The Importance of *Love's Martyr* in the Shakespeare Authorship Question

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One of the most critical years for both Queen Elizabeth I and William Shakespeare was 1601 – so critical, in fact, that either one could have been killed or executed. Historians have well noted this about the queen because of the attempted coup d'état in February by Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, but not about Shakespeare, even though he was linked to it.

Essex and his supporters specifically used Shakespeare's play *The Life and Death of Richard II* on the eve of their February 6 revolt. They evidently believed that the performance of this play, which showed the successful deposition of an English monarch, would help persuade Londoners to support regime change. They were wrong. After the revolt failed, the authorities questioned actor Augustine Phillips of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, the company which performed the play at the Globe Theatre, but not its author. Not questioning the author was strange because before the rebellion, a portion of the play – the deposition scene – was perceived as politically dangerous or seditious. All three printed editions (1597-98) had omitted it, possibly at the order of "Master Warden Man" of the Stationers' Company.[1] More damning for Shakespeare was his well-known admiration for Essex's co-conspirator, Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton. In 1593 and 1594, Shakespeare had dedicated two printed poems to him, poems that became wildly popular. In addition, orthodox scholars believe that Shakespeare had lauded Essex in *Henry V* (5.1), a play they date to circa 1599. For these reasons, the authorities should have, at the very least, questioned Shakespeare.

Evidently to account for this irregularity, a few scholars doubt that the pre-rebellion play was Shakespeare's, but this is unrealistic. Actor Phillips described it as "the play of the deposing and killing of King Richard the second,"[2] which uniquely characterizes Shakespeare's play. Queen Elizabeth, in her post-rebellion chat with William Lambarde, remarked, "I am Richard II. Know ye not that?" Referring to Essex, she added: "He that will forget God, will also forget his benefactor; this tragedy was played forty times in open streets and houses."[3] Shakespeare's play was the only known "tragedy" -- as it is described on the title page of both the first 1597 and second 1598 quartos -- on this subject. Also, Essex liked *Richard II*: Sir Walter Ralegh said so in a 1597 letter, after he and Essex saw a private performance.[4] This is further confirmed by state notes relating to Essex's hearing in 1600 for misconduct in Ireland. Essex was accused of promoting John Hayward's 1599 history of Henry IV, the nobleman responsible for ousting King Richard II, and for repeatedly attending a play on the same subject:

> ... but also the Earl himself being so often at the playing thereof, and with great applause giving countenance to it.[5]

With these facts in mind, Shakespeare's play seems to have been alluded to at Essex and Southampton's treason trial. The prosecuting attorney, Sir Edward Coke, accused the two earls of attempting to capture the queen. Southampton challenged Coke to say what he thought would be done to her if they had. Coke replied, "How long lived King Richard the Second after he was surprised in the same manner?"[6] Furthermore, Essex paraphrased a Shakespeare line during his sentencing when he said, "I owe God a death"; in *Henry IV, Part 1*, Prince Hal said to Falstaff before a battle, "Thou owest God a death" (5.1.126).[7]

The rebellion play was Shakespeare's play, but again one wonders, how did its author escape reproof? This is especially important because the queen admitted that she was behind the political allegory in the play. Elizabeth, in fact, was linked to Richard II through the greater part of her reign, according to historian Lily Campbell.[8] It was because, like Richard, Elizabeth's policies were more influenced by her personal favorites than by her counselors. Citizens made this comparison in private letters, and in print, like the treasonous *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1584). Shakespeare's play illustrates this aspect of Richard's reign, and the fatal result. That the play enjoyed so many performances, that it was printed (albeit without the deposition scene), and that the author was undisturbed by the authorities is beyond miraculous – it implies the queen's tacit approval of the play and its author. The reaction to Hayward's 1599 book, however, was completely opposite. Like Shakespeare's play, Hayward's history was more about Richard II than Henry IV, and included an account of his deposition. It was also tied to Essex because it included a Latin dedicatory epistle to him. That letter was immediately suppressed, and the book's second edition, also printed in 1599, was burned. Hayward was questioned about the book and his connection with Essex. In 1600 he was imprisoned, and was released only after Elizabeth's death in 1603.

The writers and actors of the comedy *The Isle of Dogs*, performed in 1597, are another unfortunate example. The play was immediately deemed seditious; its co-author and actor, Ben Jonson, and two other actors, were jailed and interrogated by

Richard Topcliffe, "chief of the Elizabethan secret police."[9] The play was so offensive to the Crown that all copies were destroyed and the Privy Council ordered the demolition of two theaters (the Curtain and the Theatre), although the order was not carried out. Co-author Thomas Nashe avoided capture by fleeing London just in time, but the authorities raided his residence and seized his papers; he remained a fugitive for about eighteen months. Moreover, not long after Nashe returned to London, Archbishop Whitgift commanded (June 1599) that Nashe's works were to be banned from print and that his remaining books were to be burned.[10] The text of *The Isle of Dogs* no longer exists, but the title provides a tantalizing clue about its subject matter. The Isle of Dogs is a place name for an isthmus. At that time, it was a seedy area that faced Elizabeth's palace at Greenwich. This fact, as noted by Charles Nicholl, and the swift reaction to the play by the highest authorities, could indicate the play satirized the queen or her court. Nicholl also observed that the Northumberland Manuscript (circa 1597-1603), which contained controversial and seditious works, included a fragment of *The Isle of Dogs* as well as Shakespeare's *Richard II*.[11]

Although Shakespeare was only indirectly involved with the Essex Rebellion, his play was part of the plan. At the very least he should have been questioned, arrested, or disciplined. But the queen evidently took no offense towards the author, and her relationship with the Lord Chamberlain's Men remained unchanged – in fact, they performed before her the night before Essex's head was chopped off. That the authorities ignored the Stratford Man, the presumed Shakespeare, after the Essex Rebellion strongly suggests he was not the author of *Richard II*. Besides ample contemporary evidence that "William Shakespeare" was a pen name used by a nobleman,[12] two clues that the play was written at least seven years before its orthodox dating of circa 1595-96 also argue against the Stratford Man's authorship. First, actor Phillips said his company discouraged Essex supporters to have "that play of King Richard" performed because it was "so old & so long out of use that they should have small or no Company at it."[13] This is not indicative of a four- or five-year-old play. (The play was evidently not performed in public theaters, but in "open streets and houses," as the queen mentioned.) Christopher Marlowe, in his circa 1588 play, *Dr. Faustus*, apparently alluded to *Richard II*, and another Shakespeare play, in one line.[14] Marlowe describes Helen of Troy:

> *Was this the face* that *launched a thousand ships* … ?
> (5.1.92)

The first part of Marlowe's line repeatedly appears in Shakespeare's *Richard II* (4.1.281-85):

> *Was this the face*, the face
> That every day, under his household roof,
> Did keep ten *thousand* men? *Was this the face,*
> That like the sun, did make beholders wink?
> Is *this the face* …

The second part of Marlowe's line appears in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (2.2.81-82), which also described Helen of Troy:

> … Why she is a pearl
> Whose price hath *launch'd* above *a thousand ships* …

There are at least sixteen more instances of similar phrases and unusual word clusters between these writers. Because there is no evidence that the Stratford Man was in London in the 1580s, orthodoxy routinely accepts Shakespeare as the borrower, but a plethora of evidence demonstrates that it was the reverse.[15]

Even though "William Shakespeare" was not prosecuted in 1601, something very curious happened: during that year there were no printings of his plays or his popular narrative poems. In fact, in 1601 the steady stream of his printed works since 1593 came to a sudden halt after reaching a crescendo of seven editions in 1600. This indicates that in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion publishers feared, or were prevented from, printing anything authored by Shakespeare. But there was one interesting exception: 67 lines of verse in *Love's Martyr*.

The publication of *Love's Martyr* was the second seditious event in 1601 that involved Shakespeare. If he were the Stratford Man, then his execution that year would have been assured. This poetical work, described as allegorical, can only be viewed as thinly veiled commentary about the succession of Queen Elizabeth. Written by Robert Chester, it is the story of the mythological phoenix and its search for a lover so it can reproduce. Dame Nature assists the Phoenix by pairing it with the Turtle Dove. After burning together, "Another princely Phoenix," as described by Chester, emerged from their ashes. The legend of the phoenix, however, has nothing do to with acquiring a mate – it is a beautiful rare bird that renews itself every 500 (or 1000) years solely by self-immolation. No story about the phoenix and a turtle dove existed before *Love's Martyr*.[16]

Love's Martyr featured a separate section, "Diverse Poetical Essays," comprising poems on the same topic by "the best and chiefest of our modern writers," according to the title page. They were Shakespeare, John Marston, George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and Ignoto. That Chester and company were allegorizing Queen Elizabeth is unmistakable as the phoenix was one of her most constantly used symbols. In the year of her accession, 1558, a coin featured her portrait on one side and a burning phoenix on the reverse.[17] A medallion with similar images was issued in 1574, today called "The Phoenix Badge"; it most notably featured "ER" (Elizabeth Regina) above the phoenix's head, and a crown above that.[18] In the "Phoenix Portrait" by Nicholas Hilliard (c. 1574), the queen wears a large phoenix jewel that hangs from a collar of pearls and three jeweled Tudor roses, her family emblem; her hand, which holds a red rose, is positioned just below the phoenix pendant. In 1596, a large portrait engraving of the queen was published. On either side of her is a column – one holds a burning phoenix, and the other a pelican, another of her personal symbols.[19] In late 1601, the queen was compared to a phoenix in a speech addressed to her at parliament: "God has made you a phoenix and wonder of the world, since no maiden Queen ever ruled so long and happily."[20] Posthumously, the queen was depicted in a full-length statue with a phoenix beneath her feet.[21] Shakespeare specifically described the infant Elizabeth as a phoenix in *Henry VIII* (5.5.39). These are only a few examples.

More evidence that Chester and company's phoenix represented the queen is that the phoenix legend was altered to suit her: traditionally the phoenix is characterized as male, while their phoenix is female; conversely the Turtle dove is traditionally female, but their turtle dove is transformed into a male. Chester's subtitle, moreover, plainly states that the Phoenix and Turtle Dove were "allegorically shadow[ed]," announcing that they represented real people and a real love story:

> Love's Martyr: or Rosalin's Complaint. *Allegorically shadowing the truth of Love*, in the constant Fate of the Phoenix *and Turtle*.

That Elizabeth was the phoenix of Chester's work is stressed again in another title that occurred on the first page of his narrative:

> Rosalin's Complaint, metaphorically applied to Dame Nature at a Parliament *held (in the high Star-chamber) by the* Gods, for the preservation and increase of *Earth's beauteous Phoenix*.

The "complaint" of Rosalin, who throughout the text is called Dame Nature, is presented at "a Parliament" in the "Star Chamber," which was a courtroom in Westminster Palace, the seat of Elizabeth's government. In addition, Dame Nature describes the Phoenix not as a bird, but as a woman: she has hair, forehead, cheeks, chin, lips, teeth, arms, hands and fingers. And in the section titled "Cantos," the Phoenix is described with the terms "rose," "queen," "empress" and "sovereignty," and she is chided by the Turtle Dove for her "chasteness," an undisguised reference to Elizabeth's much vaunted virginity. The Phoenix is even described as aging, as noted by Anthea Hume: the Phoenix says her "golden Feathers" are quickly falling out (24); she fears her beauty "wilt perish" (27); she describes herself as ripe in years (29).[22] Queen Elizabeth was sixty-eight in 1601. Jonson's two poems about the Phoenix in *Diverse Poetical Essays* described it as a "Woman" and a "Lady," one with quick wit and "graces," whose "Judgment (adorn'd with Learning) /Doth shine in her discerning," qualities often attributed to Elizabeth.

Other writers understood that Chester's Phoenix symbolized Queen Elizabeth. In *The Mirror of Majesty* (1618), attributed to Sir Henry Goodyere, Queen Anne (consort of James I) was likened to a phoenix. She emerged "From old Eliza's urn, enriched with fire .... " This was a direct reference to *Love's Martyr* because it was the first work to associate an urn with the phoenix – in Shakespeare's poem, "Threnos," and in Ignoto's poem.[23] Goodyere had also taken a near-verbatim line from Ignoto's poem: "One Phoenix born, another Phoenix burns." Josuah Sylvester used the phoenix and urn imagery in recalling the late Queen Elizabeth in his *Bartas his Divine*

Weeks and Works (1605): "From Spicy Ashes of the sacred URN /Of our dead Phoenix (dear ELIZABETH)." Also, when *Love's Martyr* was republished in 1611, the prefatory poem, "The Author's request to the Phoenix," was dropped, presumably because the addressee, Elizabeth I, was dead. The evidence that Queen Elizabeth was "allegorically shadowed" as Chester's Phoenix is overwhelming. Most commentators acknowledge it, but they never connect her to the story, to the message behind Chester's allegory – that she had a lover and a child who should be recognized to settle the succession crisis.

The complaint of Rosalin, or Dame Nature, is about the Phoenix's "preservation and increase," which in the context of Elizabeth I could only mean the succession, a topic she refused to deal with and which was illegal to discuss. The name Rosalin is significant because it suggests rose, the Tudor family symbol.[24] The queen was often portrayed with a rose. Nicholas Hilliard's "Pelican Portrait" of Elizabeth (c. 1574), for example, displays a large red rose with a royal crown above it. Another notable example (c. 1600) is a portrait engraving of the queen surrounded by roses and eglantine and the words "Rosa Electa."[25] Rosalin-Dame Nature fears that the rare and beautiful Phoenix will die childless, i.e., the Tudor ancestors of Elizabeth fear that their dynasty will end unless she produces an heir. The head god, Jove, instructs her to take the Phoenix to Paphos, an island associated with the goddess Venus. There the Phoenix will find her mate, the Turtle Dove. The Turtle Dove's importance to Phoenix-Queen Elizabeth is also stressed in the title – he is "Love's Martyr." The Phoenix's "Love" martyred himself by jumping with her onto the pyre to produce their child, "Another princely Phoenix." Just as the Phoenix was described as a woman, rather than a bird, the Turtle Dove was described as a man, rather than a bird: "his name is Liberal honor" (19), and he has curly hair and a rosy complexion (20). Chester prays to Christ that the Phoenix will have a child: "Let her not wither Lord without increase, /But bless her with joy's offspring of sweet peace. Amen. Amen" (23).

The poem that follows is titled "To those of light belief," presumably addressing those who may not take seriously the story about to be told, which is described as "Plain honest Truth and Knowledge" (23). Rosalin-Dame Nature meets the Phoenix, who is sullen and weeping. "Envy" has arisen, the Phoenix says, "A damned Fiend o'er me to tyrannize" (28). Rosalin-Dame Nature replies, "he shall not touch a Feather of thy wing, / Or ever have Authority and power, /As he hath had in his days secret prying." As the reader has been advised that this is a true story, it appears that Envy (note the initial capital "E") allegorizes the Earl of Essex, who very recently had attempted to "tyrannize" Queen Elizabeth with rebellion. Essex had held great "Authority and power" as Earl Marshal and as the commander of a large army in Ireland. Rosalin-Dame Nature banishes Envy, just as Elizabeth had banished Essex from court after he returned in disgrace from Ireland. In relief the Phoenix says:

> What is he gone? Is Envy pack'd away?
> Then one foul blot is moved from his Throne,
> That my poor honest Thoughts did seek to slay….
> (29)

Envy-Essex evidently wished "to slay" the Phoenix-Queen Elizabeth and divest her of her "throne" – a blatant reference to the Essex Rebellion. Phoenix-Queen Elizabeth also refers to the Rebellion by saying Lady Fortune "did conspire / My downfall" by sending to her "Envy with a Judas kiss" (31). Needless to say, the phoenix myth has nothing to do with envy, conspiracy, or traitors.

Rosalin-Dame Nature takes the Phoenix out of Arabia in a flying chariot, and one hundred pages later, they land in Paphos. The Turtle Dove sees the "beauteous Phoenix," they pair up, and both commit to "sacrifice" their bodies "to revive one name" (136). In this context, the name that would need reviving is Tudor. "Of my bones," says the Phoenix, "must the Princely Phoenix rise," a "creature" that "shall possess both our authority" (138-39). Chester's allegory has Queen Elizabeth declaring that a child from her own body, a prince, will rule after her. In the last line of this dialogue, Chester writes: "And thus I end the turtle Dove's true story. Finis. R.C." (139).

Chester also wrote a conclusion to his story, or rather an announcement: A new phoenix does arise from the ashes of the Phoenix and Turtle Dove.

> From the sweet fire of perfumed wood,
> Another princely Phoenix upright stood:
> Whose feathers purified did yield more light,
> Than her late burned mother out of sight,
> And in her heart rests a perpetual love,
> Sprung from the bosom of the Turtle-Dove.
> Long may the new uprising bird increase,
> Some humors and some motions to release,
> And thus to all I offer my devotion,
> Hoping that gentle minds accept my motion.
> Finis. R.C.
> (142)

Chester offers devotion "to all" three figures – the newborn "Another princely Phoenix," its father, the Turtle Dove, and its "late burned mother," the Phoenix. Queen Elizabeth had been specifically called a "princely Phoenix" ten years previously in printed verses:

> And with our Queen that princely Phenix rare,
> whose like on earth hath seldom times been seen....[26]

Chester hopes that "gentle minds" will "accept" his "motion," which in this sense is "a proposal, suggestion, or petition" (*OED*). With such clear language and symbolism, Chester and company certainly believed that the queen had given birth to an heir and successor. Marston described the child in *Diverse Poetical Essays* as alive and "grown unto maturity," "wondrous," and "perfection." Shakespeare, conversely, described the Phoenix ("Beauty"), the Turtle Dove ("Truth"), and their child ("Rarity"), as "cinders" lying in an "urn" in the second of his two poems, titled "Threnos." It is a lamentation of the three dead birds, allegorically prophesying the downfall of the Tudors.

Beauty, Truth, and Rarity,
Grace in all simplicity,
Here enclosed, in cinders lie.

Death is now the *Phoenix* nest,
And the *Turtle's* loyal breast,
To eternity doth rest.

Leaving no posterity …

To this urn let those repair,
That are either true or fair,
For these dead Birds, sigh a prayer.
("Threnos" 1-7, 13-15)

Shakespeare's first poem, which is untitled, is solemnly dramatic. An unidentified voice, possibly his, calls upon the Phoenix, "the bird of loudest lay [song]," to be the sad herald of specific birds, calling them to the scene of the Turtle Dove's funeral and immolation. Predatory birds like the owl ("shrieking harbinger") are to be excluded with the exception of the royal eagle, the "feath'red king." The swan, acting as priest, and the crow, which according to legend reproduced merely through the exchange of breath, are allowed to be among "our mourners."[27] After the description of the approved birds, they sing an "Anthem" about the now-dead birds. Shakespeare does not describe the immolation scene. The poem includes many terms relating to government, such as "session," "interdict," "king" and "tyrant." Shakespeare also uses "augur," which in ancient Roman times was a government official who used omens to predict future events; the omens often "derived from the flight, singing, and feeding of birds" (*OED*). "Herald" and "trumpet[er]," as noted by Hume, indicate that the funeral is "a great public occasion."[28]

Shakespeare's first poem in *Love's Martyr* is based on rare Latin and Anglo-Saxon (Old English) sources.[35] Ovid in his *Amores* (2:6) summons birds, only the "pious winged kind," to a funeral of the parrot. They are to sing mourning songs. The swan, phoenix, crows (daw and raven), and chief mourner, turtle dove, are among those invited. Shakespeare's poem also called for the same non-predatory birds to attend the phoenix's funeral (he added the eagle), and were to sing. The first printed edition of Ovid's story, translated by Christopher Marlowe, appeared after 1602 (STC 18931). In "The Phoenix," an elegy by Lactantius (c. 240-320 AD) that is another obvious source for Shakespeare's poem, pious birds surround the phoenix in flight as a sacred function, but do not sing; the swan acts as priestess (as does the swan in Shakespeare's poem), and both Lactantius' phoenix, like Shakespeare's, is uncharacteristically female. Lactantius' poem had seen print only once before *Love's Martyr* — an edition dated to circa 1522.

In the Anglo-Saxon poem "The Phoenix," usually dated to the late 10th century, the phoenix is the "king" of birds, is their "lordship" and is a "noble bird"; other birds flock around him in flight and sing, which marvels mankind watching below. The Anglo-Saxon phoenix, besides having a beautiful voice, also has the loudest: "no trumpets, nor horns, may equal that sound" (line 134).[36] Similarly, Shakespeare's phoenix has the loudest birdsong, as described in the first line, "the bird of loudest lay [song]," and is a queen. Those two characteristics for the phoenix were unique to Shakespeare and the Anglo-Saxon poem.[37] The Anglo-Saxon poem existed only in manuscript, in an anthology today called The Book of Exeter, which has been stored at Exeter Cathedral since the 11th century. Only a tiny group of scholars were studying Anglo-Saxon during Elizabethan times. Shakespeare evidently had knowledge of, or access to, an extremely rare manuscript, and possibly could even read this language.

Shakespeare's language of state accords with that on the title page and opening text of *Love's Martyr*, that Elizabeth I was being allegorized. The experts, meanwhile, remain mystified about the meaning of Shakespeare's poems; this is perhaps because they never connect his Phoenix, also called "Beauty," with Chester's Phoenix, who was Queen Elizabeth. The treasonous symbolism, that the queen had a lover and child and that the Tudor monarchy will soon end, is lost to them. Alexander Grosart in 1878 was the first to link Queen Elizabeth with Chester's Phoenix, and remarked, "The fact that Elizabeth was living when *Love's Martyr* was published fills me indeed with astonishment at the author's audacity in so publishing."[29] Interestingly, the Earl of Essex referred to Queen Elizabeth as "Beauty" and "Phoenix" in an unpublished poem, written in late 1590.[30]

Love's Martyr was issued sometime after June in 1601, the same year as the Essex Rebellion, which was prompted by, among other issues, the succession question. Many of the Essex conspirators were executed. To release *Love's Martyr* at this time, or to be associated with a work with such obvious political overtones, was strangely reckless. But Chester did devise a cover story: the title page states the book was his translation of the "venerable Italian Torquato Caeliano." No writer of this exact name ever existed. Chester evidently invented it by combining the names of the 16th-century Italian poets Torquato Tasso (d. 1595) and Livio Caeliano; the latter was the pseudonym of Angelo Grillo (1557-1629). Also, *Love's Martyr*, and separately, *Diverse Poetical Essays*, was dedicated to Sir John Salusbury. Queen Elizabeth had knighted him in June 1601 specifically for his part in quelling the Essex Rebellion. Chester and company apparently wanted the work to be associated with a man that the queen trusted. Salusbury was also known to be anti-Essex before the rebellion.[31]

It is believed that *Love's Martyr* inspired a bill, drafted c. October 1601, specifically to ban "the writing and publishing of books about" the succession that could lead subjects "into false errors and traitorous attempts against the Queen."[32] The bill was not passed. Already on the books, however, was Elizabeth's proclamation against "diverse traitorous and slanderous libels" of "our royal person and state."[33] It was issued on April 5, 1601, well before the printing of *Love's Martyr*. Hanging was a punishment for libelers of the queen/state. The obvious allegory contained in *Love's*

Martyr would certainly have qualified as a libel of "virgin queen" Elizabeth, but none of the contributors was arrested. Despite this, some evidence suggests the book was suppressed. It elicited no comments by contemporaries and the surviving copies show signs of tampering. Only one of the four copies has the date on the title page. On another copy, the date was purposely sliced off. Another copy completely changed the title page, adding a new title and date (*The Annuals of Great Britain*, 1611) and omitting the author's name. The fourth copy, recently discovered in Wales, has pages missing from the front and back.[34] Richard Field, printer of Shakespeare's earlier poems, *Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis*, also printed *Love's Martyr*. His involvement raises the possibility that Shakespeare, the nobleman-great author, helped fund the work, and that he shared Chester's appeal to the queen to accept her child as her successor. The child was certainly not King James of Scotland, who did succeed to the English throne.

Two years after James's accession, in 1605, *Love's Martyr* contributors Chapman, Marston, and Jonson were jailed for writing a play deemed offensive to the Crown. Mutilation was intended for them, "a standard punishment for sedition,"[38] but it was not carried out. It has been argued that their play, *Eastward Ho!*, contained contained controversial satire against the Scots, but even censored passages do not appear particular offensive to modern ears. The play, however, contains a distinct and emphatic presence of Shakespeare, with allusions to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Henry IV, Part 2*, and *Richard III*. Editor Richard Horwich also observed that the writers of *Eastward Ho!* "seem to have gone out of their way to call attention to their borrowings" from *Hamlet*,[39] including characters named Hamlet and Gertrude. Another Shakespeare reference in *Eastward Ho!* appears in the character "Touchstone," which recalls the name of the courtier-clown in *As You Like It*. Interestingly, Touchstone, his surname, is a verb-noun construct like "Shakespeare," and his first name is William. And although his trade is jewelry, Touchstone's apprentices are more concerned about crafting poetry lines. There is also a strong resemblance between Gertrude's song in *Eastward Ho!* and Ophelia's song about her dead father in *Hamlet*:

GERTRUDE
His head as white as milk,
All flaxen was his hair;
But now he is dead,
And laid in his bed,
And never will come again.

God be at your labor.
(*Eastward Ho!* 3.2)

OPHELIA
And will he not come again?
And will he not come again?

No, no, he is dead,
Go to thy death-bed,
never will come again.
His beard was white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll [head];
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan;
God ha' mercy on his soul!

And of all Christian souls, I pray God.
God be wi' you!
(*Hamlet* 4.5.189-200)

It is a strange fact of history that Shakespeare's passing was not noted by his contemporaries near the time it had occurred -- strange because, during his lifetime, his plays and poems were publicly regarded as great. There were, however, hints that he had died not in 1616, but before 1609. They are contained in *Myrrah, Mother of Adonis* (1607), *Envy's Scourge* (c. 1609),[40] and the dedication of *Shake-speare's Sonnets* (1609). Unrelated to the plot, Gertrude's song in *Eastward Ho!* may have been a veiled memorial to the great author, William Shakespeare, by his former associates in *Love's Martyr*.

In 1601 in *Love's Martyr*, Robert Chester explicitly identified the main character, the Phoenix, as Elizabeth I, the then-reigning queen. Chester and the other contributors of this "allegorical shadow," including Shakespeare, indicated their belief that she had a child by her lover, the Turtle Dove, who was the "Martyr" of the title. They were evidently urging Phoenix-Queen Elizabeth to acknowledge her now-grown child, "Another princely Phoenix," to continue the Tudor monarchy, allegory that could be perceived as treasonous. Oddly, no one was prosecuted, even though this was Shakespeare's second offense in one year, following the performance of his play, *Richard II*, which was staged to foment the Essex Rebellion. Throughout her reign, Elizabeth was compared to Richard II, mostly because of her reliance on flattering courtiers for policy advice. Shakespeare's play, therefore, which illustrates this very point, could be viewed as open and direct political allegory; Elizabeth herself had so acknowledged it. Although orthodox Shakespeare scholars know this, they cannot explain why Shakespeare was exempted from prosecution, unlike the unfortunate historian John Hayward, and the authors of the earlier "seditious" play, *The Isle of Dogs*.

The most logical explanation for Shakespeare surviving 1601 is that he was not the Stratford Man, but rather a nobleman with royal protection. The 1605 play, *Eastward Ho!*, was full of Shakespeare allusions and it apparently memorialized him. Its three authors, all former contributors to *Love's Martyr*, were jailed after the first performance, possibly indicating they no longer had his protection. *Love's Martyr* could be the reason why the death of the real Shakespeare went unnoted when it had occurred: because his involvement in this work advertised his position on the succession, and his candidate was not King James of Scotland, but rather an unnamed child of the queen. (The Fair Youth of Shakespeare's sonnets was constantly described with royal terms.) To eulogize Shakespeare after King James succeeded to the English throne – using either his real name or his pen name -- was politically risky and best avoided. The first open praise of Shakespeare after his death occurred in a book of his collected plays, the First Folio (1623), in a preface that falsely suggested he was the Stratford Man. Today it is rarely noted how Shakespeare's two poems in *Love's Martyr* emerged at such a perilous time in history, or that the book contained such dangerous political allegory. Abstracting Shakespeare's texts from their original political context perpetuates their mystery, and promulgates the myth that the Stratford Man was the great author. Like the phoenix, Queen Elizabeth's image may indeed prove to be reborn after 400 years: from that of virgin queen to queen who fulfilled her duty to procreate a male child, but failed to enthrone him.

Let the bird of loudest lay [song],
On the sole *Arabian* tree [i.e., the phoenix],
Herald sad and trumpet[er] be:
To whose sound chaste wings obey.

But thou shrieking harbinger [owl],
Foul precurrer [precursor] of the fiend [death],
Augur of the fever's end,
To this troop come thou not near.

From this Session interdict [forbidden act]
Every fowl of tyrant wing,
Save the Eagle feath'red king,
Keep the obsequy [funeral rite] so strict.

Let the Priest in Surplice white [garb of clergy],
That defunctive [dead] Music can,
Be the death-divining Swan,
Lest the *Requiem* lack his right.

And thou treble-dated Crow,
That thy sable gender mak'st,
With the breath thou giv'st and tak'st,
'Mongst our mourners shalt thou go.

Here the Anthem doth commence,
Love and Constancy is dead,
Phoenix and the *Turtle* fled,
In a mutual flame from hence.

So they loved as love in twain,
Had the essence but in one,
Two distincts, Division none,
Number there in love was slain.

Hearts remote, yet not asunder;
Distance and no space was seen,
’Twixt this *Turtle* and his Queen;
But in them it were a wonder.

So between them Love did shine,
That the *Turtle* saw his right,
Flaming in the *Phoenix* sight;
Either was the other’s mine.

Property was thus appalled,
That the self was not the same:
Single Natures double name,
Neither two nor one was called.

Reason in itself confounded,
Saw Division grow together,
To themselves yet either neither,
Simple were so well compounded.

That it [Reason] cried, “How true a twain,
Seemeth this concordant one,
Love hath Reason, Reason none,
If what parts, can so remain.”

Whereupon it made this *Threne*,
To the *Phoenix* and the *Dove*,
Co-supremes and stars of Love,
As *Chorus* to their Tragic Scene.

Threnos.

Beauty, Truth, and Rarity,
Grace in all simplicity,
Here enclosed, in cinders lie.

Death is now the *Phoenix* nest,
And the *Turtle*’s loyal breast,
To eternity doth rest.

Leaving no posterity,
’Twas not their infirmity,
It was married Chastity.

Truth may seem, but cannot be,
Beauty brag, but ’tis not she,
Truth and Beauty buried be.

To this urn let those repair,
That are either true or fair,
For these dead Birds, sigh a prayer.

William Shake-speare.

Endnotes

[1] *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare*, ed. Oscar J. Campbell (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1966), 690.

[2] Russ McDonald, *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare: An Introduction with Documents* (New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996), 71.

[3] *Ibid*, 178.

[4] Edward Edwards, *The Life of Sir Walter Ralegh* (London: Macmillan, 1868), vol. 2, 166-67. The performance was at the home of the queen's secretary, Sir Robert Cecil.

[5] *King Richard II*, Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare, ed. Peter Ure (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1956), intro., 59.

[6] Charlotte Stopes, *The Life of Henry, Third Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's Patron* (Cambridge: University Press, 1922), 210.

[7] Martin Green, *Wriothesley's Roses* (Baltimore, MD: Clevedon Books, 1993), 214.

[8] Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's Histories: Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1978, 6th edition), 191.

[9] Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 243-45.

[10] *Ibid*, 263-64.

[11] *Ibid*, 244, 254-55.

[12] Katherine Chiljan, *Shakespeare Suppressed: The Uncensored Truth About Shakespeare and His Works* (San Francisco, CA: Faire Editions, 2011), 243-67.

[13] McDonald, 71.

[14] Chiljan, 353.

[15] *Ibid*, Appendix A.

[16] T.W. Baldwin, *On the Literary Genetics of Shakspere's Poems and Sonnets* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1950), 374.

[17] Edward Hawkins, *Medallic Illustrations of the History of Great Britain and Ireland,* eds. Augustus Franks, Herbert Grueber (London: British Museum, Dept. of Coins and Medals, 1885), vol. 1, 90-91.

[18] *Ibid*, 124-25.

[19] Roy C. Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 113; Francis A. Yates, *Astraea, The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), plate 6b.

[20] *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth 1601-1603*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green, (London: Longman & Co., 1870), 115.

[21] Strong, 156. The statue (by Nicholas Stone) was finished in March 1623.

[22] Anthea Hume, "Love's Martyr, 'The Phoenix and the Turtle,' and the Aftermath of the Essex

Rebellion," *Review of English Studies*, New Series, vol. 40, no. 157 (Feb. 1989), 59.

[23] William H. Matchett, *The Phoenix and the Turtle* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), 182-83.

[24] *Robert Chester's Love's Martyr*, ed. Alexander Grosart (London: New Shakspere Society, 1878), intro., p. 45.

[25] Strong, 114; Yates, plate 8b. The engraving was by William Rogers.

[26] John Phillips, *A Commemoration on the Life and Death of the Right Honorable, Sir Christopher Hatton* (London: 1591), 4.

[27] Peter Dronke, "The Phoenix and the Turtle," *Orbis Litterarum*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1968), 209.

[28] Hume, 59. Editor Colin Burrow reads "trumpet" as "trumpeter" (*Complete Sonnets and Poems*, The Oxford Shakespeare [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002], 373).

[29] *Robert Chester's Love's Martyr*, ed. Grosart, intro., 46.

[30] *Ballads from Manuscripts*, ed. W.R. Morfill (Hertford, UK: Ballad Society, 1873), vol. 2, 250-51. Paul E.J. Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: the Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 87-88.

[31] Hume, 64.

[32] *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series,* ed. Green, 115-16; Hume, 65.

[33] Hume, 58.

[34] Ilya Gililov, *The Shakespeare Game: The Mystery of the Great Phoenix*, tr. Gennady Bashkov and Galina Kozlova (New York: Algora Publishing, 2003).

[35] *Ovid in Six Volumes*, tr. Grant Showerman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 2nd ed., vol. 1, 399-403; *Lactantius: The Minor Works*, tr. Sister Mary Francis McDonald, Fathers of the Church, vol. 54 (Newburgh, NY, c. 1965), 213-20; *The Exeter Book, An Anthology of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, tr. Israel Gollancz (London: Early English Text Society, Oxford Univ. Press, 1895, Part 1). Notable in these translations are words besides "phoenix" that appear in Shakespeare's poems. Ovid: *trumpet, harbinger, obsequy, swan, turtle dove, daw/raven* [crows]; Lactantius: *priestess, swan*; Anglo-Saxon: *trumpet, lay, swan, eagle, fiend, sad*. Matthew Roydon's elegy to the late poet Sir Philip Sidney in *The Phoenix Nest* (1593) draws very lightly from Ovid's story.

[36] Marie Axton also noted that the voice of the Anglo-Saxon phoenix was described as "beorhtan reorde" (line 128), which "means literally 'louder raised'" in *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), 126.

[37] The short poem about the phoenix by Claudian (circa 370-404 AD) was apparently based on that of Lactantius, but added that the newly reborn phoenix was a temporary king of birds – only while they accompanied him on his flight to Egypt (to deposit the ashes of its predecessor).

[38] Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 207-08. Some believe that Marston was not jailed, but Ben Jonson said otherwise.

[39] Richard Horwich, "Hamlet and Eastward Ho," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 11, no. 2 (Spring 1971), 231.

[40] Chiljan, 260-61.