syndrome to foreclose factual inquiry. The responsibility of intellectuals is to make that factual inquiry, and to unmask falsehood in any guise. Neither can happen under present conditions.

In short, the most critical subset in Shakespearean studies, the author’s connection to the text, is censured from acceptable and customary scholarship. The first error, suppressing historical inquiry into the author enigma, inevitably produces another, English students quickly learning what not to allow themselves to think, say, and essay. Deeply perplexed avocational scholars have stepped into the empty space in recent years.

Institutional denial is more common to sectarian religion. Recent partisan remarks by Shapiro, that Roland Emmerich’s film *Anonymous* has all blond heroes and all dark

[non Aryan] heavies, as well as Stephen Greenblatt's comparison of Stratford doubters to Holocaust deniers, tell us a great deal about the antagonistic state of affairs in the University departments to whom the culture has delegated the Shakespearean inquiry. They are historiographically ignorant, incompetent to represent the issue on the national stage, and, resistive to the facts, personally annoyed more than wholesomely inquiring. At about the same time Shapiro slandered Emmerich, Stanley Wells of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust attributed a huge fraud discovery to Shapiro that plainly he should have credited to the research of Dr. John Rollett. But Rollett has Oxford connections, though he is not an Oxfordian. Shapiro hid an extremely indirect reference to Rollett's prior discovery, in the little-to-be-read bibliography chapter of *Contested Will*, and avoided even mentioning Rollett's name. His actions have some of the sly characteristics of premeditated fraud. Shapiro, Greenblatt, and Wells betray themselves and their professional ethics.

Compared to all this, the gifted devoted Katherine Chiljan, BA(UCLA), wins the day with an authentic contribution to knowledge. Sigmund Freud opined that talent is universal, only character is rare. She is not a novice, having found and edited the indispensable primary texts, which are published in *Dedications to the Earl of Oxford* (1994) and *Letters and Poems of Edward, Earl of Oxford* (1998).

The second implication of *Shakespeare Suppressed* is how shallow the prevailing orthodox scholarship seems in comparison. Stanley Wells of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust published his latest book recently: *Shakespeare, Sex, & Love*. We have noted the decades-long absence of departmental discoveries. Apparently, as before the Copernican Revolution, everything has stagnated in entrenched ambitions and unexamined assumptions.

There are at least two dramatic exceptions to the prevailing inert belief system. One is the work of Alastair Fowler, who takes no position on the authorship question, but whose book, *Triumphal Forms*, virtually clinches the argument that the Sonnets were written by an highly erudite Renaissance mind, with specific numerological intent. The other is Ted Hughes' *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*, a near discovery of Edward de Vere through tracing Shakespeare's unconscious personification of the boar as uncontrollable animal Desire. De Vere's heraldic or totem animal was the boar. But Hughes was not looking for the author.

What is to be done about the impasse? The Shakespeare establishment must be realistic. The faults of false certainty and its obverse, denial, lie within, whether a person or an organization. In this case, literary criticism, no one can analyze artistic work accurately if artificially, doctrinally banned from the social and biographical context where the art rooted and grew. I have heard English professors even insist, perhaps under status duress, that interpretative analysis is entirely subjective, *ipso facto* discountable as evidence in the question of authorial identity. This is a convenient confusion between determining legal guilt by hearsay and determining literary identification by demonstrations of distinctive imagery and style, the latter of which being what the establishment pretextually forbids but *Shakespeare Suppressed* accomplishes so effectively. It is also cheap relativism that achieves nothing good scholastically or morally.

The empirical fact the Shakespeare professional pretends not to know is that there is no basis by which to identify Shakspere the man with Shakespeare the work. Shakspere was a predatory and miserly person, not an artistic one. Chiljan pursues that principle in minute unmistakable detail. It has always been available from the record.

But in the broader sense, any attempt to separate interpretive analysis and biography from literary criticism is unrealistic. It means rejecting most critical literature in the last two hundred years, including much written about the Shakespearean canon – a body of work Walt Whitman described as “in some respects greater than anything else in recorded literature.” Surely these are self-laming measures to protect a defective but entrenched doctrinal narrative.

We need not jettison interpretive analysis. In every other literary field but Shakespeare, critical studies have expanded our artistic and cultural knowledge through sensible and sensitive biographical-to-historical correlation, bringing together the life and work of artists into understandable integrity. Every mind lives and breathes in a social frame. Shapiro’s crank theory that 16th century literature did not comprehend autobiography comes to mind. Of course Henry Miller would not fit into a tyrannical religious state, and personal confession was not a literary device. That was why the device of allegory was in use. And the poetry of Shakespeare, Vaux, Dekker, Donne were utterly self-conscious.

A further Stratfordian avoidance mechanism, recently expressed in the *Times Literary Supplement* exchanges and elsewhere, is that enjoyment and comprehension of a work of art don’t need the maker’s biography or even our seeing his byline. (Who cares who wrote Shakespeare? We have the plays, don’t we?) Who cares who wrote the Ninth Symphony or painted the Guernica? Art and artist are inextricable though not identical.

Trends come and go like shibboleths. In the 1980s, deconstructionism completely divorced author from work. The Author died, so to speak. New Historicism responded with imaginative biography, such as Greenblatt’s ficto-bio *Will in the World*. One reaches the point of absurdity if either of these standards dominates methodology, i.e., knowing as little as possible about a creation’s creator is the best state of appreciation and knowledge; or, imagining into the artist’s life is more worthwhile than factually tracing his human fate. The first is overeducated stupidity. The second is dishonest fiction. History and biography either make sense of a life and work or they force us to reconsider the accuracy of our initial assumptions. The Oxfordian challenge in questioning first assumptions and thereby discovering a more fertile subject matter, has produced the only salubrious new work in the field.

III. The Argument

Doctrinal politics aside, what is Chiljan’s answer to the identity of “Shakespeare”? What does she say? I can indicate the depth of analysis, not repeat it. The reader has much to enjoy in following its path.

Facing off with “the Professor” or “the experts,” her straw-man conceits personifying the status quo view, she demonstrates that Edward de Vere concealed himself as a public author long before Shakspeare left Stratford; that there was never any proof that Shakspeare was a writer and little that he was an actor; that the “Shake-scene, upstart Crow” anecdote connected to the nascent “Shakespeare” actually had nothing to do with either “Shakespeare” or Shakspeare, a scholarly tour de force; that the 1593 poet-identity “Shakespeare/Shake-speare” was an invention made necessary to present veiled support for Henry Wriothesley as the rightful successor to Elizabeth; that the same denotation “Shakespeare” expanded ad hoc into dramatic literature in 1598; that Shakspeare the Stratfordian capitalized on the name confusion, and though it is likely Oxford protested effectively to stop the publication of quartos in six instances, only pointed literary characterizations, not Stationers’ Company law, denounced Shakspeare’s mendacity; that Oxford traded his personal literary acclaim for his son’s life in 1601, following the Essex Rebellion; and that the royal family succession triangle (Oxford, Elizabeth, and Southampton) was excised from history via the First Folio’s permanent transfer of “authorship” onto the Stratford counterfeit.

I see nothing surprising about this outline, since gaining familiarity with the Oxfordian literature. That bibliography is highlighted by *Shakespeare By Another Name* (Mark Anderson), *The Monument* (Hank Whittimore), *Edward Vere’s Geneva Bible* (Roger Stritmatter), *Great Oxford* (Richard Malim, ed.), the annotated *Macbeth* (Richard H. Whalen) and annotated *Othello* (Whalen and Ren Draya); *Shakespeare’s Lost Kingdom* (Charles Beauclerk); *Dating Shakespeare’s Plays* (Kevin Gilvary, ed.); and *Shakespeare’s Guide to Italy* (Richard P. Roe), which has been circulated and acclaimed privately since 2010.

The uniqueness of this book is its organization and quality and its lifelong commitment to the truth. *Shakespeare Suppressed* follows the facts step by step and advances our knowledge in several areas. An example: *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is widely termed a weak play from “Shakespeare’s” retirement phase, which he amended in collaboration with John Fletcher of the Jacobean playwright generation. By comparative textual analysis, simply comparing plot and phrases, Chiljan identifies this play with the very young (16-year-old) Oxford’s work, presented before the Queen at Oxford University as *Palamon and Arcite* in 1576. Records indicate she supplied him with royal capes and garments for the occasion. Historiographically, the play switches in an instant from being Stratfordian supportive evidence of Shakspeare’s uncharacteristically waning creativity, to a revised descendant of Oxford’s precocious playwrighting skills. Hence the crude derivative work. To corroborate the identification, Ben Jonson referred to it by Oxford’s original title, *Palomon*, in *Bartholomew Fair* (4.3) in 1614, well before the 1634 printed edition. The scholar unfamiliar with the early play as the basis for the later may not comprehend Jonson’s passing remark or its prodigious implications. Shakespearean history then has to re-form to suit the facts. Instead of the presumed and much-touted collaboration with Fletcher, so convenient to a later dating and to partisan muddying of the authorship itself, we are left with Fletcher picking up an old script, subplotting it, then trying it on the stage long after Oxford died.

Similar proofs pass muster. Six plays before Elizabeth's 1570-80s court reappear as Shakespearean:

- *Troilus and Cressida* (1609) shares elements with *The History of Ajax and Ulysses* and *The History of Agamemnon and Ulysses*, (1572 and 1584 respectively.)
- *The History of Error* (1577) preceded *A Comedy of Errors* by seventeen years.
- *The History of Caesar* (1583) preceded *The Life and Death of Julius Caesar* by eleven years.
- *A History of Ariodante and Genevora* (1583) preceded *Much Ado About Nothing* by nine years.
- A shared critical element in *Titus and Gissippus* (1577) preceded *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1590) by thirteen years.

As Shakspeare was born in 1564, in an objective environment, this list would be sufficient to shake and shatter the Stratfordian chronology, unmasking an approximation created *post facto* to give credence to the Stratford Shakspeare claim to Shakespearean authorship. Chiljan relied on the prior work of Eva Turner Clark for some of the courtly records. Her contribution is the wealth of detail—plot changes, dates, performances, comparison to Chambers' traditional dating, publication. In so many words, the "lost plays" of Oxford are not lost. They were transformed in time into several of the familiar canon plays.

Chapter 5 discusses documents showing that Shakspeare was a grain broker, property owner, money-lender, and investor, but not a writer.

- The single document in 1595 interpreted as showing the man from Stratford to be an actor actually refers to Kempe, Shakespeare & Burbage as servants to the Lord Chamberlain to receive money on behalf of the Lord Chamberlain's Men acting troupe.
- In 1603, "Shakespeare" is mentioned as a member of the actors, but there is no evidence Lawrence Fletcher or William Shakespeare ever acted, and none of the latter being a playwright.
- Records of the Globe and the Blackfriars theaters show Shakespeare was an investor, but not a writer.
- The appointment of "Shakspear ye Player by Garter" to Gentleman status in 1596 does not mention him as a writer. Shakspeare never spelled his name "Shakespeare" until 1596, by which time it had become a famous name in England and the Continent.
- The Belott-Mountjoy case in 1612 says nothing about his being a writer, although another writer, George Wilkins, participated. He did not note "William Shakespeare" was a writer, actor, or famous playwright and poet, nor did the Court record.

These documents accord with others of the (seventy) legal records recording Shakspeare, as a businessman, broker, theater and concession owner, and dealer in money, but never that he wrote any of the Shakespeare canon.

The argument thus gathered together in one chapter makes it a readily accessible source for future use. The book's skill in summarizing disparate sources into a cohesive frame of reference warrants describing *Shakespeare Suppressed* as a new standard in Shakespeare authorship studies. The reader may differ with individual points in the study, as I did concerning its treatment of *Willobie His Avis*. But that difference is made easier to contrast by the clarity of the chapter's presentation.

Chiljan has a particular gift for aesthetic insight, as, for instance, into why the creation of the Droeshout etching, the frontispiece to the First Folio, was important. She first connected the heretofore unknown young Droeshout to Gheeraerts, and then his etching's peculiar form to Jonson's First Folio strategy, expressed directly from the play *Every Man in His Humor*. Creating a "monster," we would say a Frankenstein, foreclosed a lot of reasonable questions. This pictorial shock-attack helped Jonson achieve the necessary identity switch. The public would not ask about authorial origins while gaping at a human-like monster. The past didn't exist. He was *sui generis*. Sir George Greenwood reacted somewhat more humorously, maybe in psychological self-defense, that the etching was of a "leering, hydrocephalic idiot."

Bamboozlement is not a new art form. The etching was only one detail. All the participants in the First Folio dedications can be traced to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain from 1614, with the actors' names used to assure that Shakspeare was their fellow Shakespearean thespian. Similarly, the Shakespeare Monument at Stratford-upon-Avon was a contrivance that co-opted an insignificant cenotaph to a wool merchant and formed a false shrine. How these two major falsehoods occurred provides the best reading in the book and its final triumph.

The crux of the story is political, why was it so governmentally important to separate Edward de Vere, Lord Oxford, from his lifetime writings, some of them vitriolically critical of the Cecils, who were his own in-laws and the de facto tyrants of Elizabethan and early Jacobean England? The book answers that pivotal question.

IV. The Man Who Knew Too Much

Oxford's intimate background with Elizabeth I and the extraordinarily treated youth, Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton, was the dark shadow of Gloriana, a royal bloodline possibility so destabilizing to the State that it had to be eradicated or else just the continuing rumor would threaten the legitimacy of the Stuart monarchy and its succession. The political words Realpolitik or Machiavel give the basic idea. If ever there was a contract to efface an artist (who was both in and ahead of his historical era) to save face for everybody else, the Earl of Pembroke wrote it and made it stick.

Using state papers and exchanged letters almost exclusively for proof, *Shakespeare Suppressed* follows the systematic removal of Oxford's political input—he died a broken man; of Southampton and his son, the remaining Tudor heirs, poisoned together in

1626; and of the origin of the Shakespeare works, effectively stolen and packed onto a convenient beast of burden for the indefinite future. There is never any space in the official histories for the losers and troublemakers. They become the stuff of tragedy.

It is almost breathtaking that Oxford wrote some of this history into the plays and poems as it unfolded like a nightmare in front of him. Chiljan found the connections, for instance how Robert Cecil blackmailed him to suppress his life's work to save his son. Again, it is not in a written State document. In *The Winter's Tale*, the King of Sicillia (i.e., Robert Cecil) commands a nobleman to take his daughter (Perdita—lost) out and abandon her. A bear (rampant power or authority) eats him alive. Autolycus the courtier eventually rescues the true rights of the nobleman's daughter (Art) because she gave such intrinsic evidence of nobility.

The author's exegesis characterizes that nobility (aristocracy) as so integral to the works that it becomes a contextual clue that would eventually lead posterity to "lost" art's progenitor. Dropping the allegory, Cecil blackmailed Oxford to abandon his rebellious troublemaking art and Oxford sacrificed his "daughter" for his son. Southampton was already in the Tower condemned. Oxford's writings were not yet gathered in print. The state papers document a sudden reversal of execution plans, never explained. Southampton was saved. Oxford's noble counterpart, Antigonus, who reminds us that Antigone was buried alive, is enjoined to secrecy about what he has had to do to satisfy the King of Sicilia. If he talked it would threaten the legitimacy of the succession. He did not and was left to live his own Greek tragedy.

Shakespeare Suppressed's interpretation of the daughter as being the personification of Art, appears elsewhere in Shakespeare, namely with Miranda in *The Tempest*, anagramming to "in drama" as a clue. Understanding these plays may have been obscured by the vagaries of time and the catastrophic ambitions of men, but the inquiring reader can still comprehend their, and their author's, profound thoughts.


Chiljan achieves her intention, separating the real and false, in such a measured, almost self-effacing, style that at first one is unaware of its persuasive power. This changes in the postscript, written to the Professor community (Chapter 18). She hands them a hot bucket of Hell for the cowardly way they have run Shakespeare studies, with the arrogant wrong-headed notion they have priestly veto power to say what is fact or not. She writes some rough things, but they are just and ought to be heard. The dignified transition to a more accurate paradigm of the literature and history of the early English nation-state—as well as just cleansing ourselves culturally from some entrenched and corrupting myths—are two substantial reasons to take heed.

***Dating Shakespeare's Plays:
A Critical Review of the Evidence***

edited by Kevin Gilvary

Turnbridge Wells, Kent: Parapress, 2010

reviewed by Donald Ostrowski

 *Dating Shakespeare's Plays* makes a substantial contribution to the theory of dating through systematically re-examining 40 plays (36 from the First Folio and four from quartos) attributed in whole or in part to Shakespeare. Nineteen contributors analyze the evidence to establish not so much the exact date of a play's having been written but a range of dates—the earliest and latest possible date for the composition of each play. In addition, the book has three preliminary chapters: an “Introduction” and “Style, Verse and Chronology,” both by Kevin Gilvary; and “The Use and Limits of Francis Meres,” by Eddi Jolly. The “Conclusion” is also by Gilvary. In this review, I will focus on the methodological contributions of the book.

The dating of written work is an auxiliary historical discipline remarkably short on theoretical explications. Disparate practices are common, dependent on period and field of study.¹ Dating of Old Testament (OT) books, for example, involves close readings and modes of complex argumentation.² Dating of specific pieces of information within an OT book involves equally close reading and argumentation that may be even more complex.³ Classical studies developed together with Biblical criticism over the course of several centuries and contributed its own methods. Dating of *Rus' Chronicles* is a much more recent development, but utilizes some of the techniques of Biblical criticism and Classical studies. Scholars who do so, however, add practices of their own relevant to the material at hand.⁴ After Biblical criticism, Shakespearean criticism is probably the most active. Yet, until recently both fields have been methodologically immature. As the Biblical scholar Richard Elliott Friedman has written about scholarship in his field:

I think it is all about method. For these 35 years I've been telling my students that the most important thing they need to learn is method. Our field was mighty sloppy for its first couple of centuries.... Biblical scholars ... dated texts based on ideas in them: If a text expressed guilt, they concluded that it had to have been written during the Babylonian exile. (Did they really think that people could only feel guilt when they

were in exile? ...) They made judgments about style without being trained in literary analysis, and judgments about history without being trained in historiography. The Bible was old, but the field was young, and we were plunging in haphazardly, without a sense of how to pursue the work properly.”⁵

Likewise, Shakespearean scholarship, except for a few bright exceptions, has been similarly lacking in scientific rigor. A case in point is the dating of the plays attributed to Shakespeare, which has until now been done in an unmethodical and often whimsical way.

We should not judge previous Shakespearean scholarship on this issue too harshly, for, as far as I know, no one has codified the principles or common rules for the dating of written texts. Rarely can a specific date be established for a work that has no date on it. In the vast majority of such cases, two termini provide a frame for the discussion of dating a written work—the earliest possible date and the latest possible date.⁶ Some common principles used to establish those dates include (this list is not exhaustive):

1. A work cannot have been created before a work from which it borrows.⁷
2. A work cannot have been created after a work that borrows from it.⁸
3. Style, terminology, spelling, punctuation, and grammar can help to date a written work approximately.⁹
4. Codicological dating (for example, according to watermarks¹⁰ and paleography¹¹) can establish an earliest possible date for a manuscript or printed copy and thus help to establish a latest possible date of composition.
5. Publication date can establish a latest possible date of composition, but not an earliest.¹²
6. The content of a written work can be used to place it in the context of a period in which it was most likely written.¹³
7. References in other works, such as diaries, interviews, letters, marginalia, memoirs, notes, etc., to the work can help establish a latest possible date.¹⁴
8. Reference to historical events (including a prediction of something that was unlikely to be known to the supposed author—that is, a postdiction) can provide an earliest possible date.¹⁵

As Gilvary writes in the Introduction: “The ‘date’ of a play can refer to three possible events: when it was composed, when it was first performed or when it was first published” (2). He quickly points out, however, that we also have “no evidence for the date of composition of any play by Shakespeare” (2; see also page 190: “There is no direct evidence for the date of *composition* of any of Shakespeare’s plays” [italics in original]). Nor is there direct “evidence to date any première of any play by Shakespeare” (2). The date of publication, which depends on “a combination of an entry in the Stationers’ Register with the bibliographic information on the title page” is usually not complicated, but what does complicate matters is the assumption made by many that “publication in quarto followed shortly after composition,” although such plays as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *A Comedy of Errors* that appear in Meres’

list of 1598 were not published until 1623, some 25 years later (3, 15–16, n. 4).

Gilvary describes four main previous attempts to date the plays through establishing a general chronology for them: Edmond Malone in 1778; Edward Dowden in 1874; E. K. Chambers in 1930; and Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor in 1987. One surprising finding, at least to me, is their tendency to assign plays to certain years solely on a desire to fill in so-called “blank years” (i.e., years in which no other play has been assigned) (189). The assumption is that Shakespeare was continuously productive at a certain discernible pace. Although we do have evidence of authors who are continuously productive,¹⁶ the more usual rate of production by authors of a particular creative genre is sporadic and dependent on circumstances and the muse of inspiration. Gilvary notes that almost all subsequent attempts at fixing the dates of particular plays have been dominated by the four phases of Dowden’s chronology—1. “in the workshop,” the period of Shakespeare’s youth when he is experimenting and reworking other authors’ plays; 2. “in the world,” the period in which his “imagination began to lay hold of real life” and history in particular; 3. “out of the depths,” the period in which the author “ceased to care for the tales of mirth and love; for the stir and movement of history,” and began to explore “the great mystery of evil”; and 4. “on the heights,” the period in which the poet exhibited a “wise, large-hearted, calm-souled” attitude (5). Later, Gilvary remarks that absent “direct evidence for the date of composition of any of Shakespeare’s plays, many assertions and proposals have become gradually accepted as ‘fact’ in ‘scholarly consensus’” (190).

Gilvary then discusses the types of evidence that have been used to date English plays of the 16th and 17th centuries. He first divides the evidence into external and internal. He lists eight types of external evidence, four of which are not applicable to dating the plays attributed to Shakespeare; the other four are helpful only in establishing a latest possible date of composition:

1. Dated manuscripts—“there is no manuscript dated or undated of any Shakespeare play” (8);
2. Correspondence concerning literary matters—“There are no letters either to Shakespeare or by him about any of his plays or any literary matter” (9);
3. Revels Accounts—They “list plays performed at court but do not indicate when they were written” (9). They can, however, provide a latest possible date for composition;
4. Record of payment for plays—“There are no records of payments for the script of any Shakespearean play” (9);
5. Allusions to Shakespeare writing his plays—“There are no allusions to Shakespeare that can indicate when he composed any play” (9);
6. Francis Meres, 1598—“This list indicates [twelve Shakespearean] plays that were in existence by 1598, but gives no further indication of the date of composition” (10);
7. Stationers’ Register (SR) —“lists when a play was registered for publication, thus indicating that a play was in existence but not necessarily demonstrating when it had been composed” (11). Just as with Revels Accounts, SR can provide a latest possible date for composition of a particular play.

8. Title Pages—“Nineteen of Shakespeare’s plays were published in quarto up to 1622,” which again provide evidence for a latest possible date of composition.

In regard to internal evidence, Gilvary lists three types:

1. Sources. He defines “a source” as “a text which has had a major influence upon a play, usually concerning plot, characters and setting” (12). He points out that “Geoffrey Bullough carefully distinguishes between a probable source, a possible source and a similar text (which he [Bullough] calls an analogue)” (12).

2. Allusions to other texts. In contrast to a source, according to Gilvary, following Thomas Green “an allusion is a reference to another text which may have been added at a later stage” such as “when a play was revised” or merely represents an interpolation (13).

3. Allusions to contemporary events and people. Gilvary briefly discusses the problem with such allusions. One would think that identifying a contemporary allusion, such as to a general or an eclipse, would help establish the date of a play, but the problem is “[i]f we were sure of the date of composition, we could be sure of the allusion” (14). The range between the earliest possible date and the latest possible date of each play means we have alternative generals and eclipses to choose from.¹⁷

In the analysis of the dating for each play an “Orthodox dating” and an “Oxfordian” dating is provided. The reason that Gilvary gives for providing the Oxfordian dating is “[t]he main challenge to the ‘orthodox’ dating has been made by Oxfordians” (14). Since the lives of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford (1550–1604) and William Shaksper of Stratford (1564–1616) overlap but do not completely coincide, the date of composition has some bearing on the attribution question. Thus, within each chapter a four-category grid is applied to discuss the dating of each play: Internal Orthodox Evidence; External Orthodox Evidence, Internal Oxfordian Evidence, and External Oxfordian Evidence.

Near the end of the Introduction, a minor grammatical error occurs. After indicating that Alan Nelson’s biography of Edward de Vere, *Monstrous Adversary* (2003) has been used, Gilvary writes: “The ultimate purpose of this book is not to establish (or reject) Oxford’s candidacy for authorship but to examine the range of possible dates for each play” (15). The problem is the antecedent for “this book;” those familiar with *Monstrous Adversary* will readily see that rejecting Oxford’s candidacy for authorship was Nelson’s main motive in writing it. To those who are not familiar with Nelson’s book, it will probably not be clear that “this book” refers to *Dating Shakespeare’s Plays*.

In the chapter “The Uses and Limits of Francis Meres,” Eddi Jolly points out the collective inconsistency of editors in using Meres’ list in different ways to support their views about a play: “1. Meres was not offering a complete list; 2. If a play is not mentioned by Meres Shakespeare has not yet written it; 3. Meres may have accidentally omitted a play; 4. A play of quality is likely to have been mentioned by Meres; 5. If a play is omitted it is not known to Meres” (20). As Jolly remarks: “These editors cannot

all be right” (20). After an analysis of Meres’ content and style including a table on symmetry in Meres, Jolly concludes that “Meres does not intend to offer a full list of every writer’s works in 1598, and that he does not do so” (24). For Shakespeare, Meres provides a list of 12 plays, 6 comedies and 6 tragedies. Their inclusion on Meres’ list can provide evidence toward a latest possible date of composition for these plays, but no inferences should be drawn on the basis of the absence of a play from the list.

In the chapter “Verse, Style and Chronology,” Gilvary discusses various attempts to date the plays (or at least establish some kind of sequence of composition among them) through the analysis of verse and meter. Among the most prominent of these attempts are those by F. J. Furnivall and Frederick Fleay, Chambers, and Wells and Taylor. According to Gilvary: “While Furnivall compared end-stopped *vs* run-over lines, ten-syllable lines *vs* lines with an extra syllable (feminine lines) and rhyme *vs* blank verse, his friend, Frederick Fleay, counted syllables and rhymes” (29). Chambers derived his chronology from the work of Furnivall and Fleay and “has been extremely influential” (29). But Gilvary goes on to cite Grady’s and Vickers’ questioning whether these metrical tests are valid. Gilvary also points out that “Furnivall seemed to have made up an outline biography and then used metrical tests to support it” (29). In other words, the method as applied to Shakespeare’s plays has been a circular one.

Gilvary goes on to point out that since the mid-1970s “the style of many Elizabethan authors has been analysed” mainly “to establish or deny authorship” (30). But such studies do not provide an independent confirmation of the validity of the method: they “have NOT [caps in original] been used to establish the evolution of style for any other author’s works nor compared against authors whose chronology is already known” (30).

Wells and Taylor, in contrast, isolated 27 “colloquialisms in verse,” the result of which was to “confirm the traditional dating of Shakespeare’s plays.” But, as Gilvary points out, “there has been no explanation as to how a study of style and/or verse can date an author’s works” (30). One should also point out that some plays attributed to Shakespeare (such as on the title page of quartos) but not thought to have been written by him on stylistic grounds are excluded from the stylistic date base, thus raising questions about how one determines what is and what isn’t Shakespeare’s style. Again, a bit of methodological circular reasoning may be occurring based on the traditional dating of the plays, which, as pointed out above, is made to fit the biography of Shakspeare of Stratford. Gilvary lists and discusses five components of using style to date texts that are otherwise not datable: 1. establish dates for core texts to provide a framework of analysis for the undated ones; 2. unrevised drafts; 3. meter; 4. colloquialisms; and 5. changes in style within a text, as in Dickens’ *Great Expectations*. Not having unrevised drafts, as indeed we do not for Shakespeare, according to Gilvary, “calls into doubt the basis for making judgements based on style” (31). The core texts that are datable by other means “must be known to have been composed within one short space of time” for the method of dating by style to have any validity (31). In the conclusion to this chapter, Gilvary iterates the assertion that “Shakespeare appears to be the only major writer whose works have been dated according to stylistic tests” (34). He quotes Vickers that stylistic methods can “play a part in confirming or questioning

a date established on other grounds,” which in the case of Shakespeare’s plays “have yet to be established” (34).

In regard to the dating of individual plays, I will mention here only a few salient points. Perhaps the most immediate observation is that none of the date ranges given for any of the 40 plays discussed excludes either William Shaksper or Edward de Vere from having been the author. In other words, the date range for each play overlaps, at least in part, with the adult lifetime of both men, while some of the extreme dates lie beyond the lifetimes of one or both. After reading these chapters, one can see that the earliest possible date for each play ranges from 1558 (*Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Merchant of Venice*) to 1590 (*As You Like It* and *King Lear*). The latest possible date for each play ranges from 1592 (*1 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI*) to 1623 (*Coriolanus* and *Timon*) (Table 1, page 477).

One piece of evidence in regard to dating that has received a great deal of attention is Ariel’s reference in *The Tempest* to “still-vexed Bermoothes.” Traditional scholarship has pointed to a description in a letter of 1610 written by William Strachey of the crash of the *Sea Venture* in 1609 off the coast of Bermuda. Strachey’s letter was not published until 1625. A number of Stratfordians have latched onto this letter as evidence against the Oxfordians. Yet recent scholarship, both Stratfordian and Oxfordian, has rejected Strachey’s letter and its description of a Bermuda shipwreck as a source for the play. The chapter on dating *The Tempest*, co-authored by Philip Johnson and Gilvary, does a commendable job of summarizing briefly and accurately the issue as well as the evidence and arguments for and against seeing a connection between Strachey’s letter and the play (40–44).

Another issue that comes up in discussion of dating of such comedies as *The Tempest*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Love’s Labours Lost* is *commedia dell’arte*, the Italian form of theater that was prominent in the 16th and 17th centuries. *Commedia dell’arte* utilized stock characters and stock situations in which the actors often improvised. I imagine that for a playwright to be influenced by *commedia dell’arte* he or she would have to have seen such plays performed, and probably more than once. To describe such a form to a playwright and expect that person to then write plays in that style would be akin to describing a Monty Python sketch to someone, expect them to get it, and be able to replicate it in new ways. While the contributors to *Dating Shakespeare’s Plays* do well in remarking on the probable influence of *commedia dell’arte* on the author of the comedies mentioned above, a number of other authors have picked up on influence of the form on at least one of Shakespeare’s tragedies, *Othello*.¹⁸ To be able to adapt the form that way would seem to indicate the playwright had thoroughly internalized that form.

An example of the direction of borrowing from the Shakespearean corpus is the relationship between *As You Like It* and Thomas Lodge’s prose romance *Rosalynde* (written 1586–87, published 1590). The orthodox position, as represented by Bullough and Brissenden, is that the author of the former borrowed from the latter, providing 1590 as an earliest possible date for the play. Some Oxfordians have posited a reverse direction of borrowing, providing a latest possible date for *As You Like It* of 1590, given that the borrowing could have occurred any time up to the first publication of

Rosalynde (141, 144). Another example is the relationship of *The Taming of the Shrew*, first published in the First Folio (F1) in 1623, to an anonymous play *The Taming of a Shrew*, which was entered into the Stationers Register in 1594. As Stephanie Hopkins Hughes describes it, one can ask whether “A *Shrew* is the original play, by an unknown writer, and the direct source of” *The Shrew*? Or whether “*The Shrew* is the original play and A *Shrew* is a memorial reconstruction by an actor or some other person of the Shakespeare play, i.e. a ‘bad quarto’? Or do “both *Shrews* derive from a lost original which was Shakespeare’s first version of the play” (151)? If Stephen Miller’s conclusion, based on a systematic text comparison, is correct —that *The Shrew* is primary and A *Shrew* is derivative¹⁹ — then the derivative version appeared in print 29 years before its source did.

There has been a tendency to assign late earliest possible dates to particular plays on the basis that the translation of a work written in Italian or French was not then available in English. The reasoning is that Shakespeare was not able to read these works in the original. There is ample evidence in the plays that the author knew both French and Italian. For example, *Il Percorone* by Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, published in Italian in 1558, and considered a source for *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (65, 67) and possibly *The Merchant of Venice* (125), was not translated into English until 1632, well after the death of any of the proposed candidate-authors of the plays. In contrast, we have examples of English translations by associates of Oxford of works connected with the plays. Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloë*, which was translated into Italian and French by 1559, and which was a source for *The Winter’s Tale* (178–79), and possibly *Cymbeline* (427), was translated into English in 1587 by Angel Day, who had dedicated an earlier work to Oxford (181). *Fedele and Fortunio*, translated and adapted into English in 1585 (from Luigi Pasqualigo’s *Il Fedele*) probably by Anthony Munday,²⁰ self-described “servant of the Earl of Oxford,” may have been connected with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (57), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (67–68) and *Much Ado about Nothing* (98), as was his translation of a Spanish romance, *Primaleon, Book III* (1595), which may have served as a source for *The Tempest*.

A number of plays had been attributed to Shakespeare but scholars now think were not written by him. Some of these were later (1650s) attributions, but *The London Prodigal* was printed in 1605 with “Shakespeare” on the title page. There are at least two other plays—*A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608) and *Sir John Oldcastle* (1600)—that were published early with “Shakespeare” identified as the author, and a third—*Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (1609)—that scholars accept as only partially written by Shakespeare. Gilvary addresses this problem in the chapter on *The Life and Death of King John*. Discussing the relationship of this play to *The Troublesome Reigne of Iohn King of England*, which was published anonymously in 1591 and republished as by “W Sh” and “W Shakespeare” in 1611 and 1622, respectively, Gilvary mentions but does not necessarily support the suggestion that pseudo-Shakespeare plays such as *The Troublesome Reigne*, *Sir John Oldcastle*, and *The London Prodigal*, which had attributions on their quarto title pages, “were deliberately misattributed so as to boost sales” (199).

This issue is a troublesome one from a methodological perspective. If, as Kier Cutler and others have suggested, the name “Shakespeare” was a generalized pseudonym,

then perhaps not all the works presently attributed to Shakespeare (the Shakespeare canon) were written by one person, or even had the involvement of a particular individual who can be identified as Shakespeare. If there were several Shakespeares, then that would help to account, to a certain extent, for the phenomenal knowledge and wordsmithing in the plays, and it would make even more problematic the attempts to identify a single style, even one divided into Dowden's four phases. That would also raise the possibility that the Oxfordians, Marlovians, Baconians, etc., are venturing too much by trying to claim the entire canonical corpus for their respective candidate. On the other hand, if we insist on seeing a single author for the plays now attributed to Shakespeare, and if we insist on basing our conclusions on evidence, logical argument, and elegance of interpretation, then the Earl of Oxford is by far the leading candidate.

An oft-cited argument for denying the Earl of Oxford any claim to have authored the plays attributed to Shakespeare is that a number of the plays were written after Oxford died in 1604. The publication of *Dating Shakespeare's Plays* will not stop anti-Oxfordians from continuing to make that argument. But it will allow Oxfordians to respond each time they do by citing this thoroughly researched, fair, and balanced analysis of the available evidence regarding the dating of the plays.

Endnotes

- ¹ See, e.g., D. S. Likhachev, *Tekstologiya. Na materiale russkoi literatury X–XVII vekov*, 1st ed. (Moscow and Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1962), 272–280; 2nd ed. (Leningrad: Nauka, 1983), 290–297; 3rd ed., with the participation of A. A. Alekseev and A. G. Bobrov (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2001), 285–292. The first half of the section in each case deals with the codicological dating of manuscripts; the second half, with dating of written works.
- ² See Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986).
- ³ Baruch Halpern, “Eyewitness Testimony: Parts of Exodus Written within Living Memory of the Event,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September/October 2003: 50–57.
- ⁴ A. A. Shakhmatov, *Razyskaniia o drevneishikh russkikh letopisnykh svodakh* (St. Petersburg: M. A. Aleksandrov, 1908); D. S. Likhachev, *Russkie letopisi i ikh kul'turno-isotricheskoe znachenie* (Moscow and Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1947); A. N. Nasonov, *Istoriia russkogo letopisaniia. XI–nachalo XVIII veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969); Ia. S. Lur'e, *Obshcherusskie letopisi XIV–XV vv.* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1976).
- ⁵ Richard Elliott Friedman, “The Bible Then—The Bible Now,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 37:5 (September/October 2011), 26.
- ⁶ Both termini are often identified by their Latin phrases. The first phrase is *terminus ante quem non* [end before which not] (sometimes rendered as either *terminus a quo* [end from which] or *terminus post quem* [end after which]), and refers to the earliest date a work could have been written. The second phrase is *terminus post quem non* [end after which not] (sometimes rendered as either *terminus ad quem*

[end to which] or *terminus ante quem* [end before which]), and refers to the latest date a work could have been written. This multiplicity of terms can be confusing, so, in an effort to save the reader from trying to disentangle the meaning of the Latin phrase being used in each case, I will refer to the “earliest possible date” and the “latest possible date” of a composition.

⁷ A prime example of the application of this principle is Ihor Ševčenko, “The Date and Author of the So-called Fragments of Toparcha Gothicus,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 25 (1971): 115–188 + 28 plates, in which Ševčenko demonstrated the dependence of the *Fragments of Toparcha Gothicus*, supposedly dating from the 10th century, on, among other texts, an account of travels by Maria Guthrie published in 1802: *A Tour, Performed in the Years 1795–6 through the Taurida, or Crimea ... by Mrs. Maria Guthrie*, ed. by Matthew Guthrie (London, 1802).

⁸ Complications often arise in trying to ascertain direction of borrowing and whether both borrowed from a common source. A central problem in Rus’ historical and literary study is the relationship of the Igor Tale (*Slovo o Polku Igoreve*) to the 15th century work titled *Zadonshchina*. See John Fennell, “The Recent Controversy in the Soviet Union over the Authenticity of the Slovo,” in *Russia: Essays in History and Literature*, edited by Lyman H. Legters (Leiden, 1972), 1–17; idem, “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign,” In John Fennell and Anthony Stokes, *Early Russian Literature* (London, 1974), 191–206; and Russell E. Martin and Donald Ostrowski, “Guest Editors’ Introduction,” in A. A. Zimin and the Controversy over the Igor Tale (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), 3–17 (= *Russian Studies in History*, 45, no. 2 [2006]). For a discussion of just such a problem involving the *Complaint (Zhaloba)* of Isaiah of Kamenets-Podolsk and the First Letter (K1) attributed to Prince Andrei Kurbskii (1528–83), see my “‘Closed Circles’: Edward L. Keenan’s Early Textual Work and the Semiotics of Response,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes*, 48, nos. 3–4 (2006), 254–263.

⁹ The best known example of the use of this principle was Lorenzo Valla’s analysis of the Latin in the *Donation of Constantine* showing that it could not have been written in the 4th century (the time of Constantine the Great) but most likely in the 8th century. Lorenzo Valla, *Discourse on the Forgery of the Alleged Donation of Constantine*, edited and translated by Christopher B. Coleman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), 20–183 <<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/vallapart2.html>>. A second well-known example is Morton Smith’s stylistic analysis of a letter found by him that purports to have been written by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 217). Smith compared the writing style and word usage with other well-accepted writings of Clement, as well as Clement’s contemporaries or near contemporaries Athanasius and Philo. He concluded that the letter is most likely an authentic work of the late 2nd–early 3rd century (i.e., written by Clement) rather than a forgery of the 18th century, the time the copy that Smith discovered was made. Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 67–77.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Alan Stevenson, *The Problem of the Missale Speciale* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1967) on using watermarks to date a printed copy.

- ¹¹ See, e.g., A. Powell Davies, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York, 1956), 27–35 for an informative explanation of using paleography to date the Dead Sea scrolls.
- ¹² Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Master and Margarita*, e.g., was written between 1928 and 1940, but not published until 1966.
- ¹³ The correspondence attributed to Kurbsky and Groznyi provides an example of this principle as it has been pointed out that the issues being discussed are more in keeping with 17th-century issues than those of the 16th century. Ia. S. Lur’e, “Pripiska Ivana Groznogo s Kurbskim v obshchestvennoi mysle drevnei Rusi,” in *Perepiska Ivana Groznogo s Andreem Kurbskim*, edited by Ia. S. Lur’e and Iu. D. Rykov (Moscow: Nauka, 1981), 249.
- ¹⁴ The Church Council of 1564 in Moscow declared in its decision that nothing had been written about the wearing of the white cowl by the archbishops of Novgorod. This statement has been used as evidence for dating the *Tale of the White Cowl* to after 1564, because it discusses that very matter. Donald Ostrowski, “Ironies of the Tale of the White Cowl,” *Palaeoslavica*, 10, no. 2 (2002), 43–44. As a counter example, one might point out that *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the standard version of which is generally regarded to have been written between 1800 and 1600 BC, has few or no allusions that are clearly to it as a written work in subsequent antiquity. Maureen Kovacs, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), xxiii, xxvii. Likewise, the Igor Tale, thought to have been written in the early 13th century AD, leaves no “tracks” before the late 18th century.
- ¹⁵ The classical scholar Andrew Runni Anderson preferred a late 7th century composition for the *Revelations of Pseudo-Methodios of Patara* on the basis that the Umayyads are mentioned in the work (*qui fuerunt filii Umee*). The Umayyad Caliphate is generally regarded to have begun in 661 with the accession of Caliph Muawiyah I. Andrew Runni Anderson, *Alexander’s Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations* (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1932) 45, fn. 1. Examples of postdictions also occur in the *Revelations of Pseudo-Methodios of Patara*. See Anastasios Lolos, *Die Apokalypse des Ps.-Methodios* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1976), 20–22. Another example of a postdiction occurs in the 1st and 2nd Long Redactions of the *Tale of the White Cowl*, which “predict” that Moscow will become a patriarchate. That postdiction provides an earliest possible date of 1589 for both redactions since that is when the Moscow patriarchate was established. Ostrowski, “Ironies,” 44–45.
- ¹⁶ One of the most remarkable examples is the Russian historian Sergei M. Solov’ev, who between 1851 and his death in 1879 published 29 volumes of his *History of Russia from the Earliest Times* at the rate of one volume a year. In the field of music, Bach was known for his steady pace of productivity turning out a cantata a week for most of 27 years while Kantor of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig.
- ¹⁷ In the chapter on Henry V, Gilvary discusses how the Chorus’ mention of “the general of our gracious empress / As in good time he may, from Ireland coming, / Bringing rebellion broached on his sword” could be an allusion to Thomas Butler, Earl of Ormonde in 1569–73; Sir John Norris in 1575; Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex,

in 1599, or Charles Blunt, Baron Mountjoy, in 1600–01 (13, 18 n. 260). In the chapter on *King Lear*, Alastair Everitt discusses how Gloucester’s mention of “these late eclipses of the sun and moon” could be an allusion to such a co-occurrence in July 1590, February 1598, November/December 1601, or September/October 1605 (401). Since the publication of *Dating Shakespeare’s Plays*, Hanno Wember has published an article in this journal in which he points out that the 1598 solar eclipse was the only one that was more than 90% visible in England. According to him, “Solar eclipses often go unnoticed because unless the eclipse is more than 90% of totality, it dims the sun’s light no more substantially than does a cloudy day.” Hanno Wember, “Illuminating Eclipses: Astronomy and Chronology in *King Lear*,” *Brief Chronicles* 2 (2010), 37. Wember goes on to make the comparison with the solar eclipses of 1601 (80%) and 1605 (85%) and bring in the percentages of their co-occurring lunar eclipse: 1598 (98%), 1601 (88%), and 1605 (58%). Gilvary, though, does raise the question whether the statement by Gloucester in *Lear* is a topical allusion to a specific co-occurrence “or to no specific co-occurrences” (14). A third example of ambiguous allusion can be found discussed in the chapter on *Macbeth* by Sally Hazelton, in which the terms “equivocator” and “equivocation” could refer to trials of Jesuit priests Edward Campion and Robert Southwell in 1581 and 1595, respectively; to the Gowrie Conspiracy of 1601; or to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 (371–375).

¹⁸ Barbara Heliadora C. de Mendonça, “*Othello*: A Tragedy Built on a Comic Structure,” *Shakespeare Survey* 21 (1969); Louise George Clubb, “Italian Stories on the Stage,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. by Alexander Leggatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 43–45; Pamela Allen Brown, “*Othello* Italicized: Xenophobia and the Erosion of Tragedy,” in *Shakespeare, Italy and Intertextuality*, ed. by Michele Marrapodi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Teresa J. Faherty “*Othello dell’Arte*: The Presence of *Commedia* in Shakespeare’s Tragedy,” *Theatre Journal* 43 (1991): 179–194; Irene Musumeci, “Imagining *Othello* as *Commedia dell’arte*,” URL, 2002; Ren Draya and Richard F. Whalen, eds., *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, (Truro MA: Horatio Editions-Llumina Press, 2010); and Richard F. Whalen, “*Commedia dell’arte* in *Othello*, a Satiric Comedy Ending in Tragedy,” *Brief Chronicles* 3 (2011) (72-107).

¹⁹ Stephen R. Miller, ed., “*The Taming of a Shrew*”: *The 1594 Quarto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²⁰ Anthony Munday was identified by F. H. Mares as the “M.A.” and “A.M.” of the signed dedications. F. H. Mares, ed., *Much Ado about Nothing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

***The Assassination of Shakespeare's Patron:
Investigating the Death of the Fifth Earl of Derby***

by Leo Daugherty

Cambria Press, 374 pages, 2011

reviewed by Peter W. Dickson



n publishing the first-ever attempt to resolve the question of who in April 1594 murdered Ferdinando Stanley, the Fifth Earl of Derby and the heir apparent to Queen Elizabeth, Professor Emeritus Leo Daugherty of the University of Virginia has produced a monumental achievement in the annals of historical research. Stanley's mysterious and extremely violent death—evidently from a massive dose of arsenic—had a huge impact on the royal succession, but is also relevant to the Shakespeare authorship dispute because most orthodox scholars (the Stratfordians) believe that William Shakespeare was a member of Ferdinando's acting company in the early 1590s known then as Lord Strange's Men.

Hence the title of Daugherty's new book, *The Assassination of Shakespeare's Patron: Investigating the Death of the Fifth Earl of Derby*, published by Cambria Press in May 2011. This book is the second by Daugherty with this publisher, following quickly on the heels of *William Shakespeare, Richard Barnfield and the Sixth Earl of Derby*, which appeared in 2010. In the earlier book Daugherty advanced the theory that Barnfield and Shakespeare were the rival poets alluded to in the *Sonnets* and that the Fair Youth was Ferdinando's younger brother William – the same fellow whom Burghley moved quickly to marry his granddaughter and Oxford's daughter, Elizabeth, immediately after Ferdinando's April 1594 murder.

The earlier book is less impressive than the newer book dealing with Ferdinando's murder, for two reasons. First, William was no fair youth because he was already in his early 30s when the two poets allegedly competed for his attention, if not also his affection. Second, Daugherty makes his case based on selecting passages from poetry, a weak methodology, especially when he draws on the notoriously enigmatic *Sonnets*, about which there is no agreement when the poems were written and to whom they were addressed.

In sharp contrast, the new book concerning Ferdinando's assassination is a *tour de force*. Daugherty spent 15 years mining archives in Britain, especially the Cecil Papers, which yielded documentation that few even knew existed, let alone studied.

Daugherty addresses the basic question of culpability for Ferdinando's untimely death, which some at the time attributed to witchcraft, given that Ferdinando had an encounter with a witch-like woman on April Fool's Day 1594, only four days before he began to show signs of ill health. However, as Daugherty emphasizes, the four doctors tasked with trying to save the Earl's life were in agreement that his death was due to poison from the hands of an assassin.

The immediate suspicion fell on the Catholics in exile who had tried to lure Ferdinando into a plot to overthrow the Queen, but failed because Ferdinando turned over the agent who had approached him (Richard Hesketh, his own step-brother, as Daugherty has discovered) to the Queen and Burghley. After extensive interrogation and investigations overseen by Sir Robert Cecil, Hesketh was executed in late November 1593. Amazingly, Daugherty located there only the records of this interrogation in the Cecil papers, but found the original talking points that Hesketh were given by the exiled Catholics for him to use in his exploratory discussions with Ferdinando about a possible plot.

Although Daugherty is a Stratfordian who has connections with scholars such as Carol Enos and Ian Wilson, who have argued or suggested that the incumbent Bard from Stratford was a secret Roman Catholic, he refuses to endorse that view openly. Furthermore, Daugherty rejects the attempt of one of the forerunners of the Catholic Bard movement, Christopher Devlin, to shift blame for the assassination from the Catholic conspirators on the Continent, such as the Jesuit Robert Parsons and Cardinal Allen, to Lord Burghley. Devlin tried to advance this thesis in an essay entitled "The Earl and the Alchemist" in 1963. Nonetheless, as even Daugherty admits, it was not only these Catholic conspirators who promptly accused Burghley of being behind the assassination because of his hasty decision to arrange the marriage of Ferdinando's brother William to his own granddaughter Elizabeth de Vere. Many at the English court and in the public at large who had those same suspicions, although it is hard to imagine Derby would have ever married the granddaughter of a man he thought had a hand in his brother's murder.

Daugherty concedes that the Catholic conspirators wanted revenge for Ferdinando's betrayal of Hesketh because in a second edition of a seditious tract published in Antwerp and circulated in England under the title *A Conference on the Next Succession to the Crowne of England*, the author Robert Parsons, under the pseudonym Robert Doleman, backed away from supporting Ferdinando as the heir apparent. Parsons did this on the grounds that distrust of him was growing for obvious reasons given his betrayal of Hesketh. Parsons even asserted that some men (meaning English Catholics) were beginning to think that his younger brother William might make a better successor to Queen Elizabeth, a remark which, along with other rumors, suggested that Ferdinando might not have long to live.

Parsons' tract was dedicated to the Earl of Essex, the Queen's hyper-ambitious favorite, as a way to get him into trouble; surely anyone reading it could see that it was only a matter of time before these frustrated Catholic conspirators hiding in the Continent would try to kill Ferdinando.

As Daugherty does not believe that Burghley beat them to the punch to clear the way for his granddaughter's marriage to William Stanley, the question is whether the Catholics in exile carried out the deed or some other faction did. Daugherty opts for the latter explanation and assembles substantial evidence to support his theory than certain quasi-Catholic retainers formerly in the service of the Stanley family were the murderers. These men abandoned Ferdinand when, not long after he succeeded his father as Earl in September 1593, he betrayed Hesketh. They also were aware that the royal court (the Queen and the two Cecils, William and his son Robert) had lost confidence or trust in Ferdinando and were taking steps to marginalize him in local administrative affairs in the Cheshire-Lancashire domains, the traditional strongholds of the Stanley family.

These retainers fled Ferdinando's service circa December 1593 (after Hesketh's execution) and declared their loyalty to Essex, of all persons, who had little reason to accept them into this service unless he had an ulterior motive—which is precisely what Ferdinando suspected and feared. In accepting these retainers into his own service, Essex was signaling that since the regime had decided to marginalize Ferdinando, then he would join in.

This is a crucial factor in Daugherty's interpretation, which crystallizes in chapter 12, "Ferdinando, Essex and the Throne." Daugherty reviews in great detail a long bitter stream of letters between Ferdinando and Essex in early 1594 not previously known to exist. This correspondence makes clear that Ferdinando had become paranoid about Essex's refusal to dismiss the retainers from his service, especially a man named Richard Bold who, in 1587, had threatened to kill Ferdinando because he had persecuted his mother-in-law for being a Catholic.

Daugherty discovered that Ferdinando, frustrated with Essex's refusal to cooperate, decided after receiving a report about seditious activity at Bold's residence (a well-known haven for Catholic recusants and secret masses) to raid Bolt's home on April 2, the day after the conversation with the witch. Ferdinando took sworn depositions from Bold and his allies and reported their suspicious behavior to the local authorities, and also dispatched a messenger to the royal court in London. But in so doing Ferdinando exceeded his jurisdictional authority in the region.

Daugherty concludes that Bold and his associates, who were not incarcerated, were now primed to strike back at Ferdinando and that their plans to kill him likely were known by Essex, who essentially gave them a wink and a nod. Essex's interests were served by seeing Ferdinando out of the way because he wanted to play kingmaker. Of course, the Stanleys did not need a kingmaker, because on the basis of the Third Act of Succession (1544) and the last will of Henry VIII, which barred the Stuarts from the royal succession, the Countess of Derby (Margaret Clifford) and her sons (Ferdinando and William) were next in line to succeed Queen Elizabeth. Thus, Daugherty concludes:

The evidence also points strongly upward to Essex. Perhaps he was communicating with Richard Bold obliquely about getting rid of Ferdinando, and Bold knew what Essex wanted. It also appears that

Essex knew he had a ready, willing, able assassin in Bold – a servant whom he knew had his own strong motives for killing the Earl of Derby.
(275)

Even though there is no evidence that Essex authorized the assassination, there is no way to view Tudor succession in the same light after reading Daugherty's chapter 12, a masterful historical reconstruction of the tense dialogue between a would-be kingmaker and the widely recognized heir apparent to the English throne.

Nonetheless, there remains a lingering issue concerning the timing and therefore the true perpetrator of Ferdinando's murder. Daugherty notes on page 178 that Ferdinando was already showing signs of stress with a horrible dream on the night of April 4. The next day he claimed to have seen an apparition and gave an uncharacteristically weak signature on his last letter, just before another night of restless sleep. Unmistakable signs that he looked to be fatally ill were clear to his personal physician by April 7.

This tight chronology means that if the Bold-led group achieved its revenge, then they had acted quickly—within 72 hours after the raid on April 2—and obtained a large amount of arsenic to do the job. Daugherty sensed a problem here in terms of chronology after this writer pointed out that to him in a telephone conversation. He does not categorically rule out that the plan to murder Ferdinando was already in place by either the Bold-led faction that had gone over to Essex or the exiled Catholics who wanted revenge for the execution of Hesketh. But this would mean that Ferdinando's raid on Bold's residence on April 2 merely telescoped his fate. The bottom line is that whatever the truth about the identity of the assassins, the Catholics in exile had more than four months to plan their retaliation with their own agents, as opposed to Bold's clique, and might well have been the party (as opposed to Essex) to encourage Bold and his men to finish off Ferdinando.

Daugherty dismisses the idea that Burghley's quick move to marry Elizabeth de Vere to William, who inherited his brother's claim to the throne, was an effort to shore up the regime, which perceived growing threats from Catholics at home and abroad. We should note Southampton's former tutor (Smithin Wells) was executed as a crypto-Catholic in December 1591 and the Jesuit poet Robert Southwell was imprisoned in 1592. Just before *Venus and Adonis* appeared in print in the spring of 1593, Parliament intensified the penalties for all English Catholics, with a new Edict Against Papist and Other Recusants. Less than a year later, Essex launched the smear campaign against the Queen's Spanish-Jewish doctor (Raphael Lopez) during his bitter correspondence with Ferdinando. During this time the palace guard was doubled in size.

Given that the Queen and Burghley were increasingly paranoid about "creeping Catholicism," Daugherty's dismissal of the political significance of the hastily arranged de Vere-Stanley marriage in April-May 1594 is not fully convincing. Contrary to his suggestion, it is doubtful that, during such a tense period, Ferdinando's 14-year-old daughter was a stronger candidate than her 33-year-old uncle to be heir apparent. The stature gap between Derby and his young niece was too great, and surely so after his

marriage to the daughter of the nation's highest ranking Earl, and granddaughter of the most powerful person in the realm after the Queen herself.

Furthermore, if William was not the obvious heir apparent, then why did Parsons in the second edition of his controversial tract on the royal succession endorse William as the best successor to the throne to protect Catholic interests? The second edition appeared in print in early 1594, *before* Ferdinando's murder (see page 157). It is obvious that both Burghley and the Catholic conspirators agreed on at least one thing: William was the figure with the strongest claim to the throne by a wide margin after his brother's death, which means that his marriage to Oxford's daughter was a strong signal about who the Tudor regime envisioned in 1595 as likely successors to the crown.

The impact of Daugherty's book on the Shakespeare authorship debate should be profound. It helps illuminate how people with, or aspiring to, great power in the 1590s clearly viewed the royal succession in terms of the Stanley family's powerful legal claim to the throne as stipulated in the Third Act of Succession and Henry's VIII's will. Even if it can be argued that the wording of the 1571 Treason Act (which changed "lawful issue [of the Queen]" to "natural issue") opened the door to a possible later change to the Succession Statute, the fact remains that the Queen and Parliament never passed a new act or amended the old one. Hence, it is irrelevant to fantasize about other Tudor claimants, including the wild theories about Oxford or Southampton being secret royal bastards.

If one is going to argue that Oxford was the Bard, either on his own or possibly in conjunction with his son-in-law Derby, then obviously in the wake of the marriage in 1595, Oxford's literary fate became bound to his son-in-law's status as the heir apparent. There is no way the authorship of the Shakespearean literary works, if they came from the pens of these two Earls, would not become a highly sensitive political matter, requiring either anonymity or the employment of a pen name not only until 1603, when King James ascended to the throne, but well beyond that date, as by 1612 only two of this King's eight children were still alive, with no guarantee that the Stuart line would not die out, a possibility which would have raised the issue of a reversion to the Stanleys as the default successors.

The other important aspect of Daugherty's book for the authorship question can be found on pages 26-32, where he highlights recent analysis by Stratfordians such as Catherine Canino, Lawrence Manley, and Ian Wilson concerning Shakespearean dramas such as *Henry VI Parts 1-3* and *Richard III*. They observe how the dramatist seems to go out of his way to highlight the roles of the ancestors of Ferdinando and William Stanley during the War of the Roses, even distorting facts to achieve this effect. The originator of the Oxfordian movement J. Thomas Looney also noted this phenomenon in his book, *"Shakespeare" Identified* (1920) and struggled to explain why Oxford would do this. Looney proposed that Oxford and Derby may have collaborated, a view also adopted by Robert Plumer Fowler in *Shakespeare Identified in Oxford's Letters* (1986) among others.

A sensible conclusion would be to entertain the proposition that these particular dramas might well have been composed by Ferdinando for his own acting

company, Lord Strange's Men. This conclusion would also lend weight to the remark of Claire Asquith in her 2005 book, *Shadowplay*, that after Ferdinando's murder, Burghley and the Queen moved not only quickly to marry his brother to Oxford's daughter, but to confiscate his acting company and bring it under firm, direct royal control as a renamed troupe known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men. From this perspective, we can easily imagine how the repertoire of this company so closely associated with the name "William Shakespeare" might have contained many, if not all, of the dramas that came from the pen of one or both of the Stanley brothers.

Interview with Leo Daugherty
by Gary Goldstein



Q: What led you to believe there were relevant archival materials—letters, diaries, memos, etc.—not yet discovered by scholars that would resolve the mystery of Ferdinando Stanley’s death?

A: I did not know that sufficient archival materials would exist to resolve the mystery. What I knew, from the cursory research I’d done up till about 10 years ago, was that the surface had hardly been scratched. Nobody had researched, in connection with Ferdinando Stanley, such major Catholic Lancashire players as the Bold brothers, their brother-in-law Williamson (chief aide to Lord and Lady Shrewsbury, also players), and the Doughtie brothers. For example, it was often repeated by scholars that a man named Doughtie had fled Lathom Castle (where Stanley lived and died) on the night of his death, stealing a horse and riding away into the night. The authorities in London had pursued him. Then the researchers all said words like “There the records of Doughtie end.” I doubted if they really did end there. I wondered if I could find Doughtie. After some work, and a little luck, I found that he had fled to Spain, had been put on the payroll of the English Catholic leadership there, and that his brother had been a gentleman waiter at Lathom for years — serving food daily to the earl. This led to the discovery that Richard Bold’s brother, Henry Bold, had served as a gentleman waiter right alongside Doughtie.

Similarly, scholars had known for years that Ferdinando’s father Henry (fourth earl) had taken as his second wife (common law) a woman named Jane/Joan Halsall. He and his first wife divorced not too long after Ferdinando’s birth, and he soon married Jane/Joan. They remained together until Henry’s death. But no one had figured out that this same woman was Richard Hesketh’s mother by a previous marriage of her *own*. I had long suspected this, but had to do a good bit of genealogical research to prove it. By Jane/Joan, Henry bore four more children, one of whom was Dame Ursula Stanley, who married Sir John Salisbury of Lleweni; I think he is the most likely “Turtle” of Shakespeare’s enigmatic masterpiece “The Phoenix and the Turtle.” This discovery showed that the man who had brought the treasonous crown offer to Ferdinando (i.e., Hesketh) was his virtual brother, as Jane/Joan was of course

Ferdinando's stepmother and had been since his boyhood. This meant that Hesketh would have immediate access to Henry and/or Ferdinando when he brought the crown offer from the Catholic leadership abroad. Similarly, no one had focused on the acrimonious Ferdinando/Essex correspondence of early 1594 — the sole subject of which was Richard Bold — in connection with Ferdinando's death.

Q: To what extent did scientific inquiry and expertise play a role in your investigation? Did you have to consult with toxicologists or forensic experts to conduct a proper examination of some aspects of the evidence?

A: I did this second-hand, using the fairly recent toxicological studies of Ferdinando's death reported in two medical journals — *Hepatology* and *The Lancet* — and the follow-up correspondence in those journals. Previous to these publications, Ian Wilson had interviewed several specialists in preparing his book *Shakespeare: The Evidence* (c. 1991), and these physicians had likewise decided for arsenic, probably in one or two massive doses.

Q: How did your investigation proceed?

A: Slowly. It started back in the early 1990s with my strong interest in Ferdinando's younger brother William, who became sixth earl in April of 1594 upon Ferdinando's death. William is a fascinating character in his own right, actually more interesting than even Ferdinando, and I ended in writing up the narrative of his life for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004). I subsequently wrote a small book about some connections between William Stanley and William Shakespeare, centering upon the young poet Richard Barnfield, for whom Stanley had been an important patron. I became interested in the fact that this was an amazingly under-researched noble family, particularly as Henry, Ferdinando, and William had been such prominent patrons of poets, players, and playhouses. I was intrigued by the early researches of Christopher Devlin and Charles Nicholl into Ferdinando's death. It seemed a fascinating, mysterious puzzle. So I began trying to figure it out. I did the work mostly for fun, as historical research is what I like to do best.

My main interest as a Shakespeare teacher of many years' standing is the political and intellectual background of the plays and nondramatic poems. And here was background galore — unexplored background for Shakespeare, and on the man who, at the time of his death, was the leading contender to the throne.

Q: At what point in your research did you have enough information to draw a comprehensive diagram of players, motives, and actions?

A: I started trying to create one early on, just to bring order out of chaos, but I didn't have a "comprehensive" diagram until about two years ago. This is because I was slow in connecting some of the more obscure key players to the murder.

Q: To what extent did creative insight play a role in your research? After all, it took 400 years before an American professor solved a mystery that impacted the succession to the English crown.

A: I think very little. I think the largest role was played by intellectual curiosity, a love of historical research, a love of evidence, and a love of trying to construct reliable narratives from evidence. I think “creative insight” sometimes leads to turning wishful thinking into conclusion — particularly among researchers who value it more than they value disinterested seeking. For myself, I find that following the evidence wherever it leads is more fun — even if, as is usually the case, it leads nowhere. I am a fan of disinterestedness, and I regret the seeming fact that so many in the arts and humanities today don’t share my enthusiasm. I note at the same time that absolute disinterestedness – absolute “objectivity” – is an impossible dream for humans, no matter how idealistic they may be in trying to achieve it in their work. Because we are human, we are inescapably “interested” — or, to use Donna Haraway’s word, “guilty.”

Q: To what extent were the Stanley and Cecil descendants helpful in your investigation — did they provide access to private archives?

A: Their curators were most helpful — and most generous. I did not speak with any of the actual descendants.

Q: How does your investigation change the way the English succession should be viewed?

A: I’m not sure it changes anything very important about how historians think about succession. In one way, I guess I wish it would, as I myself believe that succession is usually the main answer to most questions about what was “really going on” in advanced monarchical societies. Most historians know this – perhaps especially historians of Elizabethan England – but they fear appearing unfashionably “reductionist” in making succession the “be-all and end-all.”

My own researches lead me to believe that one can hardly be reductionist *enough* when it comes to the importance of succession in such societies. For example, from all I can tell, the major political players in Elizabethan England (and even the general populace) always had it on their minds. It was always there. Most questions led to it, and most fears sprang from it — from the fear of societal disorder, if not indeed of actual chaos. A recent historical joke has Lord Burghley working at his desk in the early 1590s when some high-up colleagues rush in to inform him that a giant saucer-shaped vehicle has just flown in from on high, that it has landed in London, and that hordes of small purple creatures are rushing out of it and onto the streets. Burghley’s first question: “How might this impact the succession?”

Q: The Catholics in exile on the continent had a powerful desire to get revenge for Fernando’s betrayal of Hesketh to the Queen and Lord Burghley. They also had more

than four full months to think about how to do that after Hesketh was executed in late November. Robert Parsons in the second edition of his work, *A Conference on the Next Succession to the Crowne of England*, all but signaled to Ferdinando and to the royal court in London that his days were numbered. In contrast, the local quasi-Catholics like Bold did not have anywhere the same amount of time to plan an assassination, actually only a few days after Fernando overreached by going after them. Should we categorically rule out that the Catholics in exile had nothing to do with the murder of Fernando?

A: Oh, no, I wouldn't rule them out. But the Jesuit leadership on the continent was thinly manned, underfunded, and highly pragmatic. I doubt that revenge would have motivated them much. In regards to Bold, the Doughties, et alia, my inference, as I say in the book, is that the plan had been in the works for quite a while and was the "real" topic of the Essex/Ferdinando correspondence. I believe on the evidence that Essex wanted to re-plant Bold inside Lathom, and Ferdinando didn't want that, and Ferdinando told both Essex and Gilbert Talbot (earl of Shrewsbury) that Bold had plotted for his life a while earlier — in revenge for Ferdinando's having hassled the mother-in-law of Bold and Williamson, Agnes Mordant, for her recusancy. I also infer that the plan was not ready to be unleashed at the time Ferdinando busted Bold and his cohorts at Bold Hall in early April of 1594, but the fact that he did bust them all was a "trigger" for the assassination. I go into all that in my book.

Also, re *Conference on the Succession*: the Jesuits kept rapidly revising it in response to deathly events up in Lancashire. Most scholars know only that they seemed to settle on Ferdinando as their preferred successor, but they actually got out another fast edition after Ferdinando's death and came out for William. William, however, was not a viable candidate. But some tiny bits of evidence do suggest that William may have tried to get possession of Ferdinando's three daughters in the days immediately following his death. If so, he or people advising him may have wanted to get control of the eldest, who was next in line for the throne after Ferdinando, by some people's reckoning.

Q: Do you accept the interpretation that Lord Burghley acted quickly after Stanley's assassination to save the Tudor regime from further plots, especially by Catholics, by marrying the obvious heir apparent to the English throne (William Stanley) to his own granddaughter, Elizabeth de Vere?

A: No, I can't see that that would have been very useful to Burghley. William wasn't a viable candidate after Ferdinando's death because Ferdinando's eldest daughter was ahead of him in the bloodline. William was also a very eccentric young man who mainly travelled the world and wrote plays for his own theater company to perform, mostly in the provinces but also in London shortly before Elizabeth actually died. I think Burghley's motive with the marriage was to put this powerful earldom under his own thumb, not trusting William to administer it well because of his sketchy background. It turned out that Elizabeth (Vere Stanley) did do most of the governing,

but it isn't known how much she deferred to Burghley for advice and guidance (or perhaps rule). She was a powerful woman, and a woman of her own mind. Burghley's main fear about the earldom of Derby after Ferdinando's death was that it might become a powerful rogue faction, acting with other such factions (e.g., the Shrewsburys) to bring on a new War of the Roses. This was what the Cecils most feared — after their succession fears.

To answer your question more directly, I can't see how marrying Elizabeth to William could possibly, in Burghley's mind (or in anyone's), have "saved the Tudor regime from further plots, especially by Catholics." Besides, Burghley, whose spy system was very good, knew among other things that William, like his father Henry, was far more tolerant of the Catholics than Ferdinando had been. The fiercely anti-Catholic Ferdinando would have been, in fact, Burghley's best bet in terms of any possible issue here.

Q: Do you think that Burghley's decision to arrange this marriage quickly was an astute action to signal the Earl of Essex that he was not needed as a kingmaker?

A: Oh, Essex already knew very well that the Cecils wanted him out of the kingmaker business with all their hearts. They made no secret of that, and Essex needed no more signals on that score. The Cecils and Essex were deeply rivalrous about the succession, as they were about almost everything else in Elizabeth's England of the 1590s.

Q: Are the tombs of the Fifth and Sixth Earls of Derby (Fernando and William Stanley) located in the vault associated with the Derby Chapel at the Parish Church of Ormskirk of Saints Peter and Paul near Liverpool? Are these tombs accessible, have you seen them, and what materials are used – e.g., are they made of marble?

A: There seems to be much interest in this matter, judging from other people's recent correspondence with me as well as your own. Yes, they are buried at Ormskirk, although I'm not sure that William was originally buried there. I don't know if they're accessible, but I assume so. I have no idea what they're made of. Tell me why you (and others) want to know about this. I have been mainly asked about it by Oxfordians.

Q: How do the results of your research affect the way we look at Shakespeare the dramatist?

A: It demonstrates (along with the recent researches of other people, such as Lawrence Manley and Catherine Canino) how willing Shakespeare was to bend history in order to flatter his patrons – particularly his Stanley patrons in his early days as a dramatist. As I note in the book, one sees this primarily in *Richard III* and in the three *Henry VI* plays. It shocks some people today, even some good scholars, to think that the "artist" Shakespeare would "do such a thing." But do it he did. And why not? To Shakespeare, his plays were not really his art. His art was in *Venus and Adonis*, *Phoenix and Turtle*, and *Sonnets* – but most particularly in what he probably viewed as his major "literary" or "artistic" creation of all – *Lucrece* (1594), which, ironically, is one of his

least-favored and least-read works today. When it came to pleasing his audience – especially its most noble and influential members – he did whatever it took. In regards to the one known occasion when he didn't – e.g., in *Macbeth* and its negative effect upon the new King James – I think we have a fascinating problem, so anomalous is this meeting of playwright, play, and supremely noble audience member.

Q: Do you think your investigation will have an impact on the epistemology of historical research? For example, the current propensity to speculate about psychology, motive, and so on based on the plots and characters of literature of the Elizabethan period, especially drama produced in an age of censorship that uses allegory as a means of communicating about public affairs?

A: No, not regarding public plays. I don't use any such evidence in my book, and I don't believe in its usefulness. I think that scholars such as Peter Milward and Claire Asquith and Richard Wilson go far afield in their attempts to build arguments and conclusions therefrom. On the other hand, I believe that the study of topical allusion or historical representation gets a very unfair rap today in connection with nondramatic poetry, particularly pastoral. Pastoral seems especially important to me, as the Elizabethan poets mainly *wrote* it to shadow real contemporary people and their doings, and those scholars today who disallow such approaches to pastoral – again, just a question of academic fashion and the ideologies stemming therefrom – are leading us down a dead-end path. When, for example, Jonathan Bateman recently said that he thinks people should not want to know the real-world identities of Shakespeare's beloved male addressee, rival poet, and fair youth, it can all sound neo-art-for-art's-sake in a supposedly high-minded way, or even a tres-hip way, but what is such a belief, really, other than disguised anti-historicism in particular – and anti-intellectualism in general? Insofar as *Sonnets* is pastoral (which it manifestly is, at least in part), it should certainly be studied for topicality if critics and scholars wish to do so – and valued when such work is done well, rather than disallowed out of hand. But with plays it is different, and the idea that Shakespeare was sending "secret coded messages of hope" to Catholics in his public theater audiences, by way of his characters and what they say, is, to say the least, highly unlikely.

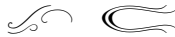
Q: What is your take on the current Shakespeare Wars?

A: I think the "Shakespeare Wars" – as Ron Rosenbaum called them in his recent book of that title – are decidedly unhelpful to research. The main reason I say this is that most of the "warfare" emanates from scholars and critics deeply entrenched in ideology far more than in commitment to good evidence, and good sense, on almost all sides. Example: "Shakespeare the Catholic." Several readers of my book are Catholic scholars, some of them Jesuits, who are friends of mine. They know that for 25 years or more I have publicly agreed with them. Why? Because almost all the good evidence points to a Shakespeare with a strong "old faith" background in Warwickshire – family, friends, and connections – and that his continuing connection

to Catholicism is well-documented. Also, almost no good evidence points in any other direction. Peter Milward, S.J., has published the best and most useful roundups of this evidence.


These readers are so deeply committed to “Shakespeare the Catholic,” and at the same time so deeply committed to Catholicism itself, that they become upset when scholars say anything remotely critical of the Elizabethan Catholic church – and the exiled Catholic leadership abroad. They deny, for example, that the leadership sent Hesketh to Ferdinando with Archduke Ernest’s (and almost certainly the pope’s) blessing), and that Lancashire Catholics killed Ferdinando for religious reasons. They think the pope’s deposition order against Elizabeth in 1570 – amounting to a hit order – should not be taken seriously. They think that the entire sixteenth-century Catholic leadership, in England and on the continent, some among its number now canonized, is made up of heroic, saintly figures. But, because of their psychological manicheanism, they also believe that the leaders of Elizabeth’s government were satanic Machiavellians. Thus, when I try in the first half of the book to give the disinterested facts about the Elizabethan Catholic leadership, these friends respond with tunnel-vision shock, saying in effect, “But I thought you were one of *us*.” Two of them deny my finding that Ferdinando was himself anti-Catholic – out of deeply committed wish for a Catholic Ferdinando rather than out of any consideration for the documentary evidence I discovered about his passionate support for the Reformation in England – and hatred of the Counter-Reformation efforts there.

They were also upset by my dissing of some of the bad Catholic scholarship on Ferdinando’s death during the past fifty years. Most noticeable to me is that these friends, all good and reputable scholars, responded to my book with long letters which mentioned *nothing but* its picture of Elizabethan Catholicism. They mentioned nothing else! – whereas the non-Catholic scholars didn’t mention the Catholic material at all in their responses. I find this discouraging because of my longstanding belief, stemming originally from my interest in the history of scientific inquiry, that no pre-existing ideology—including religious ideology—should be allowed to influence, in any way, one’s evidence-based intellectual work. Such pre-existing ideology cannot help but blind, or at least put blinkers, on people who attempt such work. Yes, we are still devoted friends, these Catholic scholars and I, and I think we always will be. But the main thing I have learned so far from publishing this book is the powerful *extent* to which ideological commitment adversely influences intellectual conclusions.



Leo Daugherty holds a BA in Fine Arts, an MA in English Literature, and a PhD in American Literature. He also did postdoctoral study in linguistics, studying syntax with Noam Chomsky at MIT. For more than ten years, he has taught Shakespeare and other courses in the humanities in the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies program at the University of Virginia. He is also Professor Emeritus of Literature and linguistics at the Evergreen State College, where he taught for over 25 years. In addition to *The Assassination of Shakespeare's Patron*, he is also author of *William Shakespeare, Richard Barnfield, and the Sixth Earl of Derby* (2010), editor of Robert Greene's *Greene's Funeralls* and *Orpheus his Journey to Hell: A Modernized Edition*, and the author of critical essays on writers as diverse as Shakespeare, Cormac McCarthy, and Allen Ginsberg.

Shakespeare: The Concealed Poet
by Robert Detobel (assisted by KC Ligon)
Privately Published in Germany
reviewed by Bonner Miller Cutting

pening with an existential flourish, Robert Detobel quotes the final lines of Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*. Beckett's depressing, barren landscape is the perfect metaphor for orthodox Shakespearean biography. The two actors remaining on the stage at the play's end agree to exit, but do not leave, presumably because they have nowhere to go -- which represents the predicament of mainstream Shakespearean biography and literary criticism, in which masses of scholars have trawled through the ancient documentary records in search of a detail or two which might support the incumbent bard. They do this in hope of finding what masses of scholars from previous generations may have missed.

It is ironic that traditional scholars have responded to the Shakespeare authorship question (and the accompanying demand for evidence) with a surge in biography; yet these same scholars refuse to admit that the authorship question even exists. Beckett himself would be hard pressed to wrestle with this Gordian knot. Nevertheless, in both the genres of biography and literary criticism, the academic community cultivates an impression that there is robust documentation to support their position. What is this documentation? Where can it be found? And what does it mean? These are the questions to which Detobel has devoted a full measure of time and expertise.

With an impressive command of the historical, legal and literary records, Detobel reveals the many lapses in the official story of William Shakespeare. It takes persistence in addition to knowledge of the period's history to mine the records as deeply as Detobel has in this book, and the process can be tedious. But the results are worthwhile as the documents, when studied carefully, have much to tell us.

Shakespeare the Concealed Poet is divided into three parts. It begins with an examination of the role of 16th century printers and delves into information from contemporary records, especially the Stationers Register. Detobel uses his command of this complex resource to evaluate the customary practices that controlled the

Elizabethan printing trade. As he progresses through this material, the traditional rationales that have been constructed to account for the publishing of the various plays and poems of Shakespeare fade away. His work on authorial rights, the Register entry of *The Merchant of Venice*, and the riddles of the publication of the first and second quarto editions of *Hamlet* should leave orthodox scholars in a state of panic.

In Part II he takes a renewed look at the well-trodden *Greenes Groatsworth of Wit*, and extracts a great deal from this pamphlet that others have overlooked. A close study of Robert Greene's work encompasses other Elizabethan writers with whom he has literary connections, and this, in turn, leads into Part III.

Assuming that an orthodox professor has the fortitude to read through Parts I and II, an even more compelling experience awaits him in Part III, where Detobel delves into the intricacies of the Harvey-Nashe controversy.

For readers unfamiliar about this literary war of words, it consisted largely of a vitriolic exchange between the high-profile Cambridge academician Gabriel Harvey and the notorious poet, playwright and essayist Thomas Nashe. Each writer sought to humiliate the other publicly through letters and essays published as pamphlets. Though the controversy attracted a great deal of interest at the time, it might appear to us today as an arcane literary quarrel — were it not for the fact that it serves as a linchpin in unraveling the Shakespeare mystery. Detobel's insightful investigation into this material, in and of itself, makes his book invaluable.

The significance of the Harvey/Nashe feud is quite simple: buried in the letters and pamphlets are references to someone who is "Shakespeare." As Detobel notes, "Shakespeare is strangely absent from the contretemps (or is he?)." In fact, references to a mysterious individual nicknamed *Apis Lapis* and also to a *Will Monox* are prominent in the exchanges, and these allusions point to a respected but *unnamed* poet whose identity is submerged — a "concealed poet." Detobel concludes (and other researchers concur) that the elusive *Apis Lapis* and *Will Monox* are literary personae of the 17th Earl of Oxford.

As Detobel systematically explores the historical context, it becomes increasingly apparent that it is "Shakespeare" who exerts the powerful yet invisible presence in the Harvey/Nashe quarrel. To make matters worse for orthodoxy, when the literary and personal associations of Harvey, Nashe and Greene are factored into the equation, it becomes self-evident that the feud which erupted in the early 1590s had its origins in 1580 with letters published by Harvey, including his vehement poetic satire on the Earl of Oxford's effete, Italianate manners. It all merges: "Shakespeare" and the "concealed poet" are one and the same, and none other than the Earl himself. Why didn't Harvey, Greene and Nashe just give us all a break and say so?

In closing, it must be stated that there are a few drawbacks to *Shakespeare the Concealed Poet*. One senses that there are, indeed, a few pieces of the puzzle that remain to be put together. Detobel is an accomplished writer and translator of scholarly works in German and French; even so, his narrative is difficult to follow in some places. Moreover, the wealth of detail in his research is a mixed blessing, and his brilliant observations are sometimes obscured by the abundance of facts that are too often loosely strung together. The information that Detobel has gleaned from the records is

valuable, but sometimes he doesn't organize it sufficiently to formulate conclusions.

In the translation of the German text into English, Detobel worked with the late KC Ligon, who died before the book was completed, leaving behind a manuscript still requiring clarification in certain places. Nonetheless, her gifted presence is felt in this book.

Given its detailed research, *Shakespeare: the Concealed Poet* is a text that will press the reader to revisit many issues, though it will be well worth the effort. All in all, to paraphrase Churchill's famous remark, the book brings the study of the Shakespeare authorship issue far beyond the end of the beginning.


Shakespeare: The Concealed Poet can be ordered for \$20 (plus shipping) through Hanno Wember of the Das Neue Shakespeare Gessellschaft in Germany at gesellschaft@shake-speare.de.

Theater Of Envy: William Shakespeare (Carthage reprint)

by Rene Girard

St. Augustines Press

reviewed by Heward Wilkinson

he French thinker Rene Girard's remarkable book on Shakespeare, valuably republished on both sides of the Atlantic in this paperback version, remains one of the most significant critical perspectives on Shakespeare ever written. It is likewise a profound learning and gleaning from Shakespeare. Girard is a multidisciplinary thinker who is difficult to classify, having relevance, at least, to history, philosophy, anthropology, theology, and literary criticism. Partly through writing his first book, on the novels, especially, of Cervantes, Proust and Dostoevsky, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, Girard came to a radical, difficult, and very disturbing understanding of certain core processes which constitute us as human.

This was, *firstly*, the recognition of the immense power for human beings, and for the development of humanity as humanity (the emergence of "hominization"), of imitative desire, *mimesis*, simplistically illustrated by mass feeling of any kind, a barroom brawl, or a panic in a building, or a stadium. It encompasses aggression, fear, sexual desire, the power drive, religious feeling, art, and much else.

Secondly, there is the theory that human beings *learned*, as they developed culture, to deal with the danger of mimetic violence by developing the mechanism of the sacrificial murder, the scapegoat murder, which for a time freed the group of the danger of mimetic escalation of aggression to everyone in the group, so was therefore interpreted as a redemption, and led to the sacralization of the victim and the foundation of religions.

The *third* stage is the diagnosis of the "human disorder" of mimesis, and the undoing of the scapegoat mechanism, by the religions of non-retaliation, above all Christianity (in its original form). This conception was developed as an anthropological thesis in *Violence and the Sacred*, and *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*.

So powerful is Girard's thesis that he himself, undoubtedly, is characteristically mimetically affected by it, constantly seeking, by dismissals, to differentiate it more sharply than it permits, from, for instance, Freud and Hegel, who both anticipate

powerful elements in Girard's conception. This is something which, indeed, in relation to Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he says is one form of the mimetic tendency:

It is Snout now who demands one more prologue after the fashion of Bottom. But, like all compulsive mimes, Bottom hates to be copied; he prizes originality above all else, and as soon as he sees his ideas espoused by another man he repudiates them. The need to contradict in him is just as mimetic as the need to copy.... (61)

It is perhaps this dimension of contrarian *mimesis* which makes Girard underestimate in Shakespeare the element most important to his vision, Shakespeare's own Christianity. (I return to this.)

As this suggests, when Girard turned to Shakespeare, he found in Shakespeare the arch diagnostician and greatest master portrayer of the mimetic process who had ever written! In this book he concentrates mainly on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Julius Caesar*, and *The Winter's Tale*, touching on many other plays and poems in the process. He also has a chapter on James Joyce, and Stephen Dedalus' diatribe on Shakespeare in *Ulysses*, for reasons to which I shall return. In a sense, *Julius Caesar* is Girard's *piece de resistance*; the mimetic background to the ritual murder of Caesar, which then fails to exorcise the mimetic crisis, the crisis which only sinks sweetly back into its ground again after the death of Brutus, and Mark Antony's elegy on him, is evoked with phenomenal mastery and penetration by Girard.

But he actually takes *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as his master thread of analysis. Girard thinks that Shakespeare's approach to *mimesis* was too direct in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, and that the "message" of *mimesis* is too difficult to tolerate, to admit of a direct approach. He thinks *A Midsummer Night's Dream* demonstrates that Shakespeare had learned a profounder mastery of a more indirect, and more subtle, communication, multilayered, which nevertheless embodies within it, comprehensively mapped and alluded to, all the elements of a mimetic crisis. I briefly sketch facets of it which slot into place aspects of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which only become meaningful on this approach.

Thus, for instance, Girard manages to portray the deeper significance of the otherwise merely farcical, theatrical troupe of Peter Quince and the Athenian "mechanicals" – which would be the popular meaning of this subplot, illustrating the double level Shakespeare has now achieved. This deeper significance is to explore the mimetic character precisely of acting and the acting frame. Bottom is portrayed as through and through a great mimetic, as a great actor must be, and this is the source of his absolute confidence; always, undefeated, he will offer: "I have a device will make all well." And he carries it off, unconquerably, even when he is translated into an ass ("Bottom, thou art translated"; this whole play, as Girard recognizes, is about "translation"), and subject of and to the caresses of Titania, and the ministrations of her fairies. He is completely without snobbery, direct or inverted, and treats everyone as an equal. He is veritably, as an actor, Keats' "chameleon poet":

As to the poetical character itself...., it is not itself—it has no self. It is everything, and nothing—it has no character. It enjoys light, and shade. It lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—it has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet.

And he manages even to embody implicitly a profound Christian humility, saturated with Pauline allusions, before the mystery of his “vision,” the Pauline “things which are not,” which can become redeemed:

‘ have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was,—and methought I had,—but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was.

(I think Gerard Manley Hopkins picked up that “patched fool” in the last lines of his *That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection*.) Bottom embodies an unconquerable integrity, which is more than a match for the patronising snobbism of the courtiers of Theseus’ court (Hyppolita, so wise and astute in her reaction to Theseus’s response to the story of the *mimesis* of the lovers, is the least able to honour the *mimesis* of the actors), watching the play. “Translation” is at the very heart of what he embodies. But this aspect of him Girard does not fully explore, though, like any creative innovator, he provides us with the means to go beyond him. As such, Bottom clearly incarnates something profound of the author. It is perhaps because Girard is, paradoxically, wedded to a conception of Christianity as the annulment and antithesis of *mimesis*, and the process of mimetic violence, that he is unable to glimpse a Christianity, Shakespeare’s Christianity, which would itself be mimetically transformational (as in *Measure for Measure*; though Girard glimpses it at the end of *The Winter’s Tale*, he has to see it as only achieved at the very end of the journey). But, laying a base for this nevertheless, Girard grasps the other end of this spectrum magisterially:

This high degree of *self-dispossession*, higher than anything the Western theater can ever achieve or want to achieve, is what Shakespeare is representing in this subplot, a theatrical experience so intense that it turns back into the trance from which the theater must originally have emerged.

(62)

In his much lengthier analysis of the lovers’ chaotic experience and transformation process, Girard is equally shrewd, and shows that the ostensible interference of Puck in fact simply mimics the mimetic process the lovers are going through. At the end,

Theseus treats all this as mere projection, and in this, doubly missing the purpose of the author. James Shapiro, in *Contested Will*, follows, and identifies with, the positivism of Theseus. But Girard shows that Hyppolita's brief but profound response to him, treating the whole mimetic dimension as actual, not as merely projective, is the heart of what Shakespeare is trying to intimate regarding the lovers – for those who have ears to hear:

But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigured so together,
More witnesseth than fancy's images
And grows to something of great constancy;
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

I do think Girard misses a dimension of significance, perhaps we could call it archetypal, in Jungian shorthand, in the role of the fairies, which Girard *does* treat as merely projective, merely projective of the mimetic myth and crisis.

Finally, in the closing chapter on *The Winter's Tale*, Girard writes:

Writers are such *mimes*, we are told, that they can feign a thousand states of mind that they never experience themselves. This is true, no doubt, but it is not the whole truth, and partial truths are misleading. What a genuine writer desires to represent is his own state of mind.

(338)

And here comes in the reference to Joyce. Girard, invoking Joyce's triangular exploration, in Stephen Dedalus, of Shakespeare's own mimeticism, which Joyce tries to attach to the conjectural life of William Shakespeare of Stratford, though Joyce sidelong alludes to the authorship issue ("Manner of Oxenford"), makes it totally clear that the great writer about *mimesis* must be profoundly mimetic himself, and must replicate the process of it in his work:

... Joyce understood not only mimetic desire in Shakespeare but the sacrificial ambivalence that goes with it, and deliberately set out to duplicate this remarkable feature in his own text. He decided that, in his great homage to Shakespeare, he should be as Shakespearean as possible, and not only revealed but mimicked the sacrificial strategy of his writer.

(269)


The great writer, as Nietzsche said, writes from his own reality. This great Shakespearean exploration opens Shakespeare up anew, as no one has done, I believe, since G. Wilson Knight in *The Wheel of Fire*.

***The Shakespeare Guide to Italy:
Retracing the Bard's Unknown Travels.***

by Richard Paul Roe

New York, Harper Perennial, 2011

reviewed by Virginia J. Renner

hallenging lovers of Shakespeare and scholars of history and literature, Richard Roe's Guide to the Bard's Italian travels persuades us, as we follow his itinerary, to revise our traditional view of Shakespeare, his life, and his world. European travelers as well as Shakespeare scholars will enjoy accompanying the author as he identifies exact sites in Shakespeare's ten Italian plays. Roe's claim, that the many precise locations he reveals attest to the playwright's own travels in Italy and Sicily, has significant implications for Shakespeare studies and the authorship question.

Beautifully produced, this book has over 150 illustrations, including many color photographs, paintings, engravings and 19 maps, ten drawn especially for this work. It is a fascinating travelogue, a genuinely useful guide for tourists and fans of Italy and Sicily. If it gains the audience it deserves, it should probably be made available in electronic form for the convenience of students and travelers. At that point, if not in another edition, the addition of an index would greatly enhance its usefulness. It was also momentarily disappointing that Roe did not include the Induction scene when discussing *Taming of the Shrew*, and that he stopped short of following Othello when the action moves to Cyprus. But this work is the result of Roe's focus on just those plays set in Italy and Sicily, and interested readers can be grateful he traveled as far as he did to report his discoveries.

Richard Roe, who did intensive research in many libraries to supplement his field trips abroad, is careful in his Preface to leave any revolutionary implications for the rest of us to recognize after reading the facts that he presents. When matters of interpretation arise, Roe readily labels them as his own. Certainly, after he shows, with the aid of detailed maps, how two gentlemen could go by waterways from their home in Verona to Milan, how Lucentio in *Taming* did the same from Pisa to Padua, and why they would want to do so, the reader is enlightened and the plays are enlivened. Indeed, after the discoveries presented in just the first few chapters of this book, it seems probable that the playwright knew the Italian landscape from first-hand experience.

Starting with *Romeo and Juliet* and Roe's reminder that no balcony appears in the text, we tour the city with the author, not only to Juliet's house, where a balcony is

tacked onto the front to please the tourists, but to all the places we hear about in the play. Even lifetime readers of the drama may be surprised at new information about Verona that Roe's persistence uncovers. The examples analyzed below represent but a few of those which appear in the *Guide*, demonstrating Roe's stance that the playwright meant what he wrote, particularly about geographical matters, and that there are few mistakes or transcription errors in the original text, despite what modern play editors often decide.

We're given enough background in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* to see this Renaissance city as a center for trade, travelers, and shipping and to lead us to definitions employed during the 16th century for such terms as "tide," "flood," and "road." These do not pertain to the sea or land route; rather, they refer to the connecting canals and river systems that took travelers from Verona to Milan, a more convenient and quicker journey than going by land. Talk of being shipped or sailing did not mean on the sea. Yet, Roe cites the editor's note in the second edition of *The Riverside Shakespeare*, "Shakespeare seems to have supposed that Verona was a seaport" (40). This is only one of many editions that indicate misunderstanding of what these particular words meant. In the first line of Act 2, scene 5, when Speed says to Launce, "Welcome to Padua!" Roe assures us that Speed is joking with Launce, and that there is no need to change the city to Milan, or to give a note that the author made a mistake, forgetting where they were.¹ This *Guide* explains why there is both a Duke and an Emperor of Milan and why the Emperor disappears, which editors note as an authorial mistake. The mystery and the meaning of St. Gregory's Well, the place Proteus sends poor Thurio, is made chillingly clear.

By the time we reach Chapter 4 and *Taming of the Shrew*, the reader is glad to have the five maps immediately at hand showing the waterways from Pisa to Padua, and the approaches to the city, and the fine photographs that place us perfectly in the local geography. The end result is an increased confidence in the original play text.

Discussion of *The Merchant of Venice* begins with explanations of why Antonio's ships certainly can land at the five ports named in the play, though some editions dispute this, and why his "wealthy Andrew" does not refer to a Spanish galleon captured at Cadiz in 1596. This assumption leads the Arden editor to date the play "in its present form not earlier than August 1596."² The background Roe provides on sea commerce and 16th century history leads us to think of it as an earlier play.

Major portions of Chapter 6 concern Portia's journey from Belmont to Venice and back again, revealing where you can find her stunning Villa Foscari that Michael Radford featured in his 2004 film version of the play. There are also directions to and photos of Shylock's still surviving penthouse in the Jewish quarter of Venice.

Of the many passages explored and their meanings revised, perhaps the most interesting one that Roe's research finally cleared from the muddle scholars have made of it, comes in *Merchant*:

Bring them I pray thee with imagin'd speed
Vnto the Tranect, to the common Ferrie
Which trades to Venice; waste no time in words....
(3.4.53)

What is or was “the Tranect”? The Quarto (1600) and First Folio spelling given above is usually in the footnotes and editors change the text to “traject,” the meaning given as ferry from the Italian, “traghetto.” By now, halfway through the volume, we have learned to pay attention to capital letters and to suspect they refer to something specific, not general. It is fascinating to read the description from Montaigne’s travel journal dated November 3, 1580, telling us what the Tranect is and how it works. A boat is transported across the narrow spit of land from the canal to the Venetian Lagoon “...with wheels that they put underneath, over a wooden flooring, and launch them into the canal that goes into the sea [Lagoon] in which Venice is situated.” Montaigne’s journey, as well as Portia’s journey, put them both in Fusina, the location of the Tranect. Even more startling, editors might have found the answer in a book by Fynes Moryson, *Itinerary*, published in 1617 (STC18205), or in *Coryat’s Crudities* of 1611 (STC5808). Roe found it all in the *Modern Language Review* of January, 1932, in Violet M. Jeffery’s work which describes “the ingenious contrivance for transferring boats from the canal to lagoon” (146-51). Because modern editors typically assume they know more about Italy than Shakespeare did, they change the spelling and leave the original Tranect in the notes, never bothering to search for the correct explanation.³

Only the first act of *Othello* takes place in Venice, which the author must have known well as the text includes local details, such as the gown Senators wore in public and the location and meaning of the Sagittary. The sources for the story, by Bandello and Cinthio, were not set in Venice, had no such details, and were not translated into English until much later. By walking to the area known in Venice as the Sagittaria, the street of the arrow makers, Roe was able to find the canal landing, or *Fondamento Orseolo*, where Othello met Desdemona before escorting her to a nearby house for their first night together in the Sagittary. Roe’s close reading of the playwright’s text and investigation on the ground together prove important. Until the 2010 Oxfordian Shakespeare edition of *Othello* by Ren Draya and Richard F. Whalen, editors have never pictured exactly where it is and what it was. M. R. Ridley in the Arden 1958 edition came close, but backed away. In most editions, including the Oxford and RSC editions, the notes often emphasize the sign of the Centaur, associate it with lust and Iago’s slurs, slanting future critical interpretations away from the topical and empirical cues of the original text.

The chapter on *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is relatively short, but a delightful surprise, taking us to Sabbioneta, or “Little Athens,” the city that Roe asserts is the inspiration for the setting of *Dream*. This ideal city, still tiny, evokes an enlarged stage set. The brainchild of Vespasiano Gonzaga, its construction continued even as this duke invited cultured guests there for learned discussions and arranged displays of his “rich collections” to show the “nobility and intelligentsia.” Its traditional name, “La Piccola Athene,” was given for these erudite meetings, not for its architecture. Roe found, unlike most continental palaces, that “the city itself was largely the palace of the duke” (182). The Duke’s Oak and the Temple, referred to in the play, are there. Today nature preserves protect what little remains of the marshy lands outside its walls. The news that the setting of this play, full of fairy magic, was inspired by a real

place, that it started as another man's dream and ended with his death in 1591, may be disturbing for some. Does it change what we hear in the familiar text?

The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

(5.1.15-17)

Perhaps the discoveries in *All's Well that Ends Well* are the most concrete of all in their exactitude and in providing fine opportunities for Florentine tourists. Roe acknowledges this himself when he says, "It is in this scene, especially, where the playwright displays his most precise knowledge of that city. His descriptions are a first-person testament to his having walked the streets, visited its sites and learned of its colloquialisms..." (199). Beginning with the stage directions of Act 3, scene 5, Roe corrects the OED about the definition of "tuckets." Then he reconstructs the action, where the Widow of Florence and others are gathered as Helen joins them, where Bertram and the men enter the City walls, where they are headed and their route—and he includes photos of all the places in the scene. This detailed explanation will be instructive for actors, editors, and audiences alike. The sight lines are still there and we can see it now, just as the author conceived it then from his visit there.

Messina, the setting for *Much Ado About Nothing*, is not like other cities explored in the book, as a large earthquake nearly leveled it in 1908. Undeterred, Roe identifies places in the play and assures us "...their actual sixteenth-century locations, nonetheless, have been fully verified" (220). We learn that the Royal Palace, the Temple and the family's "old Monument" in the Monumental (or Great) Cemetery were actual landmarks when the playwright was there. The Cemetery does still exist. The usual date given for *Much Ado* is 1598 and the author examines this assumption. Roe calls attention to the special gift Count Claudio sent to Hero, a pair of perfumed gloves. He notes that Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, famously presented Queen Elizabeth with a gift of perfumed gloves when he returned from his year in Italy in 1576 and questions a reference to it twenty years later, when such gloves were then a commonplace possession for noble ladies. The "gloves" incident and echoes in the play of recent exploits of Don John (Juan) of Austria, who died in 1578, make the play's orthodox date of composition look doubtful to Roe.

Bohemia did have a coastline, we learn, when the king was Ottakar II. He inherited the throne of Bohemia in 1253, and later inherited its coastline of sandy beaches in 1269. Therefore, for Roe, the play takes place in the thirteenth century when Palermo and its Palazzo Reale (or Normani) was a famous cultural center, and Bohemia's Prague castle was an austere fortress. This setting works until Leontes sends messengers off to consult the oracle at Delphos, long gone by the Middle Ages. As a result, modern play productions are now usually set in classical times. Roe concentrates on the journey by sea to Greece and back, demonstrating how it depicts 16th century travel time accurately, the precise route taken, and the specific sites that it features. Meanwhile, most editors are still talking of landlocked Bohemia and a landlocked

author. However, John Pitcher, editor of the 2010 Arden edition text, writes: “This clearly wasn’t Shakespeare’s mistake, but a joke. ... A shipwreck off Bohemia in Act 3 would alert early audiences to the unreality and make-believe that was to follow in the remainder of *The Winter’s Tale*. But if the joke was familiar why didn’t Jonson get it? Was he out of humour, or was there something that for once he simply didn’t know he ought to laugh at?”⁴ Or was Ben Jonson being his usual disingenuous self?

Knowing Roe had become an expert on the realities of Mediterranean voyages during the 16th century, we accept his explanation of how Prospero and Miranda, adrift in a small boat, could arrive safely on that incredible island in *The Tempest*. This enchanted setting, complete with its exotic sounds and smells, muddy pools and yellow sands, according to Roe, is real; the book includes photos of it. Critics think of it as an imagined construct, though Sicilians must have long known it. In his book *Shakespeare and Italy: The City and the Stage*, Jack D’Amico writes: “The island, like the version of the ideal city, exists in the imagination. It is the quality of the isle that makes it, among other things, more like a theater in a city than a geographical place fixed solidly on God’s globe.”⁵ Nevertheless, that we can find this magical place and visit it is a major thrill of this book, a surprise best left for each reader to enjoy.

Despite the traditional editorial notes about the Bermuda Islands in Act 1, scene 2, explaining the “still-vexed Bermoothes,” Roe insists this is a local joke that Londoners enjoyed. The 1999 Arden edition now includes, after its note on the Bermuda Islands, a second explanation about a section of London where illegal distilleries, thieves and fugitives were found, which is called the Bermoothes or the Bermudas. As Roe points out, why go to the Bermuda Islands to get “dew” when this kind of “dew” is plentiful close at hand.

One last revelation, dependant on learning that Catalan, with good reason, was the official language in Sicily until 1609 and how this word-sensitive author used it effectively in naming Caliban and Ariel, provides a satisfying ending to this astonishing achievement.

Endnotes

¹ In addition to the 3 mentioned in Roe, of 5 additional editions checked, only the RSC admits it might “conceivably” be a joke.

² John Russell Brown, ed., *The Merchant of Venice* (London, Methuen, 1955). The Arden Shakespeare (Third series) Introd., xxvii.

³ In addition to the Arden edition Roe mentioned, of the 6 editions checked, none understood what the Tranect truly was.

⁴ John Pitcher, ed., *The Winter’s Tale* (London, Methuen, 2010). The Arden Shakespeare (Third series) Introd., 100.

⁵ Jack D’Amico, *Shakespeare and Italy: The City and the Stage* (Gainesville:University Press of Florida, 2001), 172.

Bardgate: Shake-speare and the Royalists Who Stole the Bard

by Peter Dickson

Mount Vernon, OH: Printing Arts Press, 288 pages, 2011

reviewed by Gary Goldstein

B*ardgate* is the first authorship book to provide a comprehensive solution to the “cover-up” of the Shakespeare authorship mystery through a combination of literary and historical evidence showing how the canon was used for political purposes by competing court factions during the reigns of King James and King Charles. In this highly detailed exposition, Dickson offers a combined literary-historical perspective on how William Shakespeare became identified with William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon.

At the book’s center are two bibliographic discoveries made by the author at the Library of Congress that clinch the identity of the “Grand Possessors” of the Shakespeare manuscripts. He posits, for the first time, a bi-authorship partnership of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford (as primary author) and William Stanley, Earl of Derby (Oxford’s son-in-law) together writing under the pseudonym of William Shakespeare. Dickson offers a complex solution in which Oxford’s literary fate became intertwined with the Stanley family – the brothers William and Ferdinando of royal Tudor blood and their family’s equally strong involvement in the theatrical culture. In fact, it was their company, known as the Lord Strange’s Men and not Oxford’s Men, which supplied the key actors to form the new company associated with the name Shakespeare, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, in 1594.

Dickson hypothesizes that a key reason academics have suffered from astigmatism regarding the authorship issue is that there were not one, but rather three, distinct stages that comprised the Shakespeare “cover-up”:

1. The author(s) decision to adopt anonymity through public use of a pseudonym;
2. The decision of a coterie of Protestant Earls – Oxford, Southampton, Pembroke – to use the Shakespeare canon during King James’ reign in response

to the Spanish Marriage Crisis while deceiving the public as to the author's real identity, but not clearly identifying the alternate author; and

3. The decision of a coterie of Catholic courtiers during King Charles' reign to use the canon to definitively identify Shakespeare as William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon, including the installation of the monument bust in Stratford's Trinity Church with references to him in contemporary publications.

The vital link between the author's own anonymity and the posthumous decision by others to publish the canon of plays for political reasons are the Grand Possessors of the manuscripts themselves. In this, Dickson has discovered two pieces of archival evidence, both bibliographic.

The first is the title page of the *Othello* quarto published by Thomas Walkley in 1622, only a year before the First Folio. It contains no dedication but does state

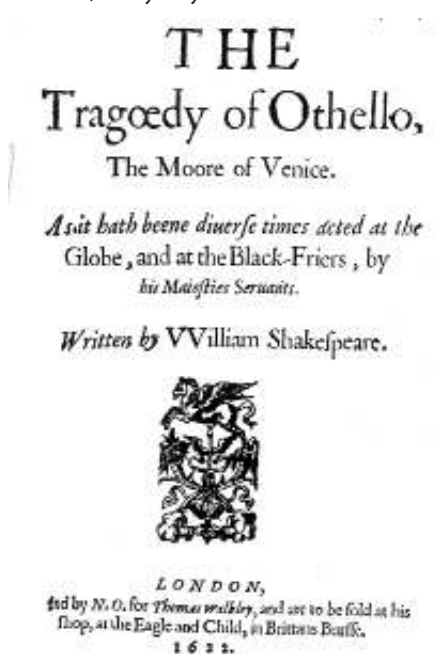


Figure One: 1622 edition of *Othello* bearing publisher's legend with Derby device of "Eagle and Child."

on the title page that is to be "...sold at his [Walkley's] shop at the Eagle and Child..." (Figure One). The depiction of an eagle in flight carrying a child in a basket is the insignia or heraldic device of the Stanley family, the Earls of Derby.

The second, and more compelling discovery, is the publication, also in 1622, of Jaun de Luna's picaresque novel, *The Pursuit of the History of Lazarillo de Tormez*. Walkley published with a dedication to Oxford's descendants and in-laws that is stunning for the inclusion of such a lavish and detailed expression of gratitude in what is obviously, in 1622, a highly charged political text:

To the right honorable
James, Lord Strange,
Mr. Robert Stanley,
And
The Lady Anne Carre

As with the *Othello* quarto, this book was to be sold at Walkley's shop at the "Eagle and Child."

The *Othello* quarto appeared amidst the Spanish Marriage, in which King James attempted to secure a Spanish bride for his son and heir, Prince Charles. Dickson poses the question: Is there a connection between the Spanish Marriage Crisis of 1621-23, the imprisonments of Southampton and the 18th Earl of Oxford in 1621, and of Oxford

again in 1622-23—and the late-starting and hasty printing of the *First Folio* of 1622-23? Dickson's answer is in the affirmative.

Dickson's rationale for the first institutional act of deception involved a "paranoid Protestant court faction," opposed to the proposed marriage between the son of King James and daughter of King Philip of Spain and the growing tyranny of the King's favorite, the Duke of Buckingham. Under the leadership of Oxford's son (Henry, the 18th Earl) and the Earls of Pembroke and Southampton, the crisis prompted a decision to publish the *First Folio* of Shakespeare's dramas "as a powerful expression of what it meant to be English as opposed to being Spanish and Catholic. The fear was that a dynastic union with Spain and a possible restoration of Catholicism might make that expression of national and religious identity more difficult to accomplish" (Preface, iii).

The Second Folio project, and the definitive identification of Shakespeare with Shakspeare of Stratford, was a form of retaliation against those men and the spirit which animated the First Folio project by a "clique of bitter pro-Buckingham royalists" who had been in favor of the Spanish Marriage. Dickson claims this faction exacted its revenge against the Protestant court group "by devolving the identity of the Bard(s) firmly around the apparent crypto-Catholic William Shakespeare from Stratford on Avon. They acted in conjunction with King Charles's desire to publish a *Second Folio* not long after he began in 1629 his eleven years of dictatorial rule" (Preface iv).


Dickson shows how these quasi-Catholic royalists, several of whom were from the South Warwickshire region, had the cooperation of the pro-royalist women within the family of the incumbent Bard to seal up the literary genius' identity around this surrogate. However, this successful identity theft was carried out in such a sloppy and contradictory manner that, even "after 400 years, the Stratfordians can no longer hide the fact that they cannot tell us with certainty where inside Trinity Church their incumbent Bard was really buried."

To evaluate Dickson's other evidence for Derby's participation in the writing of the plays, the issue of Shakspeare's actual burial in Trinity Church, Stratford, and other aspects of the case, readers are encouraged to read *Bardgate* in its entirety. It is a seminal publication that provides a comprehensive framework demonstrating how the various elements of the complex cover-up were carried out for 40 years – from the 1593 publication of *Venus and Adonis* to the 1632 publication of the Second Folio.

Bardgate is available directly from the author for \$35 at pwdbard@aol.com.

Anonymous

reviewed by Sky Gilbert

 *Anonymous* is a big event for Oxfordians. The good news is that it is a very good movie indeed. But we should not become so caught up in the excitement of seeing a Hollywood “Masterpiece Theatre” style epic that presents an argument in favor of the Oxfordian position, that we ignore what is the most interesting aspect of this film — its reception. Note the context of the film’s release. This says a lot about Hollywood’s commitment to it. *Anonymous* was released on Halloween weekend, along with another costume epic: *Puss ‘N Boots*. When I saw *Anonymous*, the trailer was Spielberg’s *The Adventures’ of Tintin*. Hollywood, always conscious of perception, has been sure to place this film where they think it belongs, just in case it should, by chance, be taken too seriously.

But first, the good news. Although *Anonymous* is most certainly a fiction – and those who oppose its fantasies will likely never stop emphasizing that — it is a very fine fiction indeed. As I watched the film I tried to decide whether *Anonymous* is a worthy piece of entertainment (or even art), in its own right — beyond any Oxfordian prejudices. *Anonymous* certainly compares more than favorably with *Shakespeare in Love*. Both films are intelligent, witty, funny, thrilling, moving and romantic. The author of *Anonymous* (John Orloff) does not have Tom Stoppard’s pedigree — he is perhaps most known for the adapted screenplay of *A Mighty Heart*. Stoppard’s *Shakespeare in Love* is notable for being not only about Shakespeare, but about love. This is the key to its claims to profundity. Great films and plays – including Shakespeare’s work -- are generally thought to be only as deep as they are considered *not* topical. (One Oxfordian dilemma is that if we insist that Shakespeare’s plays touch on Early Modern political or religious issues then our analysis will necessarily be considered less profound than Harold Bloom’s.) The perception of *Anonymous* as issue-based polemic will be encouraged by the prologue and epilogue in which Derek Jacobi speaks beautifully in favor of the Oxfordian cause. But if audience members are capable of seeing past their objections to this polemic, they will soon come to recognize that *Anonymous* is a film about love.

That love, however, is possibly an incestuous one between a queen of England and her son (this incest is suggested by the character Robert Cecil). Even a suggestion

of this will be distasteful to many. I, however, find it fascinating to see a lifelong relationship between two such complicated persons so naturalistically portrayed. Through the magnificent performances of Rhys Ifans and Vanessa Redgrave, we are able to imagine what it might be like for a queen and her subject to be involved in a strange romance that lasts – on and off — for so many years. Some Oxfordians will regret that the film puts Charles Beauclerk’s Prince Tudor theory from *Shakespeare’s Lost Kingdom* into the duplicitous Cecil’s mouth. Isn’t the idea of such a strange relationship simply a bit too much for *anyone* to handle? For some, indeed, it may be.

But I promised to begin by praising the film as film. I honestly don’t see how anyone could find fault with *Anonymous* as entertainment. If critics say that it is badly done it must be because they are offended by it. *Anonymous* is visually sumptuous – this is something we have come to expect from Roland Emmerich (*Independence Day*, *10,000 B.C.*, *The Day After Tomorrow*). On the other hand, we do not usually expect Roland Emmerich to create art.

Art and entertainment are defined by their intents. Those who wish to produce entertainment do so to make money, and those who wish to produce art are moved either intellectually or emotionally (or by some mysterious mixture of both) to create something that will move, edify, teach, and/or inspire us. Entertainers sometimes accidentally make art, and artists sometimes accidentally make entertainment. *Anonymous*, was, I suspect, a labor of love for the actors, the author, and perhaps even the director. But it may have been mostly a moneymaking prospect for the producers. So, somewhat accidentally, I suspect, from a collusion of philistinism and noble motives a film appeared, one that is truly moving.

Anonymous is sumptuous in the sense that the images are gorgeous without being gratuitous, and seem to represent a relevant and coherent image of Elizabethan life. It’s refreshing (or perhaps that’s not the word) to see characters struggling through the streets of London while balancing on planks laid down to cover human excrement. It’s refreshing to see a Queen Elizabeth in closeup who is not only very wrinkled, but has horrifyingly bad teeth. And finally, it’s refreshing to see actual boy actors, and the makeup and frills worn by men. All of this seems historically accurate. I’m sure there are details historians will find (other than the obvious Oxfordian ones) that will dismay them. But compared to *Shakespeare in Love*, *Anonymous* has remarkably few glaring anachronisms. Stephen Marche, in a recently published, rambling, sarcastic *New York Times* article pointed out that Marlowe’s fatal wound was in the eye (not the throat, as in *Anonymous*). He also mentioned that it would not have been controversial (as the film would have it) for Shakespeare to write a play about a deformed cripple that resembled Robert Cecil, since Richard III had always been portrayed in that way. This kind of quibbling about a fictional film serves no purpose. I ask, respectfully, does it matter? More importantly, the London of *Anonymous* looks like 16th century London might have – both ugly and beautiful, quite simply, gorgeously, hideously, authentic.

Structurally, the film is, in my view, quite flawless. I only looked at my watch once in two hours and ten minutes. It’s a great story, and if one is interested at all in Shakespeare, or history (and unhampered by anti-Oxfordian prejudice) one cannot help but be gripped by the mystery that is explained as the film unfolds. Most of the

film takes place late in Elizabeth and de Vere's life, but the flashbacks are clearly and logically placed. The final moments give us a *scene a faire* between Elizabeth and Oxford that viewers are sure to anticipate. This scene is an unspooling of earlier paradoxical events, and it is effortless in the way that an old *Perry Mason* murder mystery never was.

The dialog in the film is seamless. It seems real without employing anything resembling Early Modern English (of course we don't know how they talked in 16th century England, or what their accents were, there is only conjecture). The lower class characters are believable without sounding cockney in a *My Fair Lady* sort of way, and the aristocrats speak beautifully without seeming overly florid. The performances are top-notch, but of course it is the peerless Vanessa Redgrave and the fascinating Rhys Ifans who dominate the screen. They are able to convince us they have lived the fantastical, tragic and unlikely lives that the author gives them. Vanessa Redgrave is always luminous, but here she finally has a character that can own the sadness, longing and wisdom that rests behind her eyes. Rhys Ifans' performance will astound those who remember him only as the loutish flatmate in *Notting Hill*. There he gave us a believably hilarious boor; here he gives us the very depths of passion and anger, and delivers lines that are necessarily melodramatic with an earned intensity. All of the supporting characters are also quite brilliant — especially David Thewliss and William Hogg as the villainous Cecils — and all the performances of scenes from Shakespeare's plays within the movie are impeccably acted.

Don't let anyone tell you *Anonymous* isn't a gripping film. But then there is the Oxfordian polemic at the very heart of it. The film will, for a Stratfordian audience (i.e., for most people) serve to underline two generally held misconceptions about the Oxfordian position. This is through no fault of its own. Because the film succeeds in presenting a beautifully shot and perfectly acted version of an Oxfordian thesis, it will necessarily raise two specific issues — ones that will inevitably make a strong argument (for most people) *against* the Oxfordian case. First, there is the notion of conspiracy theories. Almost everything I have read about this film puts it in the context of conspiracy theories, as does Stephen Marche's article. He says: "Shakespeare is finally getting the Oliver Stone/ 'Da Vinci Code' treatment, with a lurid conspiratorial melodrama involving incest in royal bedchambers, a vapidly simplistic version of court intrigue, nifty costumes and historically inaccurate nonsense." Now, I am not a fan of conspiracy theories in general. But I think they are inherently radical, in the best sense of the word, because opposition to them usually comes from members of the right seeking to demonize the left. (The obvious exception are the Tea Partiers who believe that Obama is a communist. But I would argue that recent right-wing American suspicion of the federal government does not fall under the category of suspicion of government in general — just suspicion of the black president who seems, unaccountably to some — to have wormed his way in there.)

I do not mean to suggest that all Oxfordians are left-wing, merely that they are all demonized in the same way the left has been. Jonathan Kay's recent *Among the Truthers* is a case in point. This book lures the reader with a promise to reveal anecdotal material about conspiracy theorists including Tea Party "Truthers." But the book is not

primarily about those who question Obama's birthplace (though it mentions them). Instead it demonizes the left-leaning prejudices of North American academia. *Among the Truthers* makes the triumphant point in its final chapters that postmodernism and poststructuralism are conspiracy-friendly philosophies, encouraging a kind of skepticism that leads beyond reason to superstition and intuition. In other words, left-wing universities teach students that there is no "truth" and this leads them to believe any sort of nonsense – including the notion that 9/11 was planned by the U.S. government. Not coincidentally, *Among the Truthers* also demonizes Oxfordians. Kay says that, for us "conspiracy theories are a tool to eliminate the cognitive dissonance that arises when the course of human events doesn't cooperate with the results demanded by their ideology" (162).

What Stephen Marche, Jonathan Kay – and almost everyone -- are skeptical about, is the idea that government coverups actually do exist, and that governments can be consistently and even inherently evil. (Why shouldn't they be skeptical? The notion is scary.) And an evil government cover-up is what we see so beautifully articulated in *Anonymous*. What *Anonymous* does best is show the necessity of the de Vere conspiracy. It sets up a world of decadent intrigue, marshaled by the deliciously evil William Cecil and his hunchbacked son. It also presents a true and enthralling picture of the desperately guarded aristocratic privilege of Queen Elizabeth and her court. The film makes it all too clear how and why a nobleman in Puritan-heavy Early Modern England might have had little choice but to hide his artistic creations.

But although the idea of a nobleman like de Vere writing in secret makes perfect sense to Oxfordians, it is a notion that will be particularly offensive to Stratfordians, and perhaps to anyone who has blind faith in government (which, I would posit, is many people). Most people never cease laughing at what they consider to be a highly unlikely – nay impossible – prospect of large scale government malignancy, just as Stratfordians continually find it hilarious that it would be possible for a secret as huge as Shakespeare's real identity to be kept quiet for hundreds of years. One of the problems that anarchists, communists and the left has, in general, is that most people are loath to believe that those who hold power – whether it be in business or government or both – in *any* country, are corrupt. As Occupy Wall Street gains momentum, we can see the world beginning to split very much on the lines that split Stratfordians and Oxfordians. It may or may not have been an accident that the title of the film *Anonymous* is also the name for a well-known group of loosely organized computer hackers who have committed themselves to bringing down what they see as the evil mega/corporate/ government complex that rules the world. The relationship between the Oxfordian cause and conspiracy theories will be a big obstacle for us. Resentment will arise because of how clearly and adroitly the film presents the Oxfordian case. Is it possible, people will say, that governments could keep such a secret from the people? If they do, what would that say about *our* government?

I am a gay man, and for a while I was a columnist for an arts weekly in Toronto. I once inadvertently "outed" a gay politician – Bill Grahame (he has since retired from office – nothing to do with me). It was a mistake – I actually thought he was openly gay; apparently he wasn't. But even though I proclaimed his sexual preferences in my

column, the news item was never picked up by the mainstream press in Canada. The only place you can find any mention of Bill Grahame's homosexuality is on certain homophobic Catholic websites. (They were outraged by the idea that Canada's defense minister might have been a homosexual.) So, because I am gay, and I occasionally – sometimes inadvertently – reveal secret truths, I am well aware of how neatly and easily a gentleman's agreement by those in power makes it possible for a government to conspire and lie. There are gay politicians in Canada and the USA today. But they need not worry – the government and the press know that if they were to open that particular can of worms the government would crumble under the pressure of all the lies and scandal. I don't think it's an accident that Roland Emmerich is not only openly gay, but somewhat of a gay rights activist. (This is something rare among Hollywood movie directors.) Gay men are supremely conscious of the kind of secrets that those in power are capable of holding.

On that "gay" note, I only wish that Emmerich had accentuated the feminine aspect of de Vere's character. Male femininity is a stereotypical trait that is still thought, by most, to signal homosexuality. Yes, Ifans dresses in frilly clothes and brandishes a limp handkerchief. But Alan Nelson, attempting to defame de Vere in *Monstrous Adversary*, makes it clear that de Vere was perceived (at least by those who hated him) as effeminate and possibly a sodomite. He cites a poem by Harvey that suggests "foppishness as Oxford's most characteristic trait" (226). Unfortunately Rhys Ifans is not – from either a present day or a 16th century viewpoint – playing anything other than a sensitive, thoughtful, heterosexual man. Presenting de Vere as *appearing* to be a homosexual might have been historically accurate in terms of the way people perceived him, and might have been an interesting twist to the character.

But perhaps Emmerich's homosexuality aided him in other ways. The film is exceptional in its ability to imagine a couple – Elizabeth and de Vere -- who have a long term, long distance relationship that is both sexual, romantic, intertwined with power, and (as it is implied by the scheming Cecil) perhaps incestuous. All this is quite scandalous, but what especially alarms people is the idea that aristocrats who spoke beautifully -- and after all, were ancestors of the *present* Queen of England – did awful things. Several reviews have spoken disdainfully of the film's besmirching of Queen Elizabeth I. People also don't like the idea that Shakespeare — whether he was de Vere or the man from Stratford — jumped in and out of bed with lots of women. History is supposed to be picturesque and comforting, and our ancestors are *not* supposed to have been consistently debauched liars.

The good news is that this fine film will satisfy Oxfordians and many others who enjoy a gripping piece of historical fiction. The bad news is that simply because it *is* a gripping, and magnificently constructed fiction, it will anger those who hate Oxfordians. Be prepared for the onslaught. (Or it may just be that this fine film will be consigned to the dust heap, and never thought about or discussed by decent people after its initial release. That would be a shame.)

I am a passionate Oxfordian not only because I believe that all the evidence points to de Vere. I also am titillated by the much greater implications of taking an Oxfordian position. Like it or not, being an Oxfordian means that you are on the side

of those who believe that it is possible that governments were, and perhaps can still be, consistently, profoundly, and secretly corrupt. It also means that you are willing to look unflinchingly at the notion that people are sometimes bizarre and lecherous, sexual creatures – and yet that they still can contribute enormously to culture and history. Whatever we believe about Oxford, he was not happily married to his wife, nor is it likely that he ever slept in a picturesque Stratford cottage. If Oxfordians can get behind a film like this, one that so clearly crystallizes the extremity of commitment that is necessary for them (despite its relatively minor historical missteps) I think they will be doing themselves, and Edward de Vere, an enormous favor.

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Debate: A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres

An Answer to Robert R. Prechter
by Kurt Kreiler
Hamburg, Germany

Mr. Kreiler is author of *Der Mann, der Shakespeare erfand/The Man who Invented Shakespeare* from Insel Verlag, 2009, hardcover, 2011, softcover, in German. In 2005, he published *The Poems of Edward de Vere/Edward de Vere's Gedichte, Deutsch*, from Gebundene Ausgabe.

 hoever wishes to determine the authorship of a literary work must start by meticulously reading the work in question and then conducting an analysis of it in the light of its historic context. Robert R. Prechter claims to come up with the right answer by criticizing existing secondary (albeit questionable) literature on the subject. He doesn't realize that merely disproving the errors of one's predecessors often leads headlong into the next ones.

Let us begin with our own observations.

I. Two Very Different Levels of Literary Quality

Within the anthology, *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, (1573) the novel *The Adventures of Master F.I.* stands out because of its particular literary qualities. On the merits of the skilful narrative, the refined construction and the innovative plot, *The Adventures of Master F.I.* has been most justifiably declared a masterpiece, indeed a milestone, of English literature.

The novelist we are seeking describes love as an “experiment,” he discusses how jealousy can lead to betrayal, how love's passion can lead to physical violence--thereby breaking all the boundaries of convention and going into the realms of the unutterable, the impermissible, even the unthinkable. The dramaturgy of this compartmented composition is nothing less than revolutionary. The author plays the parts of the lover, Master F.I. - the narrator, G.T. — the publisher, H.W. — and the printer, A.B.

The central characters of the novel enter unconditionally into their dangerous play. The heated emotions thus generated put the characters in danger of losing themselves. They go through love, reproach, ecstasy, joy, suspicion, collapse and disillusionment. The author seems to be one of them. He immerses into the different

personalities only to return, with apparent effortless, to himself. Such refined literary devices are only to be found two hundred years later in the works of Choderlos de Laclos.

The volcanic core of the narration (how love leads to alienation) is reflected upon and analyzed at different stages of the cooling down process. Dramatic refinement along with deep psychological insight give the author the hallmark of a true dramatic prose master. The distinctive quality of *The Adventures of Master F.I.* is based on the interaction between the masterful narrative technique with the innovative content. (A fact that neither Bernard M. Ward nor his critic, Robert R. Prechter mention with a single word.) We seek such genius to no avail in the rather straightforward, not to say pedestrian prose that we have come to associate with George Gascoigne. (Consider works such as *A Delicate Diet for daintie mouthde Droonkardes* [1576] or *The Spoil of Antwerp* [1576].)

From these considerations alone, we can assume that Gascoigne did not write the novel in question.

II. To the Difference of Literary Quality Correspond Different Posies

There are also other observations to be considered. In *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, edited by “Meritum petere grave,” the index makes a clear distinction between works that George Gacoigne wrote or translated alone and works that were written by other authors or by other authors in collaboration with George Gascoigne. The index lists the play *Supposes* in the first section, another play, *Jocasta*, in the second section; “*Thirdly*, a pleasant discourse of the adventures of master F.I.,” “*Fourthly* divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen,” “*Fifthly*, certayne devises of master Gascoyne” and “*Lastly*, the dolorous discourse of Dan Bartholmew of Bathe.”¹

George Gascoigne is identified as being the translator of Ariosto and of Euripides right at the beginning: “Englished by George Gascoyne” (*Supposes*) and “translated and digested into Acte by George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmershe” (*Jocasta*).

The authorship of the fifth section is stated in a forceful manner. Not only is the section entitled “certayne devises of master Gascoyne” but with each individual poem, the authorship is restated within the text.

The publisher wrote the following introduction to the fourth chapter: “Now I will ... recite unto you sundry verses by sundry gentlemen, adding nothing of myne owne, but onely a tittle to every Poeme, wherby the cause of writinge the same maye the more evidently appeare: Neyther can I declare unto you who wrote the greatest part of them, for they are unto me but a posie presented out of sundry gardens, neither have I any other names of the flowers, but such short notes as the authors themselves have delivered therby if you can gesse them, it shall no waye offende mee” (Pigman, 216).

We then come to the introduction to the fifth chapter, which contradicts the introduction to the fourth chapter:

“I will now deliver unto you so many more of Master Gascoignes Poems as have come to my hands, who hath never beene dayntie [chary] of his doings, and therefore I conceale not his name: but his word or posie he hath often changed and therefore I will deliver his verses with such sundrie posies as I received them” (Pigman, 263).

It cannot be overlooked that, in the fifth chapter, Gascoigne used posies (epithets, or mottos that were used to tell the reader something about the author) that had not been used in chapters three and four: “Ever or never,” “Haud ictus sapio” (=Not involved, but non-the-less informed), “Attamen ad solitum” (=nevertheless unchanged), and “Sic tuli” (Thus, I bore it).

In the third section (*The Adventures of Master F.I.*) and the fourth (“Divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen”), we find the following posies: “A.B.” (the printer), “H.W.” (the publisher), “G.T.” (the narrator), “F.I.” (the poetic lover) and “Si fortunatus infoelix” (If Fortunate Unhappy), “Spraeta tamen vivunt” (Shunned but still alive), “Ferenda natura” (The nature that must be endured), and “Meritum petere grave” (It is hard to ask for that which one has earned).

From this we clearly see that the third and the fourth sections of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* are marked off from the fifth section (Gascoigne).

III. Stylistic Differences

Furthermore, we find a clear difference in style between “divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen” and “certayne devises of master Gascoyne.” The first excels with a brilliant, fast moving, meaningful yet still lyrical dialogue of the logic of contradictions. Gascoigne’s poems, on the other hand, reveal a realistic brave spirit; a down-to-earth philosophy. They teach their moral lessons with a pleasing simplicity, plodding on like a cart horse.²

IV. Gascoigne’s Own Statement

Who is behind the name “Master F.I.”? This not an unimportant question. The conservative publishers Cunliffe (1907), Prouty (1942) and Pigman (2000) stick to Gascoigne’s statement in the “Posies” (the second modified version of “Flowres” from April-May 1575), assuring us that “Master F.I.” is a certain “Ferdinando Jeronimi” - and not “Master Fortunatus Infoelix,” as we can assume from the first edition. Had they been consequent, Cunliffe, Prouty and Pigman would not have published Ferdinando Jeronimi’s story and called it “a novel by George Gascoigne,” for in his foreword to “The Poesies,” the soldier-poet denies authorship and claims to have merely translated the Italian original (Pigman 362-3).

I understande that sundrie well disposed mindes have taken offence at certaine wanton wordes and sentences passed in the fable of *Ferdinando Jeronimi*, and the Ladie *Elinora de Valasco*, the which in the first edition was termed *The adventures*

of master F. J. And that also therewith some busie conjectures have presumed to thinke that the same was indeed written to the scandalizing of some worthie personages, whom they woulde seeme therby to know. Surely (right reverend) I smile to see the simplicitie of such, who being indeed starke staring blind, would yet seeme to see farre into a milstone... But for the better satisfying of all men universally, I doe here protest unto you (reverend) even by the hope of my salvation, that there is no living creature touched or to be noted therby. And for the rest you shall find it now in this second imprinting so turquened and turned, so densed from all unclenly wordes, and so purged from the humor of inhumanitie, as percase you woulde not judge that it was the same tale.

The author of this foreword is obviously trying to pull the wool over our eyes. He now claims that the novel was written by a certain “Bartello”— who never existed. Gascoigne is trying to quieten disgruntled voices who claim that “The Adventures of Master F.I.” is, in truth, a novel about the actual private lives of living persons. The invention of the author “Bartello” was perhaps a good idea, the name being a play on the name of the Italian novelist “Matteo Bandello” who was featured in William Painter’s anthology *Palace of Pleasure* (1567) and in Geoffrey Fenton’s collection *Certain Tragical Discourses* (1567).

But “Ferdinano Jeronimi” is simply pure fiction. Many clues point to the fact that “Master Fortunatus Infoelix” is behind “Master F.I.” Here are three of them.

First, Master F.I. plays the role of the unfortunate, blessed lover in “The Adventures” (and does credit to his name); initially, the love of Mistress Elynor makes him happy but then he is plunged into unhappiness when he confesses his jealousy to her and she rejects him for it. Second, in the poems of “Si fortunatus infoelix” (in the fourth section) we clearly see the literary style and the mentality of “Master F.I.”— rich in concetti (extended metaphors), daring in the presentation, continuing the lamentations of the rejected lover. Third, the common subject matter that we find both in “The Adventures” and in “Divers excellent devises” also lends a certain clarity to the situation; for instance, Master “Meritum petere grave” (he is one of the “sundry gentlemen” of the fourth section and the editor of the *Flowres*) and Master Fortunatus Infoelix both speak of the object of their love as “Bathseba.”

In other words, in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, the name “Master F.I.” has, once and for all, been decoded.

Prechter points out that “Si fortunatus infoelix” and “Meritum petere grave” both occasionally slip in to the role of George Gascoigne, when writing — and he comes to the conclusion that Gascoigne, “S.f.i.” and “M.p.g.” are one and the same person. However, he overlooks the fact that “G.G.” appears at a royal banquet. A royal banquet was unthinkable for the soldier-poet George Gascoigne in 1572 or 1573. Moreover, later the author performs a brilliant conjuring trick with letters and word-plays. “Of all the letters in the crists crosse rowe,/I feare, my sweete, thou lovest B. the best”— hardly to be expected from Gascoigne, but with amazing parallels with Shakespeare’s *Richard III* (1.1) Clarence says: “He hearkens after prophecies and dreams/ And from the cross-row plucks the letter G,/ And says a wizzard told him that by G/ His issue

disinherited should be,/ And, for my name of George begins with G,/ It follows in his thought that I am he.”

In both *The Adventures of Master F.I.* and the “divers excellent devises” we find that dozens of role-swapping games are featured. (A speciality of the Earl of Oxford and his twin brother William Shake-speare). Prechter ignores the fact that both “H.W.,” the “publisher” of “The Adventures,” “Spraeta tamen vivunt” and “Meritum petere grave” write in the role of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. “H.W.” ends the foreword with the words: “From my lodging near the Strand the xx. of January, 1572.” (This is in keeping with Edward de Vere’s address at that time. Towards the end of 1571 he took up residence in a story of the Savoy, directly opposite Lord Burghley’s house on the Strand.) “Spraeta tamen vivunt,” “shunned but still surviving,” brings a brilliant wordplay put into the mouth of a lady: “The lustie *Ver*, which whilome might exchange/ My grieffe to joy, and then my joyes encrease,/ Springs now elsewhere.” (Surely everybody can recognize the amorous “Vere” from Oxford’s Echo-poem and Thomas Nashe’s “lusty *Ver*” from *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*.) Thirdly, the last poem from “Meritum petere grave” in “Divers excellent devises” has the title: “The absent lover (in ciphers) deciphering his name.” Bernard M. Ward has deciphered this puzzle and found the name of the author to be Edward de Vere. (Up to now, nobody has proven Ward’s interpretation to be incorrect.)

The logical conclusion: either Gascoigne wrote in the role of the Earl or the Earl wrote in the role of Gascoigne. That is why we ask ourselves once more; who is who, in this elegant game of hide and seek? The following considerations will provide the solution, even to the most casual reader.

V. A Comparison of Some Poems

My lucke is losse.

Surprisingly enough, no Oxfordians have paid much attention to the six poems, notable for their daring and innovation, from the pen of “My lucke is losse” in *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1578). One of these six is the opening poem, a translation of “Cur mundus militat sub vana gloria” from the Middle Ages:

Why dooth eache state apply it selfe to worldly praise? ...
Where is that Caesar nowe, whose high renowned fame,
Of sundry conquestes wonne, throughout the world did sound?
Or *Dives* [=Crassus] riche in store, and rich in richely name ...
O foode of filthy woorme, o lumpe of lothsome clay...

(Compare with *Hamlet* 5.1: “Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam (whereto he was converted) might they not stop a beer barrel? Imperious Caesar, dead and turn’d to clay,/ Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.”)

There is also a wonderful poem in the same vein, inspired by a theme from

Timon of Athens: “Even as the Raven, the Crow, and greedy Kite,/ do swarming flock, where barren corps doeth fall.” Or another brilliant literary firework: “If fortune may enforce the careful hart to cry.”

Couldn't we expect the unique quality of this poem to attract more attention? The answer is: “No,” simply because an important, and obvious clue has been overlooked for years. Surely it's as clear as the sun in the sky that “My Lucke is losse” is the English variation of “Master Fortunatus Infoelix” (=THE FORTUNATE UNHAPPY from *Twelfth Night*).

However, perhaps some attention should be given to the following fact: In Humphrey Coningsby's collection of handwritten poems (BL, MS Harl.7392, fol. 19) the poem “If fortune may enforce” is ascribed to “RO. LOO.” and (written in a woman's handwriting) “Balle.” The cipher “Ball(e)” identifies the Earl of Oxford as being the author of five other poems in MS Harl.7392, also signed “Ball.”

1. My mind to me a kingdom is ³
2. When griping griefs the heart would wound (see *Romeo and Juliet*, IV/5) ⁴
3. Who taught thee first to sigh, alas, my heart? (Bodleian, MS Rawl. Poet. 85: “Earlle of Oxenforde”)
4. Though I seem strange, sweet friend, be thou not so (Folger V.a. 89: “Vavaser”)
5. Short is my rest, whose toil is overlong (also in *Phoenix Nest*, 74)

The abbreviation “RO. LOO.,” comparable to “Lo. Ox.” from MS Harl. 7392, fol. 18v, must be read as “Robert Lord Oxenford.” As there is no Robert Oxenford and because the word “Balle” emphasises the identification, we can safely assume that Edward Oxenford is meant.

In other words; Humphrey Coningsby's assignation identifies “My lucke is losse” = “Master Fortunatus Infoelix” as Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

VI. Foelix Infortunatus Versus Fortunatus Infoelix

Gabriel Harvey (1550-1630), the epitome of the inexperienced theorist, Cambridge graduate, friend of Edmund Spenser, was determined to become the English Cicero. Harvey made a note on “Fortunatus Infoelix” “in his copy of the “Posies” (just after the introductory poem to “Jocasta” to be precise): “lately the posie of Sir Christopher Hatton.” This information was not correct, but is important.

Harvey's note (written in 1577 or 1578) was a reaction to the sudden rise to nobility of Christopher Hatton Esquire, Gentleman of the Privy Chamber and Captain of the Guard. He was named as Vice-Chamberlain in 1577, shortly thereafter he was knighted. The posy (or motto) of Sir Christopher Hatton was not, however, “Fortunatus Infoelix,” it was “Foelix Infortunatus” (unfortunately situated but happy).

In a speech to the Queen and her Lords at Audley End in July 1578, Gabriel Harvey corrected this mistake. In his “Gratulationes Valdinenses,” he praises the aristocrats: Leicester, Burghley, Oxford, Hatton und Sidney. ⁵ The remarks addressed

to the Earl of Oxford contained the famous advice that he could serve his country better with his sword than with his pen. (Oxford is a “de Vere” and as such a pillar of truth and reliability, nothing and nobody is more truthful than he. The name alone defines him as a conqueror and a shining example to his countrymen. He is England’s Achilles, etc.)

When addressing the Knight, Harvey takes the marvelous opportunity to reveal the identities of “Foelix Infortunatus” (the happy child of ill fortune= Christopher Hatton) and “Fortunatus Infoelix” (the unhappy child of good fortune =Alexander the Great =Edward de Vere).

Harvey’s actual words were: “One is happy though not smiled upon by fortune—the other is not happy although he enjoys good fortune.” The one—Hatton! —is a philosopher, although not always happy; “he is his own foundation, he fears no downfall because he has a clear oversight of the world, both the good, the bad and the strange.” The other, a spoiled Alexander the Great, a man to whom success merely bought unhappiness. “Alexander the Great was favoured by fortune yet he was still unhappy. Why?”

No doubt about it, with “Fortunatus Infoelix” Harvey is targeting the Earl of Oxford, and therewith, for his part, he emphasizes the equation; “Master Fortunatus Infoelix” = Oxford.

Oxford’s ironic inversion reference to Hatton’s motto, “F.I.” may well be understood as a sarcastic jab between rivals, but there is no reason to interpret further meaning into the matter. There is no cause to say that Hatton was the inspiration for “Master F.I.,” or for Mistress Elynor’s midget secretary. The author draws his inspiration from true events but he doesn’t relate the said events, he uses them as a basis for his story. He plays a game with reality, but it remains a game. A lot of famous stories would have lost their fascination if the author had stuck rigidly to actual events.

VII. A Comparison of Poems (2)

There are a lot of similarities between the poems written under the name: “Master F.I.” (=Si fortunatus infoelix =Spraeta tamen vivunt =Ferenda natura =Meritum petere grave) and those which the young Earl of Oxford wrote under his own name. Anyone who reads “This tenth of March when *Aries* receyv’d” (*Flowres*, ed. Pigman, p.237) by “Spraeta tamen vivunt” and then compares it with “Sitting alone upon my thought” by the Earl of Oxford, will be convinced that they are both from the same author. In this case, the basic composition, the role-swapping games, the setting, the monologue that was spied upon and the humorous résumé are astonishingly similar. Comparing the two poems, verse for verse, will surely dissipate any doubts:

This tenth of March when *Aries* receyv’d,
Dan Phoebus rayes, into his horned head...
I crost the Thames, to take the cherefull ayre,
In open feeldes, the weather was so fayre.
And as I rowed, fast by the further shore,

I heard a voyce, which seemed to lament...

I sawe a Dame, who sat in weary wise
*Sitting alone upon my thought in melancholy mood,
 In sight of sea, and at my back an ancient hoary wood,
 I saw a fair young lady come, her secret fears to wail,
 Clad all in colour of a nun, and covered with a veil;*

With scalding sighes, she uttred all hir mone,
 The ruefull teares, downe rayned from hir eyes:
 Hir lowring head, full lowe on hand she layde,
 On knee hir arme: and thus this Lady sayde.

*Three times, with her soft hand, full hard on her left side she knocks,
 And sigh'd so sore as might have mov'd some pity in the rocks;
 From sighs and shedding amber tears into sweet song she brake,
 When thus the echo answered her to every word she spake...*

Alas (quod she) behold eche pleasaunt greene,
 Will now renew his sommers livery,
 The fragrant flowers, which have not long bene seene,
 Will flourish now, (ere long) in bravery ...
 The lustie Ver, which whilome might exchange
 My grieffe to joy, and then my joyes encrease,
 Springs now elsewhere, and showes to me but strange,
 My winters woe, therefore can never cease:
 In other coasts, his sunne full cleare doth shine,
 And comforts lends to ev'ry mould but mine.

*Oh heavens ! who was the first that bred in me this fever ? Vere
 Who was the first that gave the wound whose fear I wear for ever? Vere.
 What tyrant, Cupid, to my harm usurps thy golden quiver ? Vere.
 What sight first caught this heart and can from bondage it deliver ? Vere.*

What plant can spring, that feeles no force of Ver?
 What floure can flourish, where no sunne doth shine?

*Yet who doth most adore this sight, oh hollow caves tell true? You.
 What nymph deserves his liking best, yet doth in sorrow rue ? You.*

Needes must I fall, I fade both roote and rinde,
 My branches bowe at blast of ev'ry winde.
 This sayde: shee cast a glance and spied my face,
 By sight whereof, Lord how she chaunged hew?

*May I his favour match with love, if he my love will try? Ay.
May I requite his birth with faith? Then faithful will I die? Ay.*

Now Ladies you, that know by whom I sing,
And feele the winter, of such frozen wills:
Of curtesie, yet cause this noble spring,
To send his sunne, above the highest hilles:
And so to shyne, uppon hir fading sprayes,
Which now in woe, do wyther thus alwayes.

*And I, that knew this lady well,
Said, Lord how great a miracle,
To her how Echo told the truth,
As true as Phoebus' oracle.*

There are some obvious parallels between Master F.I. and William Shakespeare. For example, when Master F.I. is blinded by the unique beauty of his mistress, he writes the following lines for her:

The windowes of mine eies, are glaz'd with such delight,
As eche new face seemes full of faultes, that blaseth in my sight
(*Flowres*, 176)

In Sonnet 24, "Shake-Speare" goes a step further:

Mine eye hath played the painter and hath steeled,
Thy beauty's form in table of my heart,
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,
And perspective it is best painter's art.
For through the painter must you see his skill,
To find where your true image pictured lies,
Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,
That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes.

In Master F.I.'s poem the delightful "glazing" of the eyes causes them to see better. Shakespeare has intensified this same "glaze" and sees things through the sharper eyes of a lover. In the poems of "Si fortunatus infoelix" the willingness of lovers to suffer is important: therefore the eyes play a major role, a glance can invite, or repel, the eyes that seduce so irresistibly can also refuse — cruelly and explicitly.

Looke where she likes, for lo this looke was cast,
Not for my love, but even to see my last. (*Flowres*, 227)

So looke, so lack, for in these toyes thus tost,
My lookes thy love, thy lookes my life have lost. (*Flowres*, 227)

Then though thy lookes should cause me for to dye,
Neeedes must I looke, bicause I live therby. (*Flowres*, 230)

Shakespeare also shows a certain fascination for the sufferings that the battle of love brings. The weapons of love are the eyes glances. Addressing the “Dark Lady” in Sonnet 139, he says:

Wound me not with thine eye but with thy tongue,
Use power with power, and slay me not by art...
Let me excuse thee, ah my love well knows,
Her pretty looks have been mine enemies,
And therefore from my face she turns my foes,
That they elsewhere might dart their injuries.

Oxford alias “Meritum petere grave” writes:

Such thoughts I have, and when I thinke on thee,
My thoughts are there, whereas my bones would bee.
(*Flowres*, 254)

At the end of Valentine’s poem in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (3.1) “My thoughts do harbour with my Sylvia nightly,” we find:

I curse myself, for they [my thoughts] are sent by me,
That they should harbour where their lord should be.

“Fortunatus Infoelix” contributes a poem, in sonnet form, as a prologue to Gascoigne’s translation of “Jocasta.”

The argument of the Tragedie.

To scourge the cryme of wicked Laius,
And wrecke the foule Incest of Oedipus,
The angry Gods styrred up theyr sonnes, by strife
With blades embrewed to reave eache others life:
The wife, the mother, and the concubyne,
(Whose fearefull hart foredrad theyr fatall fine,)
Hir sonnes thus dead, disdayneth longer lyfe,
And slayes himself with selfsame bloudy knyfe:
The daughter she, surprisde with childish dreade
(That durst not dye) a lothsome lyfe doth leade,
Yet rather chose to guide hir banisht sire,

Than cruell Creon should have his desire.
Creon is King, the type of Tyranny,
And Oedipus, myrrour of misery.

Fortunatus Infoelix. (Flowres, 59)

In all of the English literature of the sixteenth century we can only find one other prologue in sonnet form, and that is in *Romeo and Juliet*:

The Prologue. Chorus

Two households both alike in dignity

(In fair Verona, where we lay our scene)

From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life,
Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, naught could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

With that, we rest our case for Oxford's sole authorship of *The Adventures of Master F.I.* and "Divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen" (1573).

VIII. Conclusion

To summarize, let us devote close attention to Prechter's arguments.

Prechter doesn't realize that Oxford and Gascoigne are deliberately trying to confuse us by changing roles. Oxford (alias "Si fortunatus infoelix," alias "Meritum petere grave") speaks twice as "G.G." Gascoigne, for his part, adopts a line from the poem "Ferenda Natura": "Myne eyes so blinded were, (good people marke my tale)/ That once I song, I *Bathe in Blisse*, amide my weary *Bale*" (=Amid my *Bale* I bath in blisse). What Prechter overlooks is that both poets are referring to a line from Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale": "His herte bathed in a bath of utter blisse." This often-used quote has its own special characteristic. The story is told by the Wife of Bath but it is actually about a Knight whose life is in danger. He is given a year to find out what women really want, more than anything else. Shortly before his time is up an ugly old woman revealed the answer to him: What women really want most is sovereignty over their husbands. The Knight has to marry the old lady because she saved his life. In their marriage bed, the knight confesses that he is unhappy because she is ugly

and low-born. She tells him that he can choose between her being ugly and faithful or beautiful and unfaithful. He leaves the choice up to her; pleased with the mastery of her husband, she becomes *fair and good* (young, beautiful and faithful). “And whan the knyght saugh verrailly al this,/ That she so fair was, and so yong therto,/For joye he hente hire in his armes two./ *His herte bathed in a bath of blisse.*” The two authors of *Flowres* use this story in reference to a particular, beloved woman.

Oxford doesn't name the lady, but Gascoigne — alias Dan Bartholmew of Bath — gives her the name of “Ferenda Natura.” This mysterious lady is none other than Queen Elizabeth. (See Stephen Hamrick: *The Catholic imaginary and the cults of Elizabeth, 1558-1582*). The phrase “Amid my Bale I bath in blisse” in connection with Queen Elizabeth means that under her rule both men have managed to find a woman who is both beautiful and faithful: the Queen herself. The first homage to the faithful lady was written by Gascoigne's co-author — the Earl of Oxford — under the pseudonym “Ferenda Natura”!

Amid my Bale I bath in blisse
 I swim in heaven, I sink in hell:
 I find amends for every misse,
 And yit my moane no tongue can tell.
 I live and love, what wold you more:
 As never lover liv'd before...
 The which to thee (deare wenche) I write,
 That know'st my mirth, but not my moane:
 I praye God graunt thee deepe delight,
 To live in joyes when I am gone.
 I cannot live, it wyll not bee:
 I dye to thinke to part from thee.

(*Flowres*, 243)

The second bath-in-bliss poem was also written by Edward de Vere, this time signed with “Meritum petere grave.”

If ever man yit found the Bath of perfect blisse,
 Then swim I now amid the Sea where nought but pleasure is.
 I love and am beloved (without vaunt be it told)
 Of one more fayre than shee of *Grece* for whom proud *Troy* was sold.
 As bountifull and good as *Cleopatra* Queene:
 As constant as *Penelope* unto hir make was seene.
 What would you more? my pen unable is to write
 The least desart that seemes to shine within this worthy wight.
 So that for now I cease, with hands held up on hye,
 And crave of God that when I change, I may be forst to dye.

(*Flowres*, 247)

Soon Gascoigne retracts the passionate declarations, claiming Oxford's poems for his own. As an unsuccessful courtier he complains about "Ferenda's" vicissitude:

Myne eyes so blinded were, (good people marke my tale)
That once I song, I *Bathe in Blisse*, amidde my weary *Bale*.
(*Flowres*, 274)

He also says:

Lo thus I lye, and restlesse rest in Bathe,
Whereas I bathe not now in blisse pardie,
But boyle in bale and skamble thus in skathe,
Bycause I thinke on thine unconstancie...
("Dan Bartholmewes Dolorous discourses"; *Flowres*, 342)

That means: Both authors use the name "Ferenda Natura"; Oxford uses it as his posy and Gascoigne uses it as a name for the powerful object of his love; Queen Elizabeth.⁶ Gascoigne doesn't have the slightest intention of using the name "Ferenda Natura" as his motto, (even if Prechter suggests that he did). Instead of stealing the motto, he usurps the two "bath-in-bliss" poems from his co-author when he writes: "That once I song, I *Bathe in Blisse*, amidde my weary *Bale*" (*Recantation*)—and on another occasion—in the "Posies" (1575) - he signs Oxford's poem: "If ever man yit found the Bath of perfect blisse" with his own motto: "Fato non Fortuna" (The substitution of mottos would have been pointless if "Meritum petere grave" and "Fato non Fortuna" were the same person.)

The two authors bounce ideas off each other at whim—this is too much for Prechter, who likes to work with labels and etiquettes rather than form and content. Had he paid more attention to the comments of Dan Bartholemew (=Gascoigne) he may well have come across this expression of gratitude which Gascoigne addressed to his co-author and publisher of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* (*Flowres*, ed. Pigman, p.397):

Syr *Salamanke* to thee this tale is tolde,
Peruse it well and call unto thy minde,
The pleasaunt place where thou dydst first behold
The rewfull rymes: remember how the *Winde*
Dyd calmelye blowe: and made me leave behinde
Some leaves thereof: whiles I sate reading styll,
And thou then seemdst to hearken with good wyll.
Beleeve me nowe, hadst thou not seemd to lyke
The wofull wordes of *Bartholmews* discourse,
They should have lyen styll drowned in the dyke,
Lyke *Sybylls* leaves which flye with lytle force,
But for thou seemdst to take therein remorse,
I sought againe in corners of my brest,

To finde them out and place them with the rest.

Such skylle thou hast to make me (foole) beleeve,
 My babies are as brave as any bee,
 Well since it is so, let it never grieve
 Thy friendly minde this worthlesse verse to see
 In print at last: for trust thou unto mee,
 Thine onely prayse dyd make me venture forth,
 To set in shewe a thing so litle worth.

*Thus unto thee these leaves I recommend,
 To reade, to raze, to view, and to correct,
 Vouchsafe (my friend) therein for to amend
 That is amisse, remember that our sect,
 Is sure to bee with floutes alwayes infect.
 And since most mockes wyll light uppon my muse,
 Vouchsafe (my friend) hir faultes for to peruse.*

The conclusion that we reach is diametrically opposed to that reached by Prechter: Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, whose work came to be published under the name of “William Shakespeare,” is the author of the novel: *The Adventures of Master F.I.* including the introduction from the printer and publisher. Furthermore, in “Divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen” in the anthology, *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* (1573), Oxford, alias “Meritum petere grave,” played an epic game of hide and seek, with the soldier-poet George Gascoigne as his accessory, and then, edited *Flowres* as a collection of his own and Gascoigne’s work.



Endnotes

- ¹ *First* an excellent and pleasante Comedie entituled *Supposes*. [*Flowres* 1573, pp. 1-70]; *bThe second*, the wofull tragedie of Iocasta, conteining the vtter subuersion of Thebes. [pp. 71-164]; *Thirdly*, a pleasant discourse of the adventures of master. F. J. conteyning excellent letters, sonets, Lays, Ballets, Rondlets, Verlayes and verses. [pp. 201-294]; *Fourthly*, diuers excellent deuises of sundry Gentlemen. [pp. 294-343]; *Fiftly*, certayne deuises of master Gascoyne, conteyning his anothamie, his arrignemente, his prayse of mistresse Bridges now Lady Sands, the his praise of Zouch late the Lady Grey of wilton. [pp. 344-411]
 Gascoyne his passion.
 Gascoines libell of diuorce.
 Gascoines praise of his mistresse

Gascoines Lullabie.

Gascoines Recantation.

Gascoynes fīue notable deuises upon fīue sundry theames giuen to him by fīue sundry Gentlemen in fīue sundry meeters.

Gascoines gloze upon *Dominus ijs opus haber*.

Gascoines good morrowe.

Gascoines good night.

Gascoines counsell to Douglas Diue.

Gascoines counsell to Bartholomew wythipole.

Gascoines Epitaph upo Captaine Bourcher lately slayne in Zelande, called the tale of the stone.

Gascoines deuise of a maske.

Gascoines wodmanship.

Gascoines gardening.

Gascoines last voyage into Holland in Marche. 1572.

Lastly the dolorous discourse of Dan Bartholmew of Bathe, wherin is conteyned his triumphes, his discourse of love, his extreme passion, his libell of request to Care, his last will and testament, his farewel. [pp. 412-448]

Last of all the reporter.

² See Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, *Fortunatus im Unglück. The Auentiuren of Master F.I.*, ed. Kurt Kreiler. Frankfurt/M. 2006. Also, Kurt Kreiler, *Der Mann, der Shakespeare erfand. Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford*. Frankfurt/M. 2009

³ See Steven W. May, "The Authorship of 'My Mind to me a Kingdom is,'" *Review of English Studies*, New Series, Vol. 26, Nov. 1975. May attributes the poem to Oxford.

⁴**Peter.** I will dry-beat you with an iron wit, and put up my iron dagger. Answer me like men.

(he sings)

When griping griefs the heart doth wound,

And doleful dumps the mind oppress,

Then music with her silver sound –

Why 'silver sound'? Why 'music with her silver sound'?

What say you, Simon Catling?

(*Romeo and Juliet*, IV.5)

Only in the first edition of *The Paradies of Dainty Devices* is the poem "When griping griefs" mistakenly ascribed to the poet, Richard Edwards (1523-1566); in all of the following nine editions, the poem remains anonymous.

⁵ Gabriel Harvey, *Gratulationes Valdinenses*. London 1578. See: *Gratulationes Valdinenses* of Gabriel Harvey, ed. by Thomas Hugh Jameson (1938)

⁶ The politician and poet, Sir Walter Raleigh wrote a continuation with an amusing poem to "Ferenda Natura" (MS. Harl. 7392, fol. 22):

Fain would I, but I dare not;
I dare, and yet I may not;
I may, although I care not,
for pleasure when I play not.
You laugh because you like not;
I jest whenas I joy not;
You pierce, although you strike not;
I strike and yet annoy not ...

Lenvoy

If sweet from sour might any way remove,
what joy, what hap, what heaven were like love.



Robert Prechter Responds

I'd like to briefly respond to several points made by Kurt Kreiler in his criticism of my article, "Hundredth Sundrie Flowres Revisited: Was Oxford Really Involved?" published in *Brief Chronicles II* (2010).

Kreiler argues that "the masterful narrative technique with the innovative content" of *The Adventures of Master F.I.* are strikes against Gascoigne's authorship of the story. In my view, (1) *F.I.* was indeed innovative, but this is not a strike against Gascoigne, several of whose efforts were innovative; (2) the narrative technique is no more "masterful" than anything else Gascoigne wrote; (3) Ward himself noted the similarities between *F.I.* and Gascoigne's *Dan Bartholomew*; (4) I noted in my paper, "The tedious opening paragraph of Gascoigne's *The Glasse of Government* (1575) is perfectly compatible with his authorship of *F.I.*"

Kreiler implies that we must conclude that the narrative is therefore Oxford's. But (1) Oxford, either as himself or Shakespeare, produced no prose fiction; (2) *F.I.* is below the standard of Oxford's prose writing of the time, per his introduction to Thomas Bedingfield's *Cardanus Comforte* in 1573; (3) Kreiler does not show that the prose in *F.I.* is in fact *Oxford's* as opposed to Gascoigne's or someone else's.

Kreiler reiterates that the fourth section of *Flowres* claims authorship by diverse poets, and that there are various mottoes attached to poems in the third, fourth and fifth sections, arguing that "from this we see clearly that the third and the fourth sections of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* were not solely written by the author of the fifth section (Gascoigne)." But Gascoigne in his follow-up book, *The Posies of George Gascoigne*, states that the earlier volume is his. We cannot take both books' claims at face value, because only one can be correct. Kreiler admits of the first book, that the fifth chapter in effect contradicts the introduction to the fourth chapter. But nothing in *Posies* is self-contradictory. If consistency prompts a conclusion, then we must side with Gascoigne's comments in *Posies*. But there are many more bases for a decision on the issue, as detailed in my article.

Kreiler says, "Furthermore, we find a clear difference in style between 'divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen' and 'certayne devises of master Gascoyne.'" I don't see any substantive differences, Kreiler does not make a case to that effect.

He states that "Master F.I." and "Si fortunatus infoelix" are the same individual, so F.I.'s identity "has, once and for all, been decoded." Elizabethan printers used *I* for

J, and “F.I.” here means “F.J.,” according to both the “Freeman Jones” name cited originally in *Flowres* and the “Ferdinando Jeronimi” name cited later in *Posies*. Yet *even if* F.I. had indicated the same person (real or imaginary) as “Si fortunatus infoelix,” the connection wouldn’t much matter, and I don’t see any “code.”

I do like his connecting one of the lines in a poem from *Flowres* featuring “G.G.” to lines from *Richard III*; each excerpt speaks of “G” and uses nearly the same term in “crists crosse rowe” vs. “cross-row.” But other aspects of the poem—the elevation of God and Gold, and its mincing cuteness, for example—are contrary to Oxford’s usual manner. A brief echo in Shakespeare, unfortunately, is not definitive. As noted in my article, Oxfordian scholars have had difficulty telling Oxford’s and Gascoigne’s verse apart, no doubt partly because Oxford and Gascoigne read each other’s work. Boas, for example, said that Shakespeare is much “indebted...to Gascoigne’s *Supposes*” for *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which “certain features of the under-plot...have their exact parallel in *Supposes*.” (Boas, *The Taming of a Shrew*, 1908, p.xxi) So, a single parallel instance of language no more argues that Oxford wrote the “G.G.” poem than that he wrote *Supposes*. Moreover, it still seems that “G.G.” is more likely to be George Gascoigne than anyone else, particularly since these initials appear in a book in which the only names cited are George Gascoigne, Francis Kinwelmarsh and “Chr. Yelverton.” But Kreiler avers: “The logical conclusion: either Gascoigne wrote in the role of the Earl or the Earl wrote in the role of Gascoigne,” which, to begin with, is a vague conclusion. But there is another valid option, which is that one of them—who was well versed in the other’s work—happened to write a line that sounds like a line by the other.

Kreiler also shows how a few lines from some of the other poems in *Flowres* are like some lines from Shakespeare. Such citations are not lost on me. They seem to confirm at least that one writer read the other. But let’s face it: Out of *hundreds* of pages by acquainted poets with similar sensibilities, we should be stunned if we didn’t find any like lines. Nevertheless, if one were to do a *thorough* analysis of this type, linking certain poems to Oxford’s writing and *contrasting* them to Gascoigne’s accepted writing, it might constitute a good case that Oxford is behind some poems in *Flowres*. But as I pointed out, some of the lines in these poems also match others from Gascoigne’s accepted work and/or are contrary to Oxford’s usual manner, so I doubt such an exercise would produce the conclusion at which he drives.

Kreiler mentions the use of *Ver*, but I covered that.

He repeats the assertion that Ward “deciphered” an acrostic in one poem to read “Edward de Vere,” but I carefully countered that claim. He says, “Up to now, nobody has proven Ward’s interpretation to be incorrect,” but I also cited a paper to that effect by Genevieve Ambrose from 1927.

He credits the “My Lucke is losse” poems from *Paradyse of Dainty Devises* to Oxford and states that “‘My Lucke is losse’ is the English variation of ‘Master Fortunatus Infoelix’ (=THE FORTUNATE UNHAPPY from *Twelfth Night*).” I am not convinced that his conclusion follows, and if it did, I am not sure it would constitute any evidence with respect to the authorship of Gascoigne’s book.

Some of his Kreiler’s arguments utterly escape me, for example, this paragraph:

In Humphrey Coningsby's collection of handwritten poems (BL, MS Harl.7392, fol. 19) the poem "If fortune may enforce" is ascribed to "RO. LOO." and (written in a woman's handwriting) "Balle." The cipher "Ball(e)" identifies the Earl of Oxford as being the author of five other poems in MS Harl.7392, also signed "Ball". ...The abbreviation "RO. LOO.," comparable to "Lo. Ox." from MS Harl. 7392, fol. 18v, must be read as "Robert Lord Oxenford." As there is no Robert Oxenford and because the word "Balle" emphasises the identification, we can safely assume that Edward Oxenford is meant. In other words; Humphrey Coningsby's assignation identifies "My lucke is losse" = "Master Fortunatus Infoelix" as Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

His statement that Harvey's 1578 speech calls Oxford one who is fortunate but unhappy might provide a wisp of information supporting the case that Oxford is somehow behind the "Si Fortunatus Infoelix" poems in Gascoigne's book. But the contra-indications listed in my paper trump this far-removed datum. Regardless, the Flowres-Oxford myth holds that the posy refers to *Christopher Hatton*, which I showed to be highly unlikely, and Kreiler seems to agree with that conclusion.

Kreiler prints the poem "This tenth of March" from the *Spreta tamen vivunt* series in Gascoigne's book next to Oxford's "Sitting Alone" poem. As already noted in my paper, this is "Perhaps the poem in *Flowres* most suggestive of Oxford's composition." I ultimately argued against that assignment for five particular reasons, and I repeat that the two authors probably read and drew from each other, possibly making Gascoigne's poem a model for Oxford's, or vice versa. Nevertheless, even if (repeat, *if*) one were able to confirm that one or more of Oxford's poems ended up in Gascoigne's book, it would not follow that Oxford even knew his poems were being published, that *F.I.* was scandalous, that Oxford is *F.I.*, that he wrote *F.I.*, published *Flowres*, did so clandestinely, hid his name in an acrostic, hated Christopher Hatton, sought to embarrass Hatton, demanded a coverup, or that Hatton hated Oxford, or that there is truth to any of the other baggage that Ward's myth carries with it.

He charges, "Prechter doesn't realize that Oxford and Gascoigne deliberately try to confuse us by changing roles." He's right; I definitely do not realize this. In a comment worthy of Ward's claim about the supposed dual authorship of Gascoigne's matching "rain shower" comments, Kreiler says, "What Prechter overlooks is that both men are referring to a line that Chaucer wrote in "The Wife of Bath's Tale.'" But doesn't it make more sense that one man would refer to the same story? Especially if that man claimed Chaucer as his main influence, as Gascoigne did? Also, if that man's name is the only one connected to the publication under scrutiny?

He ascribes a poem to Oxford beginning thus:

Amid my Bale I bath in blisse
I swim in heaven, I sink in hell:

I find amends for every misse,
And yit my moane no tongue can tell.

However, we have no evidence that Oxford wrote sing-song verse in tetrameter, whereas Gascoigne did. Moreover, as Kreiler admits, Gascoigne outright claimed the poem, saying, “once I song, I *Bathe in Blisse*, amide my weary *Bale*.” Consider also: There are four pairings of *bathe* and *blisse* in Gascoigne’s book. Wouldn’t a reader conclude that the poet was fond of this pairing? But rather than ascribe all references to “bathe in blisse” to one writer, Kreiler concludes that two authors are involved, that Gascoigne (for no stated reason) in two cases is “claiming Oxford’s poems for his own,” and that Gascoigne later in *Posies* inexplicably “signs Oxford’s poem...with his own motto: ‘Fato non Fortuna.’” To make his scenario work, he must further assert, “Both authors use the name ‘Ferenda Natura’; Oxford uses it as his posy and Gascoigne uses it as a name for the powerful object of his love; Queen Elizabeth.” Oxford had posies? Gascoigne was in love with the Queen? Gascoigne purloined one of Oxford’s poems despite being heroically prolific? Gascoigne and Oxford used the same phrase for different purposes? In one book? With Gascoigne’s name attached? Kreiler’s claims seem to be an exercise in affirming the consequent rather than using Occam’s razor.

Kreiler asserts that Gascoigne’s lines in “Dan Bartholomew” beginning “Syr *Salamanke* to thee this tale is tolde” is an “expression of gratitude that he addressed to his co-author and publisher of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*.” Yet nothing in those lines indicates any co-author or publisher, much less the Earl of Oxford. He makes no case as to why Gascoigne would call Oxford “Syr *Salamanke*.” Granted, there is no proof that the lines are *not* addressed to Oxford, and it would be nice to think that our hero encouraged Gascoigne’s efforts. But even if this were the case, how does Gascoigne’s expression of gratitude become evidence that Oxford—or anyone else—*wrote* part of Gascoigne’s book? If anything, his words indicate precisely the opposite, because in this poem Gascoigne thanks only a *reader*, someone who “dydst first *behold*/The rewoffull rymes,” who “made me *leave behind*/ *Some leaves*,” who praised “*My babies*,” causing him “To *set in shewe* a thing so litle worth.” Gascoigne does ask his friend “to correct” and “to amend/That is amisse,” but there is no indication that the friend did so. Nor does Kreiler therefore argue that said friend simply did some editing, and no one has ever argued that Oxford merely corrected a few of Gascoigne’s lines. The Ward myth is much grander and more nefarious than that. Remember, the story requires that Oxford be a cad who manipulated Gascoigne for despicable purposes. Yet the cited lines, if in fact they did show Gascoigne thanking Oxford, would contradict the whole myth of Oxford’s ill intent and support the case that he was innocent. All ways, Gascoigne’s thank-you lines challenge the Flox myth and even Kreiler’s more limited theory that Oxford wrote part of *Flowres*.

Kreiler asserts of Gascoigne and Oxford, “The two authors bounce ideas off each other at whim— this is too much for a reader such as Prechter who likes to work with labels and etiquettes rather than form and content.” You will find discussions of form and content in my paper, but on one point he is correct: I am indeed unable in this case to discern “two authors” who “bounce ideas off each other at whim.” Form and

content are important, but so is coherence. For the record, I have done extensive work separating co-authors, both real and pseudonymous, from each other in numerous works; an example is my current article on *Willobie His Avis* in this volume of *Brief Chronicles*.

Kreiler ends with this summary: "Oxford, alias 'Meritum petere grave' [yet another posy] played an epic game of hide and seek, with the soldier-poet, George Gascoigne as his accessory." For some reason, followers of Ward's theory don't stop at suggesting that some of the poems in the book are Oxford's; they spin intricate tales of intrigue around it. My hat is off to those who can derive "an epic game of hide and seek" from the pages of *Flowres* and *Posies*.





The Snail's Head Press.

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