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A Semiannual Journal

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Letters to the Editor

Final Thoughts on Dering's Manuscript of Henry IV

To the Editor:

I would like to thank Francis Edwards for taking the time to read and reflect on my essay dealing with the manuscript version of *Henry IV* (see *ER*, Letters, 5:1). I am well aware that we have no way to compare its hands to "Shakespeare's"; this was why the monograph was so lengthy. The proof of the manuscript's authenticity lies in its literary and paleographic characteristics, not in the identity of its hands. Though it remains important to observe it was not in the hand of the man Dering paid to "copy out" *Henry IV*, Samuel Carington. D, therefore, cannot be a simple condensation of a written text as maintained by dependency proponents such as Evans and Downs. Let the reader attempt seamless cutting and editing if they doubt it.

Edwards makes his point regarding handwriting analysis, in which he says the Monteagle letter "was almost certainly written by the Earl of Salisbury," and cites his books on the Gunpowder Plot as proof. My source on the plot has been Mark Nicholls's excellent study, *Investigating the Gunpowder Plot* (Manchester University Press, 1991). Nicholls suspects that Thomas Percy wrote the letter and says later, "There is no need to accuse Salisbury of hypocrisy in these letters" (175). So I am not alone in thinking that "almost certainly" does not mean "certainly."

Handwriting analysis is an art, not a science. It is not used forensically in the identification of persons, as are fingerprints. It changes through time, has familiar or family similarities and can be forged. Of course, when we are dealing with a few hands, even a novice can pick out similar ones, which is why I can easily say Hand B wasn't Samuel Carington's hand. However, if one has to deal with all the hands in Elizabethan England, the proposition of establishing identity quickly evaporates. I therefore try to avoid relying upon such exercises.

Lastly, Edwards asks for some references to what fair copies might have looked like. I thought I cited some, but I would direct him to Crane's transcript of *Demetrius and Enantine*, Brogyntyn MS.; Knight's transcript of *Bonduca*, B.M. MSAdd. 36758, transcribed from Fletcher's foul papers; Crane's Promptbook of *Barnavelt*, B.M. MSAdd. 18653, and to the lesser known but cited in my monograph, manuscripts of *Arden* and *Love's Victories*, which are both at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. To this I would add the manuscripts of *Timon* and *Woodstock*, which I also cited, and which appear to be fair copies of authorial papers, likely Marlowe's, since the author of *Timon* claims to be a Kentish cobbler's son, at the

university in 1580 and to have translated the *Elegies*, a translation he predicts will someday cost him his life. Lastly, *Cardenio*, B.M. MS. Lansdowne 807, said fair copy of "Shakespeare's" play by Charles Hamilton and I. The manuscript D looks to all cases more like these than it does like a presentation copy of a printed book.

John Baker
Centralia, Washington

Postscript: Gerald Downs has, in a longer private essay and in personal discussions, proven to me that there are numerous agreements between D and Q5 which cannot be explained by the two texts being independent. He has also shown that these similarities extend to the Folio's version, which didn't appear until well after *Dering's* order for a "copying out *Henry IV*."

The Folger editors did not focus on these parallel readings and I did not discuss them at length. I should have. They strongly suggest that the printers relied upon D as copy for each subsequent edition, likely because the rewrite which resulted in the first printed edition, i.e., *1 Henry IV*, had been lost. It was, as I suggested, not much to the author's liking. D, on the other hand, was, and remained available for cross-checking and collation. It was by this means that the various quartos crept into agreement with D. I had already suggested that the Folio editors considered D for inclusion, so it is by no means curious that readings in D wound up in the Folio, whereas if D was transcribed at the time of Dering's order, this cannot be the case, since the Folio had not yet been printed.

This is to say that if Downs believes these parallel readings prove dependency, then he must believe that D was transcribed from the Folio, not from Q5. I do not. I believe D remains in all particulars the earlier version of the printed texts. In some cases, D's readings may actually be *inferior* to Q1's readings, and this would be expected if Q1 represented the author's expansion of D. The overall evidence, however, proves D to be the Ur version of *Henry IV*. (See ER on the Web, which includes the complete exchange between Downs and Baker on D.)

The Oxfordian Case Defended

To the Editor:

David Kathman raises some legitimate questions in "Why I'm Not an Oxfordian" (*ER*, 5:1), but unfortunately much of his argument is flawed by the same errors in logic that he imputes to Oxfordians.

"Double standard" is the principal allegation, i.e., Oxfordians set higher standards of evidence for the Stratford man as the author than for the 17th Earl of Oxford. The third paragraph, however, summarizes the case for the Stratford man simply by asserting his credentials, some of them very dubious, which are then described as "perfectly standard evidence of

the type used by literary historians." For example, Kathman says "there was no other William Shakespeare living in London at the time." But there is no "perfectly standard" evidence, or any kind of evidence, to support that assertion. Even more egregious is the assertion that "there were abundant resources in Elizabethan London for such a man (from Stratford) to absorb the knowledge displayed in the plays." But no historical evidence has ever been offered to demonstrate that the Stratford man made use of those resources or could have done so to the extent required. It is simply conjecture.

In contrast, Charlton Ogburn and other Oxfordians, both before him and after him, have demonstrated in detail how Oxford's education and career are reflected extensively and specifically in the plays and poems of Shakespeare. Nothing remotely comparable exists for the Stratford man.

Kathman goes on to allege that "a large part of the 'evidence' used by Oxfordians... (is) reconstruction of what the author 'must have thought' and what his background must have been like." Not so. Most of the Oxfordian evidence is documented facts. It is the Stratfordians who maintain that their man *must have* gone to school in Stratford, *must have* gone to London and become an actor, and *must have* become the poet and playwright by age twenty-five. In fact, nothing is known about his education or career until at least age twenty-eight. Even then his documented career is only that of a businessman/investor and perhaps a bit-part actor, if indeed he was the only Shakspere (in whatever spelling) in the London records.

Many eminent thinkers have been persuaded by the case for Oxford. They include three U.S. Supreme Court justices, authors such as David McCullough and Clifton Fadiman, and theater people such as Tyrone Guthrie and John Gielgud. The case for Oxford demands to be examined carefully and impartially.

Richard F. Whalen
Past President
The Shakespeare-Oxford Society
Truro, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

I read with great interest Dr. David Kathman's article, "Why I Am Not an Oxfordian." Those of us who are or incline to be Oxfordians should always be interested in the observations and comments of informed holders of another view like Dr. Kathman. They remind us that the arguments and evidence put forward by Oxfordians or whoever else need to be sifted carefully and their acceptance cannot be taken for granted. He admits that Oxfordian theories "have generally been ignored by the mainstream" and brushed aside in a manner "dismissive and condescending." He himself, however, is only prepared to admit that even the abler critics of the Stratfordian doctrine are not

more than "quite intelligent." Perhaps we have all suffered from excessive condescension all round. I like his last sentence. "The only thing which unites Oxfordians and orthodox Shakespeareans is a love for Shakespeare's works, and even if we disagree about some very basic issues, we can agree that it does matter who wrote those works." We should also be able to agree by this time that there is a genuine authorship problem whatever our preferred solution.

It is true that "all the external evidence says the plays and poems were written by William Shakespeare," but the external evidence is largely printed matter, apart from entries in the Stationers' Register and the very controversial evidence of the play of Sir Thomas More. The 1623 First Folio leaves us with the problem intact. What has to be admitted by all sides is that William of Stratford as the author of the plays and poems is an extremely unlikely candidate. To explain his achievement as an example of the age-old miracle of genius is too mystical —unless we believe in innate ideas, but most of us, even if we are Aristotelian or Thomist, will accept the principle, *nihil in intellectu nisi prius in sensu, nisi ipse intellectus.* In a word, knowledge is only acquired through experience, and certainly the kind of knowledge needed to write Shakespeare's plays. Where could William of Stratford have acquired it?

We need not cavil over the impossibility of proving that young William went to the local grammar school. Since his father John was elected a burgess in 1559, he had the right to send his son there for a free education and as a man of normal ambition for himself and his we can suppose he used the privilege. What William actually learned there is controversial. William Lyly's Latin grammar was printed at the rate of 10,000 copies a year at least, so he had on offer the rudiments of Latin. What else was taught there we can only guess. Saffron Walden, another of the 300 or so schools like Stratford's in this period is the only school which has left a record of its curriculum. It was ambitious: Ovid, Sallust, Virgil, Cicero, Terence, Horace and Erasmus. But we do not know how much of this was taken up by Stratford. What is more, we have no idea to what extent young William availed himself of the fare provided. To say, as has been said, that he was as well equipped as any of the other playwrights of his time is simply not true since all those who were significant had been to the university: Thomas Nashe, Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson. Certainly, there is no difficulty in accounting for Edward de Vere's background: the two universities and the inns of court.

It is unnecessary in this limited context to go over once again the evidence of wide knowledge and experience of many skills shown in the plays. In this point Dr. Kathman admits a weakness in the Stratfordian case and the

strength of the Oxfordian. Small wonder the "literary historians" fight shy of internal evidence since there is nothing to help them in what is to be found inside the plays themselves, where there are many allusions in the plays, and sometimes and especially in the sonnets, which could be taken to indicate experiences in the life of the 17th Earl. Dr. Kathman has a good point in rejecting, where the sonnets are concerned, overmuch insistence on the hyphenated name as an indication of concealed authorship. Nevertheless, it is not without significance that the device of the earl as Viscount Bulbeck was a hand shaking a broken spear. The real difficulty is the dedication to "our ever-living poet" in the edition of 1609. Does Dr. Kathman know any examples of this appellation being applied to authors still alive? Nor need we raise objections to William of Stratford as an actor, and that he was the holder of shares in the Globe in which he acted. However, there were probably a number of William Shakespeares around at the time, and we could not be sure that "our William Shakespeare" was the only one who migrated to London. Shakespeare was a common name in Warwickshire and William was a common name everywhere. W.J. Thomas, the antiquary, concluded from the presence of the name William Shakespeare in a muster roll of hired soldiers within the Barlichway Hundred in the village of Rowington for 1605 that "the bard" did military service at one point. Professor Samuel Schoenbaum justly observed, "Thomas has of course confused the poet with some namesake" (*Documentary Life*, 88, n. 1). A great difficulty resides in the fact that there is no continuity in the record of William of Stratford's life.

The great problem for Oxfordians is to know what was the relationship between William of Stratford and the 17th Earl of Oxford. There must have been one, and probably one of some intimacy. It is not conceivable that an actor by the name William Shakespeare should not have known or even been intimate with the man who could be taken as the true author of the plays and poems known and published in the name of the man from Stratford. Some of the reasons for anonymity on the part of the earl, and why he might have been content to let it appear among those who were not in the know that it was another who produced his canon, has been discussed in a previous article in these pages (see *ER* 2:2) and need not be repeated. Certainly, there is nothing absurd in the idea of the earl and William becoming closely acquainted. The earl was of course the patron of a company of players. The theater, so to speak, ran in his family. The earls of Oxford had their players as far back as 1492. We remember a famous or notorious occasion when the 16th earl's company—Edward's father—caused a scandal by playing in Southwark when a dirge was be-

ing sung in St. Saviour's for Henry VIII on February 6, 1547. The company played in various places from 1555 to 1563, if not at court. Young Edward de Vere, whom Francis Meres was later to designate as the best for comedy, must have taken a keen interest in these dramatic proceedings.

A number of theatrical troupes and companies visited Stratford in the late 1580s. It was the custom for leading London companises to tour the provinces during the summer. In the1583-4 season, three troupes performed in the Stratford Guildhall, those of the Earls of Worcester, Essex, and probably very significantly, Oxford. Was this when young William, not very studieously inclined, and very willing to escape into the more exciting life of a travelling company, decided to leave Stratford, not necessarily forever, to see something of the larger world? This was when he found a place in Oxford's and began a lifelong association with the earl. But if this seems too early for his removal to London, the busiest year for plays in Stratford ran from December 1586 to December 1587. Five companies, the Queen's, Essex's, Leicester's, Stafford's and a fifth unidentified—was this Oxford's?--played this year so that William had quite a choice. Even if he joined one of the others, he could still have ended up or continued in Oxford's since allegiances were lightly borne and changes easily made. E.K. Chambers quotes Wright and Haliwell's *Reliquae Antiquae* referring to to 1580, "The Duttons [John and Laurence] and theyr fellow players forsakyng the earle of Warwycke theyr master became followers of the Erle of Oxford and wrot themselves his Comoedians, which certain genetlemen altered and made Camoelians" (*Elizabethan Stage*, II, 98). One could see William of Stratford as Autolycus or Touchstone, streetwise rather than wise, perhaps, a man with a sense of money and an eye even for small sums as is evident in the curious documents which survive to prove his determination to lose nothing to an owing neighbor. A man very different from his earl his patron who, nevertheless, no doubt found a certain fascination in his company, used his name—and paid him for it. Admittedly, there is much speculation here, but without "must have beens" there can be no history.

The difficulty with history, as E.L. Woodward pointed out, is that, sooner than in any other subject which tries to be scientific, one comes to the limit of the evidence. One can give up or attempt to extrapolate. As Dr. Kathman would be the first to agree, the subject in hand demands a great deal of patience and forbearance toward those with whom one disagrees. This is not impossible.

Indeed, greater than I or most of us have seen the difficulty of the Authorship Issue. One remembers Henry James's dictum (*The Letters of...*, NY 1920, I, 424).

"I am a 'sort of' haunted by a

conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practised on a patient world... The more I turn him round, the more he so affects me. But that is all—I am not pretending to treat the question or to carry it any further. He bristles with difficulties, and I can only express my general sense by saying that I find it almost as impossible to conceive that Bacon wrote the plays as to conceive that the man from Stratford, as we know the man from Stratford, did."

He bristles with difficulties. Indeed, he does.

Francis Edwards,
S.J., F.S.A., F. Hist. Soc.

David Kathman responds to Messrs. Whalen and Edwards: Francis Edwards' letter contains much that is reasonable, but I am forced to disagree with much of what he says, particularly his statement that "[w]hat has to be admitted by all sides is that William of Stratford as the author of the plays is an extremely unlikely candidate." Contrary to Mr. Edwards' statement that "all those [playwrights] who were significant had been to the university", many other important playwrights and poets besides Shakespeare lacked a university education: Ben Jonson, George Chapman, John Webster, Thomas Kyd, Michael Drayton, Henry Chettle, and Thomas Dekker are only among the most notable. As to where Shakespeare and these other writers gained the knowledge displayed in their works, there were abundant resources in Elizabethan London for an intelligent and enterprising person to learn about virtually anything under the sun: books were plentiful and relatively cheap, and travellers from around the world could be found throughout the city. In fact, Shakespeare of Stratford had an outstanding resource available in his fellow Stratfordian contemporary, the printer Richard Field. Field printed or held the copyright to many of the most important sources used by Shakespeare, including the 1587 *Holinshed's Chronicles*, North's translation of Plutarch, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and many books on learning French and Italian. Oxfordians often scoff at the idea that Shakespeare could have learned so much by reading and talking to people, but if Ben Jonson could become the greatest classical scholar in England while working as a bricklayer's apprentice, soldier, and actor, Shakespeare's achievement does not seem particularly remarkable. To the extent that orthodox scholars invoke "genius" as an explanation for Shakespeare's achievement, they do so not as the *deus ex machina* so often depicted by Oxfordians; rather, we say that Shakespeare's genius allowed him to make better, richer use than his contemporaries did of the abundant resources available to them all.

Richard Whalen and I obviously have some fundamental dif-

ferences of opinion over what counts as "conjecture" and "documented fact." I find it hard to credit his claim that "most of the Oxfordian evidence is documented facts," or his assertion that my description of the Oxfordian case actually applies to the Stratfordian one. While we certainly know many facts about Oxford, none of these facts directly connects him with Shakespeare's plays; it is only through conjecture, most of it extremely tenuous and/or misguided, that Oxfordian are able to make any connection at all. In contrast, the evidence connecting William Shakespeare to the plays is direct, straightforward, and abundant compared to most of his contemporaries: his name on the published quartos and in the Revels Accounts, his membership in the acting company which put on the plays, his friendship with the men (Heminges and Condell) who compiled the First Folio, and their explicit statement that their "friend and fellow" Shakespeare was the author. Oxfordian attempts to discredit all this evidence, when they are not based on the double standards I wrote about in my article, generally boil down to allegations that the evidence is forged, and thus become unfalsifiable. Furthermore, Mr. Whalen's claim that "Oxford's education and career are reflected extensively and specifically in the plays and poems of Shakespeare" is equally true of many other noblemen of the period, and I would argue that some of these others (such as the Earls of Derby and Essex) are actually a better match for "Shakespeare" by Oxfordian standards than Oxford is. I agree with Mr. Whalen that "the case for Oxford demands to be examined carefully and impartially", though obviously we have some serious differences over how to go about this.

To the editor:

Dr. David Kathman's article is worth close attention because he takes the Oxfordian case seriously and attacks several points of perceived weakness in our case, which we would do well to rebut if he is mistaken or, if he is justified, to accept and decide how to deal with them. We should not waste time defending the indefensible. Third, he exposes several weaknesses in his own Stratfordian case, which we should examine carefully.

I intend to concentrate on replying to two general reasons he gives for not being an Oxfordian.

The first is that "Oxfordians have built up a picture of who the author must have been from reading the plays themselves.... A large part of the 'evidence' used by Oxfordians is internal to the works themselves." Beyond commenting that "literary scholars have always treated such internal evidence with the utmost caution," he does not, perhaps wisely, take this line of argument much further, but moves on to his second main point.

This is the application by Oxfordians of a "double-standard" when evaluating evidence for

Shakspere and for Oxford, and some manipulation of evidence to suit their own case. He uses Charlton Ogburn as his example because "...his book is generally accepted as the most thorough and detailed exposition of the Oxfordian position..." He concludes by saying "I have tried... to explain the major ways in which Oxfordian methods differ from those used by literary scholars, using Ogburn's book as a case study. Oxfordians typically ignore or rationalize away the external evidence..." and so on. Kathman is here using the fallacy of arguing from the particular to the general —some of Ogburn's evidence and methods are suspect, therefore all of them are, therefore, because Oguburn is the doyen of Oxfordians, the whole case fails.

If Kathman cannot accept the Oxfordian case on these grounds, he should not be a Stratfordian either since, for generations, Stratfordian "literary scholars" and others have used precisely the same methods to argue their case.

Turning to his first objection, we should note Kathman's further comment on the use of internal evidence, that: "interpretations are notoriously subjective, and whenever possible should be backed with external evidence." To see Stratfordians at work on such internal evidence, I shall look at their treatment of Shakespere's education, and the so-called Lost Years, when Shakespere disappears altogether from the records. I do not argue that all Stratfordians behave in the same way, or that because some do, all do, but the examples I am going to give come from a wide range of people and times.

All the Stratfordian biographers I have read assume that he went to the Royal Grammar school, first mentioned by Rowe in 1709. Some acknowledge that we do not have any record showing that he did so, but make the assumption just the same: "We need not doubt that Shakespeare received a grammar school education" (Schoenbaum 1987). Others do not even bother to make any caveat on the matter. This assumption does not rely on evidence of any literary or intellectual activity in which he is known to have engaged during his life (external evidence), but on what can be inferred from the plays and poems (internal evidence). That his father had the right to send him to the school free, that some of his contemporaries, such as Richard Field, showed in their lives evidence of being educated men, or that the curriculum at Stratford (inferred from other schools) was excellent, while true, is not evidence that Shakspere went to the school. In the absence of external evidence apart from the plays that he was a man of any education, we have good reason at least to question whether he did. To Kathman it seems acceptable for Stratfordians to make inferences from the plays without external evidence, but not for Oxfordians. But of course Oxfordians do have external evi-

dence to support their inferences —the known facts of Oxford's life.

In dealing with the Lost Years, many biographers over the centuries have suggested a wide variety of activities which the young man could have, might have, engaged in. The more pretigious scholars tend to play these suggestions down ("No use guessing"—Chambers 1923). Others are not above indulging in them ("About this [his reading habits] we can infer a good deal, by rending back from what appears in his works"—Rowse 1963). The list includes:

Country-schoolmaster—Aubrey/J.Q. Adams, 1923; Soldier in the Low Countries—W.J. Thoms, 1859/Dufff Cooper, 1949; Sailor—Falconer, 1964; Apothecary or physician—Royal Institution, 1829; Gardener—Gardener's Chronicle, 1841; Printer—Blades, 1872 (possibly ironical); Lawyer's clerk—Malone, ca 1780/Rushton, 1858; Page or tutor to Sir Henry Goodere—Gray, 1926; World voyager with Sir Francis Drake—Bliss, 1947; Scrivener—Everitt, 1954; Apprentice with Leicester's Men—Baldwin, 1929; Identified as William Shakeshafte, player—Baker, 1937; Tutor in Southampton's catholic household—Yates, 1936; Naturalist and country sportsman—Harting, 1864; Associate of Richard Field, printer—Rowse, 1963.

This use of inferences drawn from the works is still going on. The newly-published Arden edition of *The Sonnets* has an Introduction by Dr. Duncan-Jones, in which she argues that Shakespeare was homo- or bi-sexual. There is, of course, no external evidence in the life of the Stratford man to support this theory. She has derived it entirely from her reading of the poems themselves and has, predictably enough, incurred the wrath of, among others, Stanley Wells. One of the arguments advanced against her is that Shakespeare was married with children, which is no reliable indicator of sexual orientation.

As Schoenbaum and others have pointed out, much of this speculation is projection of the biographer's own tastes and predilections. There is no external evidence in support of it anywhere, but the urgency with which an excellent grammar-school education is wished upon Shakspere and the variety of the proposed experiences during the Lost Years, all unsupported by any external evidence, demonstrate an intuitive response on the part of Stratfordians to what is written in the plays as being a guide to those parts of Shakspere's life which are unrecorded. In this, according to Kathman, they are not behaving in the way literary scholars should.

It is revealing to look at the methods adopted by the two schools; Looney dervied his list of characteristics and experiences from the plays and then searched for somebody who fitted the list. In contrast, Stratfordians hold the evidence of the plays in one hand and the recalcitrant facts of Shakespere's life in the other and

try to build a bridge of assumption and speculation between them.

They are in fact doing what Kathamn criticizes Looney for doing, but whereas they have no external evidence, Looney's case is supported in every way by what we know of the life and personality of the Earl of Oxford. If it had not been, he would have looked for someone else. Oxfordians, and many Stratfordians, accept the common observation that authors generally reflect their own personality, experiences, prejudices in their work. Kathman evidently does not. He believes this to be an unscholarly procedure on the part of Oxfordians, but accepts it when it is used by Stratfordians. He is using a double-standard.

Which brings me to Kathman's second major objection—the application by Oxfordians of double-standards and their habit of rationalizing away awkward external evidence which counters their case. He summarizes the external evidence for Shakespere as the author, mentioning specifically the introductory material to the First Folio, and the monument in Stratford church. The problem which he cannot face is that the First Folio material, considered objectively, is not conclusive. It would convince only someone who already accepted the Stratford attribution as fact; the agnostic would say "Not Proven." It is ambiguous and incoherent in a context where it would have cost nobody any trouble to state quite clearly who the author was. Anonymity was not required—quite the reverse—and, in a publishing enterprise of this cost and prestige, undertaken, say Heminge & Condell "only to keep the memory of so wrothy a Friend and Fellow alive," the agnostic would expect that the identity of this worthy man would be clearly stated as a prime consideration. Instead, the identification is framed in scattered allusions. Heminge & Condell identify him as their fellow [actor], Jonson hails him as "Sweet swan of Avon" (which Avon among many?), and Digges refers to "thy Stratford moniment."

This, despite the spelling, leads Stratfordians to the monument in Stratford-on-Avon church, as a crucial piece of their evidence. However, when the agonistic studies the inscriptions on the monument, he would surely conclude that they are masterpieces of ambiguity, and in the Latin, or irrelevance; and that they studiously avoid stating the obvious, namely that this monument is to the memory of William Shakespeare, gentleman, of Stratford and London, author of the plays and poems published under his name. And he or she would be entitled to ask—Why? To which Stratfordians have no answer.

However, in the orthography of the time, *moniment, monument* and *muniment* were interchangeable spellings with two different meanings attached. A "muniment" is a collection of papers and books. There is no record of any collection of papers and books re-

lating to Shakspere the playwright in Stratford-on-Avon at that time, so the agnostic is entitled to ask if Digges was referring not to the unsatisfactory *monument* in Stratford, but to a *muniment* in another Stratford, the one in east London, for example? To which Stratfordians have no answer. To accept the evidence of the First Folio and the Stratford monument as conclusively showing that Shakspere was the playwright, is to apply a double-standard or, to paraphrase Kathman, is to refuse "to apply any except the most trivial critical standards to [Stratfordian] arguments."

Stratfordians' habit of inferring Shakspere's biography from the plays, and acceptance of the First Folio and monument as solid, convincing evidence of his authorship, are the same faults of scholarship as Kathman imputes to Oxfordianism. However, this is simply a "yah-boo" argument and I would like to consider briefly why those who love Shakespeare get embroiled in such disputes.

"It is the nature of an hypothesis, when once a man has conceived it, that it assimilates everything to itself as proper nourishment, and, from the first moment of your begetting it, it generally grows the stronger by everything you see, hear, read, or understand." *Laurence Stern*

Supporters of *all* the protagonists in the authorship question will recognize, if they consider their views objectively, that this precisely describes their mental processes. I stress *all* because the Stratfordian view is a hypothesis like all the rest. There is no solid evidence that anyone wrote the plays, apart from the fact that they exist. A major step forward in the debate will be when literary scholars of all persuasions and none recognize that all the cases are hypotheses and test them in the normal way—by considering the evidence for and against each one, and if the latter is the more convincing, discarding or modifying the hypothesis.

There is, however, a major obstacle to our reaching this Utopia: we are confronting a matter of belief, which operates when factual evidence is inconclusive:

La foi consiste a croire ce que la rasion ne croit pas... Il ne suffit pas qu'une chose soit possible pour la croire. [Faith consists in believing that which reason does not believe... It is not enough that a thing be possible for it to be believed.] *Voltaire*

Faith, or belief, and reason are antithetical, they do not operate in the same mental environment. Individuals believe, sometimes passionately, in one or other of the hypotheses—that Edward de Vere or others created the Plays of Shakespeare. They *believe*, not in the teeth of the evidence, but because reason finds the evidence incomplete, inconclusive and open to conflicting interpretations, as Kathman and I have shown. It is pointless to apply rational arguments against another's belief, but that is what all the protagonists in

the Authorship Debate are attempting to do, and becoming very frustrated in the process.

A rational position, in the face of the inconclusive evidence offered from all sides, would surely be agnostic. "We do not know, but we can bend our collective efforts to finding out, by applying the same intellectual rigor to *all* the hypotheses." I would invite David Kathman to join us in the search, recognizing that both the Oxfordian and Stratfordian hypotheses (and all the others) are simply that and no more—to be tested against the evidence, to destruction or confirmation—but that they all contain elements of truth which should be expanded by research, and weaknesses which should be purged.

Christopher Dams
President, The De Vere Society
Henley-on-Thames, England

David Kathman responds: I appreciate the civil tone of Christopher Dams' letter, but I have to disagree with the bulk of what he says. Mr. Dams accuses me of "the fallacy of arguing from the particular to the general" because I examined specific examples from a specific Oxfordian, namely Charlton Ogburn. I thought I had made it clear that my article was not intended as a comprehensive critiqueof Oxfordianism, but rather as an illustration of some of the major problems I and other Shakespeare scholars have with the way Oxfordians make their arguments. I had to keep the number of examples reasonable due to space considerations (just as Mr. Dams did in his above letter), but I have written at length about virtually every aspect of the Oxfordian case on the Shakespeare Authorship web page or on the Shakespeare Usenet group.

Mr. Dams accuses me of inconsistency because I criticize Oxfordians for basing their case almost entirely on internal evidence from the plays, when orthodox scholars have often used evidence from the plays to speculate on such aspects of Shakespeare's life as the Lost Years. The difference—and it is a major one—is that orthodox scholars do not use such speculation as "evidence as to who wrote the plays"; rather, they use it to supplement the external evidence, all of which indicates that William Shakespeare of Stratford was the author. Oxfordians, on the other hand, treat such internal reconstructions as primary "evidence" (despite their inherent subjectivity), simply rationalizing away all the considerable external evidence when it does not agree with their impressions of who the author must have been.

For example, Mr. Dams asserts baldly that the First Folio and the Stratford monument are "not conclusive" as to who the author is, a conclusion which I find quite bizarre and at odds with all normal standards of historical scholarship. The Folio is entitled "Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies" (not "Mr.

Edward de Vere's..."), and Heminges and Condell specifically say that they have compiled the volume "to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive." William Shakespeare of Stratford was both a fellow actor and a friend of Heminges and Condell, as numerous documents attest, whereas the Earl of Oxford is not known to have had any connection with either man. The Stratford monument was recognized fromthe very beginning as being for the famous poet, William Shakespeare and Oxfordian claims that it was altered in the eighteenth century are without foundation.

The evidence for William Shakespeare's authorship of his plays is much more abundant than the comparable evidence for virtually any other contemporary playwright. Oxfordia try to cast doubt on this evidence by allegations of forgery, dark hints of hidden meanings, or simply declaring that the evidence is "doubtful" for no other reason than it conflicts with what Oxfordians wish to believe. For those of us who deal on a regular basis with the facts and documents of Elizabethan theater history, such attempts to substitute speculation and subjective interpretations for documentary evidence ring hollow indeed.

To the Editor:

Going through David Kathman's attack on *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* and its author, I was stunned into silence by what struck me as a demonstration that those with whom the decision rested at the *Review* were bent upon doing me in even at the cost of whatever commitment they might feel to the truth in the matter of the Shakespeare authorship. I saw no other interpretation to put upon the publication of Kathman's broadside. I wrote that perhaps I should have been forewarned by the studied disparagement of all the Ogburns' works in Warren Hope's bibliography of *The Shakespeare Controversy*.

In response, the *Review* editor observed that David Kathman had done what no other spokesman for the Stratfordian had ventured to do—engage Oxfordians in a debate on specifics in a journal of wide and elect distribution. What struck me in his reply was that no slighted hint of any such purpose was conveyed in the *Review*, which left its readers to suppose for six months that Kathman's onslaught was printed on the same basis as other contributions, as being sound and worthwhile. Yet the point the editor makes is surely a valid one. Kathman has given us the chance to show that the case for the Stratfordian consists of attempts at deflection from the facts and abusive treatment of those who would bring those facts to the fore.

Kathman sets the stage for his argument with a mistatement of fact. In his first sentence he declares that "William Shakespeare was baptized in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564, and was buried in the same town on April 25, 1616." The man of whom he is

speaking was baptized and buried not as Shakespeare but as Shakspere, and that rendering of the name in Stratford was "fairly uniform," according to Sir E.K. Chambers. William was married as Shaxpere on one document, Shagsper on the other, naturally without any exception to them being taken by the groom, who by every indication was illiterate. His father's name was spelled Shakspeyr by one town official, Shaxpeare by another. It was never Shakespeare, according to Chambers. In the Stratfordian's six purported attempts at a signature (in different hands, by the way), none can be read as "Shakespeare." Until we get to the will, it is, according to Chambers, "Shakspe," "Shakspe" and "Shakspe"—these on legal documents. Even on the monument in Trinity Church, the crowning masterpiece of ambivalence, it is Shakspeare, with a short "a" in the first syllable.

Let us come now to Kathman's specific charges against *The Mysterious William Shakespeare.*

"Ogburn," he writes, "makes a similarly false claim (Sir Sidney Lee having backed up the fomer) when he insists that those who occasionally hyphenated Shakespeare's name in print can only have been showing that they recognized Shakespeare as a pseudonym." And so I say again. I was not speaking of names clearly of two parts, like Fitz-Geoffrey that Kathman feels compelled to bring in. The other instances of such hyphenation he cites simply reflect idiosyncracies on the part of an individual. If Allde occasionally rendered his name All-de, what of it? If "Henslowe's writers wrote a play about Sir John Oldcastle in response to the success of Falstaff" and rendered the name Sir John Old-Castle, it was because that was the name originally given Falstaff; "my old lad of the castle," the Prince calls Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*. I go into this because I see no concern in Kathman's strictures for arriving at the truth but only a slick lawyer's brief defending a dogma enshrined in academe by traducing those who, on the overwhelming strength of the evidence, changed their minds as to the identity of the writer.

In refuting Kathman on this issue, I return to what I originally wrote about the hyphenation of the name William Shakespeare.

"Of the 32 editions of Shakespeare's plays published before the First Folio of 1623 in which an author is named at all, the name was hyphenated in 15. It was hyphenated in the *Sonnets*, in *A Lover's Complaint* and in the collection of Shakespeare's poems published in 1640. It was hyphenated by John Davies of Hereford in his crucial poem addressing the dramatist as 'Our English Terence,' by Shakespeare's fellow dramatist, John Webster, in his appraisal of contemporary playwrights, in two of the four dedicatory poems in the First Folio and by the epigrammatist of 1639 who wrote "Shake-speare, we must be silent in our praise,/'Cause our encomi-

ums can but blast thy bays,"—and it would be interesting to hear Mr. Kathman's explanation why such caution should have had to be exercised in connection with a Stratfordian Shakespeare. We may add that Oxford's crest as Lord Bulbeck, as Sir Derek Jacobi recalls, was a lion brandishing a broken spear while the sobriquet of Pallas Athena, patron goddess of Athens, home of the theater, was *Hasti-vribrans*, the Spear-shaker.

Kathman quotes me as having stated that "apart from the entry in the burial register, Shakspere's death (in 1616) as far as the record shows went entirely unremarked" and in an age "when the passing of noted poets called for copious elegies from their fellows." That is what I stated because it is the fact. To dispute it, Kathman cites John Taylor's listing of Shakespeare among the deceased poets in 1620, though what that has to do with it is difficult to see. Chiefly he relies on William Basse's "On Mr. Wm. Shakespeare, he died in April 1616." There is, however, no evidence whatever that Basse's poem was written before Shakspere had been dead six years. Clearly it was occasioned by the Oxford student's having come upon the monument to "Shakspeare" in the church at Stratford, on which the date of Shakspere's death is given. (The point of Basse's poem is that Spencer, Chaucer and Beaumont should make room for Shakespeare in their "threefold tomb," which is to say in Westminster Abbey. Ben refers to the appalling proposal in the First Folio and dismisses it on the curious grounds that Shakespeare is "a monument without a tomb.") The fact remains as stated in my book. In an age when the passing of outstanding poets elicited copious elegies from their fellows, the death of Will Shakspere went, so far as the record shows, entirely unremarked except for the brief entry in the Stratford burial record. Ben Jonson, who loved Shake-speare "on this side idolatry" had not a word to say on Shakespeare's death. Interestingly, when Shakespeare's son-in-law died, the burial register read: "Johannes Hall medicus peritissimus." If Dr. Hall was memorialized as "most skillful physician," it would be interesting to have Kathman's explanation of why, if Will Shakspere were Britain's triumph, as Ben Jonson would proclaim Shake-speare to be, "the Soul of the Age" who "was not of an age but for all time," he should merit in the burial register only "gent." At the same time, Kathman might explain how it is that, while William Shakespeare was to receive such praise as no other writer ever has from as distinguished a contemporary as Ben Jonson, no one of whom we have heard reported during the dramatist's lifetime ever having met, seen or had any communication with an author, poet or dramatist by that name. And the two or three who recalled him years later did so in a few words telling us nothing of him.

Indeed, much as Kathman

makes of Shakspere's having been an actor, the fact remains that the only time we see a Shakespeare on a stage is in John Davies's poem addressed "To Our English Terence M(aste) Will Shakespeare" in which we read:

Some say (Good Will) which I, in sport do sing,
Hast thou not played some Kingly parts in sport,
Thou hadst been a companion for a King
And been a King among the meaner sort.

What I wrote was that "This is the only reference by a contemporary that tells us anything whatever about 'Shake-speare' as an actor and what it tells us is that he 'played kingly parts in sport' and thus lost the chance to be 'a companion to a king.' This could not possibly have been the conventional Shakespeare, offspring of an impoverished home of illiterate parents in a provincial village who become a busy professional actor and theatrical manager. The playwright/actor of whom Davies wrote can hardly have been other than a nobleman who sacrificed his standing at court to his addiction to the theater, which led him to sneak off and take royal parts under his assumed name." Kathman's contortions to get around this explicit implication would try an eel's back, but the facts remain: the actor could not have been the Stratfordian.

Why was "Shake-speare" called "our English Terence"? Dr. Kathman could supply the answer but might be coy in doing so. It is that "comedies bearing Terence's name," as Roger Ascham, Queen Elizabeth's tutor wrote, repeating "what is well known... were written by worthy Scipio and wise Laelius." In other words, Terence, born a slave in Carthage and adopted by a Roman Senator who freed him, served as front man for the authors of comedies in which, as Ascham declared, "doth sound in mine ear the pure fine talk of... the flower of the worthiest nobility that ever Rome bred." No parallel here, Dr. Kathman?

If the Stratfordian could not have been the actor, how do we explain the reference to Shakespeare by the actors Heminge and Condell as "so worthy a friend and fellow"? In the then current usage, "William Shakespeare" was indeed a fellow shareholder of Heminge's and Condell's, in the Globe Theater, we read in a record of 1635. This and the mortgage he acquired on the Blackfriars gatehouse in 1613 would surely have been his only connection with the theater.

Surely, no one familiar with his record as it has come down to us could see anything of the actor in Will Shakspere, of whom we read in a recent publication by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust that "Here in Stratford he seems merely to have been a man of the world, buying up property, laying in ample stocks of barley and malt when others were starving, selling off his surpluses and pursuing debtors in court and conniving, as

it seems, in the Welcombe enclosures." For generations no citizen of Stratford of whom we have heard ever suggested that he was an actor, any more than that he was an author. In an account of his travels in Warwickshire, published in 1773, the Reverend Dr. Richard Graves reported that "All the idea which the country people have of that great genius"--William Shakespeare—"is that he excelled in smart repartee and selling of bargains." Shakespeare's first biographer, Nicholas Rowe, wrote in 1709 that he was curious as to "what sort of part" his subject "used to play" but "tho' I have inquir'd I could never meet with any account of him in this way, than that the top of his performance was the Ghost in his own Hamlet"—and can we doubt that this was a witty tip-off to his having been the stand-in for the author—a shade—in his own village? To top it all, Shakspere could not have read the parts assigned to him, being plainly illiterate. The records of an actor William Shakespeare arise from the disguised appearances on the stage of Edward de Vere, a literary genius unable to resist his passion for the theater, in dire conflict though it was with his noble forebears—precedent earls saluted in the historical dramas: "See, where Oxford comes." "Is not Oxford here another anchor?" and "brave Oxford, wondrous well-beloved!" The poet confesses in the Sonnets that he has made himself "a motley to the view" and, concerned by the attraction the theater had for young Southampton, warns "For I am shamed by that which I bring forth, and so should you, to love things nothing worth."

Let me come to the central issue: the reason why doubts about Will Shakspere's authorship of the works of Shakespeare began to be voiced not long after Stratford began to be honored as the poet-dramatist's birthplace. It is because Will Shakspere, from what the record tells us of him, is about the last kind of man to have written the works of Shakespeare, from what these tell us of their author. "The man of letters is in truth ever writing his own biography," Anthony Trollope observed. As Jean de la Fontaine declared: "By the work one knows the workman." And Anatole France: "The artist either communicates his own life to his creations or else merely whittles out puppets and dresses up dolls." We have it on the novelist Samuel Butler's word that "Every man's work... is always a portrait of himself" and on the poet Wallace Stevens's that "A man's work is autobiographical in spite of every subterfuge." This is why to Ralph Waldo Emerson, who could not "marry" the reputed Shakespeare with his verse, considered the origin of the immortal works "the first of all literary problems" and why three outstanding literary figures of our past would have none of the Stratfordian—now joined in their disbelief by Vladimir Nabokov and Orson Welles, among others. Should it

be argued that many more established writers stand by Will Shakspere, I warrant that nearly to a man they would change their minds if put into full possession of the known facts.

For the fact is that virtually all the poet-dramatist tells us of himself is in direct contravention of his having been Will Shakspere of Stratford, and is consistent with his having been Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford—admired as a playwright in his own right, the poet of early verse entirely compatible with what we should imagine the young Shakespeare's to have been, the two being on the whole indistinguishable. "De Vere," Sir Derek Jacobi observes, "had all the qualifications." Michael York is convinced of Oxford's authorship, Sir John Gielgud nearly so, I think. Future students will hold that had the monument to "Shakespeare" not been erected in Trinity Church, Stratford, the official fiction of Shakespeare's authorship would never have taken hold and the clearly illiterate "malster and money-lender" (James Joyce) and "the lout from Stratford" (Henry James) never have been heard of by posterity.

Charlton Ogburn
Beaufort, South Carolina

David Kathman responds:

I am sorry to see that Charlton Ogburn has chosen to reply to me by merely repeating his assertions rather than by actually addressing the points I made in my article. Space does not permit me to properly address every one of his claims and allegations, but I would like to respond to the major ones.

Mr. Ogburn first charges me with propagating a "mistatement of fact" when I wrote that William Shakespeare was baptized in Stratford on April 26, 1564 and buried there on April 25, 1616; he insists that the man's name was actually "Shakspere", and implicitly insists that this alleged difference is significant. In my article "The Spelling and Pronunciation of Shakespeare's Name" (cited in note 2 of the original article), I gathered together all surviving written mentions of Shakespeare's name between 1564 and 1616 and showed that there is no significant difference in spelling patterns between non-literary references (i.e. to the Stratford man) and literary references (i.e. to Shakespeare as an author). In both contexts, the most common spelling by far is "Shakespeare", and in both contexts "Shakespeare"-type spellings (with the first 'e') well outnumber "Shakspere"-type spellings (without the first 'e'). Mr. Ogburn and other Oxfordians choose data selectively to support their preconceived notions on this issue, notions which are refuted when the data is looked at as a whole. Mr. Ogburn also simply repeats, parrot-like, his assertions about hyphenation. As I stated in the article, though, the idea that hyphenation has anything to do with pseudonyms is completely unsup-

ported by the evidence and completely unknown outside the anti-Stratfordian literature; hyphenated real names far outnumber the occasional hyphenated pseudonym which can be found in the Elizabethan era. Shouting louder does not change these facts.

Mr. Ogburn recites the standard Oxfordian assertions about the author of the plays being the best-educated man of his day and intimately familiar with court life, when the best evidence (which Mr. Ogburn consistently ignores) indicates otherwise. Nobody during Shakespeare's lifetime or for a century afterward ever accused him of being well-educated; on the contrary, they consistently portrayed him as an unlearned, natural wit, as in Milton's famous comment that Shakespeare "warble[d] his native wood-notes wild". The classical scholar J. A. K. Thomson in his book *Shakespeare and the Classics* (1952) found that Shakespeare actually used remarkably few classical allusions for the time, and that those he did use were standard Elizabethan fare. Paul Clarkson and Clyde Warren, in an exhaustive study of legalisms in the work of seventeen Elizabethan playwrights (*The Law of Property in Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama*), found that Shakespeare was average at best in the number and accuracy of his legal allusions. Mr. Ogburn asserts that Shakespeare's "point of view was more consistently that of the nobility than that of any other writer of consequence, ever," but Tudor social and court historian Muriel St. Clare Byrne came to a different conclusion: in her article on "The Social Background" in *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies* (1940), Byrne showed that Shakespeare was apparently unfamiliar with many rituals of court life, and that many of his allegedly "noble" households (such as the Capulets) much more closely resemble middle-class homes such as the one Shakespeare grew up in.

Mr. Ogburn goes on to recite the same tired claims about how William Shakespeare of Stratford could not have written the plays, quoting his "authorities" very selectively and using the same double standard I wrote about in my article to make Shakespeare look as bad as humanly possible. He dismisses my straightforward interpretation of the Davies poem as "contortions," ignoring my argument that Davies could not have been addressing Oxford; he continues to arbitrarily brush aside the documentary record of Shakespeare's stage career in order to repeat (even more vehemently) his fantastic assertion that Shakespeare of Stratford did not act on the public stage, but that Oxford did. He once again asserts baldly that Shakespeare's was "an age when the passing of outstanding poets elicited copious eulogies from their fellows," completely ignoring my deconstruction of his alleged examples and my demonstration that Shakespeare's death was actually the best-memorialized of any playwright's until Ben

Jonson twenty years later. Mr. Ogburn here resembles nothing more than a child with his hands clamped over his ears, singing loudly to avoid listening to something he does not want to hear. There is much room for dialogue between Oxfordians and mainstream Shakespeare scholars, but Mr. Ogburn's petulant repetition of his assertions without any attempt to address my counterarguments does nothing to further the discussion.

To the Editor:

Charlton Ogburn's sad letter shows his preference for the manufacture of melodramatic conjectures over the collection of mundane facts.

Thanks to the whims of the U.S. Postal Service, he read Dr. Kathman's piece, conjectured I might somehow be maliciously behind it, and wrote up his letter of complaint before I even became aware of the existence of the article. If I had been given the opportunity to comment on the article before its publication, I would have urged that it be retitled "Why I Am Not An Ogburnian." Dr. Kathman never even faces much less refutes the case for Oxford as Shakespeare. J. Thomas Looney's *Shakespeare Identfied* was the first and remains the best statement of that case. Barring the discovery of documentary evidence that either confirms or topples Looney's compellingly constructed circumstantial case, that is the case that needs to be answered.

Worse, Dr. Kathman plays a kind of shell game with the categories of evdience that is unpleasant to look upon. He states that he and other "literary historians" rely on "external evidence," including such things as the printed front matter to the First Folio. Charlton Ogburn and other Oxfordians are said to rely on "internal evidence," including such things as Shakespeare's printed plays. All printed materials—the front matter of the First Folio and the plays —are *secondary sources*, for the very good reason that there have been hands other than the author's intervening between us and the author's words.

Dr. Kathman further confuses the issue by stating there is no "documentary evidence" to connect Oxford with Shakespeare's plays and poems. He calls here for a *primary source*—a document—knowing full well, we must imagine, that if such a source existed there would be no authorship question. We can reasonably expect that even Dr. Kathman, with all his confusion about the nature of evidence, would become an Oxfordian if there were documentary evidence proving that Oxford was Shakespeare. Failing that, he is content to say he is not an Oxfordian because he is a Stratfordian—all that his lengthy performance amounts to.

Warren Hope
Havertown, Pennsylania

The Abysm of Time:

The Chronology of Shakespeare's Plays

Peter R. Moore

> The ... use of transcribing these things, is to shew what absurdities men for ever run into, when they lay down an hypothesis, and afterward seek for arguments in the support of it. Richard Farmer, *An Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare* (London, 1767, 1821), 30.

In 1930 Sir Edmund Chambers published the third and final version of his dating scheme for Shakespeare's plays in Volume I of his *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, his two earlier versions being found in his article on Shakespeare in the 1911 edition of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* and in Volume III of his 1923 *The Elizabethan Stage*. In 1980 Ernest Honigmann, in *Shakespeare's Impact on His Contemporaries*, examined Chambers' chronology, noted that nobody had attempted to replicate the process, pointed out several flaws in it, and said that Chambers' start date was too late, that the plays really began earlier.

Honigmann's views on Chambers' lateness are supported by many other scholars; in fact virtually every post-1930 student of the dating issue agrees that Chambers' dates are too late. These dissenters include Peter Alexander,[1] Andrew Cairncross,[2] F.P. Wilson,[3] John Crow, T. W. Baldwin,[4] William Matchett,[5] Oscar James Campbell and Edward Quinn,[6] and Russell Fraser,[7] — a list that could be expanded considerably. In fact, it is now completely orthodox to say that Chambers' chronology is too late, and to grant that his scholarship is a bit dated.

Peter Moore has published several articles in Notes and Queries, *including "Did Ralegh Try to Kill Essex?" (Dec. 94) and "The Date of F.B.'s Verse Letter to Ben Jonson" (Sep. 95). He has upcoming articles in* Notes and Queries *and* Neophilologus.

In this article I will support Honigmann and the others, and it may be asked what I have to offer, given that I seem to be singing in a chorus of near unanimity. To begin with, I will add some new points to Honigmann's, both about the chronology as a whole and about some individual plays. Otherwise I wish to examine an astonishing fact — nearly every authority who discusses the subject agrees that Chambers' dates are too late, and yet those dates still stand.

Chambers spreads Shakespeare's plays fairly evenly across the period 1590 to 1613. John Crow revised Chambers' Shakespeare article in the *Britannica* around 1960, noting that recent "scholarship has found a tendency to push back the dates of the earlier plays [from the dates given by Chambers] ... As, however, Chambers' [*William Shakespeare*] remains the standard scholarly life of Shakespeare, it is convenient to retain his order and chronology."[8] In the 1974 *Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans moves *1 Henry VI* back to 1589-90 and *Merry Wives* back three years to 1597, but his dates for the other plays stay within one year of Chambers'. The *Britannica's* Shakespeare article was completely rewritten in the early 1980s by John Russell Brown and T. J. B. Spencer who move the start of the *Henry VI* trilogy back one year to 1589, shift *Twelfth Night* forward one year, and otherwise leave Chambers' scheme intact. The 1986 Oxford *William Shakespeare, The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, does not provide the usual chronological table of the plays, but estimates that Shakespeare's works begin in the late 1580s or early 1590s. However the prefaces to the individual plays simply rearrange Chambers' sequence slightly, moving *Titus Andronicus*, *Taming of the Shrew*, and *Merry Wives* around a bit; otherwise Wells and Taylor stick with Chambers.

Moreover, as Honigmann notes (55), no one has attempted to reconstruct the entire dating scheme as Chambers did. Anyone today who wants to see the dating evidence for one of Shakespeare's plays looks in an up-to-date work, such as a recent edition of the play in question, rather than at Chambers. But anyone who wants to see the standard dating scheme built up from scratch must still consult Chambers. This point is critically important because so many plays are dated with respect to one another. For example, most editors say that the date of *Hamlet* can be established partly by the fact that it is later than *Julius Caesar*. But when was *Julius Caesar* written? Attempts to date individual plays inevitably rest on assumptions about the solidity of the dating scheme for all of the plays, which carries us right back to Chambers.

In short, Chambers dead is stronger than his successors alive. And now we will look at Chambers' methods and at the flaws in those methods. We will then consider whether Shakespeare's plays may have begun in the 1580s and whether they continue until 1613. Finally

we will examine the dating evidence for a number of specific plays.

Chambers' "Given"

Chambers explains in his *Britannica* article that his chronology:

> is certainly not a demonstration, but in the logical sense an hypothesis which serves to colligate the facts and is consistent with itself and with the known events of Shakespeare's external life.

In *Elizabethan Stage* Chambers offers the "conjecture" that:

> Shakespeare's first dramatic job, which earned him the ill will of [Robert] Greene [in the 1592 *Greene's Groatsworth*], was the writing or re-writing of *I Henry VI* ... in the early spring of 1592. (III.130)

In *William Shakespeare* Chambers again affirms his belief that Shakespeare's dramatic debut was recorded in *Greene's Groatsworth* (I.58-9), but research performed in the 1920s by Peter Alexander on *2 & 3 Henry VI* forced Chambers to move back his start date. That Chambers was willing to change his widely publicized opinion is to his credit as a scholar,[9] but he changed his start date as little as the new evidence allowed. He first moved the start to 1591, "the earliest year to which there is ground for ascribing any dramatic work by Shakespeare that we know of" (I.59). But then, in his table of dates, he puts the two Henry VI plays at 1590-1.[10] In the same work, Chambers spoke of:

> fitting this order [of the plays] into the time allowed by the span of Shakespeare's dramatic career (I.253).

He also writes of fitting pieces of evidence:

> into the facts of Shakespeare's dramatic career as given in chapter iii. There is much of conjecture, even as regards the order [of the plays], and still more as regards the ascriptions to particular years. These are partly arranged to provide a fairly even flow of production (I.269).

In short, the bedrock of Chambers' chronology, the "given" to which all that follows must conform — as in a proof in geometry — is that the sequence of Shakespeare's plays must be spread across the years 1590 to 1613.[11] The unhappy result is the method of Procrustes,

described by Ben Jonson to William Drummond as, "that tyrant's bed, where some who were too short were racked, others too long cut short". This is what Chambers' dating scheme amounts to: an attempt to force the plays, in their proper sequence[12] — early, middle, late — into the span of 1590-1613.

I will argue that Chambers' dates for Shakespeare's plays are several years too late from start to finish. In other words, the plays started well back in the 1580s, and, as far as the evidence shows, ended well before 1613. Moreover, I will argue that only one play can be dated with reasonable firmness to a period as narrow as eighteen months, namely *Comedy of Errors* to mid 1587 to December 1588. Any table of dates that assigns each play to a particular year, no matter how environed with cautions and qualifications about the uncertainty of it all, is mere wishful thinking.

Chambers' Errors

Chambers committed four general errors in his construction of Shakespeare's chronology, all of which are neatly summarized by Honigmann (70-8). What is most notable about these four errors is that Chambers knew that he was in the wrong on three of them. Here are the four items: relying on Francis Meres' 1598 list; interpreting Philip Henslowe's "ne" as "new"; treating flimsy earliest possible dates as firm evidence; and assuming that Shakespeare improved other men's plays.

Francis Meres lists six comedies and six tragedies of Shakespeare's in his 1598 *Palladis Tamia*, and Chambers follows Edmond Malone in supposing that 1598 is the earliest possible date for plays not named by Meres. Consequently Chambers writes "No mention by Meres" against eight plays in his table of boundary dates (I.246-50), despite the fact that he knew or believed that the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Taming of the Shrew*, both omitted by Meres, were earlier than 1598. Moreover, as Chambers could hardly help but know, the symmetrically minded Meres devised his lengthy list of comparisons by balancing exactly so many works of one sort against exactly so many of another, e.g., six comedies against six tragedies. Now Meres maintains the balance of his entry on Shakespeare by lumping the two parts of *Henry IV* together as one tragedy, and so he could easily have listed *Henry VI* as another tragedy and *Shrew* as another comedy — unless he was unaware of these (and other) plays, or unless he was not pretending to be exhaustive.

Philip Henslowe, businessman and theater owner, kept a sort of account book from 1592 to 1603 in which are found hundreds of entries relating to the stage. Several score plays listed by Henslowe have beside

them the word "ne", including *1 Henry VI* for 3 March 1592 and *Titus Andronicus* for 24 January 1594. Chambers and his contemporaries took Henslowe's "ne" to mean "new" in some sense or other, even though they were aware that the mysterious term sometimes appears next to plays that were not new, though they might conceivably have been newly revised. And so Chambers gained questionable earliest possible dates for two more of Shakespeare's plays, as well as for the non-Shakespearean plays so marked, thereby locking dozens of dramas into the period after 1591. But a more complete edition of Henslowe's account book than the version relied upon by Chambers was published in 1961, edited by R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert, which includes lengthy extracts from Henslowe's pawnbroking business. Henslowe frequently describes the condition of the pledges left with him by borrowers, often describing clothes and suchlike as "new" or "newe", but never as "ne". And so the plausible, if questionable, old assumption that "ne" meant "new" shifts into the category of implausible, particularly given that "ne" was still a current word in English, meaning approximately what it does in French, "not" or "nor". Henslowe's "ne" may mean no more than that something, probably connected with money, did not occur at the performances in question. More to the point, the enigmatic "ne" can no longer be considered to indicate an earliest possible date, and so dozens of plays, including two of Shakespeare's, lose their moorings and are free to drift backward.

It is often observed that the evidence available to scholars for dating plays from Shakespeare's period is of uneven quality. In particular, latest possible dates tend to be hard evidence, such as a record of performance, entry in the Stationers' Register, or a play's actual appearance in print with the year on the title page. Earliest possible dates, on the other hand, tend to be weak stuff, such as absence from Francis Meres' list, the presence of Philip Henslowe's "ne", dubious topical allusions (on which more later), possible echoes of one writer's words by another author when it is not at all clear who wrote first, and the like. Honigmann (78) tactfully states that Chambers "failed to recognise" this very obvious fact, but Chambers did indeed know it:

> As a rule the initial dates are much less certain than the terminal ones. (I.245)

Chambers goes on to provide examples of what he means, but he gives earliest possible dates to nineteen plays in his table of boundary dates. Ten are from Meres and Henslowe, and most of the others are no better. The exceptions to this rule are *Henry V* (on which see below), *Henry VIII*, and *Two Noble Kinsmen*. The last two plays are generally agreed to have

been begun by Shakespeare but finished by John Fletcher, and Chambers' earliest possible dates for the two refer to their completion by Fletcher. Unfortunately we have no evidence that the two men collaborated side by side, and so knowing when Fletcher worked on these plays is of no help in deciding when Shakespeare wrote his parts.

Scholars assumed from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth that Shakespeare routinely rewrote plays by other authors, that is, that he was something of a plagiarist during the first half of his career. In particular, *2 & 3 Henry VI*, as we find them in the First Folio of 1623, were believed to be Shakespeare's upgrades of *The First part of the Contention*, published in 1594, and *The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke*, published in 1595; that Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, published in 1604, was a revision of what came to be called the *Ur-Hamlet*, a play written no later than 1589 and published in 1603; that Shakespeare's *King John* was based on *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England*, published in 1591; and that Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* was a new version of *Taming of A Shrew*, published in 1594. In these matters, Chambers was a man of his era, but scholarship moves on. *The First part of the Contention* and *The true Tragedie* were shown to be inferior versions of *2 & 3 Henry VI*; the 1603 edition of *Hamlet* was proven to be a piracy of Shakespeare's play, not of the mythical *Ur-Hamlet* (see below); Shakespeare's *Shrew* is overwhelmingly viewed by modern scholars as the source for the other *Shrew*; and though the debate still rages on the two plays of *King John*, the balance of opinion is swinging in favor of Shakespeare's play as the original (see below). In short, Shakespeare is now seen as the victim of imitators, and hence another support for Chambers' late dates crumbles.

We have been looking at the earliest possible dates that Chambers used to backstop his late dates, and we have seen that his props collapse one after another. But we gain further insight into his chronology by looking at the generally solid latest possible dates for thirty-three of Shakespeare's dramas (I.246-50).[13] In order to cram Shakespeare's plays into the chosen bracket of 1590-1613, Chambers uses his flimsy earliest possible dates to force the great majority of the plays to within one or two years of their respective latest possible dates. More specifically, he assigns the composition of twenty-seven of those thirty-three plays to within two years of their latest possible dates. As the fragile props shatter, common sense tells us that most of those plays must have been written earlier than the dates given by Chambers.

Did Shakespeare's Plays Begin in the 1580s?

We will now turn to the 1580s. Chambers would not place any of Shakespeare's plays earlier than 1590, and the boldest post-Chambers

scholars generally do no more than place "?1589" next to one or two of Shakespeare's earliest plays. And, indeed, Chambers might argue that no evidence exists of any Shakespearean activity from the earlier decade. We shall see that this is not entirely true, but first we need to establish the historical context. How much do we know about theatrical activities in the 1580s? If Shakespeare was active in that decade, what traces should we expect to find?

Edmund Chambers provides this description of our knowledge of the history of the English stage before 1592 (that is, Before Henslowe).

> The fragmentary nature of the evidence makes a dramatic history of the period extremely difficult. The work of even the best-known writers is uncertain in extent and chronology, and much of it has come down in mutilated form. Marlowe's authorship of *Tamburlaine* is a matter of inference; it is only by an accident that we know the *Spanish Tragedy* to be Kyd's. (I.55)

F. P. Wilson offered this opinion in 1951.

> Admittedly, few of the plays acted in the fifteen-eighties have survived. So serious are the losses that the historian of the Elizabethan drama — especially of this period, before the practice of printing plays to be read became popular — often feels himself to be in the position of a man fitting together a jigsaw, most of the pieces of which are missing.[14]

Twenty years later G. E. Bentley discussed why he began his examination of playwrights in Shakespeare's era in the year 1590.

> Perhaps I ought to explain the chronological limits which I have set [i.e., 1590-1642]. ... Before 1590 ... records are so scanty, and such a large proportion apply to amateur or semiprofessional theatrical activities, that conclusions about working conditions must be very shaky. One cannot even be sure that a profession of play-writing had yet developed.[15]

And so our difficulty in finding evidence of Shakespeare's activities before 1590 is easily explained by the fact that, in terms of theatrical history, the 1580s are the Dark Ages. And yet we have real evidence that Shakespeare was writing in that decade, evidence that was known to Chambers, but which he ignored or distorted because it did not fit his preconceptions.

We may begin with the poem Ben Jonson wrote in praise of

Shakespeare for the 1623 First Folio:

> For, if I thought my judgement were of yeeres,
> I should commit thee surely with thy peeres,
> And tell, how farre thou didst our Lily out-shine,
> Or sporting Kid, or Marlowes mighty line.

Jonson is saying that in the matter of years, or time, Shakespeare is a peer of Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe; in other words, they were all contemporary. Most of Lyly's plays are from the 1580s, and though he lived until 1606, his involvement in the theater ended in 1590. Marlowe started as a writer in the 1580s and was killed in 1593. Kyd's plays began in the 1580s, and he died in 1594. Jonson had a strong sense of theatrical development, as indicated by his complaint in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair* that *Titus Andronicus* and *The Spanish Tragedy* were out of date. In his "Ode to Himself" of around 1629 he made a similar sneer at *Pericles*. Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe were men whose literary careers ended before Jonson's began, all were writers of the eighties, and these are the men Jonson chose to call Shakespeare's contemporaries.

Titus Andronicus is dated 1593-4 by Chambers, who calls it Shakespeare's sixth play, in which the 1985 *Encylopaedia Britannica* concurs. The Induction to Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, written for a performance before King James on "the one and thirtieth day of October, 1614", criticizes "He that will swear, *Jeronimo* [*The Spanish Tragedy*] or [*Titus*] *Andronicus*, are the best plays yet, shall pass unexcepted at here, as a man whose judgment shews it is constant, and hath stood still these five and twenty or thirty years." In other words, Jonson is proclaiming that those two plays were written between 1584 and 1589.[16] Moreover, Jonson's sequence of titles and dates is *Spanish Tragedy*/twenty-five and *Titus Andronicus*/thirty, implying that the former was written around 1589 and the latter around 1584.

Chambers cannot accept Jonson's clear statement, so he dismisses it as "rather vague" (I.319). He and his followers rely on Henslowe's "ne" next to a record of performance of *Titus* in January 1594, but he acknowledges several problems. The title page of the first Quarto of *Titus* states that it was acted by Pembroke's Men, which collapsed in August 1593, being forced to sell their costumes and scripts. Further, *A Knack to Know a Knave*, known to have been performed in June 1592, has a clear reference to *Titus*.[17] The lack of value of this particular example of Henslowe's "ne" is indicated by these items, known to Chambers, as well as by the fact that Henslowe put "ne" next to a performance of *Jeronimo/Spanish Tragedy* of January 1597.

Let us return to the alleged vagueness of Ben Jonson, a writer known as a stickler in matters of detail. We know the date of the royal

performance of *Bartholomew Fair* because Jonson put it in the Induction. We have little trouble dating Jonson's early plays because he put the year of first performance for each play in his *Works* of 1616. The Induction to Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* of late 1600 implies that *The Spanish Tragedy* was then twelve years old, putting it back to 1588. This date is quite consistent with his 1614 statement that *The Spanish Tragedy* was then about 25 years old, and the best estimate of modern scholars is that it was written around 1588 or 1589. The Induction to *Cynthia's Revels* also says that it has been twenty years since "Monsieur" (the brother of the King of France) came to England. Monsieur made two trips to England in pursuit of the elusive hand of Queen Elizabeth, one in 1579, the other in 1581, and so, taking the average, Jonson is right on target. When Jonson died in 1637 he left an unfinished play, *The Sad Shepherd,* and his friend Lord Falkland confirmed that Jonson was working on it just before he died.[18] Its Prologue opens with the announcement that the author has been writing public entertainments for 40 years, and from other sources we know that Jonson's first full play appeared around 1597. Jonson's dates are accurate, even from his deathbed.

In sum, objective scholarship would place *Titus Andronicus* no later than 1589.

I noted earlier that Honigmann refers to most of the earliest possible dates given by Chambers as "soft", while Chambers himself rates them as "much less certain" than his latest possible dates. But it is instructive to examine a number of solid earliest possible dates that Chambers excluded from consideration, as these reveal most clearly how he operated. I begin with a trivial example to provide contrast to the nontrivial examples that follow.

Romeo and Juliet is based on a poem that was published in 1562, but Chambers omits that datum from his table of earliest possible dates because neither he nor anyone else thinks that *Romeo and Juliet* could have been written anywhere near so early. This particular omission is reasonable, but the spirit behind it calls for ignoring evidence that does not fit one's preconceptions.

Most of Shakespeare's English history plays are based on Holinshed's Chronicles of 1587, which ought therefore to be the earliest possible date for *1, 2, & 3 Henry VI, Richard III, Richard II,* and *1 & 2 Henry IV.* But Chambers was unwilling to contemplate the possibility of Shakespeare writing in the 1580s, and so he left all but two of these plays without any earliest possible date. In other words, the earliest possible date is before 1590, therefore Chambers ignores it. Chambers does give an earliest possible date of March 1592 for *1 Henry VI,* but that date is based on Henslowe's uninterpretable "ne," Otherwise Chambers

offers 1595 as the earliest possible date for *Richard II* based on a weak theory that Samuel Daniel saw a performance that year. Unfortunately nothing whatsoever indicates that the performance Daniel may or may not have seen was of a new play or of one written some years earlier.

King John is likewise based on the 1587 edition of Holinshed, but Chambers believed that Shakespeare's play also used *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, published in 1591, as a source. We will return to the relationship between the two King John plays, but, given his assumptions, Chambers should have listed 1591 as the earliest possible date for *King John*. But Chambers believed that Shakespeare had written twelve plays before *King John*, and so he could not contemplate an earliest possible date of 1591, and so *King John* has no earliest possible date in Chambers' table.

And then there is the interesting case of *Pericles*, published in 1609, which shares two jests virtually word for word with John Day's *Law Tricks*, published in 1608. Chambers' own formidable scholarship proved that *Law Tricks* was written in 1604,[19] and so the earlier assumption that the extremely imitative Day borrowed the two jests from Shakespeare was summarily reversed — Chambers' dating imperatives demanded that Shakespeare be the borrower. But that unsupported assumption should at least have provided Chambers with a good earliest possible date for *Pericles*, namely 1604 (see below for further discussion). But Chambers' view of the Bard's career required him to date *Pericles* as closely as possible to its publication date, so he put it at 1608-9, and omitted any earliest possible date from his table.

This seems like a good place to summarize what we have seen so far. Chambers' 1930 chronology still stands, despite general agreement that it is too late, because no one has undertaken to redo his work. Moreover, Chambers' dates for individual plays, save for minor adjustments, are still found in the reference books. Chambers insists that Shakespeare's career began in 1590 or '91, despite the fact that he and subsequent scholars regard the 1580s as an unrecorded era in which major playwrights left few traces of their work. But Ben Jonson, a man who was extremely precise about the chronology of the English stage, gives us two very strong pieces of evidence that Shakespeare was writing in the 1580s. He classes Shakespeare with three dramatists whose careers ended between 1590 and 1594, and he testifies that *Titus Andronicus* was written between 1584 and 1589. The full implications of Chambers' *a priori* belief that Shakespeare's plays must be spread evenly across the period 1590 to 1613 become apparent as we examine his table of earliest and latest possible dates for Shakespeare's plays. Chambers buttresses his late dates with the useless evidence of Meres and Henslowe, and with the subsequently discredited belief that Shakespeare rewrote the plays of other dramatists, and hence necessar-

ily came after them. Chambers dismisses the earliest possible date of 1587 for most of Shakespeare's English history plays because that date violates his preconceptions. Likewise, and even more tellingly, he ignores 1591 as the earliest possible date for *King John* and 1604 as the earliest date for *Pericles*. We already saw Chambers' dismissal of Ben Jonson's comment on the date of *Titus Andronicus* on specious grounds of vagueness. We now understand exactly how Chambers' dating methods work. He begins his examination of the evidence with his conclusion already determined, namely that the plays were written from 1590 to 1613, and he discards any evidence disagreeable to this outcome. One last point — virtually everyone says that Chambers' chronology is too late, *but no one has ever said that Chambers' dates are too early.*

I observed that nearly every subsequenf commentator agrees that Chambers' dates are too late, and so I should recognize the exceptions. In his 1991 edition of *Shakespeare's Lives*, Samuel Schoenbaum repeats a statement from the original edition of 1970. Noting that some of Chambers' scholarship is obsolete, Schoenbaum remarks:

> His chronology has fared better. ... His findings with respect to the chronology have worn so well that J. G. McManaway, in "Recent Studies in Shakespeare's Chronology," *Shakespeare Survey 3* (1950), could offer only a few modifications.[20]

That is to say, in 1991 Samuel Schoenbaum, dean of American Shakespeare scholars, hailed Chambers' 1930 chronology as being pretty much intact as of 1950! I will rephrase that remark—Schoenbaum said in 1991 that Chambers' sixty-one year old chronology was in fairly good shape forty-one years ago! Schoenbaum's sentence on McManaway's article is impossible by its nature to falsify, but it blatantly ducks the problem, which has loomed ever larger since 1950. And yet Schoenbaum's first sentence on how well Chambers' chronology has fared is, in a sense, entirely correct. As I also observed earlier, Chambers' dates for Shakespeare's plays still stand.

Do Shakespeare's Plays Continue to 1613?

What are the implications for Shakespeare's chronology if his *King John* preceded *The Troublesome Reign of King John* that was printed in 1591, and if other arguments in favor of an early start for Shakespeare are accepted? Honigmann acknowledges that Shakespeare's earliest plays cannot be simply moved back a few years while "the rest of the chronology survives intact":

> But it is not quite so simple: if the first plays are moved back into the 1580s, those of the middle period are also affected, and about half the canon must be re-dated. (54)

Honigmann never suggests that the latter half of the chronology would be unsettled by his strictures on Chambers' methods, but Andrew Cairncross took a more radical approach. Cairncross concludes *The Problem of Hamlet* by proposing a tentative chronology (182-3) that begins before 1589 and closes by placing *Tempest* after 1603. In this section we shall see that Cairncross' boldness in attacking Chambers' end date of 1613 is in full accord with the evidence that Chambers presents, and also with G. Blakemore Evans' 1974 review of that evidence.

Chambers follows his table of boundary dates with a discussion from which I have already extracted several quotes (I.250-69) on the difficulties of fixing Shakespeare's dramatic chronology. He starts by naming the four plays omitted from his table (see note 12), continuing with the remark that:

> for many others, especially in the Jacobean period, a considerable range of dating remains open.

But earlier Chambers gives his opinion on the evidence available for dating the plays that follow *Timon of Athens*, which he places in theatrical year 1607-08:

> The chronology of the plays becomes difficult at this point (I.86)

In other words, Chambers tells us that dating evidence begins to thin out after James I came to the throne in the spring of 1603, and it virtually dries up after 1607.

But perhaps subsequent scholarship has firmed things up, and so we turn to Evans' essay on "Chronology and Sources" in *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Evans (47) cites Chambers as providing the authoritative summation of all earlier scholars of the chronology, he also cites J. G. McManaway's 1950 review of Chambers' endeavors, while his table of dating evidence (48-56) includes the fruits of more recent scholarship. And Evans tells us that, "it will be noticed that the dating set forth below [in the table] becomes somewhat firmer beginning with *Richard II* (1595)" (47). As we glance over Evans' dating table after *Richard II*, he seems to be right. Leaving aside the quality of the evidence, we do find more, and seemingly more precise, material for dating *Romeo and Juliet*,

Midsummer Night's Dream, Merchant of Venice, and so on — until we come to *All's Well,* which Evans places at 1602-03, followed by *Measure for Measure* in 1604, and so on to the end, whereupon we realize that Chambers was absolutely correct. For *All's Well* Evans merely records publication in 1623; *Measure for Measure* performed 1604, published 1623; *Othello* performed in 1604, published 1622; *Macbeth* published 1623; *Antony and Cleopatra* registered in 1608, published 1623; *Coriolanus, Timon,* and *Tempest* were published in 1623.

One way or another Chambers, Cairncross, and Evans support the fading away of Shakespeare after about 1603 (not that the dynastic change seems to have had anything to do with it), and their testimony is reenforced by Kenneth Muir's 1978 *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays.* Muir lists about 110 works as certain or probable sources for Shakespeare, of which slightly less than forty had appeared by 1575.[21] Then come almost seventy works that were published or performed during the period 1576-1604. The most notable concentration within the latter group consists of twelve works published in 1586-90, twenty-one works published in 1591-95, and eleven works published in 1596-1600. Then we find four works from 1601-03, followed by six titles from 1604-11. I will now offer a general observation before going on to the post 1603 items. Shakespeare's reading shows a clear plateau for works published in the period 1586-1600. Even if we fully accept Muir's judgment, Shakespeare's reading or playgoing declined markedly after 1600. Other recent authorities on Shakespeare's sources, most notably Geoffrey Bullough, will be found to agree closely, if not perfectly, with Muir.

Now let us look at the six titles that appeared in 1604-11. [22] Only John Day's *Law Tricks* (performed 1604, published 1608) is called a certain source, namely for two items in *Pericles.* Otherwise we find William Camden's *Remains* (completed by June 1603; published 1605), Samuel Daniel's *Arcadia* (written and performed 1605; published 1606), and three Bermuda shipwreck pamphlets written in 1610 and said to be sources for *The Tempest.* Camden's and Daniel's works are thought to be the sources for two small items in, respectively, *Coriolanus* and *Macbeth.* These five works are said to be probable sources for Shakespeare; none is called a certain source. We can now sharpen the general observation made in the previous paragraph. Muir's scholarship and judgment unite to portray an author who read avidly during the last two decades of the sixteenth century — but who then lost interest in new books and plays.

Muir and various other scholars argue that Shakespeare consulted Camden's *Remains* for one small aspect of the fable of the belly speaking to the other members of the body in the opening scene of *Coriolanus* (I.i.95-139). Shakespeare's version of the fable is believed by Muir and

others to represent a fusion of various versions of this tale, which was so well known that Sir Philip Sidney abbreviated it in his *Defense of Poesy* on the assumption that his readers would be familiar with it: "In the end, to be short (for the tale is notorious, and as notorious that it was a tale) ...".[23] Be that as it may, Camden's work was completed by June 1603 (the date on its dedicatory epistle), and so, as noted in the Arden edition of *Coriolanus* (24), Shakespeare could have read Camden's manuscript. Further, Camden's source was *Policraticus*, written by the twelfth century bishop and philosopher John of Salisbury, printed in 1476 and later. And so Shakespeare may have known it directly or indirectly from John without the aid of Camden. Given that scholars credit Shakespeare with such extensive reading concerning this fable alone — the Arden edition names three other versions known to Shakespeare (29) — there is nothing improbable about such a contention.

Muir himself noticed a similarity between six lines in Daniel's *Arcadia* and six lines in *Macbeth*. But there are two problems with Muir's claim that Shakespeare "was apparently" echoing Daniel. First, the similarity is not so great as to compel any assumption that the two speeches are connected.[24] Second, as is so often the case in these matters, Muir says absolutely nothing to justify his assertion that Shakespeare echoes Daniel, rather than Daniel echoing Shakespeare.

Muir's contention that Shakespeare relied on the 1610 Bermuda and Virginia reports for various incidents in *The Tempest* can only be sustained by ignoring all the other nautical literature available to Shakespeare. In the discussion below, I show that more parallels to *The Tempest* can be found in two chapters in the Book of Acts of the Apostles (concerning St. Paul's shipwreck) than are claimed for the most important of the Bermuda pamphlets. The same could easily be done with Richard Hakluyt's famous work on voyaging, which, like St. Paul, but unlike the Bermuda pamphlet, did not have to be read in manuscript.

A Statement of the Dating Problem

Everyone agrees that the sequence of composition of Shakespeare's plays — early, middle, late — can be determined with reasonable certainty by considering the evolution of the author's style. A fairly firm chronology could be established if that sequence could be anchored to the calendar at a few widely spaced points — say, one early play, one middle play, one late play — and this is what Chambers tries unsuccessfully to do. When Chambers' chronology is exposed to the full weight of evidence, his seemingly strongest anchors drag easily, and the flow of the current is always backward.

The evidence available for establishing the date of composition of even one of Shakespeare's plays tends to be maddeningly scrappy and unsatisfactory. Some pieces of evidence are strong but vague, for example, the year the play was first put in print, establishing a firm latest possible date, but where everyone is quite sure that the play in question was written years earlier. Other evidence is precise but weak, most notoriously, suggested allusions to the sort of topical events that repeat themselves — riots, storms, political happenings, and the like. As Chambers explains: "both equivocation and coronations were common phenomena, to which any dramatist might refer at any date. So, too, were the plague and tempests and even eclipses" (I.246). Where several items might suggest the earliest possible date for a play, all should be listed; Chambers only took the ones he wanted.

A rule should be laid down that topical allusions should not be taken seriously as dating evidence unless the rarity or particular appropriateness of the suggested allusion is examined. Failure to observe this rule has resulted in a proliferation of absurdly weak topicalities being identified in Shakespeare's plays, for example, Coriolanus glancing at a 1609 waterworks project (III.i.95-6). A survey of such trifles leads to the conclusion that Chambers' chronology could be shifted twenty years in either direction — to 1570-1593 or to 1610-1633 — and a bit of probing in the archives would produce an equally impressive (or unimpressive) list of topical correspondences to the plays, which is the whole point of Chambers' remark about common phenomena.

Another problem with topical references is that they were frequently added to revived plays, as will be discussed below under *Henry V*. In this case their dating implications can reverse themselves, with an earliest possible date becoming a latest possible date.

Likewise suggestions that Shakespeare borrowed from this or that contemporary English author deserve to be ignored unless the suggester squares up to the possibility that the borrowing went the other way. We have already seen two examples of failure to heed this rule, namely, Chambers' unsupported opinion that *Pericles* borrows from Day's *Law Tricks*, and Muir's equally unsupported finding that *Macbeth* borrows from Daniel's *Arcadia*, and I will offer yet another. Both *Troilus and Cressida* and Ben Jonson's 1601 *Poetaster* feature armed Prologues, and so, without a hint of argument as to why Jonson may not have borrowed from Shakespeare, scholars assert that Shakespeare was the borrower, and therefore *Troilus* is later than *Poetaster*. Kenneth Palmer in the 1982 Arden *Troilus* candidly explains that the latter's Prologue "is usually taken to be a reference to the Prologue of Jonson's *Poetaster*" (19), while Kenneth Muir in the 1984 Oxford *Troilus* remarks that, "There can be little doubt that the 'Prologue arm'd' (l. 23) is an allusion to the prologue

in Jonson's *Poetaster*" (5). That the junior writer might perhaps be expected to borrow from the senior, and that the armed Prologue of *Troilus* is natural in a play about real warfare, as opposed to a play about a squabble between writers, have no force against the inertia of Chambers' dating imperatives.

We have already looked at the evidence for putting a date on *Titus Andronicus*, finding that, at a minimum, it should be dated not later than 1589, but more likely several years before that. We will now consider ten more plays and will see that their conventional dates do not stick. As for the remaining twenty-seven plays — no precise dating is possible.

Comedy of Errors: France at War with her Heir

Comedy of Errors is dated 1592-3 by Chambers who calls it Shakespeare's fifth play. The 1985 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* dates and sequences it identically. Act III, scene ii includes this exchange: "Where France?", "In her forehead, armed and reverted, making war against her heir."[25] These words make sense for only one period of French history, spring 1587 to December 1588, or, at latest, to August 1589, and they constitute the strongest internal evidence for the date of any of Shakespeare's plays.

In 1584 Henry III of France lost his brother and heir, whereupon his brother-in-law and cousin, Henry de Bourbon, King of Navarre, became heir to the throne. Navarre was the leader of the Protestants in France's intermittent religious civil wars, but in 1584 he was residing in his mountain kingdom, at peace with the Catholics. Peace continued through December 1586, when Navarre rejected the King's demand that he change religions. The following spring Catholic armies massed against Navarre in what is known as the War of the Three Henries (the third Henry being the Catholic Duke de Guise), which culminated in Navarre's smashing victory at the Battle of Coutras in October. But the Catholics rallied and the war dragged on through 1588. In December of that year Henry III, seeking to escape domination by Guise and desiring peace, had Guise assassinated, whereupon the Catholic forces turned on the King. Catholic France was still at war with the heir, Henry of Navarre, but also with its king, Henry III. This situation continued until Henry III was murdered in August 1589, whereupon Henry of Navarre became Henry IV of France with the dying blessings of Henry III. The war continued until Henry IV became a Catholic in 1593, but from the Protestant, English, and moderate French Catholic point of view, France was at war with the King, not the heir. From the ultra-Catholic point of view, Henry IV was neither king nor heir; they selected his elderly uncle as king, with the brother of the murdered Guise as heir.

Shakespeare's words precisely fit the situation between mid 1587 and August 1589, though they would be far less appropriate after December 1588, when "making war against her king" would seem more natural.

And we find confirmatory evidence for this dating a few lines later: "Where America, the Indies?", "all o'er embellished with rubies, carbuncles, sapphires, declining their rich aspect to the hot breath of Spain, who sent whole armadoes of carracks." Some scholars see here a reference to the Spanish Armada of 1588, which seems very unlikely. Shakespeare is not associating Spanish carracks with war, with danger to England, or with defeat — surely the associations caused in England by the defeat of the Armada — and the word 'armada[o]' was in common use in England before 1588. Shakespeare associates carracks with treasure, which would be particularly appropriate after June 1587, when Sir Francis Drake captured the "San Felipe", an immensely rich carrack returning from the Indies loaded with jewels, gold, silver, spices, and silks. The "San Felipe" was carrying a double load of treasure because her sister ship developed a leak and transshipped her load to the "San Felipe". It took the English over a year to sell all the loot and fully realize the profit. The "San Felipe" was actually Portuguese, but Portugal was then ruled by the King of Spain, the carrack belonged to him, and her name is Spanish, not Portuguese.

I do not regard the capture of the "San Felipe" as clinching the case for 1587 as the year of composition of *Comedy of Errors*. And yet it perfectly meets Chambers' view that few topical references "are so definite as to be primary evidence; others at the most come in as confirmatory, after a provisional date has been arrived at on safer grounds" (I.245). As for the "San Felipe", the association of Spanish or Portuguese treasure carracks with jewels and with the Indies could be made at any time, while the English captured other treasure ships, but still, there it is in mid 1587, right as the forces of Catholic France were moving against the heir to the throne.

The trouble with Chambers' seemingly cautious position on topical references is that it encourages less meticulous scholars to ignore the background against which the validity of suggested topical allusions must be judged. For example, if we provisionally date *King Lear* at 1605-06, and we note Gloucester's remark about the "late eclipses in the sun and moon" (I.ii.107), and we further note that such eclipses were visible in Croatia in September and October 1605, being reported in England in February 1606, then we are apt to forget that eclipses occur in literally every year, that eclipses of both the sun and moon took place in 1601, and that astrology was a recurrent topic of discussion and concern in Shakespeare's age, in Shakespeare's plays, and in *King Lear*. Chambers'

argument on topical references as confirmatory evidence implies that the topical evidence is strengthened by the fact that it agrees with some other piece of dating evidence, that is, that the scholar of chronology need not closely examine the independent strength of the suggested topicality. But this implication is false; each piece of dating evidence must stand on its own merits.

Chambers and later scholars almost unanimously affirm that Shakespeare's words about France refer to the Catholic war against Henry IV between 1589 and 1593, a theory that can be dismissed out of hand. Shakespeare says "heir", not "king", and if Chambers was serious, he would have produced examples of the English describing Henry IV as the "heir" after August 1589 — that's what scholarship is all about. If he could have, he would have, but he couldn't.

But R. A. Foakes in the 1962 Arden *Comedy of Errors* (xix, note 1) gives it a try. Foakes counters Peter Alexander and H. B. Charlton, who state that Henry of Navarre was the heir between 1584 and 1589, by pointing to: "the tracts of the period [1584-9], which refer to Henry always as King of Navarre, not heir to the French throne". The obvious response to this statement is to note that Foakes conspicuously ignores the real point at issue, that is, the rank that English tracts bestowed on Henry after August 1589 — King of France, not heir to the throne. An example is found in a pamphlet to which we will return, Gabriel Harvey's 1592 *Foure Letters and certaine Sonnets*: "That most valorous, and braue king [Henry] ... Thrise happy Fraunce; though how vnhappy Fraunce, that hath such a Soueraine Head" (25-6). Otherwise we see exactly what Richard Farmer meant about the absurdity of putting hypotheses ahead of facts. English tracts during 1584-9 quite properly refer to Henry as King of Navarre because that was his highest title; "heir to the French throne" is not a title at all, it is a condition or status. Even if Henry had (improperly) been made Dauphin, he would still have been called King of Navarre, as the title of King outranks the title of Dauphin. Meanwhile, if we ask why Shakespeare refers to Henry as heir and not King of Navarre, we must trudge through matters that were perfectly well known to Foakes. To say that France is at war with her heir is to call attention to an anomaly, which would not be the case in saying that France is at war with Navarre. Moreover, Shakespeare was obviously punning on heir/hair, for which see any annotated edition of *Comedy of Errors*.

Royal France, like England, had the doctrine that the king never dies, for as soon as one king breathes his last, his heir becomes king. Proclamations and coronations are mere formalities, however symbolically important they may seem. Henry IV was immediately recognized by England, and in September 1589 Queen Elizabeth loaned him 20,000

pounds and agreed to send 4,000 troops to his assistance. Objective scholars would date *The Comedy of Errors* at 1587-8.

Romeo and Juliet: The Earthquake

Romeo and Juliet is dated 1594-5 by Chambers and the *Britannica*, and they make it Shakespeare's tenth play. Early in the play the Nurse announces that, "Tis since the earthquake now eleven years" (I.iii.24) and "And since that time it is eleven years" (I.iii.36). Late eighteenth and nineteenth century scholars noted that there was only one real quake in England in that period, in 1580, and so they dated *Romeo and Juliet* at 1591. Chambers acknowledges his predecessors' views, but cannot accept them, remarking that "This is pressing the Nurse's interest in chronology — and Shakespeare's — rather hard." (I.345) And yet Chambers will not deign to give evidence, beyond that odd statement. I call it odd because it amounts to saying that a character — and a playwright — who take the trouble to give a precise date — twice — can't really be interested in precise dates.

But Chambers' followers have done some scholarly homework, and are able to produce evidence of other seismic events in England. Unfortunately the said evidence only highlights the impact of the 1580 earthquake — the other scholars would have done better to have left well enough alone. The 1984 Cambridge *Romeo and Juliet*, edited by G. Blakemore Evans, tells us that there were landslips at Blackmore, Dorset in 1583 and at Mottingham, Kent in 1585, while a line in a book published in 1595 "seems definitely to imply" that an earthquake shook England in 1585, apparently meaning that we can be quite certain that an earthquake either did or did not occur in England in 1585. But an earthquake so feeble that its questionable effect on England is possibly implied in one line in one book is hardly the sort of cataclysm that one dates things by eleven years later (actually the 1585 quake was in Geneva). As for the two landslips, we may note that tremors so puny that their effects can be localized to single villages would also not have been exactly memorable to Shakespeare's London audiences.

Now let us turn our attention to the quake of 1580. The event, the damage, and the terror it caused among a populace unused to violent tremors are minutely described in the chronicles of Holinshed and Stow. A volume of letters between Edmund Spenser and Gabriel Harvey was published entitled "Three proper and wittie familiar Letters: lately passed betwene two Universitie men: touching the earthquake in Aprill last, and our English refourmed versifying." At least four ballads were written on the subject; one begins "Quake, quake, 'tis tyme to quake, When towers and townes and all doo shake."

Another noted, as did Holinshed, that many people were in the theater that Sunday, instead of in church: "Come from the playe, come from the playe, The house will fall so people say." Arthur Golding, a noted translator, was so shocked that he composed a "Discourse upon the Earthquake that hapned throughe this realme of England and other places of Christendom, the first of April 1580 ...", warning that the quake was God's punishment of wickedness.

Evans and other modern editors argue that, at any rate, *Romeo and Juliet* cannot be earlier than 1593 because Shakespeare's language was influenced by a 1592 work by John Eliot and a 1593 poem by Samuel Daniel. But the similarity is slight, and, as usual, Evans and the others say absolutely nothing to justify the theory that Shakespeare was borrowing from Eliot and Daniel, rather than the more sensible idea that they were borrowing from him. One of the implications of defending Chambers' late dates is that everybody else influenced Shakespeare, while he influenced nobody.

I do not believe that the earthquake reference proves that *Romeo and Juliet* was written in 1591; as Chambers would say, it was a phenomenon to which a dramatist might refer at any date. But that date would be taken as rock solid if it suited Chambers' needs.

King John: A Question of Priority

The Troublesome Reign of King John (*TR*) was first published anonymously in 1591, reprinted as by "W. Sh." in 1611, and reprinted as by "W. Shakespeare" in 1622. Shakespeare's *King John* was mentioned by Francis Meres in 1598 and was first published in the Folio of 1623. The two plays are so close in plot and characters that one must have borrowed from the other (unless we suppose a common lost source). Back in the days when everyone felt that Shakespeare regularly improved the plays of other men, it was natural to assume that Shakespeare was the borrower, which had the further advantage of agreeing with Chambers' dating scheme.

But the first half of the twentieth century saw judgment reversed, with Shakespeare seen as the victim of pirates. Peter Alexander and Andrew Cairncross both argued in books published in 1936 that *King John* came first and *TR* was the borrower, and, therefore, *King John* was written not later than 1591. In 1954 the second Arden *King John* appeared, edited by Ernest Honigmann, who proved that Shakespeare did extensive research for this play in the chronicles, and who went on to make a full blown case for the priority of *King John*. In 1963, William Matchett's Signet edition supported Honigmann with additional arguments on why Shakespeare's play came first. In *The Sources of Shakespeare's*

Plays and elsewhere, Kenneth Muir has strongly supported the traditional view that *TR* came first. In 1974, R. L. Smallwood's New Penguin edition supported Muir against Honigmann and Matchett. In 1982 Honigmann published *Shakespeare's Impact on His Contemporaries*, which includes further arguments for the priority of Shakespeare's play over *TR*. Honigmann also states in his Preface (x-xi) the interesting fact that he abandoned the whole controversy for twenty-five years because (though this is not how he put it) he was warned by higher powers in academia to stop causing trouble. A. R. Braunmuller's 1989 Oxford edition sides with the traditional priority of *TR* over Shakespeare's play. L. A. Beaurline's 1990 New Cambridge edition supports Honigmann's view that Shakespeare's play came first. The most recent contribution to the debate that I have noticed is "*King John* and *The Troublesome Raigne*: Sources, Structure, Sequence" by Brian Boyd, *Philological Quarterly* (Winter 1995), which argues that Shakespeare's play came first. The battle is fairly joined.

King John is usually listed as Shakespeare's thirteenth play, based on stylistic considerations. If it must be moved back from Chambers' date of 1596-7 to 1591 or earlier, then about twelve other plays must be moved back earlier still, and Shakespeare must start his career around 1585 (which, in my opinion, is about right). But now we have a gap in the standard dating scheme between 1591 or earlier and 1596-7, and so, as Honigmann notes, later plays must be moved back to cover the gap.

I do not pretend that it is proven that Shakespeare's *King John* preceded *The Troublesome Reign*. The jury remains out, and the traditionalists make some valid points, but victory for the progressives on this play alone would finish whatever is still left of Chambers' chronology.

1 Henry IV: Gabriel Harvey's Pamphlet

1 & 2 Henry IV are put at 1597-8 by Chambers and the *Britannica*, and are said to be the Bard's fifteenth and sixteenth plays. But Gabriel Harvey's *Foure Letters and certaine Sonnets* of 1592 uses the epithet "hotspur" three times and also says that, "some old Lads of the Castell, haue sported themselues with their rappinge bable",[26] which indicates that *1 Henry IV* may have been in existence in 1592. We will compare these two terms and a couple of others, all taken from Harvey's third and fourth letters, to some expressions from the first two acts of *1 Henry IV*.

The fat knight's original name was Oldcastle, but was changed to Falstaff out of deference to the descendants of the real Oldcastle, a

proto-Protestant martyr. In *1 Henry IV* Hal refers to Falstaff as "my old Lad of the Castle" (I.ii.41), meaning a roisterer. Several editors note that John Stow's 1598 *Survey of London* mentions a brothel called the Castle in Southwark, and therefore think that Hal is jesting about Falstaff visiting prostitutes. But Stow says that the twelve brothels of Southwark, including the Castle, were shut down by Henry VIII in 1546. And Stow speaks of these brothels in the past tense, saying he has heard of the prostitutes from "ancient men", so the jest would not have meant much in the 1590s.

Harvey's three uses of "hotspur" in his diatribe against Tom Nashe are all derogatory references to railers: "hypocritical hoat spurres", "I ... who have made Comedies of such Tragedies; and with pleasure given such hoatspurres leave, to run themselves out of breath", "wrangling, & quarreling hoatspurres". Hotspur was the nickname of the historical character portrayed in *1 Henry IV*; the name is used thrice in the first two acts of the play,[27] and, according to the *OED*, the term was pretty much restricted to the real character until about 1590 when it became a general term for a hothead or rash person.

The use of one of the two terms, "hotspur" or "old lad of the castle," in Harvey's pamphlet might not mean much, but both together seem significant, and they are joined by two other expressions that recall Hal and Falstaff. Harvey's first mention of hotspurs is in a series of insults which includes "buckram Giants" (54), meaning false or pretended giants, and that term recurs on the following page (55), while four pages later we find "heir apparent" (59). Shakespeare uses "buckram" once, in *2 Henry VI*, but otherwise has that word only in the first two acts of *1 Henry IV*, where it appears seven times, all concerning the disguises worn by Hal and Poins when they ambush Falstaff and the other three robbers. Falstaff, of course, justifies his cowardice by turning his two buckram clad attackers into four, then seven, then nine, then eleven, and the repetition of the word — used six times in twenty-six lines — certainly imprints it in the auditor's memory.

Save for one place in *2 Henry VI*,[28] Shakespeare only uses "heir apparent" in *1 Henry IV* where it crops up four times in the first two acts, always in the mouth of Falstaff.[29] As with "buckram", the repetition sticks in one's mind. Harvey's use of "heire apparant" (59) is in no sense idiosyncratic, and would hardly be worth mentioning, except that it comes between his first two mentions of "hotspur".

These few paragraphs on Harvey's *Foure Letters* and Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV* merely skim a topic that could be developed at greater length. Dr. Gabriel Harvey was a man of whom some good words could be said, but he was also a humorless Puritan bigot and a sycophant toward those in authority. At a guess, I imagine that he stormed out of

a performance of *1 Henry IV* at the end of the second act, enraged both at the slander of a man he regarded as a martyr, and at the portrayal of England's hero king as a youthful rakehell — but that the Bard's words remained in his memory. I do not pretend that this evidence of Harvey borrowing from Shakespeare is conclusive — far from it! But it is better than the evidence frequently offered by Chambers and others to support their dates for Shakespeare's plays.

Henry V: Essex in Ireland

The Chorus to Act V of *Henry V* contains six lines to "the general of our gracious empress" who is engaged in suppressing rebellion in Ireland (29-34). I share the overwhelming opinion that the general almost certainly must be the Earl of Essex and that those lines were written in 1599, but is this argument strong enough to date the play to that year? May this passage have been a revision? That the Essex passage is an addition to a play written earlier is indicated by the following. The six appearances of the Chorus in *Henry V* are not found in the edition of 1600 and its reprints in 1602 and 1619, but only in the First Folio of 1623. Some lines in the choruses were manifestly revised or added after the play was first written. The Chorus to Act V is corrupt in the lines immediately following the mention of Essex. Furthermore topical revisions were regularly added to revived plays in that age, with prologues and epilogues being the favorite location for such topicalities, while *Henry V* is a patriotic play that is regularly revived in years of national crisis — years like 1599.

The most obvious indication that the choruses of *Henry V* were revisions is found in the last line of the Chorus to Act II: "Unto Southampton do we shift our scene"; these words immediately precede a scene set in London. Much scholarship has been focused on this and other inconsistencies in the choruses, for which the simplest explanation is that Shakespeare wrote or rewrote the choruses after he had forgotten the details of his plot. Moreover lines 34-41 of the Chorus to Act V, which immediately follow the mention of "the general of our gracious empress" are almost universally agreed to contain textual corruption, which could simply indicate incompetent copying of Shakespeare's manuscript, but could also result from an imperfect revision being made at that particular point. In short, the choruses themselves, and the lines concerning Essex in particular, point to very probable revision.

And, as fairly recent scholarship has shown, topical revisions were quite common in Shakespeare's day, and the easiest way to transform an old play into a "new and improved product" was to insert the additional material where it was least likely to foul up the plot and

dialogue, namely, in prologues, epilogues, and choruses. G. E. Bentley observes that: "New prologues and epilogues for revived plays and for court performances were already commonplace in [the 1590s]". On the frequency of revision of revived plays, Bentley states that: "As a rough rule of thumb one might say that almost any play first printed more than ten years after composition and known to have been kept in active repertory by the company which owned it is most likely to contain revisions by the author or, in many cases, by another playwright".[30]

So far I have argued that Shakespeare's reference to Essex in Ireland in 1599 bears the marks of revision of an earlier text, but I have offered no positive evidence for an earlier date for the play. And yet one more item argues that the *Henry V* of 1599 was a revival. The stage history of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries shows that *Henry V* becomes popular when England is threatened or at war, most famously in Laurence Olivier's 1944 movie, made at the request of Winston Churchill and dedicated to Britain's airborne forces. And, as it happened, England faced an extraordinary triple threat in the year 1599. England had been at war with Spain since 1585, but in May 1598 her ally France made a separate peace, leaving England and the Netherlands to fight on alone. Meanwhile Tyrone's simmering rebellion in northern Ireland threatened to engulf the entire island after the destruction of an English army in August 1598. Essex's departure for Ireland with a new army in 1599 must be seen against the backdrop of the twin disasters of 1598. But then, with most of England's military power deployed to Ireland and the Netherlands in the summer of 1599, a fourth Spanish Armada assembled and the likelihood of invasion loomed. This last Armada's purpose was actually defensive, but England was seized with a sense of crisis that summer.[31] And, as Gary Taylor explains: "Revivals [of *Henry V*] have almost always coincided with wars, rumours of wars, and attendant military enthusiasms; ... But *Henry V* has not only been consistently revived in times of national crisis; it has also been, at such times, consistently rewritten"[32]. In short, the theory that the reference to the Earl of Essex was an addition to a play revived during the crisis of 1599 exactly fits the future pattern of *Henry V*.

As You Like It: The Death of Marlowe

Chambers dates this play at 1599-1600, but it contains two references to the death in 1593 of Christopher Marlowe: "Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might, / Who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?", and "it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room".[33] Shakespeare's ascertainable references to contemporaries are so rare, the Earl of Essex being the only other nonroyal Englishman to merit a clear notice, that they deserve close examination. The obvious

point about Shakespeare's tribute to the dead shepherd is this: we exclaim upon a man's death when it happens; six or seven years later we simply refer to him in the past tense.

Hamlet: The Question of the Earlier Version

Hamlet is put at 1600-1 by Chambers and the 1985 *Britannica*, both naming it Shakespeare's twenty-second play. A tragic work called *Hamlet* is alluded to in 1589, a performance of a play of *Hamlet* is recorded in 1594, and a play of *Hamlet* is mentioned in 1596. And so nineteenth century scholars supposed that all of these references are to a lost play dubbed the *Ur-Hamlet*, written by some other dramatist, possibly Thomas Kyd, which Shakespeare adapted into the *Hamlet* we know. Moreover the hodgepodge first edition of *Hamlet* of 1603 was regarded as a descendant of the *Ur-Hamlet*. This hypothesis made perfectly good sense up to the 1920s, as Shakespeare was believed to have been a regular reviser of other men's plays. But that belief has been reversed for other plays of which Shakespeare was formerly believed to have been an imitator. Furthermore, during the 1920s and 30s, the work of several scholars showed that the inferior 1603 edition of *Hamlet* was not descended from the *Ur-Hamlet* at all, but was a corrupt version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. After all, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (II.ii.336-42) mentions controversy caused by child actors, and we know that the War of the Poets — Ben Jonson versus John Marston and Thomas Dekker around 1601 — involved the Children of the Chapel. And so may we not be reasonably confident in the approximate correctness of the conventional date for *Hamlet*? The trouble with this theory is that the Children of Paul's caused such controversy in 1588-9 that they were suppressed in 1590.[34] And so the props upholding the existence of the *Ur-Hamlet* fall away, one after another; only the necessity of keeping a mature play by Shakespeare near the middle of Chambers' bracket of 1590-1613 remains to date *Hamlet* at 1600-1, when it might better be placed at 1596 or 1594 or 1589.[35]

Macbeth: Equivocation and Gunpowder

Chambers dates *Macbeth* at 1605-06, associating it, as do most scholars, with the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and the resultant trial of the Jesuit Father Henry Garnet in 1606. And yet Chambers regards that date as probable, rather than certain, in which he is joined by Kenneth Muir in the 1951/84 Arden *Macbeth* and by Nicholas Brooke in the 1990 Oxford *Macbeth*. I will not argue here that an earlier date is indicated for this play (Muir, xvii-xix, summarizes views on this question), but that the alleged connection between *Macbeth* and Gunpowder is fragile.

The best known allusions to Gunpowder in *Macbeth* lie in the word "equivocation", especially in the Porter's scene, II.iii, an apparent reference to the Jesuit doctrine brought up at Garnet's trial. The weakness of this dating argument was fully recognized by Chambers, who notes that: "the Jesuit doctrine of equivocation had been familiar, at least since the trial of Robert Southwell in 1595" (I.474). Pre-1606 dramatic references to equivocation can be found in Thomas Dekker's *Satiro-mastix*, where the word is not used, but the doctrine is unmistakably enunciated: "there's no faith to be helde with Hereticks and Infidels, and therefore thou swear'st anie thing" (IV.ii.90-1), and also in *Hamlet*: "We must speak by the card or equivocation will undo us" (V.i.133-4). A footnote to the latter passage in the Arden *Hamlet* gives a nondramatic example from 1584.

But it is often maintained that the entire play of *Macbeth* contains matters concerning James I, most especially that its plot about the murder of a Scottish king repeatedly echoes themes from the Gunpowder Plot to murder a King of Scotland who had become King of England. However Arthur M. Clark offers a strong case in *Murder under Trust* (1982) that *Macbeth* was written in 1601 in response to the 1600 Gowrie conspiracy against James' life. The detailed points presented by Clark are far too lengthy to be considered here, but their strength is attested to by Muir: "If Clark had read H. N. Paul's *The Royal Play of 'Macbeth'* he could hardly have thought that the Gunpowder Plot was less relevant to the play than the Gowrie conspiracy" (xviii). In other words, Muir's judgment is that Clark's arguments for Gowrie are about equal to Paul's arguments for Gunpowder.

In sum, the firm belief that *Macbeth* glances extensively at the Gunpowder plot withers away when its details are placed in the context of the age.

Pericles: John Day's *Law Tricks*

Pericles was published in 1609 and is dated at 1608-9 by Chambers and the *Britannica*, who call it Shakespeare's thirty-third play.

Pericles contains this passage in II.i, which, unlike the other scenes in Act II, is credited to Shakespeare rather than to a collaborator.

> 3rd Fisherman. ... Master, I marvel how the fishes live in the sea.
>
> 1st Fisherman. Why, as men do a-land: the great ones eat up the little ones. ... Such whales have I heard on a'th'land, who never leave gaping till they swallow'd the whole parish, church, steeple, bells, and all.

> 3rd Fish. But, master, if I had been the sexton, I would have been that day in the belfry.
> 2nd Fish. Why, man?
> 3rd Fish. Because he should have swallow'd me too; and when I had been in his belly, I would have kept such a jangling of the bells, that he should never have left till he cast bells, steeple, church, and parish up again.

Law Tricks has these passages in two different scenes, I.ii and II.i:

> Joculo. ... But, Madam, do you remember what a multitude of fishes we saw at sea? And I do wonder how they can all live by one another.
> Emilia. Why, fool, as men do on the land; the great ones eat up the little ones ...

> Adam. I knew one of that faculty [lawyers] in one term eat up a whole town, church, steeple, and all.
> Julio. I wonder the bells rung not all in his belly.

These items were noticed by Day's 1881 editor, A. H. Bullen, who knew that *Law Tricks* was published one year before *Pericles*, and who also noted that Day borrowed heavily from Shakespeare, "Day had evidently made a close study of Shakespeare's early comedies, and studied them with profit",[36] as well as from Sidney, Spenser, and Lyly. So Bullen concluded that Day had seen the manuscript of *Pericles* or remembered that passage from a performance.

Chambers subsequently proved that *Law Tricks* was written in 1604, which he felt to be impossibly early for *Pericles*, and so he reversed the borrowing. No later editor of *Pericles* has added any justification as to why Bullen was wrong, other than that 1604 is too early.

Let us return to the imitative habits of John Day. In his conversations with William Drummond, right after opining "That Shakespeare wanted art", Ben Jonson charged, "That Sharpham, Day, Dekker, were all rogues and that Minshew was one." What Ben meant by "rogue" becomes evident with a little study. Edward Sharpham was an imitator of John Marston. John Minshew's Spanish dictionary and grammar were based on the earlier work of Richard Percival, which Minshew took over and called his own. Jonson wrote a whole play, *The Poetaster*, against Thomas Dekker and Marston, accusing them of plagiarizing his work. In other words, Jonson was classifying Day as an imitator or plagiarist, and with good reason. *Law Tricks* borrows on a large scale from Jonson's *The Case is Altered*, and borrows from or echoes *Faerie*

Queene, Venus and Adonis, 2 Henry IV, Julius Caesar, Much Ado, Hamlet, and *Measure for Measure.* Most of these borrowing are small scraps, but when you see several from the same play, you are justified in claiming borrowing.

Law Tricks is a lively play of some merit, but it is also a motley of shreds and patches filched from better writers. How likely is it that Shakespeare would sit through a performance and decide to imitate the imitator? The presumption must be that Day borrowed the items about the great fish eating the little ones from Shakespeare, in which case 1604 becomes the latest possible date for *Pericles.*

Tempest: Is Bermuda Necessary?

Chambers places *The Tempest* at 1611-12, making it Shakespeare's thirty-sixth play, followed only by *Henry VIII* and *Kinsmen,* and he and others list two or three accounts of a 1609 shipwreck in Bermuda as important sources, especially a long letter by William Strachey and a shorter one by Sylvester Jourdan. *The Tempest* is by far the most important anchor for the latter end of Chambers' chronology, and yet he is cautious when discussing Jourdan's letter in his *Britannica* article: "this *or some other* contemporary narrative of Virginia colonization *probably* furnished *the hint* of the plot" (my emphases). Meanwhile, Muir lists the three Bermuda pamphlets as probable sources for *Tempest,* but warns: "The extent of the verbal echoes of these three pamphlets has, I think, been exaggerated. There is hardly a shipwreck in history or in fiction which does not mention splitting, in which the ship is not lightened of its cargo, in which the passengers do not give themselves up for lost, in which north winds are not sharp, and in which no one gets to shore by clinging to wreckage".[37]

Nevertheless Chambers, Muir, and virtually every other scholar who discuss *The Tempest* believe that Shakespeare was influenced by the pamphlets on the Bermuda wreck of 1609, especially Strachey's. In particular, a detailed case for Shakespeare's use of the latter source is offered in Louis Wright's reprint of Strachey's and Jourdan's letters.[38] But did Shakespeare have any need of these sources? Bermuda's evil name was well established in the sixteenth century; St. Paul's shipwreck at Malta makes a better source for *The Tempest* than any or all of the Bermuda pamphlets, and Richard Hakluyt's popular work on voyaging must be taken into account.

Bermuda's reputation for storms, wrecks, and demons was common knowledge long before *The Tempest* was written. Bermuda is cited as a place of many shipwrecks in Walter Ralegh's 1591 pamphlet about the last voyage of the "Revenge". Donne's 1597 poem, "The Storme"

includes this couplet: "Compar'd to these stormes, death is but a qualme, / Hell somewhat lightsome, and the Bermuda calme." Fulke Greville's Sonnet 59, probably written in the early 1580s, makes a similar comment on Bermuda.

Muir notes that "Strachey's account of the shipwreck is blended with memories of St. Paul's — in which too not a hair perished"[39], so we may ask how much Acts of the Apostles 27-8 shares with *The Tempest*. And, without any trouble at all, we find about thirteen items. First, a voyage within the Mediterranean with Italy as the destination. Second, discord and mutiny among the voyagers; the sailors against the passengers. Third, the ship driven by a tempest, that is, forced to abandon course. Fourth, utter loss of hope. Fifth, a supernatural being — an angel in St. Paul, Ariel in *Tempest* — visits the ship. Sixth, desperate maneuvers to avoid the lee shore of an unknown island. Seventh, the ship grounds and splits. Eighth, detailed descriptions of some techniques of seamanship. Ninth, St. Paul gathers wood, like Caliban and Ferdinand. Tenth, a plot against St. Paul's life. Eleventh, the island has barbarous inhabitants, like Caliban. Twelfth, supernatural oversight of the whole episode. Thirteenth, a stay on the island, seeming miracles (St. Paul immune to snakebite), followed by a safe trip to Italy.

So any argument that Shakespeare relied on Strachey for items in his plot can be topped by St. Paul. Furthermore, Strachey's account is quite lengthy, 99 pages in Wright's reprint, while the average Bible covers St. Paul's shipwreck in less than two pages. Thus St. Paul gives a very compressed set of events, making him superior as a potential source; Shakespeare would not have had to wade through 99 pages extracting a detail here, a detail there. Finally, we don't have to speculate about how Shakespeare may have had the opportunity to read his source in manuscript, as with Strachey; we know Shakespeare read his Bible.

But Wright claims that Shakespeare followed Strachey so closely in certain items that we can virtually see the Bard in the act of borrowing: "When William Shakespeare sat down to write *The Tempest* he had fresh in his memory a vivid description of a hurricane and shipwreck .... The author was William Strachey".[40] Wright's footnotes to Strachey's text allege about six details borrowed by Shakespeare. For the sake of brevity we will examine only the best known example. Here are the descriptions of St. Elmo's fire from *The Tempest* and Strachey, followed by two descriptions from Volume III of Hakluyt's *Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries*, published in 1600.

> Now on the beak,/ Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,/ I flamed amazement. Sometimes I'ld divide/ And burn in many places; on the topmast,/ The yards, and boresprit would

I flame distinctly,/ Then meet and join. (*Tempest*, I.ii.196-201)

An apparition of a little[1], round light[2], like a faint star, trembling and streaming along with a sparkling blaze, half the height upon[3] the main mast[4] and shooting sometimes from shroud to shroud[5], tempting to settle, as it were[6], upon[3] any of the four shrouds[5]. And for three or four hours[7] together, or rather more, half the night, it kept with us, running sometimes along the main yard[8] to the very end and then returning... (Strachey)

In the night there came upon[3] the top of our mainyard[8] and main mast[4], a certain little[1] light[2], much like unto the light[2] of a little[1] candle, ... This light[2] continued aboard our ship about three hours[7], flying from mast to mast, & from top to top: and sometime it would be in two or three places at once. (From Robert Tomson's account in Hakluyt)

We saw upon[3] the shrouds[5] of the Trinity as it were[6] a candle, which of it self shined, and gave a light[2], ... it was the light[2] of Saint Elmo which appeared on the shrouds[5] ... (From Francisco de Ulloa's account in Hakluyt)

As the underlined, numbered words show, Strachey resembles Hakluyt far more than Shakespeare resembles any of the other three descriptions. But the similarity of Strachey to Hakluyt goes further, in that the fire is confined to the upper part of the ship: the masts, yards, and rigging. Only in Shakespeare does the fire travel through the hull: beak, waist, deck, and cabins. Technically speaking Shakespeare could be charged with error, as St. Elmo's fire visits only the higher parts of a ship. But then Shakespeare is describing Ariel's supernatural activities rather than the science of atmospherics. Moreover, Muir (280) argues that Strachey's words on St. Elmo's fire are probably based on a passage in Erasmus' colloquy.

In conclusion, St. Paul's shipwreck works better than Strachey as an overall source for *The Tempest*. Furthermore any argument that Shakespeare borrowed St. Elmo's fire from Strachey is, *a fortiori*, an argument that Strachey borrowed from Hakluyt.[41] That being the case, and given the much greater availability of Hakluyt's best-selling work than Strachey's unpublished letter, it should be presumed that Hakluyt rather than Strachey was Shakespeare's source —if, indeed, Shakespeare needed a source.

Conclusions

Sir Edmund Chambers' *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* was a truly revolutionary book in its effect on Shakespeare's biography. It demolished the mythology and wishful thinking of many earlier scholars, who produced fantasies based on liberal use of the word "doubtless", and it forced a return to the primary evidence, no matter how scanty. Chambers' chronology is also of real value, as it represents the strongest case that can be made for the hypothesis that Shakespeare's plays were written between 1590 and 1613. Chambers begins by using biographical considerations to establish his boundary dates, and he then uses the chronological evidence on the plays to spread them between those boundaries. In this regard Chambers follows the methods of Edmond Malone (see note 11), and both of these scholars explicitly state the assumptions behind their methods.

That said, Chambers' chronology falls apart under inspection.

Chambers' errors, as given by Honigmann, are these. Supposing that Francis Meres' 1598 list of Shakespeare's plays is complete, even though Chambers knew that it was not complete. Assuming that Philip Henslowe's "ne" means "new", even though Chambers was aware that Henslowe wrote that word against plays that were not new. Treating weak earliest possible dates as strong evidence, even though Chambers discusses that very problem. Believing, in agreement with most scholars of his day, that Shakespeare routinely rewrote other men's plays, a verdict reversed by more recent scholarship.

But Chambers' mistakes do not stop there. He treats Shakespeare's absence from the theatrical archives of the 1580s as evidence that the Bard had not yet begun to write, despite his knowledge of the emptiness of those same archives. He ignores or casually dismisses the disagreeable evidence of the punctilious Ben Jonson that Shakespeare was active in the 1580s, specifically, Ben's naming Shakespeare as a contemporary of Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe, as well as Ben's very precise statement about the date of *Titus Andronicus*. He disregards inconvenient earliest possible dates such as Holinshed's 1587 Chronicles. More strikingly Chambers ignores earliest possible dates dictated by his own logic: 1591 for *King John* and 1604 for *Pericles*. And Chambers also fails to consider the implications of his own words to the effect that, in terms of useful dating evidence, Shakespeare starts fading away around 1603, and is virtually gone by 1607-08.

But Chambers' chronological arguments still rule, despite the opinion of so many leading scholars that his dates are too late. On this matter we have the authority of James McManaway in 1950, G. Blakemore Evans in 1974, most especially Ernest Honigmann in 1980, and Samuel Schoenbaum in both 1970 and 1991. But this point need not rest on

voices of authority, for examination of chronologies of Shakespeare's plays published in the last several decades shows only trivial alterations to Chambers' chronologies of 1911 and 1930.

And the errors continue. The last fifty years have yielded impressive comprehensive works on Shakespeare's sources, but these works are invariably organized play by play, as with Kenneth Muir and Geoffrey Bullough, or, for that matter, in the sections on sources in the Arden, Oxford, and Cambridge editions of Shakespeare's plays. Virtually nothing has been done to arrange Shakespeare's certain and highly probable sources in the order in which they appeared, and then to examine that list closely for chronological significance. As for supposed topical references, all the caution of scholars like Chambers and Muir seems to have been wasted, as everyday events in Shakespeare's plays are linked to everyday events in the archives of the age. As Fluellen might have put it: "There is a treason in *Macbeth*, and there is also moreover a treason in 1605-06, and there is equivocatings in both". Also moreover, the implications of Bentley's notice of the frequency of topical allusions being added to revisions seem not to have sunk in. And finally, whenever Shakespeare writes something similar to something by another author, it always seems that the Bard was the borrower, as with armed Prologues in *Troilus* and *Poetaster*, or the jests in *Pericles* and *Law Tricks*.

Where do we stand? The implications of the evidence presented in this essay are: *Titus Andronicus*, circa 1585; *Comedy of Errors*, 1587-8; *King John* circa 1590; *Romeo and Juliet*, 1591; *1 Henry IV*, by 1592; *Henry V*, 1592-9; *As You Like It*, 1593-4; *Hamlet*, ?1594; *Macbeth*, perhaps 1600-01, *Pericles*, by 1604. And yet, though some of the pieces of evidence underpinning this list are strong, others are weak. We have two different ways to propose dates for Shakespeare's plays. We can present evidence of earliest and latest possible (or probable) dates for each play, carefully analyzing every item, or we can exhibit a table assigning each play to a particular year (with, of course, some prefatory caveats on our lack of complete certainty). The latter method soothes our vanity by allowing us to avoid confessing ignorance. But the reality of the evidence now available favors the former method, and, as someone said, awareness of ignorance is the first step on the road to knowledge. Any attempt to present a list of Shakespeare's plays, assigning a year of composition to each, no matter how qualified, is pretending to know more than we do.

Notes

1. Peter Alexander, *Shakespeare* (London, 1964), 97, and *Shakespeare's Life and Art* (1939, rev. ed. 1964), 57-69 ff.

2. Caincross, *The Problem of Hamlet* (London, 1936, 1970) , 179-85.
3. F.P. Wilson, *Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1953), 113.
4. T.W. Baldwin, *Shakespeare's Five-Act Structure* (Urbana, Illinois, 1947), 776-84.
5. William Matchett, ed., *King John*. Signet Classic edition combined with *Henry VIII* (New York, 1986), "Textual Note," 148.
6. Oscar James Campbell and Edward Quinn, *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* (New York, 1966), article on "chronology," 113.
7. Russell Fraser, *Young Shakespeare* (New York, 1988), 145-8.
8. John Crow's astonishingly candid statement deserves careful consideration. He is saying, in effect, "I and most scholars think these dates are too late, but they have become the conventional wisdom, the dramatic history of the age has been adjusted to them, and therefore we will keep them," which, of course, is the whole problem.
9. Indeed, as I hope the quotations in this section show, Chambers also fully meets the scholarly requirement of clearly stating his a priori assumptions, and the same is true of Edmond Malone (see note 11).
10. Edmund Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford, 1930), Vol. I, 270. Further quotations from this work will simply be followed by the volume and page number, thus (I, 270). Chambers dates Shakespeare's plays to theatrical years, so 1590-1 means fall 1590 to summer 1591, not January 1590 to December 1591.
11. In this matter, Chambers is in full accord with Edmond Malone's 1778 essay, "An Attempt to ascertain the Order in which the Plays of Shakespeare were written." Malone conjectures, to use his own word, that Shakespeare began writing plays in 1591, based on the apparent lack of notice of those works prior to Greene's *Groatsworth*. Moreover, Malone asserts that:

> The plays which Shakespeare produced before the year 1600, are known, and are seventeen or eighteen in number. The rest of his dramas, we may conclude, were com posed between that year and the time of his retiring to the country [which Malone put at 1611]. Malone's *Shakespeare*, Third Variorum Edition (1821; AMS reprint, New York, 1966), II.291-302.

12. I agree with Chambers and every other authority that the approximate sequence or order of composition of the plays can be determined on stylistic grounds with reasonable certainty. I further agree with Chambers that attempts to determine an exact sequence by the use of quantitative methods are probably hopeless (I.253). Such methods assume, for example, that Shakespeare's stylistic development was

monotonic, to use a mathematical term, that it always proceeded in the same direction, as from more rigid versification to freer versification.

13. Chambers, I.246-50. Chambers' table of boundary dates omits *Shrew*, *All's Well*, *Coriolanus*, and *Timon*, and gives no latest possible date for *Two Noble Kinsmen*.

14. Wilson, The Clark Lectures, Trinity College Cambridge, 1951, published as *Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1953), 106. See also Wilson, "Shakespeare's Reading," *Shakespeare Survey 3* (Cambridge, 1950), 14-21, esp. 16.

15. Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time 1590-1642* (Princeton, 1971), viii. Bentley later notes (14-5) that Philip Henslowe's business diary, listing hundreds of performances between 1592 and 1602, names about 280 plays, of which about 40 survive today, while "at least 170 would now be totally unknown—even by title—had Henslowe's accounts been destroyed." Our knowledge of the Elizabethan stage is so dependent on Henslowe's 1592-1602 diary that Schoenbaum calls it "the most valuable single document relative to the early stage" (1991 ed., 127) and "that most precious of Elizabethan playhouse documents" (1991 ed., 256). As far as the Elizabethan stage is concerned, pre-Henslowe is virtually prehistoric.

16. This argument on *Titus Andronicus* originates with Honigmann, *Shakespeare's Impact*, 67.

17. On the reference to *Titus* in *Knack to Know a Knave*, as well as other indications that Titus was written before 1593, see the 1953 Arden, the 1984 Oxford, or the 1994 Cambridge edition.

18. C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson* (Oxford, 1925-52), II.213-7 and XI.436.

19. Edmund Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford, 1923), III.285-6. See also *The Works of John Day*, "Reprinted from the collected Edition of A.H. Bullen (1881) with an Introduction by Robin Jeffs" (London, 1963), xiv-xv.

20. Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford), p. 517 of 1991 ed., p. 713 of 1970 ed. Incidentally, Schoenbaum modified the paragraph in which this passage occurs, and he made a minor stylistic change to the passage itself. Therefore the passage as quoted reflects his considered opinion in 1991, rather than simple failure to review what he wrote in 1970.

21. It is impossible to give a precise count of the titles named by Muir without making arbitrary decisions about how to count an original work and a translation of the same work, or how to count difference editions of the same work, or works by one author that are conventionally lumped together as one work. My own count is 113; anyone else's ought to be quite close to that number. I should also note that Muir was not concerned with chronology in this book, while his dating assump-

tions are pretty much in line with Chambers'. Consequently, when Muir considered a work by another English author that was written slightly before he believed the Shakespearean play in question was written, he naturally assumed that any borrowing was by Shakespeare, when, in fact, the influence could have gone the other way. See my note, "The Dates of Shakespeare's Plays," *The Shakespeare Newsletter* (Fall 1991), XLI 3, No. 210, 40.

22. I omit Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me* (performed 1604, published 1605), a probable source for the sub and Prologue of *Henry VIII*, and also John Speed's *History of Great Britaine* (1611), a probable source for items in the latter part of *Henry VIII*, III.ii. These portions of *Henry VIII* are usually attributed to John Fletcher rather than to Shakespeare.

23. Sir Philip Sidney, *Selected Prose and Poetry*, ed. Robert Kimbrough (San Francisco, 1969), 126. *The Defense of Poesy* was first published in 1595, and its version of the fable begins: "There was a time when all the parts of the body made a mutinous conspiracy against the belly." Shakespeare's equivalent words are: "There was a time, when all the body's members Rebell'd against the belly," which gives some idea of the difficulty of sorting out influences in any author's version of this well known parable.

24. Muir's theory about Daniel's Arcadia is ignored by Nicholas Brooke in The Oxford Shakespeare *Macbeth* (1990) in his sections Dates and Sources, as well as in the footnotes to the lines in question.

25. III.ii.120-2; this and all subsequent citations from Shakespeare's plays are from the second Arden edition.

26. Gabriel Harvey, *Four Letters and Certeine Sonnets* (New York and London, The Bodley Head Quartos, 1923), "hotspur" is on 54, 63, and 81; "old Lads of the Castell" is on 74.

27. I.i.52, 70; II.iv.100.

28. I.i.151; the term is also found in the Chorus to Act III of *Pericles*, but those lines are generally not atttributed to Shakespeare. 2 *Henry VI* uses "buckram" at IV.vii.23.

29. I.ii.56; II.ii.42; II.iv.265, 362.

30. G.E. Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist and Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642* (Princeton, 1971, 1984), 136 and 263. More generally, see 135-6 and 259-63.

31. A synopsis of reports of the invasion scare and the forces raised to meet it in August 1599 can be found in G.B. Harrison, *The Elizabethan Journals* (Ann Arbor, 1955), "A Last Elizabethan Journal," 13-38.

32. Gary Taylor, ed., The Oxford Shakespeare *Henry V* (Oxford and New York, 1984), 11. See also Andrew Gurr, ed., The New Cambridge Shakespeare *Henry V* (Cambridge, 1992), 39 and Oscar James Campbell and Edward G. Quinn, *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* (New

York, 1966), article on *Henry V*, Stage History.

33. III.v.81-2 paraphrases a couplet from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (I.175-6): "Where both deliberate the love is slight;/Who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?" III.iii.11-12 echoes a passage from *The Jew of Malta* (I.i.36-7): "inclose/Infinite riches in a little room"; Marlowe was killed in a tavern room during a quarrel over the reckoning.

34. Caincross, 105-6.

35. I should note that a date of 1589 or earlier for Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as we know it is not in line with my own views of the evidence on chronology, but I don't believe that awkward facts can be swept away by the mere existence of a plausible alternative explanation. On the other hand, a date of, say, 1594 is perfectly reasonable for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and the mention from 1589 could be to an earlier version of Shakespeare's play. My main point is that Chambers' modern followers have no right to treat the hypothesis of a non-Shakespearean *Ur-Hamlet* as an established fact. That hypothesis is still tenable, but twentieth century scholarship has rendered it far less powerful than it was in the last century, a fact that twentieth century scholars have yet to face.

36. From Bullen's article on Day in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

37. Muir, *Sources*, 280. That the stereotyped behavior of passengers in a storm was a byword in those times is seen in an item in Harvey's useful *Foure Letters*, where he compares Fabius Maximus to: "an experte Pilot, that in a hideous tempest regardeth not the foolishe shrickinges, or vaine outcries of disorderly passengers, but bestirreth himselfe, and directeth his mariners, according to the wise rules of orderly Nauigation" (74-5).

38. Louis B. Wright, ed. *A Voyage to Virginia in 1609* (Charlottesville, 1964).

39. Muir, op cit.

40. Wright, op cit, ix.

41. Here are the other items that Wright says Shakespeare borrowed from Strachey (with Wright's page numbers in parentheses)—followed by my responses. Mutinies at Bermuda (xiv) suggested mutinous sailors in *Tempest*—Hakluyt reports several English mutinies, a common accurrence in that turbulent age. Cries of terrified passengers in Strachey (6) suggested the same in *Tempest*, I.i.35-7—a commonplace in nautical literature; see note 37. Strachey speaks of "the glut of water" (7), while *Tempest*, I.i.58, has "to glut him," Shakespeare's only use of g-l-u-t—Strachey uses glut as a noun, Shakespeare as a verb, as he does with glutted in *1 Henry IV*, and as he does with engluts in *Othello* and englutted in *Henry V* and *Timon*. Strachey discusses a drink made from cedar berries at Bermuda (24), while Caliban speaks of "water with berries in it," I.ii.336—Strachey lists over forty items of food found at Bermuda, Shakespeare mentions about a dozen wild foods in Tempest,

and berries are the only common item. Strachey speaks of taking birds at night by "lowbelling" (31), while Sebastian mentions "batfowling," II.i.180, which Wright says "was another name for 'lowbelling'"—see the *OED* on the difference between batfowling, scaring birds with light, then clubbing them; and lowbelling, scaring birds with noise, then netting them.

Controversy Among Gentlemen

A.M. Challinor

If anthologies were compiled to illustrate twentieth century commentary on Shakespeare, they might justifiably be overweight in material from the early years. That era, a golden age for literary controversy, included long discussions about the very origins of his plays and poems. Not only did several significant books appear; sequels were clearly economic. So authors responded to critics, while "supporters" followed the battles at leisure. And some aspects of those disputes may, even now, have lessons to impart. If there were giants in the earth in those days, none stood taller than George Greenwood (1850 - 1928) and J. M. Robertson (1856 - 1933). Cut and thrust between these two was always fierce, although reasonably civil. Both Members of Parliament in the Liberal cause, they readily described themselves as "friends"—but how they argued! The passing of the decades has given a sense of distant charm to their debating, without in any way diminishing its importance.

Granville George Greenwood, who was educated at Eton and Cambridge University (where he took a First in Classics), made the law his profession. Knighted in the 1916 New Year Honors List, he is largely remembered for his insistence—so astounding to many that it meets with ridicule rather than serious attention—that the great writer Shakespeare simply could not have been the man from Stratford-upon-Avon. This was expressed emphatically, along with his reasons, in a volume published in 1908: *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (SPR). Later works contained some additional thoughts, but were given over mostly

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to defense against critics. Who 'Shake-speare' was (or the various people using that name were) George Greenwood was reluctant to say. He also wrote on other subjects: amusingly, in terms of punning, one of his works on an entirely different matter published in 1918, was entitled *The problem of the will.*

Understandably, Greenwood took pains to deny that he was a defamer of the Shakespearean accomplishment, for he saw the works as superb. He always insisted too that he was not a Baconian, although critics and others—through either slackness or perversity—often described him as such[1]. Admired by those who disbelieve in the traditionally accepted authorship of 'Shakespeare', he has become something of a father figure within each of their various persuasions. This is partly because of the range and vigor of his arguments which served as a valuable conspectus; partly because the concept of a 'great unknown' as the master-mind behind the plays and poems provides an umbrella for theories from a variety of doubters. He left in one of his books in particular (ITSP) good advice, which has often gone unheeded, on the subject of how weak arguments can deflect attention from better ones.

Greenwood's principal contemporary opponent on the subject of Shakespeare's identity came from a very different background. John Mackinnon Robertson, was born in Scotland at Brodick, Isle of Aran. Leaving school at the age of 13, he subjected himself to intensive and sustained self-education through a formidable program of reading. This eventually bore fruit in the publication of nearly a hundred books or other monographs. Those writings fall into four categories. There is a very small miscellaneous group; several works on the social sciences; a large number of volumes and articles concerned with literary criticism and particularly the Elizabethan age. The fourth category, largest of all, relates to religion and free thought—Robertson was an uncompromising rationalist. His achievements as writer and politician were acknowledged locally as well as nationally at the time of his death[2]. Yet he is surprisingly little known today, being omitted from many reference works where one might expect objective evaluation of his accomplishment. However, there are two specialist studies[3] which strive to do justice to his considerable achievements.

In the literary sphere, Robertson made his mark with a detailed work attempting to refute the idea that the Shakespearean output was really that of Bacon (BH 1913). Much of it seeks to overturn Greenwood's contentions about Shakespeare's Stratford education, his vocabulary, knowledge of the law, and similar issues. There were (and are) scholars and critics who would have had Robertson stop at this point. However, his numerous later books set forth views based upon stylistic analysis.These writings were less well regarded by literary orthodoxy.

For, by the wholehearted application of aesthetic scrutiny and judgment, based on continual reading and exceptional memory, he was led to believe that the Shakespeare corpus contained the work of several dramatists. So Robertson reasoned that Shakespeare drew on the writings (often unpublished) of others, sometimes just for economy, but on occasion because passages were capable of enhancement via his own glorious han[4].

Meanwhile Sir George, his works characterized by a somewhat legalistic style of debating, along with occasional Latin quotations, was never interested in the possibility of defeat by Robertson or anyone else[5]. Although dogmatic himself, he felt it necessary to warn his adversary about dangers in being too "cocksure" (ITSP 11). Very much in the minority with his views on the question of Shakespeare's identity, he appreciated receiving the support of people such as Mark Twain—"the praise of those whose praise I estimate" (VS 11). He was keen to respond to any reasoned argument; what he would not tolerate were slurs upon his integrity. Thus, when it was suggested that he had lied on a particular issue, he found it necessary to remind that particular critic about the ground rules for all civilized debate between honorable people—"controversy among gentlemen," as he termed it[6]. The two gentlemen discussed here were intellectually active to the end of their days, each a marvellous illustration of the Robertsonian dictum that "a mind really worth having in old age must be the product of [mental activity in] all one's preceding years"[7]. Sir George, when in his late seventies, still wrote to *The Times* on various matters, by far his favourite theme being animal rights[8]. As for the fiery Scot, he was still pursuing literary issues into the early 1930s, claiming that, purely on stylistic grounds, he could identify an anonymous book reviewer[9].

By then, Robertson had penned many volumes proclaiming the verdict resulting from his minute examination of the Elizabethan dramatic texts. The search for verbal parallels between Shakespearean passages and those of his contemporaries was supported through an examination of the flow of verse, line endings, word juxtaposition, diction and imagery. He claimed that we can differentiate sharply between the work of the various Elizabethan dramatists by such scrutiny. In terms of versification, for example, some lines have double-endings; that is, they end with an additional syllable. Some others are "end-stopped"; sense and rhythm are linked to the line ending. Robertson, keeping in mind the likely date of each work being analyzed, offered percentages of lines which "run on", are end-stopped or have double endings. Perceiving such work about style similarities across long passages of text to be much needed literary detection for the proper appreciation of Shakespeare, he longed to see it eventually

removed from the realm of individual aesthetic judgement and placed on a firm scientific footing.

Robertson's arguments about style recognition, being cumulative, really defy concise exposition. Essentially, the outcome of his analysis of verse rhythms on a massive scale, along with examination of each individual writer's vocabulary and diction, is that he sees—within Shakespeare's texts—passages from Greene, Peele, or others, but more especially the use of material penned by either George Chapman[10] or Christopher Marlowe. If we deny the results of this kind of analysis, he insisted, we must assume Shakespeare to have written, more or less concurrently, both at his glorious best and in inferior or archaic fashion. Twelve or more Shakespeare plays, mostly but not entirely early ones, are said to rely on one or more of these other hands. These include *Titus Andronicus, The Comedy of Errors, Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Taming of The Shrew, The Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet,* and *Julius Caesar.*

Perhaps the most significant links of all, when we consider word frequencies or associations along with those pointers relating to versification, concern two history plays. "There are so many salient parallels in *Richard The Second* to (Marlowe's) *Edward The Second* that we must either avow his presence or assume Shakespeare to have aimed at all manner of unimportant imitations." It is urged that the *King Henry The Sixth* plays are a collaboration, but that "Marlowe dominates all three," the opening "hung be the heavens with black ..." passage being perhaps the most Marlovian in the whole of the Shakespeare Folio. The style is the man: "had the study of versification been kept to the forefront as it should have been, the ascription of any of the *King Henry The Sixth* plays to Shakespeare could hardly have been persisted in" (MC 93). Even the passage in that play which includes a famous reference relating to the "tiger's heart" and leads into lines anticipating the 'Will' sonnets does not escape. Robertson insists : "that the hand is Marlowe's ... is the only rational aesthetic inference open to us" (MC 145).

This concept of plurality of hands aroused academic attention. For a time there was even some increase in support. Yet scholars of his day often felt that Robertson went too far. Reviewers mixed guarded praise with caveats. H. Dugdale Sykes, for example, stated that it could be hazardous to attribute a play to more than one hand because the style is not homogeneous, but then added: "it would be idle to deny the value of the searching examination to which he has subjected the texts ... full of acute and illuminating criticism". Una Ellis-Fermor admired "the ease with which he (Robertson) moves among data so numerous and so complex". And an anonymous review (of SC, part 4) in *The Times Literary Supplement,* said that he had " done more than any contemporary critic of Shakespeare to increase awareness of the nature and extent

of *problems for which some solution must be found*" (my emphasis).

Yet many were prepared to accept solely the external evidence—those fine plays bear an author's name, that name was affirmed by the First Folio in 1623, therefore they must be entirely by him. Robertson, in reply, insisted that even the greatest genius is affected by the conventions of his age. Certainly, in Shakespeare's time, borrowing and collaboration were rife. The latter was unavoidable within the Elizabethan theatre's economic conditions : it was practiced by others, including Marlowe. And (we might go on to wonder) would not such disguised 'takeovers' explain the caricature of one apparently prepared to make all men's work his, that very dramatist who "would be thought our chief", in one of Ben Jonson's epigrams?

> "He marks not whose 'twas first and aftertimes
> May judge it to be his as well as ours".

Naturally the Scot, for all his endeavour, was no more free from possible error than other Shakespearean critics. The very best of ears may be mistaken: lacking the resources for the fully scientific approach which he urged, our man was clearly very reliant upon the powers of his own, while his tone may sometimes seem unnecessarily pugnacious. Several other features of his writings may be noted as possible faults. On occasion the same determination that had taken him to such learning after considerable early disadvantage, led to pushing what may be basically good argument into untenable positions. There may be much in a play which sounds like (for instance) Marlowe or Chapman; this does not necessarily mean that all such *is* either Chapman or Marlowe. Nor does the fact that Shakespeare wrote the best work mean that none of the lesser work could also be his. It is evident that Robertson worked in isolation: links with colleagues might have moderated some of his views. Sometimes he offers assertions, with too little supporting evidence provided. There is at least one claim made which cannot be substantiated, for he argues that Marlowe and Shakespeare must have been acquainted. We certainly have no proof of that.

The power to persuade us about sundry stylistic pointers may depend upon how valid we consider vocabulary and versification tests: they can never be absolutely exact and definitely require support via other kinds of evidence. Shakespeare's style was doubtless still evolving in the early plays: his progress towards metrical freedom may have been uneven. Thus it could be simplistic to attribute a play to more than one hand because it lacks a uniform style. Some such "judgments" may be subjective or erroneous. Nevertheless, four things can be said of Robertson:

* He prized historical truth more than scholastic reputations or passive acceptance of a received view.
* Whatever his excesses, the general thrust of the arguments is often persuasive to those open to receive primary evidence, both aural and visual, unencumbered by preconceptions.
*He admired the genius of Shakespeare and believed only thorough textual analysis of the plays would help differentiate that genius from the work of lesser men.
*He always affirmed, against the insistence of Sir George Greenwood and others, that this essential Shakespeare was a writer and actor from Stratford-upon-Avon.

Since Robertson and Greenwood were constantly arguing about that last crucial matter, it seems most strange to see their views firmly bracketed by a modern commentator. Yet, in his panoramic history of all the Shakespearean biographies, *Shakespeare's Lives* (428), Samuel Schoenbaum remarks: "the true irony in the association of the believer (Robertson) with the arch-heretic (Greenwood) lies in the actual closeness of their stances". Moreover, that seemingly surprising verdict can easily be justified. For they both proclaimed that the Shakespeare enterprise comprised one master-mind, but many pens. What Robertson believed on the basis of intensive stylistic analysis, Greenwood had concluded earlier on the evidence of Shakespeare's breadth of knowledge, legal allusions, apparent foreign travel and vast vocabulary. On the same page of his book, Schoenbaum quotes a Greenwood claim that it was now (i.e. early in the 20th century) generally admitted that Shakespeare did not write a large portion of the dramas in the 1623 Folio. Some seventy five years on, Dr. Schoenbaum makes his own most remarkable addition: *"And so, at the time, it was"* (my emphasis).

The comprehensive story of Shakespeare biographies over four centuries, which Schoenbaum's volume unfolds, contains astonishing incidents relating to - among other matters - guesswork, forgery, and massive self-deception. Yet those seven words just quoted and stressed, innocent though they appear, have their own capacity to astonish. If plurality in the Shakespeare works was widely accepted by scholars circa 1915, just how, why, and when did perceptions change? We would have to read on carefully in *Shakespeare's Lives* to find out, for it certainly will not do for those seeking to know the genuine facts of the past to say, as the learned professor does at the very end of his book, that "each generation must reinterpret the documentary record by its own lights" (568). For this remark, taken in its context, seems to carry a hint of mere expediency or "fashion following"—that it is good sense to support

whatever is today's scholarly consensus. Yet integrity demands that the accurate representation of history should be prized above unthinking conformity. And, most certainly, it was not new archival discovery that gradually changed views about the unity of Shakespeare'. The greatest searches of records had been made by the end of the century's first decade. They were conducted by Dr. and Mrs. C.W.Wallace, who sifted literally millions of archival records searching for new light on activities of the man from Stratford-on-Avon, but came up with disappointingly little—indeed nothing of real literary consequence. Greenwood had noted these discoveries, taking them in his stride. They offer threat neither to a hypothesis about 'many hands nor to one on author identity.

Evidence of when the pendulum really swung concerning majority perceptions of what constitutes truth (in this matter of unity in Shakespearean composition) is found principally in a 1924 pamphlet (DS). The enormous influence of this on subsequent thinking was inversely proportionate to its size[11]. It comprises the text of a lecture given in that year by Sir Edmund Chambers to The British Academy. Chambers was later to be acknowledged as the greatest Shakespearean biographer of the century. His views, soon endorsed by others as well as in his own later work, greatly reassured those conservatives who had been so worried by Robertson, if not by Greenwood. Why, the very champion who had fought so nobly against the 'Baconian heresy' had now become awkward, by constantly raising difficulties himself! Some solution to the problems identified simply had to be found—here was a well argued one from a great scholar. And, as the attack upon the received faith was rebuked by such an authoritative source as Chambers, the reaction of many (often uncritical worshippers) was very much a question of: "for this relief, much thanks." Robertson had simply wanted to probe for historical facts, to indicate parts of *The Complete Works* which might be 'alien', yet the very thought of any 'plurality' upset many uncritical Shakespeare admirers—as a later Robertson book (LD) readily acknowledged. His ideas on Elizabethan literature had become as much a thorn in the orthodox flesh as, in a different sphere, were his rationalist writings.

It was the verdict of Sir Edmund, pronouncing the unity of 'Shakespeare', that inexorably shaped the academic consensus of succeeding generations in this matter. In a masterly exposition, his 1924 British Academy lecture stressed the value of external signs of authorship (title pages and the attributions in the 1623 Folio) as well as emphasizing the value of internal evidence. We would identify (say) any Chapman play by such external attribution; so, if that kind of identification is itself unsafe, how can we claim to recognize Chapman's

style in Shakespeare? That *Titus Andronicus* was at least partly written by another is conceded by the lecturer, since there is early tradition to suppose so; likewise plays not included in the Folio, although bearing Shakespeare's name or initials, can safely be discounted. Chambers went on to argue that stylistic diversity in the plays may be explained by experimentation with different modes of writing, or the great author being not consistently at the top of his form, or failing to complete all of his intended revisions. Language similarities and parallel passages with other dramatists would simply denote a keen ear and retentive memory.

An earlier 'disintegrator' than Robertson (Sir Edmund reminded us) had been F.G.Fleay, a man of talent, but possessing "a demon of inaccuracy". Thus, it is rather oddly argued, it must *always* be unwise to follow any pluralistic authorship path. Our Scot means well, we are told: he identifies a genuine problem, but his solution is wrong. These matters are picked up again in Chambers' two volume biography of Shakespeare, although it is there admitted that the great dramatist may have polished or developed alien plays in his early work and that the influence of Marlowe is discernible well into Shakespeare's career.

These arguments for authorship unity were superbly marshalled, but are they correct? Chambers always commands our admiration yet, like all mortals, is not immune from the possibility of error. Without querying either his right to hold these beliefs or his great presentational skills, it must be remarked that experienced civil servants (as he then was) have to be experts in making a case; they shift emphasis, or reinterpret evidence to meet new political needs[12]. Robertson, for his part, rejected the criticism and sought to rebut it in some further volumes, insisting that there was too much blind reverence for The First Folio: "the Foliolators can never recognise hands"(GS 46). He was obliged to point out that even Chambers had accepted *some* plurality to help explain inferior work found in Shakespeare. There are remarks from him too in writings on subjects other than Elizabethan literature which might be applied to the attempted rebuttal by Chambers. These suggest that history shows many examples of well reasoned but innovative arguments being resisted for as long as possible. "Every new reading of the past ... has been at its inception denounced as stupid"[13]. This may sound prophetic to those who know the power of a prevailing consensus, with substantial reputations and publications irrevocably locked into it, to ignore or suppress all 'boat-rockers'.

In direct response to Chambers, Robertson protested that the "thesis that pretends to safeguard the challenged creed... leaves all the salient problems darker than before" (SC 1925, 1). But, with regard to influencing the scholarly route among future specialists in Elizabethan

literature, Chambers prevailed as if by fiat. The view of authorship plurality in *The Complete Works*, once widely considered seriously as both reasonable or even probable, was to be dismissed. Denied the oxygen of wide-scale debate, shut out most effectively from the higher education curriculum, the Robertsonian hypothesis became increasingly that of a voice crying in the wilderness. His final volume of all on the subject (SC 1932) began by warning students against such "academic tactics" (but we know that students must be guided largely by the advice of their tutors) and ended with a brief, but obviously heart-felt lament concerning "the grossest aesthetic confusion" that arose from rejection of a plural authorship theory.

Coincidentally, soon after the publication of the text for the Chambers lecture, there had appeared in the national press a letter from Robertson (LMM) which is intriguing in more than one respect. It noted that orthodox commentators have declared that Juliet's allusion to Jove: *Romeo and Juliet* (II.ii. 92-93) has its source in Ovid, adding that this is no problem since Shakespeare had to hand the Marlowe translation of Ovid's *Amores*.

> "For Jove himself sits in the azure skies
> And laughs below at lovers' perjuries".

Robertson's point is that the reference is not extracted from the *Amores*, but from another work by Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, not available in English until many years after Shakespeare's death. So how without help, we may ask, could that man "of small Latin ... !" (Enter the ghost of Greenwood, smiling). There may, of course, be a hidden and acceptable explanation, but Robertson's reaction to the error in orthodox supposition as exposed by his find was that it shows how an idea can be first accepted uncritically, then perpetuated—even passing "unchallenged for over a hundred years through the hands of the most distinguished editors of Shakespeare" (LMM). This might equally well be applied to those who, all too thankfully and comprehensively, had jettisoned his theories in the light of the Chambers lecture.

Sir Edmund Chambers, as behoves a senior government officer, had an incisive mind, a remarkable grasp of facts and superb organizational abilities. It would be foolish not to heed most carefully any pronouncement of his on the subject of Shakespeare, but posterity may have listened so well that there has been insufficient incentive for serious consideration of at least partial admission for the alternative 'pluralistic' answer. After all, as Chambers himself reminded us, to acquiesce lazily is but to invite ossification of views; we must, he insists, dig in the Shakespearean garden regularly for ourselves in order to

"turn our notional assents ... into real assents" (DS 22). No commentator holds, by right, a monopoly of truth. Reaction in either direction is helpful: the 'pluralists' may well go too far at times; the 'unifiers' may protest too much. If Robertson needed to moderate his views, so do his critics. Moreover, while the explanation offered by Chambers—for what he sees as a style diversity that is more apparent than real— is certainly plausible, so is the alternative of composite work, involving many contributors. We have to decide how to choose between them.

Before giving our "real assent" we should look at the textual evidence—parallel passages as well as frequencies of word usage, line endings and diction. A specialist encyclopedia, edited by Boyce, strikes the right note on Robertson: "his overall thesis is generally thought to be exaggerated". It doubtless is so in places. Yet any free-thinking modern investigator of the structure of Shakespearean composition, reading widely in the literature of the age and developing an ear for style, cadences and phrase repetition could come to feel that the Scot was broadly on the right lines. There is such a range of different stylistic-type evidence on display and the accumulated effect of it all is compelling. There are remarkable parallel passages too, as may be seen from just two examples involving Marlowe:

> Their fingers made to quaver on a lute,
> Their arms to hang about a lady's neck,
> Their legs to dance and caper in the air...
> Marlowe: 2 *Tamburlaine* (I.iv)

> He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
> To the lascivious pleasing of a lute
> Shakespeare: *King Richard III* (I.i)

> One is no number; maids are nothing then,
> Without the sweet society of men.
> Marlowe: *Hero and Leander* (Part 1, Sestiad 1)

> Among a number one is reckoned none ...
> *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (136)

It is unfortunate that Professor Schoenbaum and other recent commentators have been both more comprehensively dismissive and less courteous to the Robertsonian view than was Sir Edmund Chambers. The latter used the word 'disintegration' only because he was concerned that the unity of the Shakespeare work and the skill of the supreme dramatic craftsman should not be undervalued. Alas, the term

was later turned into a useful label to justify instant rejection, as academic orthodoxy in the matter became progressively more rigid. Such style analysis, we are told in effect, is a waste of mental effort; either pseudo-scholarship or nugatory endeavor. And to praise Robertson brings forth Schoenbaum's scorn. H.N. Gibson, for example, had done so and is suitably rebuked. In a 1960s attack on Shakespeare authorship heresy, Gibson rashly claimed that the only work of Robertson's he appeared to know (BH) had demolished all Greenwood's arguments. He thus hailed Robertson as a great Elizabethan scholar. Schoenbaum, when reacting to this, became quite feisty, denouncing Dr. Gibson's naivety in giving undeserved credibility to the "prince of disintegrators" (428). The quoted phrase sounds all too uncomfortably close to 'prince of darkness'. It seems that dissenters from the prevailing creed are at first simply queried, then marginalized, and finally recommended for excommunication.

Surprisingly, if we leave aside for the moment Greenwood's belief about the very identity of Shakespeare, we may question as Schoenbaum did (though hopefully in a kinder tone) whether the gap between these fascinating protagonists from the early part of the century, although it certainly existed, was ever quite as wide as might be supposed by the quantity and vehemence of their arguments. The orthodox view of the plays as offered by Chambers is that, whatever internal diversity exists, or seems to exist within the Shakespeare works, there was a "single shaping spirit of imagination"(DS 5), and that "common sense revolts" (WSFP 1.219) unless one agrees that "a single mind and a single hand dominate them". How do the other critics fare in relation to this criterion? Greenwood gives a clear echo: "many pens, but one master mind" (ITSP 454). Robertson, for his part, stated that Shakespeare was "content to transfigure, much or little, the faulty performances of other men ... inlaying their webs with his threads of gold, lifting their often halting verse and broken music ... to the utmost altitudes of song"(SC 1923, 211). Moreover, near the end of his life, the Scot gave a hint that his zest for pointing to what he saw as the alien hands in Shakespeare might have partly misled the critics; he insisted that he had always believed that more than half of *The Complete Works* came directly from the pen of the master (LT).

Unfortunately, it seems that for many people, as the passage of time adds to the sheer quantity and complexity of history, helpful probabilites within the consensus must be counted as certainties; possibilities which have aided one's cause are termed probabilities; speculations which do likewise become seen as (at least) possibilities; radical counter-arguments become regarded only as quaint and unworthy of sustained attention. The authority of Chambers being rightly respected, his stance

was accepted as entirely correct. What is so sadly amiss is that, as academic system building proceeded on that foundation, the alternative view gradually faded from sight. The concept of plurality in Shakespearean authorship is not likely to loom large in any modern literary syllabus, nor find favour with many of today's dons. In some matters, the head shaking of experts is likely to prove decisive, at least for all practical purposes; this was one such. Yet even Chambers himself, if read aright, is forced to admit 'a patchwork quilt': it is simply that Robertson insisted that the patches are more frequent and curious than had been previously recognized.

Objective examination of the evidence may yet show that, whatever the excesses of Robertson (or any by Greenwood for that matter), problems were identified which were not entirely removed by insistence on the essential unity of Shakespeare. Chambers showed an alternative to the 'many hands' argument—what *could* have happened. But did it? A 'solution' had been found, but was it right—or even fully adequate as an explanation of the 'alien material' found by Robertson? Does not the latter theory fit in with the Jonson epigram?

We come back to the issue of choice between the interpretations of Chambers Robertson, or indeed (if we are sufficiently brave) Greenwood. This should not be made in advance either on the basis of what one would hope to be true, or on account of Sir Edmund's deservedly high reputation. For those sufficiently interested to read and re-read the texts voraciously, there is primary evidence to be weighed. The most reasonable way of testing is one of dispassionate hermeneutics: to interpret by getting as close as possible to the source of the Shakespeare 'river'; to examine, without prejudice, the works attributed to him alongside those of contemporaries. And all this with close attention being paid to style, parallelisms, line structure and verse flow. The fair conclusion may well be that, despite some overstatement by the Scot, there *is* a good deal of stylistic plurality in *The Complete Works*; that there *are* other voices. And that this phenomenon intermingles most curiously with what seems to be genuine 'Shakespearean' material.

Robertson well knew that "a scientific debate was still some way off" (SC 1925, xii). How he would have relished the opportunity provided by computers for stylometrical analysis! Yet there are reasons for retaining the laborious and seemingly old-fashioned techniques that he applied. For technology-led analysis of texts from previous centuries uses only *some* weapons from the Robertsonian armory. And one requires a 'feel' for the literature which it is difficult for machine intelligence to simulate at present[14]. There is more involved than word counts, word juxtapositions, and similarities of phrase. Some of the complex comparative analysis needed calls for essentially human,

though objective, qualities in interpretation. In seeking to apply these, we might do well to remember that all such stylistic testing is but one kind of evidence, needing corroboration via other routes. Moreover, with regard to any computerized stylistic testing, there is a very poor track record to date in terms of consistency: such examination of Elizabethan texts has unfortunately thrown up many conflicting results. Eric Sams has remarked upon what he sees as the considerable drawbacks in existing machine analysis of literary styles, but does suggest that there may yet be progress in such testing if distinction can truly be made "between influence, imitation, parody or plagiarism on the one hand, and actual authorship on the other" (191).

It has been argued that a way forward could be through neural networking. This concerns a proposal for technological stylometry tests which is analogous to ideas in neuropsychology. Matthews and Merriam, applying that technique at the University of Aston, England, have claimed that it separates essentials from background, rather like the human mind and eye pick out the face wanted within a crowd. Nevertheless, difficulties still arise. Care must be taken to ensure that any such analysis does not (via prior assumptions at the input stage) automatically endorse received orthodoxy. For instance, to offer the computer the text of plays by Marlowe and Shakespeare and then to look for guidance as to which of them (if either) wrote the anonymous drama *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, would be a method fundamentally flawed. For can we be certain that the 'style' of any Shakespeare play offered for such an exercise is itself truly homogeneous—the work of a single pen?

Whatever machine-based scrutiny of texts does or does not eventually achieve, there is continuing scope for stylistic analysis by individuals on the texts of Shakespeare and his age. Although this may at times be informal, it requires much time and rigor: reading and re-reading the plays and poems, with a keen interest in what makes a distinctive style; an ear for sound and repetition of phrase, an eye for line endings, a retentive memory. Intellectual integrity demands that such efforts be without fixed preconceptions—either about the extent of our supreme Bard's learning, or regarding any unusual 'composition rights' he may have held. Neither Robertson nor Greenwood would expect more than this of us, but they would respect nothing less.

Conclusions

Firstly, this debate between protagonists surprisingly modern in their outlook, remains an intriguing 'quarrel' of great verve and integrity, most worthy of renewed attention[15].

Furthermore, while this is not an occasion to pursue in any detail

Greenwood's idea of an 'alternative Shakespeare', we may at least say that efforts to investigate or refute such theories encourages the scanning of a great range of the plays, thus having the potential to help people appreciate a wider range of Shakespearean work than many would ever otherwise manage. They prompt most useful consideration of the great author's background knowledge as well as stylistic issues. Certainly, attempts to prove wrong any advocate of Bacon, The Earl of Oxford, Marlowe or another as the true author, or part-author, of Shakespeare's works should be based on reason and evidence, not ridicule. I have taken up these matters in detail elsewhere, in what seeks to be an independent and open-minded history of all such authorship controversy since 1900.

Thirdly, the course of the debate from the mid 1920s, involving the increasing isolation of Robertson, shows how some avenues of investigation can be blocked in established academic circles via the hasty or too sweeping dismissal of unpopular theories.

Fourthly, it may be noted that Greenwood had argued for collaborative authorship, basing his view on the obvious range of Shakespeare's knowledge, interests, and vocabulary. Robertson's style tests are but another route to the same conclusion. If, as is contended here, they are correct in principle concerning covert plurality in the Shakespeare canon, and Robertson is right in several—although not all—of the specific examples offered, there is a host of related major questions to be answered. Shakespeare, the master-hand, must then have interwoven with his own original writings the work of others; sometimes edited, sometimes unchanged. Did he collaborate without acknowledging helpers, did he 'borrow' material without permission, or do both? How could he have collaborated in some cases? In particular, how could someone of lowly status have the power and opportunity to do these things with such freedom and impunity?[16] Could this even mean that 'Shakespeare' was an enterprise designed to produce the outstanding literature of the age through a combination of creation, take-up and enhancement; a great and influential personage being hidden somewhere as master writer and planner?[17] (Greenwood's ghost smiles more broadly).

A fifth issue is that the work of Robertson suggests the continuing use of Marlowe material well into Shakespeare's 'middle period'. This is particularly intriguing since orthodox history insists that Christopher Marlowe died in May 1593.

Finally, the whole thrust of such questions as are posed here rests on the assumption that the discarded 'plural' authorship theories do have some validity. Renewed present-day interest in stylometric testing of numerous texts from previous centuries where they may be

authorship doubts, along with the presence of computer technology for carrying out some of the work that Robertson was forced to do on the lines of individual endeavor, may yet provide impetus for the revival of interest in the question of authorship unity among the texts comprising The First Folio. It must avoid obstacles such as those mentioned by Sams; equally it must beware of transmitting the beliefs of present orthodoxy into its raw material input for the computer. If progress can be made, this would be highly beneficial, since the voice of the 'pluralists' (Chambers and others notwithstanding) seems to some of us to have persistent, though silent, vindication in the textual evidence. It could just be that, despite his perpetual fame and the ceaseless flood of publications about him, that great author remains fundamentally misknown.

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16. "A Marlowe mystification," being the title of a letter by Robertson, published in *The Times Literary Supplement* 11th December 1924 (LMM).
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Notes

1. It is mostly orthodox Shakespearean commentators who have falsely proclaimed Greenwood to be " a Baconian" (he was even so described in his *Times* obituary and within *The Oxford Companion To English Literature* until his omission from the latter work after the 1967 edition). Yet some Baconians, even to this day, also seek to claim him for their ranks. Since we cannot quiz Greenwood and Robertson now, it is safest to assume that the views of each would still be what they consistently were during their lifetimes.
2. When Robertson died, notices duly appeared in the national press, and H. J. Laski provided a tribute within *The Dictionary of National Biography*. There was also an obituary published in the area where he had been born (*Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald*,13th January 1933). Yet, since then, he has been much neglected, not least in Scotland: histories of Arran and its 'celebrities' tend to mention only his service as a Member of Parliament and some even focus rather more on his maternal grandfather, affectionately known locally as 'Baron' Mackinnon. The decline in awareness of Robertson's scholarship and output may result from hostility towards his freethinking, but is more likely due simply to present-day ignorance of his accomplishments .
3. The relevant studies are M. Page, *Britain's unknown genius* (1984) and G. A. Wells, editor, *J. M. Robertson: liberal, rationalist, scholar*. (1987). Excellent though these are as general tributes, the first is short and the second, consisting of essays by various contributors, is weakest in its

appraisal of Robertson as a Shakespeare critic. Nor, alas, are literary interests reflected in his few extant letters to associates.

4. A collection of aphorisms by Francis Bacon claims that some people are like the ant, collecting things to use them; others like the bee, which gathers material but transforms and digests it by a power of its own; others again, like the spider, spin webs from their own substance. Shakespeare, as portrayed by Robertson, seems to reflect all these types.

5. Neither Greenwood nor Robertson was inclined to acknowledge possible errors. The former, when caught out in minor factual details, rather amusingly tended to put the blame on those responsible for compiling the indices to his books.

6. Writing of that particular opponent, Greenwood observes: "he must, surely, know, that controversy among gentlemen is not, and cannot be, with any decency, conducted on such lines" (VS p. 26.)

7. Robertson also remarked that all nations, whatever they possessed, had too many blockheads to the square mile. Quotations of this kind - pressing the benefits of 'continuous learning' - are to be found in a small miscellaneous category of works, outside his chief areas of interest, notably *Courses of Study* (various editions) and *What to read: a plea for the better use of public libraries* (1905).

8. Greenwood apparently often insisted that he preferred animals to some people.

9. This review was one of those cited above: *The Times*, 19th June, 1930. I can make no claim to know the identify of its author, but venture to say, on clear stylistic grounds, that the same person later penned Robertson's *Times* obituary.

10. George Bernard Shaw once laughingly called Robertson a "Chapmaniac".

11. This pamphlet, a mere 22 pages, was published at the price of one shilling.

12. The cynical may say that the rules of literary criticism are but those of politics: in determining which of two divergent views shall be future official policy, powerful senior civil servants are likely to prevail over the elected politicians.

13. The statement here quoted appears in Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*, while, in his *History of Freethought*, he stated that any "truths which stamp the sacred records as false are met by reinterpretation of the records". Certainly Chambers offered orthodoxy an acceptable 're-interpretation'.

14. An analogy might be with a chess game, with a master opposed by machine intelligence. Beyond logic, there lies something best expressed as an intuitive approach - often needed to win difficult end games. The computer has not the essentially human power to recall: 'we have been

here before and the outcome then was ... so my conclusion now is...'
15. This remark, although fully supportive of our protagonists, brings to mind a wry comment of Churchill's in the very different context of dispute about Irish unity: " the integrity of their quarrel is ... unaltered in the cataclysm which has (since) swept the world".
16. The conclusion to which Robertson was forced - that sundry dramatists must have lodged unpublished material with the acting companies and that this was how Shakespeare managed to access it - is clearly most unsatisfactory.
17. Accepting that the oft-quoted 1592 attack on someone who was a "shake-scene" and an "upstart crow beautified with our feathers" refers to the dramatist Shakespeare gives further point to the Jonson epigram. Moreover, subsequent expression of sorrow for that attack by its publisher, Henry Chettle - a retraction which has been described as the most handsome apology of the age - surely supports a theory that there was more weight and influence behind 'Shakespeare' than was readily apparent.

An Alternate Solution to the Funeral *Elegy*

Richard Desper

Dramatic new evidence bearing on the Shakespeare authorship question was recently reported by Donald Foster[1] in the form of a poem, "A Funeral *Elegy* for Master William Peter", originally published in 1612 by T. Thorpe.[2] Foster has cited this poem as definitive evidence upholding the tradition that the body of work published under the name "William Shakespeare"[3] was indeed written by the glovemaker's son from Stratford-upon-Avon. Foster's thesis is twofold. First, although Thorpe identified the author only as "W. S.", Foster's computer analysis of the poem, in comparison with other works of the Shakespeare canon, resulted in a positive identification. Second, Foster cites the date of publication (1612) and its association with the death of a person in that year as evidence against the proposal that the Shakespeare canon was instead written by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, who died in 1604. While conceding the "plainness" of the *Elegy* (in comparison to the Sonnets, for instance), Foster maintained that the similarities between Shakespeare's works and the *Elegy* cannot be due to deliberate imitation of Shakespeare's style by another writer. Seconding Foster, Prof. Lars Engle[4] acknowledged that, while the *Elegy* was written quickly, as was *Merry Wives of Windsor*, it still was the work of "William Shakespeare".

In response, Oxfordian scholars have cited numerous discrepancies in Foster's argument. Sobran[5] points out that the ostensible subject of the poem, William Peter, had been married for three years at the time of his death, while *Elegy* eulogizes its subject as someone who had been

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Dr. Desper previously appeared in The Elizabethan Review *with "Allusions to Edmund Campion in Twelth Night" in spring 1995.*

married for nine years. Sobran also notes that the *Elegy* speaks of its subject as a devoted father, while the historical William Peter died without issue. Sobran argues that the time from the January death of William Peter to the date of registration of the *Elegy* by Thorpe is remarkably short for the poem's composition. Foster's thesis requires a scenario in which the news of William Peter's January 25 death in Exeter traveled over 150 miles from Exeter to Stratford-upon-Avon, where the author wrote the 578-line *Elegy*, and then sent it another 150 miles to Thorpe in London—all within three weeks. In addition, Sobran notes that the author of the *Elegy* refers to himself as being in his youth. This could not apply to the forty-seven year old William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon in January, 1612. Sobran's theory is that the poem was written well before 1612, and that Thomas Thorpe was in possession of it when he heard of the death of a man named Peter in 1612. Knowing it was the work of the author of the Shakespeare canon, including the Sonnets which Thorpe had published in 1609, he took the opportunity to profit from the *Elegy* by using Peter's 1612 death as a fitting occasion for publishing the poem.

The important point of Foster's argument is that the *Elegy* constitutes a work both written and published in 1612 about a particular event occurring at that time, and identifiable as written by the author of the Shakespeare canon. The reasoning is that until one settles the authorship question, the only written works which can be historically ascribed to William of Stratford are half a dozen signatures. Connecting the *Elegy*, or any other newly discovered work, to the Shakespeare canon does not, of itself, constitute evidence of authorship; it merely adds another item to the works of Shakespeare, whoever he might be. To argue otherwise would be to presume the predicate. Furthermore, publication of the *Elegy* well after Oxford's death does not, *of itself*, disqualify Oxford as the true author "William Shakespeare". If one were to follow this type of argument to its logical conclusion, then the existence of *All's Well, Antony and Cleopatra, Two Gentlemen*, and *Coriolanus*, first printed in 1623 in the First Folio and unknown to history before that date, would disqualify the Stratford Shakespere (who died in 1616) as the playwright. Thus, one must either disqualify both Oxford and Shakspere, or concede that literary works may have existed years before their publication

The crucial point is whether the *Elegy* was written on the occasion of the death of someone in 1612 or in reference to an earlier death. Sobran has shown that doubts may be raised with regards to the contents of the poem *vis-à-vis* the known facts of William Peter, supposedly the subject of the poem. Our task here shall be to demonstrate that the *Elegy* refers to the an actual death which occurred well before 1612. We shall identify that person and show how the known historical facts

about his life and death mesh perfectly with the contents of the *Elegy*. This shall confirm Sobran's argument that the *Elegy* printed by Thorpe in 1612 was actually written decades before. Additionally, we shall show that this person was alluded to repeatedly in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. Finally, it shall be shown that the revelations of the author of the *Elegy* about himself also mesh with our historical knowledge of the 17th Earl of Oxford at the time the *Elegy* was written.

We are willing to stipulate that Foster is correct in attributing the *Elegy* to Shakespearean authorship, but shall take the *Elegy* as yet further evidence that the Earl of Oxford is the true author of the Shakespeare canon, writing a tribute to the Catholic martyr, Edmund Campion. Such an interpretation is consistent with the contents of the poem and the histories of Oxford and Campion.

The major points supporting such an interpretation are as follows.

First and foremost are the references to a spouse of nine years, and of fatherhood (511-513, 526), which do not fit the known life of William Peter at all, but which figuratively fit the life of Father Edmund Campion.

Second are the references to a death by martyrdom (179-184, 318-320, 321-324, 367-370, 391-396, 535-536). While the authors of elegies do often succumb to hyperbole and exaggeration in their praise of the deceased, there are limits of taste, beyond which the praise rings untrue. The level of expression of the departed's martyrdom, particularly in 367-370, where his death is compared to that of Jesus Christ, hardly accords with the life and death of William Peter.

Third are the references to the departed as a condemned man, one under sentence of death (34-35, 157, 249-268, 535-536,). Most telling is line 157: "The many hours till the day of doom", which suggests the interval between a judicial sentence and its execution. These "hours" have no meaning with regard to the violent death of William Peter, who had no foreknowledge of his death.

Fourth are the occasions (48, 159) in which it is noted that the body of the departed would not lie in a tomb. For Edmund Campion, law provided that his drawn and quartered body should not be accorded burial; thus there is no tomb at which his admirers could remember him. On the other hand, there is no reason to believe that William Peter was not accorded burial.

Fifth are those allusions to the Catholic religion of the departed (318-320), and to the figurative meaning of his name as a "Champion" of that faith. The foremost fact of the life of Edmund Campion is that he was a Roman Catholic; the same cannot be said of William Peter.

Sixth are those references by the author of the *Elegy* to his own "youth" (558-60). Such references are hardly appropriate in terms of the forty-seven year old William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon in

1612, the year of William Peter's death. However, the term would be appropriate for Edward de Vere in the time frame 1581-83, when he was in his early thirties.

With regard to Oxfordian authorship, we note that Oxford's fall from favor (including banishment from Court) between 1581 and 1583 fully accords with the remarks (137-148, 565-572) of the author of the *Elegy* about himself, and with certain of Shakespeare's sonnets (33-38, 71-72, 111-112, 121), in which the poet alludes to his own damaged reputation. Abrams calls attention to the parallels between these sonnets and the various lines in the *Elegy* in which the author remarks on the shame attached to his name, and comments that the *Elegy* is "an odd forum for an author to be discussing such matters". Indeed, such remarks would seem to be *non sequiturs* in an *Elegy* written by the gentleman from Stratford-upon-Avon in 1612 about William Peter. They are quite appropriate, however, for the Earl of Oxford to incorporate into a poem written circa 1581-83 about Edmund Campion.

This writer has demonstrated that *Twelfth Night, or What You Will,* is more than the greatest jewel of comedy of the Elizabethan era (see *ER,* 3:1). The spirit of *Twelfth Night* is that of a season when (to quote Feste, IV.i.9) "Nothing that is so is so"; when meanings are turned inside out. Thus, in the midst of this boisterous, rollicking comedy, it can be argued that the author has inserted a poignant salute to the Catholic priest and martyr, Edmund Campion:[6] ...as the old hermit of Prague, that never saw pen and ink, very wittily said to a niece of King Gorboduc, 'That that is is'; so I, being master Parson, am master Parson; for what is 'that' but 'that', and 'is' but 'is'?" (Iv.ii.15-19). The concept that this speech contains deliberate allusions to Edmund Campion, particularly to his 1580-81 mission to England, has been discussed in detail and shall only be alluded to here. The earlier discussion was written without reference to the authorship question.

The historical record of meetings between the Earl of Oxford and Edmund Campion is limited to a single occasion: the State Visit of Queen Elizabeth and her court to Oxford University, from August 31 to September 5 , 1566. Campion, the university's brilliant young star, made an excellent impression on Elizabeth, expostulating publicly[7] before her on matters of science and philosophy. He would have been twenty-six years of age at the time. At that same visit, the sixteen-year-old Edward de Vere, ward of the Queen since his father's death four years earlier, due to become Seventeenth Earl of Oxford at his majority, was awarded[8] the degree Master of Arts. De Vere had been educated by illustrious tutors (most notably his uncle, Arthur Golding, famed for his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) at Cecil House, the London home of his guardian, William Cecil, later to become Lord Burghley. Thus de Vere's residence as a scholar at Oxford may have been of quite

limited duration. Nonetheless, both Campion and De Vere were present for the six-day royal visit. Consequently, the sixteen-year-old Edward de Vere had both occasion and opportunity to meet and befriend the twenty-six-year-old Edmund Campion. Whether the two actually met and formed a friendship is not contained in the historical record of this event.

The following lines in the text of the *Elegy* display the poem's numerous associations to the life and death of Edmund Campion.

" ... time ... Abridged the circuit of his hopeful days" (1-2). Campion, after a promising career at Oxford University, was executed (December 1, 1581)[9] at the untimely age of forty-one.

"What memorable monument can last / Whereon to build his never-blemished name / But his own worth, wherein his life was graced" (5-7). Campion had been convicted of and executed for treason, a verdict for which history has pronounced him blameless.[10] In particular, Campion was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church in 1970, which amounts to official ecclesiastical recognition that he died in a state of grace. Many Catholics of the Elizabethan era held the same opinion.

"A life free from such stains as follies are, / Ill recompensed only in his end" (19-20). Campion was innocent yet condemned. See Sonnet 121 ("Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed") also for the theme of a good man unjustly perceived of as evil.

" ... he had / Warrant enough in his own innocence" (34-35). Allusion to the death warrant under which the innocent Campion was executed.

"But death to such gives unremembered graves" (48). Particularly for one executed by hanging, drawing, and quartering. The remains are not accorded any kind of respectful burial; instead, they are divided up and disposed of to several different destinations, as was the custom of the day.[11] There is no grave, marked or unmarked, for those who died as Campion died.

"His younger years ... did yield again the crop / Of education, bettered in his truth" (51-54). Campion was the shining star of academic excellence in his Oxford days, honored by the Queen during her 1566 visit to the University, and supported financially by her favorite, the Earl of Leicester.[12] Campion had even been chosen to deliver the eulogy on the death of Leicester's first wife, Amy Robsart, in 1562.

" ... a temple, in whose precious white / Sat reason by religion overswayed / Teaching his other senses, with delight / how piety and zeal should be obeyed" (59-62). Campion's religious conscience rendered him unable to make the appropriate gestures of adherence to the established church; he resigned his post at Oxford in 1569.

"He from the happy knowledge of the wise / Draws virtue to reprove secured fools / and shuns the glad sleights of ensnaring vice / To spend his spring days in sacred schools" (71-74). Campion's studies of the fathers of the Church led him to eschew the path of security of his promising Oxford career for Catholic universities abroad, at Douai, Rome, then Prague, as novice, priest and professor.

"Not ... / Courting opinion with unfit disguise / Affecting fashions" (91-93). Campion's nature made it difficult for him to trim his sails to political expectations, forcing him to leave Oxford.

"Unburthened conscience, unfeigned piety" (124). In exile, Campion, relieved of the pressure to conform to doctrines he could not affirm (e.g. that the sovereign was the Supreme Head of the Church in England) was free to follow his conscience in religious matters.

"Though I, rewarded with some sadder taste / Of knowing shame, by feeling it have proved / My country's thankless misconstruction cast / Upon my name and credit" (137-140). At the time of Campion's 1580-81 mission to England, the Earl of Oxford was embroiled in two controversies. In the first of these, Oxford, in the Christmas 1580 season, confessed himself to have been a secret Catholic, publicly broke with Rome, and named as fellow Catholics his first cousin Lord Henry Howard and two others. Howard counterattacked strenuously with denial and*ad hominem* arguments against Oxford's veracity and reputation. Note the use of "shame", connoting disgrace or disrepute, rather than "guilt", connoting culpability for offensive conduct. The entire Oxford-Howard episode remains somewhat a riddle to this day, and Oxford no doubt felt misunderstood at the time.

"... to enbane / My reputation with a witless sin" (143-144). Refers to Oxford's second controversy of this time period. Anne Vavasour, lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth, bore an illegitimate son (March 1581) and named as his father Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford.[13] For this offense, Oxford was first lodged in the Tower for several months, then banished from court until 1583. Note the word "sin", implying culpability, rather than mere "shame".

"Yet time, the father of unblushing truth, / May one day lay ope malice which hath crossed it, / And right the hopes of my endangered youth, / Purchasing credit in the place I lost it" (145-148). A clue to the date of the *Elegy*: before Oxford's 1583 return to court, but obviously after Campion's death in December, 1581. As to how Oxford eventually "purchased credit" to return to court after *l'affaire Vavasour*: he reconciled with his wife, Lord Burghley's daughter, *nee* Anne Cecil, after seven years estrangement; Anne bore him a son in May, 1583, who survived only a day or two. Shortly after, the Queen, perhaps seeing this as tangible evidence of

Oxford's reformation, and feeling sympathy for the bereaved pair, turned a kind ear to petitions from Anne's father, Lord Burghley, and from Sir Walter Raleigh, and re-admitted Oxford to Court. Note also the association of Time as the revealer of Truth, a dominant motif in *The Winter's Tale*, which has been previously cited as an autobiographical work of Oxford.[14]

"The many hours till the day of doom" (157). Refers to Campion's wait of several days while under sentence of death. Cannot be reconciled to the violent death of William Peter in 1612, since he had no foreknowledge of his impending death.

"For should he lie obscured without a tomb" (159). Again, refers to the manner of disposition (without a tomb) of Campion's body after his execution.

"Time would to time his honesty commend" (160). History will exonerate Campion. Borne out in fact: see remarks on (5-7).

"And I here to thy memorable worth, / In this last act of friendship, sacrifice / My love to thee, which I could not set forth / In any other habit of disguise.... And I confess my love was too remiss / That had not made thee know how much I prized thee, / But that mine error was, as yet it is, / To think love best in silence ... He is steady / Who seems less than he is in open show ... I took this task upon me, / To register with mine unhappy pen / Such duties as it owes to thy desert" (205-226). Oxford expresses his regret that he could not have spoken out on Campion's behalf during Campion's imprisonment, trial, and execution. In Oxford's defense, one should recall that Oxford was himself in disgrace at this point in time, having been banished from Court. Oxford himself was released[15] from the Tower of London only six weeks before Campion was lodged[16] there. Knowing full well that his voice would do Campion no good, Oxford maintained silence on the subject, resolving instead to pay his tribute to Campion in writing for a later day.

"... wherein to tell / What more thou didst deserve than in thy name, / And free thee from the scandal of such senses ... So in his mischief is the world accursed: / It picks out matter to inform the worst. ... The text of malice ... As 'tis by seeming reason underpropped" (249-268). Campion died a traitor's death, in apparent disgrace, his name ruined if one were judge by the same light as did his prosecutors. The author has set out to undo this disgrace, to free Campion's name to posterity from the disgrace attached to it, as Campion would have done for the author. Hardly applies to the William Peter of 1612: it is a misfortune to die in a violent drunken quarrel, but not a disgrace of this nature.

"Ruling the little ordered commonwealth / Of his own self, with honor to the law / That gave peace to his bread, bread to his health; ...

wherein he joyed / A monarchy of comfort's government" (294-299). Portrays the self-content of a man who knows himself and is faithful to his own conscience. The "bread" could well refer to the bread which Campion, as a priest, offered in peace in the celebration of the Catholic mass. This is immediately followed by —

"For in the vineyard of heaven-favored leaning / Where he was double-honored in degree, / His observation and discreet discerning / Had taught him in both fortunes to be free" (301-304). First the "vineyard" allusion to the wine of the Catholic mass, then the "double-honored in degree" allusion to Campion's two academic degrees (BA and MA), and finally, allusion to Campion's exercise of a free conscience.

"... In all respects of trial, to unlock / His bosom and his store, which did declare / That Christ was his, and he was friendship's rock" (318-320). First, an allusion to Campion's trial, in which he presented an eloquent and steadfast statement of his religious faith. "Friendship's rock" is no doubt an allusion to Peter, the rock upon the Christian church was founded, and perhaps to the "Thou art Peter" phrase (MT 16:18-19) which forms the basis of Papal claims for authority according to the doctrine of the apostolic succession. With regard to Edmund Campion, there is a more specific connection, for on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, June 29th, 1580, shortly after his arrival in England, he preached on this text before a large audience in the hall of Lord Norrey's house.[17]

"A rock of friendship figures in his name, / Foreshowing what he was, and what should be, / Most true presage, and he discharged the same / In every act of perfect amity." (321-324). "Figures" indicates that his name is to be examined for figurative content: that name is Campion, the Champion, the Protector, the Defender of the Faith. Note also that there are two specific allusions to a "champion of the church" in the Shakespeare canon, in a single scene in "King John" (III.i.255,267), where the English Crown is in conflict with the Papacy.

"Thus he, who to the universal lapse / Gave sweet redemption, offering up his blood / to conquer death by death, and loose the traps / Of hell" (367-370). Taking the "universal lapse" to be original sin, this passage would seem to be making reference to the death of Jesus Christ, thus drawing a parallel between his death and that of Campion. The William Peter of 1612 hardly rates such acclaim.

"Those saints before the everlasting throne ... from earth hence have not gone / All to their joys in quiet on their beds, / But tasted of the sour-bitter scourge / Of torture and affliction" (391-396). In general, this compares Campion to earlier Christian martyrs. Specifically, it also refers to Campion's racking[18] which he endured at the

time of his 1581 imprisonment.

"Let then the false suggestions of the froward, / Building large castles in the empty air, / By suppositions fond and thoughts untoward ... Rebound gross arguments upon their heart" (399-403). Refers to the "Conferences"[19] of September-October 1581, in which leading churchmen of England sought to refute and discredit Campion intellectually with little success.

"His being but a private man in rank / (And yet not ranked beneath a gentleman)" (431-432). Campion was born a commoner, yet his ordination as a priest would have conferred upon him a status equivalent to that of a gentleman. Thus a priest is accorded the title "Don" in Latin countries, and "Sir" in the plays of "William Shakespeare".

"...he dies but once, but doubly lives, / Once in his proper self, then in his name" (495-496). Campion has a second life inasmuch as his name lives on after his death. Can this also be said of the hitherto unremembered William Peter?

"Amongst them all, she who those nine of years / Lived fellow to his counsels and his bed / Hath the most share in loss" (511-513). She is the Catholic Church, whom Campion embraced from his exile in 1572 to his death in 1581. Again, a figurative, not a literal, interpretation. The nine years matches the interval 1572-1581, not the much briefer period of William Peter's marriage.

"As he was both an husband and a father" (526). A priest conferred with holy orders is considered married to the church, and his title is "Father". Again, figurative, not literal.

"His due deserts, this sentence on him gives, / 'He died in life, yet in his death he lives.'" (535-536). Ironic use of "sentence" as both the sentence of judgment of the court and the judgment of posterity. The content of line 536 joins the two meanings: he died as a result of the sentence of the court, yet his name lives in the minds of men as a martyr.

"Learning my days of youth so to prevent / As not to be cast down by them again);" (559-560). Refers to Oxford's relative youth compared to Campion. Oxford was ten years younger than Campion, and age 31 at the time of Campion's death.

"... banished in th' exile / Of dim misfortune, has none other prop / Whereon to lean and rest itself the while / But the weak comfort of the hapless, 'hope.' / And hope must in despite of fearful change / Play in the strongest closet of my breast". (565-570). Reflects the Earl of Oxford's status — banished from the Court of Queen Elizabeth but hoping for the lifting of that mark of disgrace — at the time of writing of the poem.

"And court opinion in my deep'st unrest" (572). A pun on "court

opinion". In its first meaning, the author, in his unrest, courts the good opinion of others. As its second meaning, the Royal court's opinion of him, as expressed by the Queen's banishment, is the source of his deepest sorrow.

"Long may thy worthiness thy name advance / Amongst the virtuous and deserving most, / Who herein hast forever happy proved" (575-577). While the average elegy may figuratively nominate the departed for sainthood, in this instance, the author is extending a literal nomination for sainthood. Many are "worthy", "virtuous", and "deserving", of course; but a saint has also died in a state of grace and may be counted among the company of saints in heaven. The author declares the departed to be "forever happy proved", i.e. assuredly in heaven, which amounts, in canon law, to the imputation of sainthood to him.

The Religious and Political Dilemma of Elizabethan Catholics

That the Earl of Oxford, who himself abjured the Roman Catholic Church in December, 1580, is being proposed as the author of an *Elegy* for a Catholic martyr need not form a contradiction. Oxford could well have become disillusioned with Roman Catholicism, while maintaining a personal respect and admiration for Edmund Campion.

In retrospect one may raise questions as to the wisdom (as well as the morality) of papal policy *vis-à-vis* England at this point in time. The policy comprised military intervention, as exemplified by the abortive Smerwick invasion of Ireland in 1580.[20] Papal policy also encompassed the endorsement of assassination,[21] first appearing in the Sega / Como correspondence of 1580. Papal policy also included the dispatching of Edmund Campion on his exclusively religious and nonpolitical mission of 1580-81. In short, rather than choosing between subversion, military intervention, or nonviolent mission activity, the papacy chose all three. It should be no surprise that, under the circumstances, the English government placed little stock in Campion's protestation of nonpolitical intention. Quite possibly, Campion knew that this would be the case from the day[22] he was called from Prague to return to England.

Indeed, Oxford and Campion share similarities in their attitudes towards tradition. To both, the history of past generations is treated with respect, and looked to for insights into proper and righteous behavior. When it comes to the eventual conflict between Church and Crown, the two part ways, but reluctantly, each following the path accorded the highest in his personal priorities. For Oxford, seventeenth of his line, his oath to his Sovereign would be given first place. For

Campion, his conscience would come down on the side of Church instead.

Shakespearean Attribution of the *Elegy*

Scholars on both sides of the authorship issue have raised objections to the attribution of the *Elegy* to the author of the Shakespeare canon. Stanley Wells has summarized the arguments on this issue recently[23] in the *Times Literary Supplement*, and a number of controversies have been raised in this area. For instance, Wells cites factual difficulties, notably its lack of specificity, as a weakness of the poem:

> "The praise of the murdered man is almost all generalized. We learn practically nothing about him, and when the writer does refer directly to the victim's life he gets it wrong."

However, if identifying the subject of the poem to be Campion, the reason for the poem's lack of specificity becomes evident. The author of the *Elegy* deals openly and fully in terms of his feelings for his subject, but, in deference to the political realities of the day, omits factual details which would readily identify the subject to the Elizabethan public. The government of England had executed Campion as a traitor, and would not take kindly to a poem extolling him as a martyr, even from the hand of the ranking earl of England.

Foster himself expressed reservations with his attribution, finding (NY Times, Jan. 14, 1996) that the poem was not so figurative or filled with word-play as is characteristic of Shakespeare. However, when the author and subject are properly identified, both figurative language and word-play are evident.

Both Duncan-Jones and Vickers have found the author of the *Elegy* to be overly modest about his intellectual abilities, compared to those of his friend, as he discharges his vow to memorialize his friend:

> "But here I trust I have discharged now / (Fair lovely branch too soon cut off) to thee, / My constant and irrefragable vow, / As had it chanc't thou might'st have done to me . . . / But that no merit strong enough of mine, / had yielded store to thy well-abled quill / Whereby t' enroll my name, as this of thine, / How s'ere enriched by thy plenteous skill. (233-240)"

They argue that this modesty compared to the writing abilities of the fallen friend is inappropriate for the established poet William Shakespeare of 1612 *vis-à-vis* the obscure William Peter. This affirmation of modesty is more appropriate when affirmed in 1581-83 by the

Earl of Oxford *vis-à-vis* the renowned Oxford scholar, Edmund Campion.

Conclusions

The Shakespeare authorship question is as much an historical question as a literary one, and the focus in this article has been on historical association rather than literary analysis. A much better fit with regard to the historical record is obtained if one identifies the subject of the poem as Edmund Campion. Furthermore, a fit is also obtained in terms of what the author reveals about himself in the *Elegy*, such as his position of disgrace at the time of the subject's death, and the historical record of the Earl of Oxford.

Others have taken yet a third view, proposing that the author of the *Elegy* was someone other than Shakespeare. Thus, John Ford has been advanced as a possible author of the *Elegy*, arguing, in part, that the quality of the verse in the *Elegy* does not measure up to Shakespearean standards. Foster's chief supporter, Richard Abrams, responds to such arguments in a recent *Times Literary Supplement* article thusly:

> "These are large claims . . . the question of style is likely to arise repeatedly . . . as readers turn to, and then impatiently turn away from, the poem's often ponderous verse. The *Elegy* is unquestionably a difficult poem. It may be guilty of "sameness, tediousness . . . elaborate obscurity", the charge brought to bear not last week against the elegy, but by Wordsworth against the Sonnets, which he ultimately came to read as the key with which Shakespeare unlocked his heart. . . 'Tedious and repetitious' the *Elegy* may also be, in Professor Wells' words; but the poem is not without its secrets, and it will not yield these up to careless reading." [24]

The present writer sees these words as particularly appropriate, not only in the context of establishing attribution of the *Elegy* to the author of the Shakespeare canon, but also in establishing Edward de Vere as the actual identity of that author.

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Notes

1. While Foster suggested the possibility of Shakespearean authorship of the *Elegy* as early as 1989, he, along with his chief supporter, Richard Abrams, strongly advocated this position first in April 1995, in a presentation before the Shakespeare Association of America. A general discussion of the subject was held at the Feb. 9, 1996 conference at UCLA. See also Abrams' article in the *Time Literary Supplement*, Feb. 9, 1996, and Foster's letter in the Mar. 27, 1996 TLS. Opposing views by fellow scholars have been voiced by Katherine Duncan-Jones adn by Brian Vickers in TLS.
2. Foster's text of the *Elegy* is available on-line via the World Wide Web; see Works Consulted.
3. For the purpose of this paper, the name "William Shakespeare" is intended to connote the author of the Shakespeare canon.
4. Both Engle and Professor Robert Watson spoke in support of Foster's thesis at the Feb. 9, 1996 conference on the subject held at UCLA.
5. Joseph Sobran, see above.
6. Desper, "Allusions to Edmund Campion in Twelth Night," see above.
7. Waugh, 11-13.
8. Ward, 27. Waugh, 8. Ogubrn, 772.
9. Waugh, 225.
10. *DNB*, III, 850-854; The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1973, 4, 721; Allen, 16-20; More, 100; Edwards, 20; Simpson, 279-313.
11. The directions of the Lord Chief Justice for the dispositon of Campion's remains are quoted by Waugh, 222, and do not bear repeating here.
12. Waugh, 7-14.
13. Ogburn, 646.
14. Desper and Vezzoli, see above.
15. Oxford's release from the Tower of London took place on June 8, 1581 (Ogburn, 646).
16. Campion was lodged in the Tower only July 22, 1581. (Waugh, 179-81)
17. Waugh, 125-26.
18. Waugh, 194, 206, 209, 216.
19. Ogburn, 638.
20. See Meyer, 266-275; see also Appendix XVIII, 489-91.
21. When Campion was called at Prague to go on his mission to England, a fellow priest inscribed above Campion's door "P. Edmundus Campianus Martyr." (Waugh, 90)
22. See Wells' *TLS* article referenced above.
23. See Abrams' *TLS* article referenced above.

The Dedication to Shakespeare's Sonnets

John M. Rollett

Part One: "Mr. W. H. Revealed at Last"

One of the most enduring of literary mysteries is the identity of "Mr. W. H.", the man to whom *Shake-speares Sonnets* were dedicated in 1609. Yet it turns out that his name was recorded, by simple means, for posterity to find, in the enigmatic Dedication printed on the second leaf of the quarto. Commentators for over two hundred years have admitted to being puzzled by its unusual appearance, peculiar syntax, and obscure meaning.[1] If they had only realised it, the key to an explanation of these matters is described in several classical texts, and in books on the shelves of every public library.

The Dedication to the Sonnets is unlike any other literary dedication of the period,[2] quite apart from the mystery of "Mr. W. H.", and some scholars have speculated that it may be a cipher. As Richard Dutton says, "The grammar of the piece is almost sufficient to quell interpretation in itself. How many sentences are hidden within the unusual punctuation (which ... [may be] essential to some cryptogram ...)?"[3] Who is "the onlie begetter"? Is he the "Fair Youth", the young man to whom many of the sonnets were addressed (and who is identified with "Mr. W. H." by most commentators), or is he the agent who procured the manuscript? Is "T. T." referring to himself as the "well-wishing adventurer", or is he merely signing off as the publisher, Thomas Thorpe? And, asks Kenneth Muir, "Is there any significance in

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the way the Dedication is set out?"[4]

Undoubtedly, as Stanley Wells says, "'Mr. W. H.' provides the biggest puzzle of all",[5] and Samuel Schoenbaum calls it "a riddle that to this day remains unsolved".[6] The mystery is compounded by the difficulty of understanding what the writer of the Dedication was trying to convey by the rest of the text, which Northrop Frye characterises as "one floundering and illiterate sentence".[7] This is the more surprising, in view of the fluency and wit displayed in Thorpe's other dedications (see Appendix A). A student of cryptography might well ask him or her self whether there was more in this piece than meets the eye, since as Helen Fouché Gaines has said, "awkwardness of wording" may be a pointer to a 'concealment cipher', that is, a cipher designed so that superficially it appears innocent of hidden information.[8]

TO.THE.ONLIE.BEGETTER.OF.
THESE.INSVING.SONNETS.
Mr.W.H. ALL.HAPPINESSE.
AND.THAT.ETERNITIE.
PROMISED.

BY.

OVR.EVER-LIVING.POET.

WISHETH.

THE.WELL-WISHING.
ADVENTVRER.IN.
SETTING.
FORTH.

T. T.

FIG. 1. The Dedication page of Shake-speares Sonnets, published by Thomas Thorpe in 1609.

The first person to attempt to decipher the Dedication was the eminent Shakespeare scholar Leslie Hotson, who described it in the following way:[9]

Thorpe's inscription has been termed *enigmatic, puzzling, cryptic,* recalling the Elizabethans' characteristic fondness for anagram,

> rebus, acrostic, concealment, cryptogram, 'wherein my name ciphered were'. In these ensuing sonnets Shakespeare declared, *Your monument shall be my gentle verse*, and Thorpe has set out a monumental inscription TO ... Mr. W. H. Is there possibly something more than initials, hid and barr'd from common sense here in his text, which we are meant to look for?

Hotson's researches had convinced him that the mysterious "Mr. W. H." was a certain William Hatcliffe, who had been admitted as a law student to Gray's Inn in 1586, and a year later chosen as 'Prince of Purpoole', an exalted 'Lord of Misrule' appointed to preside over Christmas festivities. After detailing several peculiarities of the Dedication, suggestive of a cryptogram, Hotson claimed to find the name of his candidate concealed within it. His method (somewhat simplified) was to start with "Mr. W. H." in line three (Fig. 1), move down diagonally one line to another 'H' in the word "THAT", pick up 'HAT' from this word, and then drop vertically down to line seven and pick up 'LIV' from "EVER-LIVING". In this way he arrives at 'HATLIV', a reasonably good approximation to "Hatcliffe". It must be said at once that no cryptologist would place any credence in this procedure, since it involves so many arbitrary steps. Cryptography (speaking generally) is systematic, and often uses simple mathematics, leaving little room for guesswork. And although Hotson's theory attracted a lot of interest when it was first published, William Hatcliffe has now been ruled out by most scholars as a possible "Mr. W. H."

Hotson was apparently unaware that his hypothesis that the Dedication might contain some kind of secret information seems to receive support from an unexpected quarter—Ben Jonson. In 1616 he published his *Epigrammes*, part of his *Workes*, with a dedication to William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, which begins:

> MY LORD. *While you cannot change your merit, I dare not change your title: It was that* [your merit] *made it* [your title], *and not I. Under which name, I here offer to your Lo: the ripest of my studies, my* Epigrammes; *which, though they carry danger in the sound, doe not therefore seeke your shelter: For, when I made them, I had nothing in my conscience, to expressing of which I did need a cypher.* [clarifications inserted]

According to Edward Dowden, writing in 1881, some critics have supposed that Ben Jonson is here alluding to Shakespeare's Sonnets, because of the words "I dare not change your title".[10] It has always been a puzzle that the dedicatee should be addressed as "Mr." if, as is generally supposed, he was a nobleman (invoked in the sonnets as *Lord, prince, king, sovereign*), especially by or on behalf of one so much lower

in the social scale as the son of a Warwickshire glover and dealer in wool. (Hotson's solution to this puzzle is Hatcliffe's election as a *temporary* Prince, who could be addressed in lofty terms at the time and for some years afterwards.) But the most intriguing aspect of Jonson's remarks is the reference to a cipher. By saying in his dedication that he had "nothing in my conscience, to expressing of which I did need a cypher," he seems perhaps to imply that some other dedication *did* make use of a cipher, and the reference to a change of title may well point to the Dedication to the Sonnets.

Peculiarities of the Dedication

The peculiarities of the Dedication may be summarised as follows.

(a) The natural order for a dedication of this kind would be, as Hotson stresses: 'To the dedicatee: (1) the dedicator (2) wisheth (3) blessings'. But in this dedication the natural order is inverted, and it has the form 'To the dedicatee: (3) blessings (2) wisheth (1) the dedicator'.[9] Hotson comments that it is the *only* dedication he has seen "which puts the sentence backwards". To "expose its conspicuous peculiarity," he reproduces nine other dedications as examples of normal word order, and goes on to suggest that if Sherlock Holmes' remark that "singularity is almost always a clue" holds, then here is a prime example.

(b) Awkwardness of wording is evidenced further by the close conjunction of "wisheth" and "well-wishing"; surely the writer could have avoided the repetition of the root word "wish" by saying something such as 'well-willing', 'well-disposed', 'benevolent', 'amiable' or 'friendly'? Again, the phrase "these insuing sonnets" jars slightly, at least to a modern ear; one might (with a completely open mind) have expected either 'these sonnets', or 'the insuing sonnets', or perhaps 'these the insuing sonnets'.

(c) It is all in capital letters (apart from the 'r' of "Mr."). As far as has been ascertained, there are only two other lengthy dedications of the period all in capital letters (those to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Jonson's *Volpone*).

(d) The spelling of the word "onlie" is very unusual; the most common spelling of the word at this time was 'onely'. In the First Folio of 1623, the word appears as 'onely' 67 times, 'only' 5 times, 'onelie' twice, and 'onlie' once. (In the sonnets, 'onely' occurs 4 times, 'only' twice, and 'onlie' not at all.)

(e) There are full stops after every word, a most remarkable feature, which is believed to be unique to this dedication; to date, no other example has been reported.

(f) The hyphens joining two pairs of words into compound adjectives are unusual, in that they are lower-case, instead of the expected upper-case hyphens.

The lines of the Dedication are carefully proportioned so as to form three blocks, each in the shape (roughly) of an inverted triangle. The line spacing is subtly increased between the middle five lines, as if to emphasise this feature.

These peculiarites may be the consequence of a badly-worded text and a quirky compositor. An alternative possibility will now be investigated.

The Dedication as a " Transposition Cipher "

The fact that the Dedication is all in capital letters (apart from the 'r' of "Mr.") suggests the possibility of a 'transposition cipher',[8] a technique familiar in Elizabethan times to scholars such as John Dee.[11,12] The total number of letters in the text of the Dedication (disregarding Thomas Thorpe's initials "T. T." at the end, offset to one side) is 144, which has many factors. It is characteristic of this kind of cipher that information is concealed in arrays of letters which form perfect rectangles, and we therefore examine each of these arrays in turn. If the Dedication is written out in 8 rows of 18 letters, we obtain the perfect rectangular array shown in Fig. 2.

T O T H E O N L I **E** B E G E T T E R
O F T H E S E I N **S** V I N G S O N N
E T S M r W H A L **L** **H** A P P I N E S
S E A N D T H A T **E** **T** E R N I T I E
P R O M I S E D B **Y** **O** V R E V E R L
I V I N G P O E T W **I** S H E T H T H
E **W** E L L W I S H I N G A D V E N T
V **R** E R I N S E T T I N G F O R T H ©

FIG. 2. The Dedication as an array having 8 rows of 18 letters.

Inspection reveals the name "WR - IOTH - ESLEY" located in columns 2, 11, and 10, reading out down, up, down. This is *precisely* how the family name of the Earls of Southampton was always spelt officially. It is remarkable then that the candidate favored by many scholars as the "Fair Youth" and "Mr. W. H." is *Henry Wriothesley,* 3rd Earl of Southampton, his initials being reversed in a simple device, occasionally used elsewhere at the time. It was to this man that Shakespeare dedicated the two long poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece,* in 1593 and 1594 respectively.

Support for the correctness of this decipherment comes from the perfect array with 9 rows of 16 letters, displayed in Fig. 3.

T O T H E O N L I E B E G E T T
E R O F T **H** E S E I N S V I N G
S O N N **E** T S M r W H A L L H A
P P I **N** E S S E A N D T H A T E
T E **R** N I T I E P R O M I S E D
B **Y** O V R E V E R L I V I N G P
O E T W I S H E T H T H E W E L
L W I S H I N G A D V E N T V R
E R I N S E T T I N G F O R T H ©

FIG. 3. The Dedication as an array with 9 rows of 16 letters.

The name "Henry" can be found running diagonally down and left from the 'H' of "THESE" to the 'Y' of "BY". In an array with 15 letters in each row (the last being incomplete), the name can be read out vertically in the 7th column, as shown in Fig. 4. (It will be noticed that "Henry" and "Wriothesley" share the one 'Y' in the text.)

T O T H E O N L I E B E G E T
T E R O F T **H** E S E I N S V I
N G S O N N **E** T S M r W H A L
L H A P P I **N** E S S E A N D T
H A T E T E **R** N I T I E P R O
M I S E D B **Y** O V R E V E R L
I V I N G P O E T *etc* ©

FIG. 4. The Dedication arranged in rows of 15 letters.

It is a reasonable deduction (though perhaps not an inescapable one) that the full name "Henry Wriothesley" was deliberately concealed in the Dedication, in order to record for posterity his identity as "Mr. W. H." and the young man to whom many of the sonnets were addressed, and to whom the poet wrote, "Your monument shall be my gentle verse" (sonnet 81). The odds that this proposed cipher solution might be an accident of chance, and not a deliberate construct, are discussed in Appendix B.

It may be relevant that in February 1601, following the rebellion by the Earl of Essex, in which Southampton played a leading part, he was convicted of treason, attainted, deprived of his lands, stripped of his Earldom, and confined to the Tower, where he signed himself "of late Southampton, but now . . . H. Wriothesley".[13] Thus during the period up to his release in April 1603 on the accession of James I, and until the restoration of his Earldom in July, he was a commoner, plain "Mr. H. W." The Dedication may have been composed during this period,

when there was no expectation of his being pardoned.

The Authentication of Concealment Ciphers

In search of guidance on how to judge whether a possible concealment cipher is authentic, we turn to the book by William and Elizebeth Friedman called *The Shakespearean Ciphers Examined*.[14] It is of interest to learn that

> ... the science of cryptology ... is a branch of knowledge which goes back far into the past – certainly beyond Elizabethan times. In the sixteenth century it was abundantly used. ... The question of course ... is not whether ciphers could have been used, but whether they were used.

In their book (written with a courteous but devastating wit) the Friedmans investigated many such attempts to uncover concealed names or messages, almost all relating to Francis Bacon, and concluded that all were erroneous. They made no mention of the Dedication to the Sonnets, as no decipherment had been proposed before their work was completed.

In the course of their analysis they put forward criteria for assessing whether a solution of a supposed cipher is genuine or not. One of these is that the key to the cipher should be given unambiguously, either in the text or in some other way, and not contrived to fit in with preconceived ideas; another is that the decoded message should make good sense, and have been sufficiently important to have been worth concealing; and a third, that the message should have been hidden where it had a high probability of being found. The last criterion is clearly fulfilled. With regard to the cipher keys, these are factors of 144, the number of letters in the text, and as to the importance of the information concealed, the "Fair Youth" was promised immortality through the Sonnets, although his name has up till now remained a mystery.

Lastly and crucially, it is necessary to assess, on a scientific basis, the likelihood that the supposedly hidden information might have resulted by chance. As a guide to the significance of a probability calculation, the Friedmans state of a cipher solution, in effect, that if "the chances of its appearing by accident are one in one thousand million, [the cryptanalyst's] confidence in the solution will be more than justified."[15]

The assessment of the odds that the name "Henry Wriothesley" might have occurred fortuitously is carried out in Appendix B, and it is found that (very roughly indeed) they are of the order of 1 in 30 billion.[16] (The phrase "of the order of" is used to imply "to within a factor of about 10".) These odds, provided they can be independently

confirmed, would more than satisfy the criterion suggested by the Friedmans as sufficient to justify the cryptanalyst's confidence in the validity of the plaintext solution. Such validation does not exactly amount to certifying that the transposition ciphers are genuine (in view of the fact that very occasionally, in daily life, we experience what appear to be amazing coincidences), but comes very close indeed to doing so. If there were indisputable evidence that the Dedication was a cryptogram (over and above the many striking peculiarities listed in Section 2), or if the name "Wriothesley" were divided into two rather than three segments, then any doubts would vanish. As things are, the interpretation of the odds is up to each individual. If convinced, by the odds or by common sense, the reader now knows the name of the man Shakespeare was so certain he had immortalised by his verse, a name lost to us for nearly four centuries.

Conclusion

When the Dedication to *Shake-speares Sonnets* is analysed as a transposition cipher, it reveals a hidden name, "Henry Wr-ioth-esley", 3rd Earl of Southampton, regarded by many commentators as the person most likely to have been "the onlie begetter" and the young man to whom many of the sonnets were addressed. A corollary of this finding is that the strange syntax and awkward wording are to be explained as a consequence of the difficulty of selecting and arranging suitable words to provide the right letters in the right locations. There is no longer any point in puzzling over the precise meaning of the text, since its creator had a another consideration uppermost in his mind.

The discovery that the name *Henry Wriothesley* was recorded in the Dedication to the Sonnets will, it is hoped, be welcomed by all Shakespeare scholars, as putting an end to more than two hundred years of speculation about the identity of "Mr. W. H." and the "Fair Youth". It is perhaps the first hard fact concerning England's national poet to emerge for some time.

Appendix A: Thorpe's Dedications

We give here the opening sentences of four of Thomas Thorpe's dedications. These demonstrate fluency, wit, and a love of word-play, qualities all conspicuously lacking in the Dedication to the Sonnets. They are typical of dedications of the time in the use of somewhat extravagant language, the obsequious tone adopted when addressing the nobility, and the frequent alternation of italic and Roman fonts. Thorpe's special flavor lies in subtle and erudite word-play, involving puns and contrasting pairs of words such as (see below) (1) *Blount /*

blunt; (2) *late imaginary / now actual, most-conceited / almost-concealed, devised Country / desired Citie, testament / testimonie*; (3) *distressed / fortunate*; (4) *worthily / unworthy, matter / model*. It seems unlikely that a man with such an exuberant and sophisticated style would have freely composed the barely grammatical and nearly incomprehensible sentence which forms this Dedication. Either Thorpe wrote out of character, or someone else with their own agenda wrote the piece and attached Thorpe's initials to it.

(1) From the dedication prefaced to *Lucan's First Booke*, translated by Christopher Marlowe:[17]

To his kind, and true friend: Edward Blunt.

Blount: I *purpose to be blunt with you, & out of my dulnesse to encounter you with a* Dedication *in the memory of that pure Elementall wit* Chr. Marlowe; *whose ghoast or* Genius *is to be seene walke the* Churchyard *in (at the least) three or foure sheets.* . . .

(2) From the dedication to *Augustine, or the City of God*, translated by J. H.:[18]

To . . . William, Earle of Pembroke, *etc*

Right gracious and gracefull Lord, your late imaginary, but now actuall Travailer, then to most-conceited *Viraginia*, now to almost-concealed *Virginia*; then a light, but not lewde, now a sage and allowed translator; then of a scarce knowne novice, now a famous *Father*; then of a devised Country scarce on earth, now of a desired *Citie* sure in heaven; then of *Utopia*, now of *Eutopia*; not as by testament, but as by testimonie of gratitude, observance, and hearts-honour to your Honor, . . .

(3) From the dedication to *Epictetus etc*, translated by Io. Healey:[19]

To a true favorer of forward spirits, Maister *John Florio.*

SIR, as distressed *Sostratus* spake to more fortunate *Areius*, to make him mediator to *Augustus. The learned love the learned, if they are rightly learned:* So this your poore friend though he have found much of you, yet doth still follow you for as much more: that as his *Mecænas* you would write to *Augustus, Bee as mindefull of* Horace, *as you would bee of my selfe*: . . .

(4) From the dedication to *Epictetus etc*, translated by Io. Healey,

another edition of the work above:[20]

To the Right Honorable, William, Earle of Pembroke *etc*

Right Honorable, *It may worthily seeme strange unto your Lordship, out of what frenzy one of my meanenesse hath presumed to commit this Sacriledge, in the straightnesse of your Lordships leisure, to present a peece, for matter and model so unworthy, and in this scribling age, wherein great persons are so pestered dayly with Dedications. . . .*

These dedications are signed (respectively): THOM. THORPE, *Th. Th.*, TH. TH., *T. Th.*; none is signed T. T.

Appendix B: Assessing the Cipher Solution

In this Appendix we determine mathematically the odds that the parts of the name "Henry Wriothesley" might have occurred by chance in rectangular arrays such as those of Figs. 2 to 4. Three further arguments are then presented which provide additional support for the proposition that the Dedication contains information deliberately concealed by means of transposition ciphers.

(1) Examination of the full set of all possible arrays, both perfect and with incomplete last rows, reveals (reading down) just three 5-letter words: 'Henry', 'tress', and 'waste', and also the segment '-esley'; there are no words of 6 or more letters (words found reading up are discussed inAppendix B(4)). The rarity of 5-letter words, and the fact that two out of the four (if the 5-letter segment is included) are to be found in the full name "Henry Wriothesley", strongly suggest that the name could have been deliberately concealed in the Dedication. We now assess mathematically the odds that chance might have produced this result (the null hypothesis).

We shall consider first the name "Henry", and it will be assumed that a good estimate of the odds that it might appear in any 5-letter vertical site in any array can be assessed by imagining 5 letters picked one by one at random out of a notional 'black bag' containing all the letters of the Dedication.

There are 144 letters in the text (disregarding Thomas Thorpe's initials "T. T.", printed in larger type and offset to one side at the end); the number of 'H's is 10, 'E's 23, 'N's 13, 'R's 9, and there is just one 'Y'. The chance that an 'H' is picked first from the bag is thus 10 out of 144, and so on. The fractional likelihood of the name "Henry" being drawn from the bag is therefore the product of these 5 numbers divided by the joint product of 144, 143, 142, 141, and 140 (since the total number of letters remaining in the bag is reduced by 1 after each selection), *ie*:

$$(10 \,.\, 23 \,.13 \,.\, 9 \,.1) \div (144 \,.143 \,.142 \,.141 \,.140)$$

If we take 30 as the maximum array row size, and 6 as the minimum, the total number of possible vertical sites for a 5-letter word is 1800. (In terms of picking letters out of an imaginary black bag, this means that we may make 1800 trials of extracting 5 letters, since it is immaterial in which site the word is found.) Thus the probability that one of these sites might contain the name "Henry" is:

$$1800 \times 26{,}910 \div (144 \,.143 \,.142 \,.141 \,.140) = \text{ca. } 1 \text{ in } 1192$$

That is, there is 1 chance in about 1192 that the name "Henry" appears by accident anywhere in the Dedication, when it is regarded as a simple transposition cipher.

In a similar way we find that for the segment "-esley" of the name "Wr-ioth-esley" the probability is:

$$1800 \times 30{,}360 \div (144 \,.143 \,.142 \,.141 \,.140) = \text{ca. } 1 \text{ in } 1056$$

This segment occurs in the array with 18 letters in each row, and in the rest of this array there are 85 possible sites for the segment "-ioth-", and, as before, the probability that it is found in one of them is:

$$85 \times 17{,}920 \div (139 \,.138 \,.137 \,.136) = \text{ca. } 1 \text{ in } 235$$

A similar argument for the segment "Wr-" yields:

$$116 \times 36 \div (135 \,.134) = \text{ca. } 1 \text{ in } 4.33$$

To find the overall odds that the name "Wr-ioth-esley" might appear by chance in the Dedication, the separate odds are multiplied together giving (roughly) 1 in 1.1 million. However, since (as we have seen) it would be acceptable if one or two of these segments had to be read upwards (but hardly all three, as the decipherer might then never spot the name), it is appropriate to divide this figure by 4, to give odds of roughly 1 in 270,000. (If the surname had been split into only two segments, the odds that it might have occurred by chance would have been 1 in about 100 million, roughly 370 times smaller than the odds just found for three segments.)

The joint probability of finding the full name "Henry Wriothesley" in the Dedication can thus be assessed as the product of the probabilities of the separate names, resulting in odds of 1 in about 320 million.

These odds would be much the same for finding *any* name consisting of a 5-letter first name and an 11-letter last name (similarly split into three segments). If then we also take into account the fact that this man was already regarded as one of the most likely candidates for "Mr. W. H." and the "Fair Youth", the probability that his name was *deliberately* encrypted into the Dedication is considerably increased,[21] and might be assessed (rather vaguely) at somewhere between 1 in 10 and 1 in 1,000. In order to end up with a definite figure, we shall choose the geometric mean, 1 in 100. This estimate (of the kind which scientists sometimes call "hand-waving") then allows us to say that, as a final assessment, the odds that the name might have occurred by chance are of the order of 1 in (very roughly) 30 billion.

(2) An additional consideration, hard to quantify, is the unusual spelling "ONLIE", rather than the more regular 'onely' or 'onelie', as mentioned in Section 2(d). The final 'E' is required (supposedly) to provide the first letter of the segment "-ESLEY", and it seems likely that the use of the shorter form may have been dictated by the need to lose one letter in order to make the total number of letters 144, which has factors that provide the keys to the arrays of Figs. 2 and 3. It is evident that the peculiar syntax and curious wording, discussed in Section 2, (a) and (b), can now find an explanation in the difficulty of choosing and arranging suitable words to provide the right letters in the right places.

(3) The reader may perhaps be thinking to himself that an 11-letter name could readily be built up from, for example, four segments, three with three letters and one with two, and in this way several names might be found in the Dedication. But no experienced cryptographer would contemplate hiding a name in such a manner. The objective of the cryptographer is not only to conceal a name or message from a casual inspection, but also to ensure that it is recognised when the right approach (or algorithm) is adopted, otherwise the whole point of the exercise, not to mention the labor involved, is rendered null and void. We may credit the cryptographer in our case with knowing that when a text like this is written out in rectangular arrays, the columns abound with 3-letter words, 4-letter words are common, and only with 5-letter words can he signal to the decipherer that he is uncovering a genuine message, and not simply observing random strings of letters. In the Dedication, including all arrays with rows containing 30 letters through to 6, there are, reading down, 180 3-letter words, 42 4-letter words, and three 5-letter words plus the segment "-esley". The statistics for words read out upwards are similar, with three 5-letter words, "peals," dents," and "tails," but such words carry much less significance. The cryptographer would try as far as possible to hide important words or segments so that they can be found by reading downwards, since words or segments reading upwards are much harder for the solver to spot, and

would therefore only be used as a last resort.

To put it another way, the composer of a concealment cipher has two tasks, hiding the information, and finding some way of giving the decoder confirmation that he has correctly uncovered it (if it is not long enough to be self-validating). In this case, the confirmation is provided by the two 5-letter component parts of the full name, "Henry" and "-esley". Anything shorter would have left the cryptanalyst unsure whether the plaintext was authentic.

(4) The analysis given in this Appendix provides strong support for the proposition that the Dedication is indeed a well-contrived transposition cipher, of a simple type which calls to mind the *'skutale'* of the Spartans.[22] This technique was described by several classical authors, and hence would have been familiar to many Elizabethan scholars. To make use of it, a Spartan general would roll a long narrow strip of paper spirally around a staff (the *skutale*), and write dispatches across the strip of paper (along the staff). The intervening blank spaces would then be filled up with strings of random letters, and the strip sent out to a distant commander. The strip of paper would be unintelligible to an enemy if it was intercepted, but when wound round a staff of the same diameter by the intended recipient would reveal the concealed messages. In a similar way, one can imagine the text of the Dedication written out in a single line on a long narrow strip of paper, which when wrapped around a rod of appropriate diameter yields "Henry", and round a rod of a somewhat larger diameter brings to light "Wriothesley".

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12. Wilkins, John. 1641, repr. 1970. Mercury, *or the Secret and Swift Messenger.* London: Frank Cass & Co.
13. Charlotte Carmichael Stopes. 1922. *The Life of Henry, Third Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's Patron.* Cambridge: at the University Press; 226.
14. Friedman, William F. and Elizebeth S. 1957. *The Shakespearean Ciphers Examined.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; xv-xvi. William Friedman is regarded by many as the greatest cryptologist of the present century. For his achievements during World War II he was awarded both Presidential decorations, the Medal for Merit and the National Security Medal. His wife was also a distinguished cryptologist in her own right. Their interest in possible Shakespearean ciphers was a hobby which occupied their leisure for several years.
15. Ibid., 21.
16. Odds of 1 in 1 billion may be envisaged, in a homely illustration, as the chance of picking out, blindfold, at the first attempt, the one red grain of sugar in a one-ton heap of white sugar. Such a pile is about six feet across and three feet high, and a pair of forceps is supplied.
17. Marlowe, Christopher, trl. 1600. *Lucan's First Booke.* London: Thomas Thorpe.
18. H., J., trl. 1610. *Augustine, or the Citie of God.* London: George Eld.
19. Healey, Io., trl. 1610. *Epictetus, etc.* London: Thomas Thorpe.
20. Healey, Io., trl. 1616. *Epictetus, etc.* London: Edward Blount.
21. Conversely, if the name of someone hitherto unknown had been found, the cipher would be less likely to be judged authentic, a somewhat paradoxical situation.
22. Liddell and Scott. 1944. Lexicon. Oxford: Clarendon Press; 642.

Part Two: "These. sonnets. all. by. ..."

In Part I it was shown that the Dedication to the Sonnets is carefully worded so that it records the name "Henry Wriothesley", by means of letters regularly spaced, using a technique known as a transposition cipher.[8] The possibility that the Dedication might contain hidden information was suggested by the seven peculiarities listed in Section 2. However, since only the first four of these contribute towards the solution of the transposition ciphers, the remaining three still require consideration, *viz.* the full stops, the lower-case hyphens, and the arrangement of the text into three blocks.

The striking appearance of the Dedication is the first thing to engage the reader's attention. It is sometimes suggested by commentators, including Leslie Hotson,[9] that the Dedication is laid out in capital letters and full stops in imitation of an incised stone monument, such as were common in classical Roman times. But invariably in such inscriptions the stops are symmetrically placed, both at the beginning and end of each line, as well as between words. Moreover, they are nearly always placed mid-way between the printing line and a line defined by the tops of the characters, rather than on the printing line itself. Laid out as a typical Roman monumental inscription with stops, the Dedication would look as shown in Fig. 5.

•TO•THE•ONLIE•BEGETTER•OF•

•THESE•INSVING•SONNETS•

•Mr•W•H• ALL•HAPPINESSE•

•AND•THAT•ETERNITIE•

•PROMISED•

•BY•

•OVR•EVER-LIVING•POET• *etc* ©

FIG. 5. The Dedication laid out as a Roman monumental inscription.

It is evident from the placing of the full stops that the layout of the Dedication was not modelled on that of a classical Roman inscription. And if the stops were intended as a decoration, the effect was not sufficiently pleasing to attract even a single imitator (as far as is known).

The Dedication as an "Innocent Letter Code"

We have already found that the Dedication is a cryptogram containing the name "Henry Wriothesley". The remaining peculiarities may point towards yet more concealed information, and we shall now examine this possibility.

The full stops placed after every word are the most unusual of all the oddities listed in Section 2—they immediately suggest *counting words*. One can imagine someone with a pencil touching the point on the paper after each word (or letter) as it is checked off, the small hyphens (hardly distinguishable from full stops) indicating that compound words are to be counted separately. This prompts the idea of seeing whether a message might be found by selecting words evenly spaced, e.g. every third word, starting from the beginning, or maybe fourth or fifth, and so on. No doubt many people have had the same idea down the centuries. The result in every case is nonsense.

The next simplest scheme would be to alternate *two* numbers, and (for example) to take the third word, followed by the fifth word after that, then the third, fifth, third, and so on. But there are so many possible choices of two numbers that trial and error would get us nowhere, and might even generate more than one message. If the scheme were of this kind, the creator of this second cipher, supposing it to be there, *must* have recorded these numbers somewhere or somehow (since what is obvious to us would have been obvious to him, supposing he existed). Yet the page is devoid of other symbols, not even compositors' code marks (called signatures) to show the binder how to collate the sheets.

The arrangement of the text into three distinct blocks, each an inverted triangle, is another strange feature, and this (it so happens) provides us with a set of *three* numbers—6, 2, 4—the numbers of lines in each block, something which would be within the control of a possible cryptographer. Counting through the Dedication, using these numbers as the key, we obtain the following sequence of words:

" THESE . SONNETS . ALL . BY . EVER . . . . "

Although they lack a verb, these words appear to point to an author other than Shakespeare. Reference to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* shows that a leading alternative candidate for the authorship (if the name "Shakespeare" was a pen-name) is one *Edward de Vere*, 17th Earl of Oxford, whose name might perhaps be indicated by "E(.)VER" (see Appendix C). If the supposed message had been deliberately encoded into the text, the need to incorporate these words in the right order, at predetermined intervals, could provide an explanation for the strange

inverted syntax and obscure meaning.

We now come to a crucial point. It might be wondered why the hypothetical designer of the cipher should choose, apparently at random, the set of numbers "6, 2, 4" as the cipher key (coded into the layout). But this set, remarkably enough, consists of the numbers of letters in the three parts of the name "Edward de Vere". Thus, out of perhaps a hundred available choices of sets of two or three small numbers, our cryptographer (and we can now feel more confident of his existence) chose the one set which would serve to confirm the correctness of the decipherment, once it had been carried out.

The question of whether this is a genuine cipher, of the kind known as an "innocent letter code" [23,24,25] or an accident of chance (the null hypothesis), is discussed in Appendix D, where it is shown that (very roughly indeed) the odds are of the order of 1 in 10 billion. These odds, provided they can be independently confirmed, would more than satisfy the criterion suggested by the Friedmans as sufficient to justify the cryptanalyst's confidence in the validity of this cipher solution (Section 4). However (as discussed there), such validation does not precisely amount to certifying that the cipher is genuine, although it comes very close indeed to doing so. If the supposed message were longer (e.g. half as long again) there would be no room for doubt. As it is, the interpretation of the odds is again up to the reader. If convinced, either by the probability calculations or by common sense, he is now in possession of the names both of the author of the Sonnets and of the man he intended to immortalise by his verse, before the indifference of history hid them from us.

Since the topic of our investigation overlaps with that of the Friedmans' book, it is relevant to quote a further passage. After remarking that the kind of cryptosystems they will be dealing with are known as "concealment systems", they say:[26]

> We shall not therefore demand any external guide to the presence of the secret texts. We shall only ask whether the solutions are valid: that is to say, whether the plain texts make sense, and the cryptosystem and the specific keys can be, or have been, applied without ambiguity. Provided that independent investigation shows an answer to be unique, and to have been reached by valid means, we shall accept it, *however much we shock the learned world by doing so.* [emphasis added]

A Hypothetical Reconstruction

We now outline a possible reconstruction of the route a cryptographer might have followed in creating the Dedication as a double

cryptogram. The reader may already have noticed that if the innocent letter key is continued to the end of the Dedication, a longer message is found: "These Sonnets all by E(.)Ver(,) the fo(u)rth". A discussion of the additional information (if that is what it is) will be given elsewhere. For the purposes of this Section it is convenient to assume that the message consisted of these seven words.

We then imagine the cryptographer setting out the seven words in a skeleton schematic diagram, having already chosen the key "6, 2, 4" to correspond to the name Edward de Vere:

6: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ THESE
2: _____ SONNETS
4: _____ _____ _____ ALL
6: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ BY
2: _____ EVER
4: _____ _____ _____ THE
6: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ FORTH

Certain words are now almost dictated by the requirements of the scheme, e.g. "TO" and "OF", and the compound word "EVER-LIVING". The phrase "ALL HAPPINESS" occurs in the dedication to *Lucrece*, and the word "ETERNITY" arises naturally from one of the recurring themes of the Sonnets; it was often used in other dedications, e.g. Spenser's to *The Faerie Queene*. We thus arrive at the following:

___TO___ _____ _____ _____ ___OF___ THESE
_____ SONNETS
___Mr___ ___W____ ___H____ALL
HAPPINESS _____ _____ ETERNITY _____ BY
_____ EVER-
LIVING _____ _____ THE
_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ FORTH

There is a choice of two or more possible words for each of the blanks, as suggested below:

"TO (the, our) (only, noble, worthy, renowned) (begetter, inspirer) OF THESE (sugared, insuing, polished, following, mellifluous) SONNETS, Mr. W. H., ALL HAPPINESS (and, with) (the, that) ETERNITY (promised, predicted, described, vouchsafed, prognosticated) BY (our, the, England's) EVER-LIVING (poet, maker, author) (wishes, offers) THE (. . .) (. . .) (. . .) (. . .) (sets, puts, ventures, setting, putting, venturing) FORTH."

After a time, the Dedication might have begun to read something like this:

"TO THE onely begetter OF THESE (#1) SONNETS, Mr. W. H., ALL HAPPINESS and that ETERNITY (#2) BY (#3) EVER-LIVING poet, (#4) THE (#5) (#6) (#7) IN (#8-ing) FORTH."

The words in lower case can still be changed to others if need be; the phrase 'onely begetter' is derived from (and a reference to) the words *"onely begotten Sonne"* from St. John's Gospel, Chapter 1, verse 14, (Geneva Bible, 1560). The cryptographer now has to choose the remaining 8 words so as to provide the letters needed to make up the names "Henry" and "Wriothesley" when read out vertically from rectangular arrays. For example, if the 'Y' of 'BY' is the last letter of "Henry", and if the 'R' comes from 'ETERNITY', the 'N' from 'HAPPINESS', the 'E' from 'SONNETS', and the 'H' from 'THESE', then since the 'N' is 15 letters after the 'E', it is necessary to insert an extra letter somewhere between the 'N' and the 'R', resulting in 'HAPPINESSE', and to select a 7-letter word for word (#1) and a 9-letter word for (#2), so that the letters for "Henry" are all spaced 15 characters apart.

At this point, the cryptographer has to decide whether to place the name "Wriothesley" in the same array, and introduce a second letter 'Y', or to use the same 'Y' and go for an array of a different size. The second option has the advantage, from the cryptographer's point of view, that he does not have to search for another usable word containing a letter 'Y', and also that the name will be less obvious, since the presence of two 'Y's in the text might alert someone to the possibility that a name containing two 'Y's was concealed in the text. (The matter of the cryptographer's motivations is discussed in the next Section.)

To make use of the 'Y' of 'BY', the name "Wriothesley" must be broken up into segments, since the letter occurs roughly half-way through the text. (We may deduce from this that the message was composed first, and the two names then built around appropriate letters of the plaintext, though probably in the order 'Wriothesley' and 'Henry', rather than the order we have adopted to illustrate the problems involved.) Now this letter, the first 'E' of 'ETERNITY' and the second 'L' of 'ALL' are all spaced 18 characters apart. This means that the third letter of word (#1) must be an 'S', so 'INSVING' is chosen, and the word 'onely' must be spelt 'ONELIE' or 'ONLIE' (both rare spellings, as discussed in Section 2(d)), since its last letter must provide the 'E' which begins the segment "-esley". To allow the 8-letter word 'PROMISED' to be selected as word (#2), the word 'ETERNITY' was lengthened to 'ETERNITIE'.

The array with 18 letters in each row would now look as shown in Fig. 6, with "ESLEY" in the 10th column.

```
T O T H E O N L I E B E G E T T E R
O F T H E S E I N S V I N G S O N N
E T S M r W H A L L H A P P I N E S
S E A N D T H A T E T E R N I T I E
P R O M I S E D B Y *(#3) E V E R-L
I V I N G P O E T  * (#4)    [THE]
   (#5)     (#6)     (#7)       etc
```

FIG. 6. Possible intermediate stage in the crafting of the Dedication.

The cryptographer will have observed (if his thought processes were at all similar to ours) the fortunate conjunction of the letters 'TH' in column 11, and found that 'OVR' and 'WISHES' or 'WISHETH' for words (#3) and (#4) would add two more letters to give "IOTH", to be read upwards.

The remaining task for the cryptographer was to get the letters "WR" into the bottom of column 11, in which endeavor he failed; he made up for it by getting them into the bottom of column 2. It seems certain that another vital task was to ensure that the total number of letters was a multiple of 18, so that the decoder would start his analysis by looking at perfect rectangles (as was in fact the case); perhaps the spelling "ONLIE", rather than the more regular 'onelie', was dictated by the need to lose one letter. In this way the array with the most important information (the surname "Wriothesley") would stand the best chance of being brought to the decoder's notice, since it can be read out vertically from a perfect array. If the number of letters in the final text had contained both 15 and 18 as factors (*e.g.* 90, 180 or 270), then both first name and surname could have been read out vertically from perfect rectangular arrays. In the event, the cryptographer settled for 18 and 16 as factors (i.e. 144), which allows the surname to be read out vertically from a perfect array (8 by 18), and "Henry" diagonally from a perfect array (9 by 16), as shown in Figs. 2 and 3.

The above exposition gives some idea of how the cryptographer might have approached the problems confronting him. In reality his undertaking was far more difficult than may perhaps have been suggested, since he would have started with a blank sheet of paper, while we have the finished and remarkably brilliant result in front of us.

Discussion

We here discuss various aspects of the Dedication which have a bearing on the question of whether or not it is a genuine cryptogram. Several of these topics have been put to the author privately, by readers of early drafts of the paper. In responding to the matters raised, it will

be assumed for the sake of argument that the Dedication really is a double cryptogram, although this is of course the point at issue. It is the credibility of the answers given which will influence the reader's views. We shall also have to rely largely on speculation as to the history and motives of those involved, in an attempt to arrive at a sustainable reconstruction of past events.

(a) "If, as many writers have commented, the Dedication looks like a cryptogram, how is it that no solution has been put forward before now? Nearly 400 years have elapsed since it was first published."

One answer to this question lies in the publishing history of the Sonnets. To begin with, it seems likely that many of those who bought the original copies would have known the names of the people involved, and therefore would have had no motive for looking for them in the Dedication. Since the names were not displayed on the title or dedication pages, it must be assumed that it was necessary, for important personal or political reasons (which we can now only guess at), for the identities of the protagonists to be suppressed. Thus no-one at the time would have published the solution, even if they had found it.

The facts that so few copies (13) of the original edition have survived to the present time, and that it was not reprinted for 31 years, while during this period *Venus and Adonis* was reprinted 16 times and *Lucrece* 7, have led several commentators (e.g. Frank J. Mathew[27]) to suggest that the bulk of the first printing was called in, and further printings forbidden (there is no other evidence for this). When the Sonnets were first reissued in 1640 by John Benson,[28] the Dedication was omitted, and the next edition to include the Dedication was that published in 1711 by Bernard Lintott.[29] His reproduction was very close to the original, but instead of "ONLIE" has "ONLY", so that the transposition cipher was damaged twice over, the first 'E' of "WR-IOTH-ESLEY" being replaced by 'Y', and the number of letters being reduced to 143 (its factors 11 and 13, if taken as keys, point to rectangular arrays that contain nothing of interest). Not until 1766 was Thorpe's original Dedication reprinted accurately, by George Steevens.[30]

The edition by Steevens (who dropped the Sonnets from all his subsequent editions of Shakespeare) was soon followed in 1780 by Edmond Malone's.[31] This was the first modern scholarly edition of the Sonnets. It repeated the wording of the Dedication, but changed the spelling of three words, reducing the number of letters in each, thereby completely destroying the transposition ciphers (besides making letter changes, *viz.* 'V' to 'U' and 'I' to 'E', which would not have got in the way of their solution); in addition the layout was altered and the full stops omitted.

Fig. 7 shows how Malone caused the Dedication to be printed.

TO THE ONLY BEGETTER
OF THESE ENSUING SONNETS,
MR. W. H.
ALL HAPPINESS,
AND THAT ETERNITY PROMISED
BY OUR EVER-LIVING POET,
WISHETH THE
WELL-WISHING ADVENTURER
IN SETTING FORTH,

T. T.

FIG. 7. Malone's 1780 version of the Dedication.

Thus it had been rendered impossible to decipher either cryptogram. Later editors in the 18th and 19th century mostly followed Malone in perpetrating these or similar 'improvements' (two honorable exceptions were J. Payne Collier[32] and Robert Cartwright[33]), so that anyone suspecting a cryptogram would very probably have been defeated at the start. Not until Thomas Tyler's facsimile of 1886 in photolithography was the reader (and potential cryptanalyst) provided with a Dedication that was self-evidently authentic.[34] Even at the present time, editions of the Sonnets prepared by scholars of international reputation, and issued under the imprimaturs of great universities and august publishing houses, regularly distort the spelling, layout or punctuation in a multitude of different ways. (For example, the Oxford Shakespeare reproduces correctly the layout and full stops, but repeats the four misspellings of Malone;[35] the Macmillan Sonnets gets the layout right, but has the same wrong spellings, omits the full stops, and substitutes lower-case for capitals in the body of the text.[36] Many more examples could be given.) Only those editions of the Sonnets which include a photographic reproduction of the Dedication page offer the would-be decoder any chance of solving the ciphers. As a consequence, during the 388 years since it was first published, and for the 230 years since doubts over the authorship first began to surface in print, corrupted versions of the Dedication have vastly outnumbered accurate copies, and it would be pure chance if one of these last happened to fall into the hands of a possible decipherer.

A contributory factor to its non-solution in the past was a lack of appreciation of the delight the Elizabethans took in word-play and word games, puns, anagrams, acrostic verses, concealed dates on tombs and monumental brasses in churches, and literary puzzles of all kinds. The intellectual climate which produced such simple but effective ciphers had been lost sight of, and only in recent decades has it been

realised how many subtle 'conceits' and personal allusions have been missed by earlier researchers. John Dee in particular would have been surprised that the transposition ciphers evaded detection for so long, since he regarded this kind of cipher as "such as eny man of knowledge shud be able to resolve".[11]

Finally, it would seem that there are very few people, even today, who are simultaneously interested in the identity of "Mr. W. H." and possess some knowledge of elementary cipher techniques.

(b) "The fact that the name "Wriothesley" is split up into three segments tends to cast doubt on the proposition that it was deliberately enciphered. Why did the hypothetical cryptographer not arrange for the whole name to be formed by letters regularly spaced, so that it filled a single column (eg in an array 16 by 9 or 18 by 8)? And why not fit the name "Henry" into the same array, perhaps at the head of the same column? Similarly, the message would be easier to find if it consisted of every fourth word, or fifth or sixth, for example."

A sophisticated cipher argues strong motives; this is no recreational puzzle to while away a leisure hour. If it was important not to print the names of the protagonists on the title or dedication pages, it was equally important not to make the recovery of the hidden names too easy, otherwise the objective of concealment (for perhaps two or three decades, one might suppose) would have been lost at the outset. The cryptographer may have begun by trying to get the name "Wriothesley" into one column, but soon realised that this might prove too easy to solve, since a 'W' near the beginning of the text would have afforded an obvious clue to anyone hearing rumors about the identity of "Mr. W. H." He chose instead to try for two columns (11 and 10 of Fig. 3), and if he had succeeded there would now be no doubt that the cipher was genuine. In the event, he might well have been content to fit the name into three columns, so that it would be that much more difficult to decipher. He would then have been able to argue, if the name was discovered and he was questioned by the authorities, that it was just a coincidence; he might avoid an unpleasant fate thereby.

For the same reason, he might prefer to hide the name "Henry" in a different array, so that again he could rely on coincidence as a defence. If both names were enciphered into the same array, then two 'Y's would have been needed, which might perhaps have alerted someone to the possibility that a name which included two 'Y's had been concealed there. ('Henry Wriothesley' would immediately have come to mind, since the two long narrative poems had been dedicated to him.)

Similar arguments apply to the encoding of the concealed statement. If it had been made up of words regularly spaced (e.g. every fifth word), it would not have remained secret for long, and the consequences for the cryptographer or his patron might have been serious.

Let us suppose, as a possible scenario, that the publication of the Sonnets had been authorised (as was mandatory for all publications in those days) on the express condition that neither the identity of the author nor that of the "Fair Youth" should be revealed. And since the poet wrote in sonnet 81, with unconscious irony, "Your name from hence immortal life shall have"—a name until now erased from the record, what more likely than that someone should ensure that the name would be preserved in the Dedication (where else more appropriate?), to emerge into the sunlight at some future date. And similarly for the author.

(c) "The supposed message is only five words long, and ends two-thirds of the way through the text, at the 20th word. If the message had occupied the whole of the text, or if the text hád been shorter, it would be easier to accept the proposition that the message had been deliberately encoded there."

There are two reasons why the text had to be longer than 20 words (or thereabouts). Firstly, the text had to be long enough to allow the three segments of the name "Wriothesley" to be satisfactorily enciphered. Secondly, it had to be sufficiently long to provide enough lines of text to set out in three inverted triangles, in order to record the key "6, 2, 4".

(d) "Granted that the Elizabethans were deeply interested in codes and ciphers, how is it that no examples of innocent letter codes or of transposition ciphers have survived from that era? Can we be sure that these techniques were known to them?"

There can be no doubt that the techniques of transposition ciphers were well-known in Elizabethan times, as evidenced by John Dee[11] and John Wilkins[12]; the latter collected together all the methods that were common knowledge in 1641. The use of the *'skutale* , a transposition technique employed by the Spartans,[22] outlined in Appendix B(4), had been described by several Latin and Greek authors, and would have been known to many educated Elizabethans.

As regards the innocent letter code, it is the first technique that springs to mind to anyone shut up in prison wanting to communicate secretly with the outside world, and is usually regarded as so obvious as hardly to be worth mentioning in elementary books on codes and ciphers (but see Paul B. Thomas, who also records various simple methods of indicating the key number or numbers[23]). Sophisticated versions of it were used to good effect by prisoners of war in World War 2.[24,25]

The fact that no examples of Elizabethan innocent letter codes have been reported to date may simply mean that they await discovery, or were rarely committed to print. Some interesting examples of Renaissance concealment ciphers based on other techniques are given in the Friedmans' book.[14]

(e) "The ciphers can only be interpreted by someone having background historical knowledge of the period, and such knowledge would tend to encourage wishful thinking to read preconceived meanings and names into what are in actuality random sequences of words or letters (the *Gestalt* effect)."

It may be worth recording that when the 5-word message was found, I took it for granted that the author of the Sonnets was William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, had never heard of Edward de Vere, and in any case, prompted by Leslie Hotson,[9] was (like him) looking for a clue to the identity of "Mr. W. H." At the time of its discovery the message appeared to be meaningless and was promptly forgotten. It was two or three years later that a chance reading of the article on Shakespeare in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* revealed the fact that a leading candidate for the authorship (if the name "Shakespeare" was a pen-name) was a certain Edward de Vere, whose name might well be indicated by "EVER" (see Appendix C). Although the message now acquired a possible meaning, it was dismissed as a curiosity of no significance. Wishful thinking can therefore be ruled out in the case of the hidden message. It was not until a further 20 years or so had elapsed that a second reading of Charlton Ogburn's landmark work[37] suggested that it would be worth investigating the odds that an accident of chance might have produced the hidden message, with the results presented here.

The finding of the supposedly hidden message only added to the mystery, for the original enigma—the identity of "Mr. W. H."—still remained unresolved. The fact that the Dedication is all in capital letters then suggested the possibility of a transposition cipher (perhaps because, in elementary treatises on codes and ciphers, examples of transposition ciphers are nearly always given in capital letters). The name 'Henry Wriothesley' is well-known to anyone interested in Shakespeare's poetry, since his two long narrative poems are dedicated to this nobleman. As a check, a number of other texts of roughly the same length have been set out in all possible arrays, to see whether words or names turn up accidentally, and the chief finding is that words of five letters (or more) are exceedingly rare. (The reader might like to try this for him or her self.)

It is hardly surprising that the two names found are those of prominent Elizabethans, both associated today with the author Shakespeare (in rather different ways). It would have been more remarkable if names of obscure or unknown people had turned up.

Conclusion

When the Dedication to *Shake-speares Sonnets* is analysed as a

cryptogram, a hidden name and a hidden statement are brought to light. Only four of the peculiar features described in Section 2 are involved in the solution of the transposition ciphers which provide the name "Henry Wriothesley", regarded by many commentators as the person most likely to have been "the onlie begetter". The remaining three, notably the full stops uniquely placed after every word, contribute to the solution of the innocent letter code which yields the statement "These Sonnets all by EVER". The possible identification of "EVER" with *Edward de Vere*, 17th Earl of Oxford, is greatly strengthened by the fact that the key to the innocent letter code consists of the numbers of letters in the three parts of his name, having been coded into the layout of three inverted triangular blocks, which contain in order 6, 2, and 4 lines.

The discovery that the name *Henry Wriothesley* was recorded in the Dedication to the Sonnets will surely, as anticipated in Part I, be welcomed by all Shakespeare scholars, as ending over two hundred years of speculation about the identity of the "Fair Youth" and "Mr. W. H." The apparent indication that the Sonnets were written by someone other than the man from Stratford may contribute to the debate on the authorship controversy, now entering its third century.

Appendix C: Edward de Vere, 1550 - 1604

(1) The Dedication to the Sonnets repeats the layout pattern of an acrostic poem addressed to Edward de Vere in 1579 by Anthony Munday (his then secretary):[38]

E xcept I should in freendship seeme ingrate,
D enying duty, where to I am bound;
W ith letting slip your Honour's worthy state,
A t all assayes, which I have Noble found.
R ight well I might refrayne to handle pen:
D enouncing aye the company of men.

D owne dire despayre, let courage come in place,
E xalt his fame whom Honour doth imbrace.

V ertue hath aye adornd your valiant hart,
E xampled by your deeds of lasting fame:
R egarding such as take God Mars his part,
E che where by proofe, in Honnor and in name.

(2) The words "ever" and "Ver" (spring) were used on several occasions by Edward de Vere in his early published poetry to refer to

himself. Those who support his authorship of the works of Shakespeare point to sonnet 76, where lines 5 and 7 appear to employ the same device:

Why write I still all one, ever the same
And keep invention in a noted weed, [well-known guise]
That every word doth almost tell my name

The first publication of *Troilus and Cressida* in 1609 was prefaced by an address "From a never writer to an ever reader". This has been glossed as "From an E. Ver writer to an E. Ver reader".

Richard Barnfield, in 1598, addressed a verse to Shakespeare which included the line:[39]

Live ever you, at least in Fame live ever

Further examples have been cited.

(3) In 1589, the author of *The Arte of English Poesie* wrote:[40]

> And in Her Maiesties time that now is are sprong up an other Crew of Courtly makers [poets], Noble men and Gentlemen of Her Maiesties owne servauntes, who have written excellently well as it would appeare if their doings could be found out and made publicke with the rest, of which number is first that noble Gentleman Edward Earle of Oxford.

In 1920 it was suggested by J. Thomas Looney[41] that the Earl of Oxford's works had in fact been subsequently published under the pen-name of "William Shakespeare". The authorship question is discussed by Charlton Ogburn,[37] Richard Whalen,[42] and Joseph Sobran.[43]

Appendix D. Assessing the Hidden Message

Here we estimate the odds that chance might have produced the hidden message, and also relate the message to the hidden name spelt out by letters regularly spaced.

(1) The stimulus which prompted the attempt to decode the Dedication was the force of Hotson's arguments that it might be a cryptogram,[9] coupled with a conviction that his solution was untenable. Finding a 5-word message, "These Sonnets all by EVER", was a shock, since (like Hotson) I was looking for a clue to the identity of "Mr. W. H.", had never doubted that a man from Stratford-upon-Avon by the name of William Shakespeare was the author, and had never heard of Edward

de Vere, whether or not he is indicated by "EVER" (see Discussion (e)). That following a simple train of thought to its logical conclusion should yield a totally unexpected (and initially unintelligible) result is the first piece of evidence to suggest that the cipher solution is genuine. However, it is unquantifiable, and we therefore move on to more scientific modes of argument.

As a first step, we investigate how often a key such as "6, 2, 4" might extract from published material a grammatical statement of five (or more) words in length. Tedious experiments made by taking books at random and going through them paragraph by paragraph suggest that the frequency lies between 1 in 1000 and 1 in 10,000. (The reader is urged to try this for himself, in order to obtain a feel for this important statistic, which is essential to the probability assessment.) Next we need to estimate how often such a statement (once found) might have some bearing on some significant matter treated in the book, rather than being completely irrelevant. These combined odds may be very conservatively assessed as being of the order of 1 in 100,000.

The odds just estimated would apply to any statement which had some bearing on the Sonnets, whatever its precise meaning. We now consider the likelihood that the message in the Dedication should appear to (i) focus on the problem of the apparent authorship, which has a 230-year-old history, (ii) name the person regarded nowadays as the most probable author, if the name "Shakespeare" was a pen-name, (iii) be found in a text which has been regarded as a puzzle for over 160 years. Without commenting on the authorship question (which many people today still regard as unresolved), we observe only that the more closely the information conveyed by the supposed message corresponds to existing theories based on circumstantial evidence, the more likely it is that the cipher solution is genuine (and conversely, if the supposed message appeared to indicate someone hitherto unknown, it would be less likely to be judged authentic, a similar situation to that discussed in Appendix B(1), footnote 21).

In view of these considerations, the odds that chance could have produced (a) in the Dedication a message (b) pointing to this particular person as (c) the real author of the Sonnets might be assessed (rather vaguely) at somewhere between 1 in 100 and 1 in 10,000. For the sake of arriving at a definite final figure, we shall therefore settle for a geometric mean of 1 in 1000. This estimate (also in a "hand-waving" sense, as in Appendix B(1)) allows us to say that, very roughly, the odds that the 5-word message might have occurred by chance are of the order of 1 in 100 million.

There is one additional matter to discuss. The set of numbers "6, 2, 4" which forms the cipher key (coded into the layout) consists of the numbers of letters in the three parts of the name "Edward de Vere". It

seems that the cryptographer made this choice, out of perhaps a hundred available sets of two or three small numbers, in order to give the decipherer confidence that he had correctly decoded the hidden message.

This last consideration increases the odds by another factor of 100, and puts the chance of the message appearing by accident in the approximate area of 1 in 10 billion. Even if this figure is out by a factor of 10 or 100, it might still be regarded as good evidence for the proposition that the Dedication was designed as an innocent letter code, which was intended to be solved at some time in the future, when it was no longer important to conceal the author's identity.

(2) Before leaving the question of the authenticity of the innocent letter code, there is a further observation to be made. In Part I it was shown that the name "Henry Wriothesley" had been recorded in the Dedication by a choice of words which contained letters spaced regularly, in such a way as to spell out the parts of the name. No doubt a great deal of trial and error went into crafting the text to achieve this end. But nothing in this endeavor necessitated the *inversion* of the normal syntax, such as is followed by every other dedication ever written, so far as is known (see Section 2(a)). It would surely have been possible for the cryptographer to have found words arranged in the natural-sense order —"To the dedicatee: (1) the dedicator (2) wisheth (3) blessings"— which would have spelt out the letters of the hidden name. The conclusion is that the cryptographer was constrained by an extraneous consideration, for example the fact that several words of his text had already been fixed. This would have obliged him to proceed (more or less) along the lines suggested in the Section on a Hypothetical Reconstruction.

Although the difficulty of creating the transposition ciphers could easily have resulted in awkardness of wording, it did not necessitate the inverted syntax, which (we may infer) must therefore have resulted from some other requirement—that is, the objective of hiding the chosen message by means of the innocent letter code technique. To sum up: the transposition ciphers do *not* account for the inverted syntax; the innocent letter code does.

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Notes

Lear's Cordelia, Oxford's Susan, and Manningham's Diary

Oxfordians long ago recognized that the family relationships that dominate Shakespeare's King Lear reflect those of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, near the end of his life. Like Lear, Oxford was the father of three motherless daughters—Elizabeth, Bridget, and Susan Vere, his daughters by his first wife, Anne Cecil, the daughter of William Cecil, who died in 1588. The two eldest daughters married in Oxford's lifetime. Susan Vere did not marry until after her father's death in 1604. Like Gloucester, Oxford was also the father of two sons —a legitimate son and heir, Henry de Vere, later the 18th Earl of Oxford, by his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, and, as Charles Wisner Barrel first established, an illegitimate son, Sir Edward Vere, by Anne Vavasor.

No one would argue that Goneril, for instance, *is* Elizabeth Vere, the Countess of Derby, the wife of William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby. Goneril is a character in a play or, even more accurately, words on pages, a collection of speeches, not a person at all. Nonetheless, when Lear is driven to distraction by the treatment he receives from his eldest daughter, he alludes to a slander against Anne Cecil de Vere—a charge of adultery that, if credited, would have made Elizabeth Vere illegitimate—in a speech addressed to Regan in Act II, scene iv. "I'm glad to see your highness," Regan says. Lear responds:

> Regan, I think you are. I know what reason
> I have to think so. If thou shouldst not be glad,
> I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
> Sepulchring an adultress.

Similarly, no one would argue that Cordelia *is* Susan Vere, Oxford's youngest daughter. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing to the similarities of their situations when the play opens—and to the possibility that the character in the play is drawn in part, at least, from a living model. Professor Alan Nelson of the University of California at Berkeley has turned up evidence that increases the likelihood that Susan Vere served as a model for Shakespeare's Cordelia.

Nelson drew attention to a couplet recorded in the *Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple 1602- 1603* that was used as part of a courtly entertainment before the Queen in the summer of 1602 (see Nelson's Web site at www.violet.berkeley.edu/~ahnelson). Ladies of

the court drew lots and each gift was accompanied by a couplet. Manningham recorded the verses along with the names of the ladies who received them and the nature of the accompanying gifts. Manningham wrote:

> Blank: LA[DY] Susan Vere
> Nothing's your lott, that's more then can be told
> For nothing is more precious then gold.

The drawing of lots at courtly entertainments was prearranged, the nature of the gifts and verses going to each participant not actually left to Fortune, as the fable of the entertainment indicated. Instead, the gifts and verses often represented in-jokes, a kind of commentary on the situation of the recipient.

Nelson drastically misinterprets the couplet drawn by Susan Vere. Thinking the language of tabloid headlines spotted at the checkout counter of a supermarket appropriate to a description of Elizabethan court life, Nelson rushes to the unlikely conclusion that this couplet shows that Oxford was recognized at court as a "deadbeat Dad," someone who failed to provide for his youngest daughter. I say this conclusion is unlikely because it ignores what the couplet says, who the author of the couplet was, and the occasion at which the couplet was publicly read. More than that, because of his misreading of the couplet (and his prejudice concerning the identity of Shakespeare), Nelson fails to hear in the couplet an echo of *King Lear*.

The couplet to Lady Susan Vere and the entire entertainment staged before the Queen at Harefield, the home of Sir Thomas Egerton, the Lord Keeper, in Middlesex, was written by John Davies, now best remembered as Sir John Davies, although his life as a poet was virtually over by the time he was knighted by King James. Davies, as I have shown elsewhere (see "The Singing Swallow: Sir John Davies and Shakespeare" in *ER* 1:1), was associated with Oxford and wrote an epithalamion consisting of ten sonnets for the marriage of Elizabeth Vere and William Stanley, Lord Derby.

The entertainment Davies wrote to welcome the Queen to Harefield was first published in the second edition of Francis Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody* (1608). It is there described as consisting of a mariner with a box under his arm which contained "all the several things following, supposed to have come from the Carrick." Some of the gifts distributed in this way to the ladies present were such things as a scissors case, a dial for telling time, and writing tables. The couplets that accompanied the gifts commented on them. But some of the ladies were to receive blanks, that is, verses but no gifts. The mariner described how this apparent misfortune was to be interpreted in his introductory speech: "Come ladies, try your fortunes, and if any light upon an unfortunate blank, let her think that fortune doth but mock her in these trifles, and meanes to pleasure her in greater matters."

Even *if* John Davies had been hostile to Oxford or his family—as he demonstrably was not—he would not have used this occasion to expose Oxford publicly as a "deadbeat Dad" and to humiliate his youngest, unmarried daughter, as she accompanied the Queen on a visit.

More importantly, though, the couplet clearly indicates that Lady Susan Vere is the recipient of a priceless gift—one that is both "more then can be told" and "more precious then gold," a very special kind of "nothing" indeed. The couplet is in fact a riddle, awarding Susan Vere an inexpressible and precious gift that merely *appears* to be "nothing." What could that be? A look at the text of *King Lear* unravels the riddle.

In the first scene of *King Lear*, the scene that precipitates the action of the play, a kind of drawing of lots take place. Lear divides his kingdom and announces the "dowers" or dowries to be awarded to his three daughters. He gives equal portions of the realm to Goneril and Regan and their respective husbands, Albany and Cornwall. He reserves the largest portion of the kingdom for his youngest daughter, the unmarried Cordelia. To be awarded this portion, she is to declare publicly her love for her father in terms that will please him—no doubt by renouncing marriage in her father's lifetime. The dialogue, beginning with the words of Lear, runs:

what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

Cordelia: Nothing, my lord.
Lear: Nothing?
Cordelia: Nothing.
Lear: Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.
Cordelia: Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty
According to my bond, no more nor less.
Lear: How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little
Lest you mar your fortunes.
Cordelia: Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honor you.
Why have my sisters husbands if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty.
Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.
Lear: But goes thy heart with this?
Cordelia: Ay, my good Lord.
Lear: So young, and so untender?

Cordelia: So young, my lord, and true.
Lear: Let it be so, thy truth then be thy dower!

This dialogue solves the riddle of the couplet John Davies wrote for Susan Vere in 1602, when she fifteen years and unmarried, and recorded by John Manningham in his diary. Truth, a pun on her family name and a reference to the motto used by her father, vero nihil verius, or nothing truer than truth, is the "nothing" that is at once "more then can be told" and "more precious then gold." Poor as he was, Oxford provided his youngest daughter with a priceless dowry—his name, truth, that is the point of Davies's couplet and the kind of Elizabethan compliment and in-joke that the Queen and courtiers at Harefield would have understood and appreciated.

Unlike Cordelia, Susan Vere did not marry in her father's lifetime. She eventually married Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, one of the "incomparable paire of brethren" to whom the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays was dedicated. Perhaps we only now begin to glimpse the actual value of the "nothing" Susan Vere inherited from her father, the truth contained in Shakespeare's plays.

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Lady Macbeth's Curds and Whey

After reading Macbeth's letter telling of his meeting with the witches,Lady Macbeth famously soliloquises:

> Glamys thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
> What thou art promis'd: yet doe I feare thy Nature.
> It is too full o'th' Milke of humane kindnesse,
> To catch the neerest way. (I.v.15-18)

"The milk of human kindness" has become proverbial, though there has been extensive discussion of just what Lady Macbeth meant by it. What has not been observed, however, is the way it suggests a pun in the following line. A straightforward paraphrase of "catch the nearest way" would read something like "take the most expedient route," but the dense texture of Macbeth works everywhere against such reduction. If "way" puns on "whey," as I suggest it does, the "milk" metaphor is extended, and we have a typical example of the reverberative effect of a strong metaphor.

In the late twentieth century we encounter milk on a daily basis, but have little, if anything, to do with whey. In the early seventeenth century it was almost the other way round. Dairy historian G.E. Fussell states that: "It is probably safe to say that our Tudor ancestors did not

drink much, if any, milk... The demand for liquid milk as a commodity to be purchased cannot have been very large." Milk was little known as an independent product, but was associated with butter and cheese production, whey being a by-product of the latter. Making cheese depended on the critical separation of curds and whey: "it is profitable that the whay [sic] should runne out, and separate it selfe from the curd," stated the English translation of the *Maison Rustique* in 1600. The same work recommended that the whey be used for feeding pigs (seemingly standard practice, since fifteen years later Gervase Markham made the same poem), only "in the time of dearth" for human food. The separation of the whey from the curd was attended with some violence, involving what was seen as a purging process. In his translation of Conrad Heresbach, Barnay Googe wrote:

> [some] put in [with the rennet] the seede of wylde Saffron, and being so turned, the Whay [in separating from the curd] dooth greatly purge steame: others againe use the milke of the Figge tree, and then doth Whay purge both choler and steame.

In the same translation it is emphasized that "it is very needefull you presse out the Whay with as muche speede as you can, and to seuer it from the curd." Whey was naturally regarded as the inferior element, and the natural violence of its necessary separation from the valuable curd anticipated with anxiety. Thus it may be readily seen how whey can be punningly contrasted with the "milk of human kindness": milk symbolizes the natural man, whey the baser part of his character separated from the nobler. It is precisely this separation that Lady Macbeth wishes to see in her husband, but fears will not occur. Supporting the imaginative movement of this metaphoric echo, it should be noted that in her next sentence Lady Macbeth establishes a series of qualities in Macbeth that do not (in her eyes) resolve into their necessary complements.

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Patron Page

Charles Champlin

Richard Clement

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Sally Mosher

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