

Letters to the Editor

The Dedication to Shakespeare's *Sonnets*

To the Editor:

In Part One of my paper on the Dedication (ER, 5:2), I calculate the odds that the name "Wr-ioth-esley" might have occurred by chance in the text (when it is written out in an array with 8 rows of 18 letters), rather than recorded there by a cryptographer.

I am indebted to David L. Webb (private communication) for observing that since the name appears split into three segments, there are many additional ways in which the name might have occurred by chance, if all similar splittings are taken into account. In fact, there are 18 splittings (including the original one) which are roughly similar in form to what was found in the 8 x 18 array (they have segments with lengths 5,4,2; 5,3,3; 6,3,2; 7,2,2), and all have very roughly the same probability of occurring by chance; any of them might therefore appear as the possible work of a cryptographer. The effect is to increase the odds of a chance occurrence of the name (in any of these forms) by a factor of about 16.2.

Thus, on the same basis as before, the odds of the full name "Henry Wriothesley" appearing by chance should be revised from roughly 1 in 320 million (page 103 of my paper) to roughly 1 in 20 million. Taking also into account the coincidence that the name found is that of the principal "fair youth" candidate, and assessing the odds of this coincidence (as be-

fore) at 1 in 100, one arrives at revised overall odds that the name "Henry Wriothesley" occurred by chance in the Dedication of roughly 1 in 2 billion.

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Why was *Venus and Adonis* Published?

To the Editor:

Regarding Richard Lester's article on why *Venus and Adonis* was published (ER, 6:1), it strikes me that Oxford might have published *Venus and Adonis* simply because Southampton asked him to, or suggested it to him. Oxford might have been complaining about the special treatment meted out to the dead Sidney and the lack of understanding offered to himself. Southampton then might have pointed out the public could not make any comparison unless Oxford also went into print, and suggested *Venus and Adonis* as a work of Oxford's youth which would show up the lack of vigor in Sidney's work at the same age.

Oxford would probably have been pleased and proud and received the necessary impetus to make him try his work on the outside world.

Southampton could have been friendly with both men and yet still recognize where poetic superiority lay.

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