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Happy 150th Birthday, Mr. Looney!

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Not only is 2020 the Centennial year of the publication of "*Shakespeare*" *Identified in Edward de Vere the 17th Earl of Oxford*, it is also the Sesquicentennial of the author of that founding document of the Oxfordian movement. John Thomas Looney was 50 years old in 1920, the year that his master work was published, having been delayed somewhat by World War I. As a tribute to J. Thomas Looney on his **150th birthday, August 14, 2020**, the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship is pleased to give the enclosed brochure, "*Shakespeare*" *Identified—The book that unmasked Shakespeare*, to all subscribers of the print version of the *Newsletter*. Enjoy and share!

If you would like additional copies of this beautiful and informative brochure, contact us at **info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org**. We anticipate doing a second printing in the fall.



From the President:

The spread of COVID-19 has made times difficult for all of us and has affected the activities of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. Most of the Looney Centennial local events which were pledged to take place in 2020 had to be postponed or canceled. We were lucky that we were able to hold the "Shakespeare" Identified Symposium, celebrating the 100th anniversary of J. Thomas Looney's book, at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, on March 4, 2020. Since then, we've had to restrict our activities to virtual and online gatherings. In honor of Looney's 150th birthday (August 14) we enclose with this issue a brochure with much information on Looney and his groundbreaking book, which revealed Oxford as the true author of Shakespeare's works. Please share it with friends.

There have been some personnel changes in the SOF organization. First Vice President Bryan H. Wildenthal has stepped down from his position to focus on his duties as SOF Website Content Editor, a demanding job. He is working with Jennifer Newton, who is Website Design and Technology Editor and who worked as webmaster with Tom Regnier when he was editor of the website. Bryan will continue as a member of two committees. Joan Leon has agreed to resume her former role as Chair of the Fundraising/Membership committee.

Bryan had originally planned to leave the Board on October 1, 2020; however, he subsequently decided to resign as of July 1, 2020, thus creating a temporary vacancy on the Board of Trustees. Under the SOF bylaws, the Board has appointed Robert Meyers to fill the remaining three months of Bryan's term (Meyers had previously been nominated to a three-year term on the Board of Trustees starting on October 1, so he's actually joining a bit earlier).

Many of you know Bob Meyers. He is the President Emeritus of the National Press Foundation and was very active in the Looney Centennial event at the National Press Club earlier this year. He is the editor of the "How I Became an Oxfordian" series on our website. Bob has agreed to chair the Communications Committee; he will oversee and coordinate the print functions of the SOF— The *Newsletter* (edited by Alex McNeil), *The Oxfordian* (edited by Gary Goldstein), and the Brief Chronicles book series (Roger Stritmatter, general editor) —and the website functions (coordinated by Bryan H. Wildenthal and Jennifer Newton).

This year, the SOF will convene its Annual General Meeting (AGM) separately from the Annual Conference,

The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

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The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship is a non-profit, educational organization dedicated to investigating the Shakespeare authorship question and disseminating the evidence that Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), is the true author of the poems and plays written under the pseudonym "William Shakespeare."

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship pursues its mission by supporting research, educational and scholarly initiatives, annual conferences, website and social media, and by publishing this Newsletter and two annual scholarly journals, *The Oxfordian* and *Brief Chronicles*.

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship was formed in 2013 when the Shakespeare Oxford Society, founded in 1957, and the Shakespeare Fellowship, founded in 2001, united to form a single organization. Dues, grants and contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

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Newsletter editor: Alex McNeil (newsletter@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org)

Articles, essays, commentary, book reviews, letters and news items of interest to the Shakespeare Oxfordian community are welcome. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. As provided in the bylaws, "The conferences, publications, and other educational projects of the Fellowship will be open forums for all aspects of the Oxfordian theory of authorship."

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which was canceled due to the COVID-19 crisis. The AGM will take place on Saturday, September 26, and will be open only to current members. It's an important meeting and we welcome your attendance and participation.

Instead of a conference, the SOF is staging a Symposium on the following weekend, Friday and Saturday, October 2-3, featuring live and prerecorded presentations. It will emanate from the home of Board member Ben August in Napa, California, where a few members of the Board and some presenters will physically be present. The live-stream feed will be available, free of charge, to everyone. *There are substantial expenses involved in a virtual seminar and we hope that members and friends will make donations to the SOF to help cover these costs, since they will be saving the costs of attending a conference, including the registration fee, transportation and hotel.*

The Symposium will include a tribute to Tom Regnier, who passed away in April from COVID-19 complications (see the Spring issue of the *Newsletter*). Bryan H. Wildenthal will provide the eulogy and introduce a video of excerpts from some of Tom's presentations. While this is a sad time for all of us, we need to remember Tom and appreciate all that he did for the SOF and to promote Oxford as Shakespeare. As I said before, Tom's family requested that "In lieu of flowers, please *consider a donation* to the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship."

For more details on both events, see page 7; further information will be announced via email and on the SOF website.

John Hamill, President

From the Editor:

This issue contains articles on two of the most contentious issues within the Oxfordian movement: coded messages and the "Prince Tudor" theory.

1. Coded messages (see Letter to the editor, page 5, and articles on pages 14 and 25): Many Oxfordians are wary about claims that coded messages exist concerning Oxford's authorship of the Shakespeare canon, or about other related issues. They argue that the methods used to find such messages lack rigor, or that finding certain words or strings of letters in texts is selective or coincidental; in other words, what is "found" was not put there with that intention by the original writer or printer.

This wariness is residual, stemming from the contorted attempts in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to find ciphers in the Shakespeare texts

showing that Francis Bacon was the true author. Cryptography experts William and Elizebeth Friedman demolished these attempts in their frequently cited 1957 book, *The Shakespearean Ciphers Examined*.

Nevertheless, it is indisputable that Elizabethan writers and readers were familiar with codes and ciphers. In a society where there was strict censorship of published works, writers and printers often took pains to conceal sensitive ideas; they did so in many ways, not just through allusion. They (and their more sophisticated readers) paid attention to all aspects of the book, including layout, order of presentation, typefaces, marginalia and decorative flourishes. These subtleties are generally overlooked by modern mainstream scholars, who have been trained only to read the words of the text and to regard the rest as surplusage or as inconsequential vagaries of the printing trade.

So it should not be surprising to find that some writers did employ codes and ciphers to convey sensitive information. Whether the authors of the articles in this issue have proved their respective cases is for you to judge.

2. The "Prince Tudor" theory (see Letters to the editor, pages 4 and 5, and articles on pages 11 and 25): The idea that Queen Elizabeth and Edward de Vere had a secret child who was raised as Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, has come to be known as the Prince Tudor (PT) theory. It has been controversial ever since it was first proposed in the 1930s, and has caused more rancor and divisiveness within the Oxfordian world than any other topic (on some Oxfordian discussion groups, the subject cannot even be raised).

Opponents maintain that it was historically impossible (and would have been politically suicidal) for Elizabeth ever to have married or borne a child; John Hamill's article (page 11) cogently summarizes the main historical stumbling blocks. Some opponents further believe that clinging to such a dubious theory has at least partly prevented the Oxfordian theory of authorship from gaining broader acceptance.

Proponents find that it goes far to provide an underlying explanation for the entire Shakespeare phenomenon—the pen name, the dedications to Southampton, the "cover-up"— and especially the *Sonnets*, where the relationship between the poet and the "Fair Youth" is father-son and the "Dark Lady" is Elizabeth herself.

At the very least, the PT theory provides a lens through which to interpret Shakespeare's works. Whether that lens provides true clarification, or is some kind of distorted or kaleidoscopic lens, is for you to decide.



Letters

Reading through the Spring 2020 *Newsletter* today, I noticed that you attributed to me a quote regarding the dearly departed Tom Regnier that I presume was by Mark Alexander (p. 30, 2nd column, bottom of page).

This Mark Anderson/Mark Alexander confusion is, I hope you don't mind my observing, getting to be downright curious. (Mark and I can cite any number of examples in person, online and in print in which his work and words are mistaken for mine and vice versa.) Through this little farce, I've begun to appreciate how authorship of disputed texts can sometimes be attributed merely by force of *convention*. It seems—if the strangely self-perpetuating Anderson/Alexander mixup provides any guidance—once a misattribution gains a head of steam, it kind of propagates down the line all on its own.



Mark Alexander

Mark Anderson

Mark Anderson

(who remains a big fan of Mark Alexander and his many contributions to Oxfordian scholarship, but who nevertheless begs the reader's indulgence to differentiate one "Mark A." from the other.)

["Mark" my words-I regret the misattribution. It's been fixed on the SOF website.-Ed.]

Peter Rush's article, "The First 17 Sonnets—Their True Hidden Meaning" (Spring 2020 Newsletter), contends that Henry Wriothesley is the son of Oxford and Queen Elizabeth. This also is a contention of Peter Rogers's article in the Winter 2020 Newsletter. I feel this contention is preposterous unless the issue of incest is dealt with.

It is beyond dispute that both Burghley and Oxford strongly pushed a marriage between Wriothesley and Oxford's daughter Elizabeth Vere. If Rush's contention is correct, this would be a brothersister marriage. It seems highly unlikely that both a father and a grandfather would push such a marriage, unless the laws and taboos were very different then.

Most cultures in the world have taboos against brother-sister marriages. For example, every state in the United States prohibits such marriages. In many states even sexual relations between a brother and a sister are a felony.

Unless Mr. Rush, or someone else, can come up with an article showing that incestuous marriages were looked on favorably in England in the 1500s, I suggest that the *Newsletter* refrain from articles making the contention that Wriothesley is Oxford's son. [Elizabeth Vere was born in 1575, when Oxford was on the Continent. It is reported at the time that he doubted he was the father. Upon his return to England in 1576, he refused to see his wife or the child, and did not reconcile with them until 1581 (at which time he does seem to have acknowledged her as his daughter). If Oxford was not her biological father, then (even if Wriothesley was Oxford's son) a Wriothesley-Elizabeth Vere marriage would not have been incestuous. If Oxford was the father of both parties (who would be half-siblings), then the marriage would have been incestuous; Peter Rush addresses this in detail in chapter 11 of his book, *Hidden in Plain Sight*. In any event, the marriage never took place.

The notion that Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, was really the son of Oxford and the Queen—often dubbed the Prince Tudor ("PT") theory—is a hot-button topic among Oxfordians. For opposing points of view, see the articles on pages 11 and 25 of this issue.-Ed.]

Phil Berry Placerville, CA In a letter to the editor in the Spring 2020 issue of the *Newsletter*, Peter Sturrock and Kathleen Erickson quote a paragraph I wrote about the alleged "hidden message" in the dedication to *Shake-speare's Sonnets*. (They say the paragraph appeared in an "article" titled "Shakespeare Matters" in the "*Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Summer 2005, p. 2." In fact, the passage is in a letter to the editor on page 2 of the Summer 2005 issue of *Shakespeare Matters*). I wrote:

I cannot believe it would have been acceptable to leave the two additional words, "THE FORTH," hanging at the end of the message "THESE SONNETS ALL BY EVER THE FORTH," looking for all the world like they were supposed to mean something, unless they do. The fact that "FORTH" is also the final word in the dedication is too much of a coincidence for me. These words have meaning. We just haven't figured it out.

Sturrock and Erickson then announce that their interpretation will appear "in a forthcoming (June 15) article, 'Behind the Mask: An Analysis of the Dedication of Shakespeare's Sonnets and Its Implications for the Shakespeare Authorship Question,' in the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, Summer 2020, volume 34, issue 2." Their interpretation:

Move the R two places to the right, and we get: THESE SONNETS ALL BY EVER THE FOTHR i.e., THESE SONNETS ALL BY E VERE THE FATHER

"Yes—those two words do have meaning!" they conclude.

Having studied cryptology extensively, starting in 1997 when John Rollett's article announcing his discovery of this hidden message in the Sonnets first appeared in *The Elizabethan Review*, in my view this interpretation does not meet basic criteria for validating proposed cipher solutions. Those criteria are laid out in "Chapter II: Cryptology as a Science," in *The Shakespearean Ciphers Examined* (William F. and Elizebeth S. Friedman, Cambridge University Press, 1958). For example, the Friedmans write:

No solution can be taken as valid simply because the cryptologist says it is; he must [also] be able to show others that it is the right one. His demonstration must be unbiased, systematic, and logically sound; it must be free of appeals to insight, clear of guesswork, and should avoid imponderables like the plague.... (21)

Sturrock and Erickson offer no systematic, logical basis for changing "FORTH" to "FATHER." Rollett discovered the hidden message by the rigorous application of the key 6-2-4 to count off words in the dedication. There was nothing subjective about it, nor did he deviate from it at all. Sturrock and Erickson did no such thing. They used no key at all, relying solely on subjectivity.

Further, it is simply not credible that anyone would go to the great trouble to encrypt a message and leave it so ambiguous. "THE FATHER" of what? If the message was important enough to say he was the father of something, why leave it unspecified so we would forever be in doubt? To me it appears that Sturrock and Erickson are desperate to make a case for a "Prince Tudor" interpretation, and it is this preconceived, subjective desire, and not any rigorous methodology, that led them to their interpretation. This is just the sort of thing the Friedmans sought to avoid.

The Friedmans also write:

The most important thing to remember is that for a solution to be valid it must be possible to show that it is the only solution.... If in any system two different investigators applying the same key or keys to the same basic material get inconsistent answers, the system is self-refuting.... (24-25)

I cannot imagine that any other investigator would ever hit on the same solution as Sturrock and Erickson, it is so highly subjective. It is also not the best proposed solution I have seen. In his book *The De Vere Code* (2009), Jonathan Bond writes:

The association of the name of de Vere with the Low Countries conflict through Francis, Horatio, and briefly Edward, from the 1580s until the 1620s, was inescapable. Who in the Netherlands would not know that "de Vere" was synonymous with English commitment to the Dutch struggle for independence? Conversely, how many in England would appreciate the pun ... that ... "the fourth" translated into Dutch, is "de Vierde"?

In this interpretation, there is no need to arbitrarily move any letters to get a preconceived result. It's merely a matter of recognizing that "THE FORTH" clarifies the meaning of the word EVER. Rather than changing the meaning of the hidden message, it reinforces and clarifies it beautifully. If anyone knows a better interpretation of the meaning of "THE FORTH," I would like to hear it. Finally, if one wants to be taken seriously, the place to publish proposed cryptogram solutions is in *Cryptologia*, the journal of leading cryptologists, not in the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*.

John M. Shahan Claremont, California

[Peter Sturrock and Kathleen Erickson respond:]

In order not to further prolong this exchange, we comment very briefly on just a few points. John Shahan comments on the rules that William and Elizebeth Friedman adopted to validate a decryption. Since the Friedmans were dealing with matters of national security, they had to be extremely careful concerning any proposed decryption. Our communication was not a proposed validation of a known proposal. It was the first cut of a proposal—that in THESE SONNETS ALL BY EVER THE FORTH, the word *FORTH* may have been an anagram for *FOTHR*.

There is more than one way to interpret data relevant to the Authorship Question, such as the contents of the Dedication. One way is to adopt the same procedure that one would adopt if the text contained a message as it might have been concealed in a highly secret communication to or from an ambassador. For this purpose, the Friedmans would have been required to produce a Yes/No verdict: either "there was a hidden message and it was this..." or "there was no hidden message." It is along these lines, it would seem, that Shahan interprets the study of the contents and significance of the Dedication of the Sonnets in terms of "validating proposed cipher solutions."

However, that is neither our activity nor our perspective. Our approach is to regard the Dedication as just another item of relevant evidence, and to judge its significance in terms of probabilities, as in our current article, "Behind the Mask: Decoding the Dedication of Shakepeare's Sonnets" (recently published in *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 34, pp. 268-350 [2020]). Using this approach, we can examine possible messages revealed by various possible ELS (equidistant letter spacing) rearrangements, and estimate the probabilities that possible word combinations may have occurred by chance and, as a result, infer the probabilities that the messages were deliberately planned. Those probabilities can be expressed in either frequentist or Bayesian terms. The former procedure is the one adopted by Rollett ("Secrets of the dedication of Shakespeare's Sonnets," *The Oxfordian* v. 2, 60–75 [1999]). The latter is the one I (Sturrock) adopted in my 2013 book, *AKA Shakespeare: A Scientific Approach to the Authorship Question*. We give estimates in both frequentist and Bayesian formats in our article.

Concerning the encryption procedure, the Friedmans give an excellent analysis of the nature and limitations of the biliteral procedure, which was relevant to their evaluations of the proposal made in 1910 by Elizabeth Wells Gallup concerning bilateral ciphers indicating Francis Bacon's authorship of Shakespeare. However, the Friedmans make no comment on and offer no advice concerning *Equidistant Letter Spacing* (ELS), which is the procedure adopted by both Rollett in 1999 and Bond in 2009 (*The De Vere Code: Proof of the true author of Shake-Speares Sonnets*) in their analyses of the Dedication, and which we adopt in our analyses.

Shahan's comments concerning Rollett's publications give the impression that Rollett, on taking an interest in the Authorship Question, immediately set about testing his 6-2-4 idea. In reality, Rollett had to tread a long road to get to that destination. At the end of his life, he was still not sure he had arrived at the right place, and announced his support of William Stanley as the real Shakespeare. In practice (as distinct from theory), it is usually much more difficult to decide *what* to evaluate than to carry out the evaluation.

The Journal of Scientific Exploration—an Open-Access, multidisciplinary journal—has wide enough remit that it offers the possibility of bringing the Authorship Question to the attention of a wide range of uncommitted readers. It is our understanding that *Cryptologia* does not accept articles related to the Shakespeare Question.

We are not saying that one approach is right and the other is wrong. We are saying there is a valid choice. One cannot criticize a colleague for making a choice that differs from yours, even if your choice carries the names of two national heroes.



What's the News?

Notice of Annual General Meeting (September 26) and Symposium (October 2-3)

by Earl Showerman, SOF Secretary and Conference Committee Chair

Under normal circumstances, the Annual Meeting of the membership of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship is conducted during our yearly Conference. The cancellation of the 2020 SOF Conference due to the coronavirus pandemic requires us to conduct this year's Annual Meeting virtually. It will be held on **Saturday**, **September 26, 2020**, starting at 10:00 AM Pacific Time (1:00 PM Eastern Time). It is expected to last from sixty to ninety minutes.

The Annual Meeting will be conducted using Zoom. SOF members will be notified in advance of the necessary link to permit interactive participation from the safety of their homes. SOF members who do not have access to Zoom may call in on a toll-free number to listen to the discussion and reports. The meeting customarily includes a report from the president, the treasurer's report, reports from committee chairs, and the election of Trustees who have been nominated to the Board.

In lieu of the annual conference, the Conference Committee will present a free online Symposium on the SOF YouTube Channel on **Friday and Saturday**, **October 2 and 3**. It will commence Friday evening with a broadcast from 4:00 to 6:00 PM Pacific time (7:00-9:00 Eastern time), and reconvene on Saturday with a scheduled broadcast from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Pacific time (12:00 to 8:00 PM Eastern time). The Symposium will be dedicated to the memory of Tom Regnier, past President of the SOF.

Both prerecorded and live presentations will be featured. Speakers scheduled to be livestreamed from the Symposium "headquarters" in Napa, California, include Ramon Jiménez on "Ten Eyewitnesses Who Saw Nothing," Katherine Chiljan on "Lord Prospero in *The Tempest* and Lord Prospero Visconti," Mark Andre Alexander on "Stratfordian Blind Spots," and Steven Sabel on "The Mentors to Genius." The winning entries in this years's Video Contest will be screened, and the Oxfordian of the Year Award will be announced.

Prerecorded presentations are expected to be made by 2019 Oxfordian of the Year Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, who is working on a video of her most recent project, "Shakespeare Auteur: Creating Authentic Characters for the Screen"; Bryan H. Wildenthal, who has prepared new commentary from his recent book, *Early Shakespeare Authorship Doubts*, Earl Showerman on "Shakespeare & Politics from the 16th to the 21st Centuries"; Professor Sky Gilbert on this recent book, *Shakespeare Beyond Science: When Poetry Was the World*; and James Warren, editor of the Centenary edition *of "Shakespeare" Identified*, on "J. Thomas Looney's Difficult Task," highlighting the special challenge that Looney faced in attempting to change minds about an idea that practically everybody already believed to be true.

Registration for the Symposium is free and will be available on the SOF website in the coming weeks. Registrants will be provided with the Symposium schedule, a reading list, and other supportive materials to enrich their viewing experience.

The Symposium was originally proposed by SOF Director of Public Relations and Marketing Steven Sabel, who will serve as emcee of the livestream proceedings. Technical assistance is provided by Jake Lloyd, producer of the SOF podcast series, "Don't Quill the Messenger." Funding came largely from generous donations in the memory of Tom Regnier out of the canceled conference refunds. The Conference Committee thanks Catherine Hatinguais, Richard Joyrich, Hank Whittemore, Charlotte Hughes, Mary Dawn Fallon, Paul Arnold, Ben August, Heidi Jannsch, David Stritmatter, Alex McNeil, Anthony Ellis, Diane Kallas, Bruce Kohler and Lily Parker for their timely support.

The Board of Trustees plans to hold the 2021 Annual Conference in Ashland, Oregon, from September 30 through October 3, 2021. The Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites has guaranteed the same room and conference rates that were offered for 2020. Hopefully the recent progress that has been made in developing preventive strategies for the coronavirus pandemic will be fully realized by next year, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival will be able to produce the high quality productions that have attracted audiences to Ashland for more than eighty years.

Article on Looney Runs in UK Periodical

The following article, written by SOF members Kathryn Sharpe and Bryan H. Wildenthal, was published in the Spring/Summer 2020 issue of the Literary & Philosophical Society *Newsletter*. J. Thomas Looney did much of the work on his book, "*Shakespeare*" *Identified*, at the Lit & Phil. in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

A Mystery Solved

By Kathryn Sharpe and Bryan H. Wildenthal

Skeptical Schoolteacher Solves Shakespeare Mystery at Lit & Phil: The Centennial of a Revolutionary Book

In the years before World War I, a virtual "Sherlock Holmes" toiled in the archives of the Literary & Philosophical Society.

John Thomas Looney (1870–1944), a native of the Newcastle area, was a brilliant and independent-minded scholar. By day a mild-mannered schoolteacher in Gateshead, his hope was to solve the greatest literary mystery of all time.

Was the author "William Shakespeare" really an actor from Stratford who never traveled abroad, whose personal records contain no hint of a literary career? Or did a discreet writer use that pseudonym to publish plays and poems infused with learning, art, and exposure to cultures outside England, notably Italy?

Approaching the mystery as Holmes might have done, Looney derived from the works a profile of the author's likely characteristics. He assembled a vast array of circumstantial evidence pointing to a highly educated courtier, praised as a poet and dramatist, who traveled to Italy as a young man.



Looney's resulting book remains the most revolutionary ever published on Shakespeare. On March 4, 1920, rejecting advice to use a pen name himself, he bravely presented it to the world: "Shakespeare" Identified in Edward de Vere the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford. One of his "greatest debts," Looney wrote, was to the Lit & Phil where he researched and wrote it, with "an ease and rapidity of work that would probably have been impossible in any other institution in the country."

Looney's critics have mostly ignored his evidencebased analysis, resorting instead to *ad hominem* smears and mockery of his Manx family name. Yet researchers over the past century have continued to find new evidence corroborating his thesis. For more information: www.DeVereSociety.co.uk/public www.ShakespeareOxfordFellowship.org

Anti-Oxfordian T Shirts Peddled to Support NC Shakespeare Company

On Facebook earlier this year, a supporter of a small North Carolina Shakespeare company offered a T shirt with a violent message: "If You Mention the Earl of Oxford One More Time I'll Stab You in the Face." According to the supporter:

This is a fun little thing. Anti-Stratfordians are people who think Shakespeare isn't **really** Shakespeare, but something else. They're the folks who think Shakespeare couldn't possibly have been educated enough to make these amazing plays. They're jerks. Like the anti-vaxxers of Shakespeare world. This shirt helps them to back the eff up while supporting a small theatre company in North Carolina, USA, called Sweet Tea Shakespeare.

Based in Fayetteville, North Carolina, Sweet Tea Shakespeare (according to its website) "gathers a

diverse community around a common table to delight in the magic of story, song, and stagecraft. Sweet Tea Shakespeare is a former affiliate of Fayetteville State University. Sweet Tea Shakespeare is a not-for-profit theatre company and training ground inspired by Shakespeare and the early modern period in its spirit and operations."

Apparently the T shirt was not an original idea, as one Facebook commenter noted that the shirt was "first available at a Blackfriars Conference at the American Shakespeare Center."

Despite the crude message, it seems not to have occurred to the designer or promoters of this "fun little thing" that the shirt will broadcast the Earl of Oxford's name to people who've never heard of him, and no doubt some of them will do their own research and make up their own minds about the authorship question.

In Memoriam: Kristin Linklater (1936-2020)

Internationally known vocal coach—and longtime Oxfordian—Kristin Linklater died on June 5, 2020, at her home in the Orkney Islands. She is perhaps best remembered as a vocal coach who taught not only actors, but also students and persons from other professions, using



the Linklater Voice Method. As she stated in her classic book, *Freeing the Natural Voice; Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language* (1976), "Everyone possesses a voice capable of expressing, through a twoto four-octave natural pitch range, whatever gamut of emotion, complexity of mood, and subtlety of thought he or she experiences."

Kristin Linklater was born in Edinburgh on April 22, 1936. She trained at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, and taught voice there. She first came to the US in 1963, and soon began training American actors. In the late 1970s she assisted Tina Packer in founding Shakespeare & Company in western Massachusetts. As she later told an interviewer, their goal was "to get the words out of the head and into the body, where they are experienced emotionally and viscerally."

In 1990 she began teaching at Emerson University in Boston, where she worked with Carol Gilligan on exploring Shakespeare from a woman's point of view in the Company of Women. In 1997 she moved to Columbia University in New York. After retiring from Columbia in 2014, she moved to the Orkney Islands (just north of mainland Scotland) and founded the Kristin Linklater Voice Center.

The New York Times ran a three-column obituary (which was picked up by the Boston Globe). It did not mention that Linklater was a committed Oxfordian. Linklater said so boldly at the end of her 1992 book, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice: The Actor's Guide to Talking the Text*:

The purpose of this book is to provide a methodology which can help the speaker detect the sound of the author's voice and to establish meaning through an authentic replaying of *voice*. But whose voice is it really?

The authenticity of the voice we hear depends in some part on the authenticity of the text that has survived, and despite editorial disagreement the major portion of Shakespeare's text is not in question. The important unsolved mystery does not lie in the calm of scholarly research on the plays, but rather in the historical and biographical search for the man who wrote them.

I cannot, in all conscience, end this book which trumpets so loudly and so often the word "Truth" without bowing my head and my knee in the direction of Edward DeVere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. Whenever I say in public that I am "an Oxfordian," I find myself either defensively jocular or in tears. Nothing in the Shakespeare establishment arouses so much ridicule and rancor as the suggestion that "the man from Stratford" did not write the plays. While I am in general agreement that what is most important is not who wrote them but that they exist —that the plays, not their author, are what matter most— every now and then I think about Edward DeVere, and I look at his portrait and remember the story of his life. And I passionately care about him. (209)

In 2005 she wrote the top blurb on the jacket of MarkAnderson's groundbreaking biography of de Vere, *"Shakespeare" By Another Name*:

"Shakespeare" by Another Name is a wake-up call. The wealth of new and revelatory corroborative evidence in this biography fleshes out Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, as the man behind the plays of Shakespeare, and as the story unfolds the background to some of Shakespeare's most important plays springs into life. Mark Anderson's book will be a galvanizing force for actors and theatre people with its richly nourishing and illuminating information. No biography of the Stratford man is as persuasive.

Mark Anderson recalled her fondly in an email:

Professor Kristin Linklater was a legendary pioneer and one of the early Oxfordian voices of reason within both the academy and the pinnacles of the American, English and Scottish professional theatre world. Her life and career are a testament to finding, freeing, acquiring and embracing voice. How can our movement not be rendered some degree just a little more silent with her passing? I am honored to have had the chance to interview and correspond with Ms. Linklater over the years—and to have received her endorsement of "Shakespeare" by Another Name [see above]. The greatest King Lear I've ever seen was her Company of Women's production in 1996, with Linklater in the title role. Though in reflecting on her tremendous importance and contributions in light of her passing, I'm reminded more of the character who provides Lear's final words: One of the great case studies of losing and then regaining voice in the Shakespeare canon, Edmund's half-brother Edgar. As Edgar concludes, "The weight of this sad time we must obey./ Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say." My condolences to Ms. Linklater's family, friends, colleagues and many students and acolytes across the globe. Rest in peace.

Hank Whittemore shared an email communication he received from her in late 2019, after she read the text of his presentation at the SOF Conference in Hartford that year:

I have to ask you—are you writing a biography of Oxford with the clear assumption that he is Shakespeare? If not—why not? Somebody has to just go for it—without argument or comparison. I'm tired of all the hedged arguments and semi-apologetic suggestions. I've just read *The Brothers York* by Thomas Penn— a great read—in which the earlier Oxfords loom large and make such sense of the histories up to Richard III. I marveled at how the events of so many years were turned into a vivid and gory hourglass in the plays. And this *Venus and Adonis* information is great. I want to see it OUT THERE before I die!

Best wishes, Kristin

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Looney and Mythmaking

by John Hamill

The so-called Prince Tudor (PT) theory tenaciously returns for speculative discussion over and over again in Oxfordian literature. There are actually two subtheories: PT1, the idea that Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, was the illegitimate son of Queen Elizabeth and Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and PT2 (sometimes called the Tudor Rose theory), the idea that Oxford himself was the illegitimate son of Queen Elizabeth, and committed incest with her. They are myths that were originally put forward by the early Baconians, and then transformed into Oxfordian PT theories.

It is important to know that J. Thomas Looney, who launched the modern Oxfordian theory with his 1920 book, "*Shakespeare*" *Identified*, firmly rejected the Oxfordian PT theory when it arose in the 1930s; he remained adamant in that view until his death in 1944. As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Looney's landmark book this year, it is appropriate that we revisit the evidence that corroborates Looney's conclusion that the PT theory is not viable.

Two recent pieces in the *Newsletter*—Peter Rogers's article, "The First Seventeen Sonnets" in the Winter 2020 issue, and Peter Rush's Spring 2020 article, "The First Seventeen Sonnets—Their True Hidden Meaning," responding to Rogers —postulated PT theory as factual, and as the ultimate solution to understanding *Shake-Speare's Sonnets*. But where is the documentary

evidence? In his article, Rush makes a series of unsupported statements claiming that his theories about the *Sonnets*' hidden meaning are somehow "fact," but he presents no evidence. Rogers at least admits that his theory—that the *Sonnets* were actually addressed to Oxford's "narcissistic self"—is simply speculation, indeed, as he put it, "speculation upon speculation." Rush, unfortunately, does not even admit that.

There seem to be as many interpretations of the *Sonnets* as there are readers. As I have continued my research into the *Sonnets*, my views have evolved. I certainly agree with Rush's position that the *Sonnets* are not addressed to the "narcissistic author." That said, I also do not believe Rush's theory makes the first seventeen sonnets "transparent," as he claims. In my opinion, neither Rogers's nor Rush's arguments hold up to logical analysis.

Rush admits he is in complete agreement with Hank Whittemore's interpretation as presented in *The Monument* (2005), "recognizing that Southampton was Queen Elizabeth's and Oxford's son." But all extant documents show that Southampton was the son of the 2nd Earl of Southampton and his wife, Mary Browne. There is no contemporary record even of rumors that Southampton was the son of Queen Elizabeth and Oxford.

The lack of historical documentary evidence supporting any version of PT theory undercuts many assumptions implicit in Rush's statements. He argues that, "as detailed in Whittemore's and my books, the purpose of producing an heir is to perpetuate Southampton's lineage, properly understood as Elizabeth's Tudor lineage." Like so many Stratfordians who make biographical claims without any supportive evidence, Rush makes the outrageous claim, "It is all but certain that Southampton's royal blood was an open secret in Court circles at that time."

Admittedly, there were rumors at the time, mostly spread by Catholics, that the Queen had illegitimate children. But these rumors almost always claimed that the father was Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, the Queen's lifelong favorite. The most credible example was Arthur Dudley, who claimed that he was their son, and was even received by the King of Spain.

Rush also ignores a basic cultural taboo: he claims that both Burghley and Oxford wanted Southampton to marry Elizabeth Vere. Yet if the tenets of PT theory are

> correct, Southampton would then be marrying his own half-sister! To address this problem, in a variation to the PT theory, some claim that Oxford was not the father of Elizabeth Vere, that she was actually the illegitimate daughter of

Oxford's wife Anne Cecil, daughter of Lord Burghley, who was probably the father of the child. This adds another layer of undocumented bastardry and incest which makes the PT theory even harder to prove.

According to Rush, the marriage between Elizabeth Vere and Southampton was being pushed because "it was the only inducement for Burghley to get Queen Elizabeth to acknowledge Southampton." But if the marriage would really make his granddaughter a Queen consort, why then would Burghley need an *inducement* to get Queen Elizabeth to acknowledge Southampton? And why would Southampton's marriage to Elizabeth Vere prompt Queen Elizabeth to acknowledge him as her son? Indeed, why wouldn't she simply ignore the whole proposition, just as she had ignored Southampton for twenty-two years after his birth? The last documented time that Queen Elizabeth met with Southampton was in 1595. She died in 1603.

Moreover, Rush seems to propose that some of the Sonnets were written to promote a marriage between Elizabeth de Vere and Southampton. But, nowhere in the



first seventeen sonnets does Oxford suggest that the person being addressed actually should "marry" anyone. The message was to procreate. There is never a mention of marriage in the *Sonnets* at all. Only in the sonnets addressed to the "Dark Lady" are the sonnets clearly directed to someone *who was already married*.

Ultimately, to accept either of the Prince Tudor theories, one would have to believe that all the official and private documents of the time are forgeries, Elizabethan-style fake news, pranks or hoaxes. This is not just my opinion.

Diana Price, in her 1996 article, "Rough Winds Do Shake: A Fresh Look at the Tudor Rose Theory" (it can be found on the SOF website), concludes, "As attractive as the Tudor Rose Theory may be on interpretive grounds, the historical facts plainly refute it. . . . Adherents have not documented their case with a single piece of documentary evidence, and the inaccurate arguments advanced to support the theory serve only to discredit it. Since ample documentation contradicts it, the Tudor Rose theory cannot be viewed as having any substance."

Bonner Miller Cutting's 2018 research also disproves the PT theory (the essay is in her book *Necessary Mischief*). She writes: "Though both the Southampton PT [i.e., PT1] and Seymour PT [i.e., PT2] hypotheses reflect curious circumstances that defy traditional explanations, the major weakness of both theories is that there is no biographical evidence that supports either one."

In his 2002 article in The Oxfordian, "The 'Prince Tudor' Dilemma: Hip Thesis, Hypothesis, or Old Wives' Tale?" Christopher Paul wrote, "If Paul Streitz [a PT2 supporter] hopes to be taken seriously as a scholar, he must deal with the issues.... He needs to show solid proof that all evidence that Oxford was the son of Margery Golding and the sixteenth Earl of Oxford, and that Southampton was the son of Mary Browne and the second Earl of Southampton, was falsified or intended to mislead, as he claims. We would also want to see evidence that somewhere during the period in question a royal bastard had been raised in the household of a peer as his own child. It is not enough to simply dismiss this requirement with the pretext: 'To expect a substantial written historical record of events that persons in high places wanted kept secret would be to expect a historical record that never would have been created in the first place[;] . . . the superiority of hard historical evidence, such as letters and other documents, is somewhat overstated."" Christopher Paul then went on to say, "We are not even seeking 'substantial' evidence, but any evidence at all. Lacking all evidence that these references are false, products of ignorance, or a coverup, if we're to believe in the possibility then we need to

be shown some instance during the era in question in which it is proven that a changeling was raised in the manner suggested for Oxford and/or Southampton."

How can these theories continue to spread if there is no evidence? Further, how do they help promote the Oxfordian cause?

It is amply documented that a king can openly have a child out of wedlock (it happened all the time), but not a queen. A Maid of Honor can secretly have a child out of wedlock (e.g., Anne Vavasour and Elizabeth Blount), but Maids of Honor are not the center of the court's attention, and can leave the court at any time. For a Queen, the center of attention for the nation, court and foreign dignitaries, it would be highly improbable to become secretly pregnant, give birth, and place the royal bastard child secretly with a noble family. Her presence was continually studied and reported upon by the gaping eyes and ready ears and gossiping mouths of her court, and with an ever-vigilant retinue privy to her most personal day-to-day habits including dressing, bathing, and toileting. A Queen cannot leave the court, she is the court-it follows her.

PT theory is problematic for many reasons. For instance, Southampton is reported to have been born on October 6, 1573. The documentary evidence indicates that Queen Elizabeth celebrated her fortieth birthday on September 7, 1573, when she would have been eight months pregnant with Southampton. This effectively eliminates the possibility of a secret October "surprise" birth date. In response to this PT theorists have suggested May or June 1574 as the secret birth date of Southampton, because they believed there was no documentation of the Queen's whereabouts at that time. However, there is documentary evidence of the Queen's activities for both the summer/fall of 1573 and the spring/summer of 1574.

Recently researcher Nina Green, on her Phaeton listserv, has underscored both Price and Paul's arguments, which remove the keystone of the PT theory. She has provided evidence of reliable documentation for the Queen's movements in the spring and summer of 1574—that there is no time that the Queen could have possibly been carrying a child and giving birth in secret when she was in the company of the court and foreign dignitaries, including the French Ambassador Fenelon. Green claims that she has received no response from PT proponents refuting the proofs she presented, or offering an alternate birthdate and place. This is the cornerstone of the PT theory—when and where was Southampton secretly born?

Christopher Paul took on the PT issue again in his 2010 *Brief Chronicles* review of Charles Beauclerk's book, *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom*. Paul concludes: "In summary, Beauclerk's interpretation of the Shakespeare canon is often tantalizing but lacks credibility. It's disconcerting that he harnesses no concerted effort to refrain from twisting historical documents out of context to fit his interpretations, while simultaneously bypassing others that run counter to his course. With this work, Beauclerk is neither biographer nor historian, but mythopoeist. What he offers is not the 'True History of Oxford/Shakespeare and Elizabeth,' but a mythistory. Because his literary interpretations are based upon unfounded historical conclusions, Shakespeare's lost kingdom remains to be found."

Richard Whalen, in his Spring 2006 *Newsletter* article, "The *Prince Tudor* Hypothesis: A Brief Survey of the Pros and Cons," states in his conclusion: "there is little or no historical evidence for their elaborate hypothesis which relies mainly on literary interpretation of the *Sonnets* and seeks to explain virtually everything. Historical documents that would seem to undermine the hypothesis of a cover-up are subsumed into the cover-up as elements of it."

There are also moral and religious considerations. In an age of profound religious belief, why would a Protestant Queen allow her son and supposed heir to be raised in a devout Catholic household? Indeed, the Queen had the 2nd Earl of Southampton put into prison several times for his Catholicism, and considered him to be a potential traitor. As Whalen asks: "Why would the Protestant, risk-averse queen risk putting her son and heir to the throne with a Roman Catholic nobleman who had just been imprisoned for his role in a plan to dethrone her, even if blackmail were involved." Akrigg, in his Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton, says that Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, remained a Catholic until he married Elizabeth Vernon in 1598. Vernon was first cousin of his two closest Protestant companions from the Devereux family, the Earl of Essex and Penelope Rich.

How credible are theories based on unsupported speculations that deny contemporary documentation to prove a dubious narrative? Just as the story of the man from Stratford-upon-Avon persists, built over a factual chasm that defies the cultural requirements of his time, the PT theories persist without any hard evidence to sustain them. In my opinion, PT has become an un-quarantined virus that keeps spreading among those that do not have the vaccine of historical truth. I also believe that the PT theory is one of the reasons Oxfordians are ignored by both academia and the media. I believe it undermines our mission to develop coherent arguments proving that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, was the real author of the Shakespeare canon. Looney said the same thing. In a 1933 letter to Joan Robinson, who reviewed his book, Looney expressed reservations about "extravagant and improbable" theories concerning Oxford and Queen Elizabeth that "are likely to bring the whole cause into ridicule." Robinson agreed, opining that apparently "nonsensical" theories help the academic Stratfordians to "dismiss the whole business with a shrug."

Let me summarize my objections to PT theory. First, we would have to accept that documents created over a range of years during the sixteenth century were falsified. Second, there was no open time for the Queen to have been pregnant and have borne a child in secret during 1573-1574. Third, why would the Protestant Queen have her child, the future heir to the Throne, raised in an openly Catholic and potentially treasonous home? This makes no sense.

This is the major difference between the Looney Oxfordian and PT Oxfordian theories. Advocates of the former theory don't have to argue that the contemporary documents were forged. There are no contemporary documents that claim that the man from Stratford was the author of Shakespeare's works. We don't have the unnecessary burden of proving the Shakespeare attribution had anything to do with political succession.

Let's not be diverted by the temptation of the facile conclusions of PT theory. Evidence revealed over the last century repeatedly confirms Looney's anti-PT stance. Let's follow the path Looney outlined for us: go back to the facts. We need to delve into documentary history, rather than rely only on subjective interpretations of poetic language. Please, my friends, no more mythmaking.

Certainly, the SOF and its many members are open to new ideas, even radical ideas. We do not believe that we have all the answers, at least not yet. But shouldn't we be committed to backing up the many ideas we do present with solid research and evidence?

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by David L. Roper

Cryptography is a section of scientific investigation that deals with the intelligent concealment of information. Its practice is focused upon the need for secrecy; it therefore involves the ingenuity of an encoder and that of a decoder. The Shakespeare authorship question, for so long confined to history and literature, has now added science to its offensive. In particular, cryptography based upon the solid foundation of empirical procedures and mathematical probabilities; those foundations place it in the secure company of other recognized sciences.

The result has met with spectacular success. For the first time, it has become possible to set out an unarguable line of proof that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, was the poet and playwright who is now celebrated as William Shakespeare. Regrettably, this does not mean that a transfer of authorship will occur overnight. The addiction to a firmly held belief, caused earlier by repetitive and habitual thinking, will always be an obstacle to correction. Despite this, it does mean that numerical proofs are of such a nature that nothing but irrational objections can ever dismiss or replace them.

To begin with, Shake-speare wrote in an age that was rife with coded language. As Clare Asquith explained: "Its people were addicted to hidden meanings. Codes, devices and punning allusions were everywhere—in street songs and ballads, conversation, poems, plays, woodcuts, portraits, jewellery . . . there were literary codes, too, accessible only to a sophisticated elite." It is in this genre that evidence for the true author of Shakespeare's work has been repeatedly entrusted. Not only has Oxford personally divulged the truth of his authorship, but it has been repeated in cipher by well-known scholars of his generation: Ben Jonson, Thomas Nashe, Edmund Spenser, Leonard Digges, Sir Aston Cokayne and William Marshall. The same information has also been enciphered into two publications of Shake-speare's Sonnets: the first by Thomas Thorpe (1609), the second by John Benson (1640). These names alone would normally be sufficient to obtain credibility. But when they are endorsed by the same code word, by the same set of cipher keys based upon the poet's name, Edward de Vere, and by seventeen, the number of his earldom-to which are then added further cipher keys that pinpoint exactly where each secret commences-the accumulated evidence is so extensive for de Vere's authorship that it becomes quite impossible to dissect it without committing logical inconsistencies.

That was precisely the result which those named above set out to establish.

Each encoder's chosen medium for obtaining secrecy was a "transposition cipher"; i.e., each letter retains its identity, but its position in the text conforms to an arithmetical rule known as equidistant letter sequencing (ELS). The cipher-text will be an innocent-looking poem, an epistle perhaps, or a tribute; but it must possess a connection to Shakespeare. It then requires a "key" to unlock the secret held within the cipher-text. The key to unlocking the secret message—called plain-text—must also corroborate it.

The Stratford Monument, for example, has inexplicably inset a line of Latin text preceding the English sixain. Why? The number of letters in the inset line would normally total 35. But by writing the word *maeret* with a digraph it becomes *mæret*, thereby reducing the number of characters to 34. This was first observed by Dr. Bruce Spittle, who was able to confirm the key of 17+17. Its addition proved to be the ELS number for transposing the sixain onto a grille of 34 columns and 7 rows, with each letter occupying a single cell. The plaintext then appears vertically. Previously, the key of 34 had been discovered by using *Vere* as a "crib." Cribs are important in decipherment, because they are aimed at anticipating a word that is likely to occur in a concealed message.

However, finding the key that transposes cipher-text into a legible piece of plain-text is still capable of being explained away as coincidence, especially when it contradicts a preferred belief. To avoid this form of dissent, the encoder perfected a way to overcome it. He introduced further keys for the plain-text to be found, so that each new key would indicate the column where the first letter to appear as plain-text was to be found.

For example, using the Stratford Monument with its cipher-text laid out on a 34 x 7 grid, with one letter to each cell, the encoder began with the first letter of his encrypted message at the eighth cell. His choice of key is corroborated by the name *Vere*, which is also a Latin adverb meaning "truly." When this is translated back into Latin, the simile to *vere* is *profecto*, which contains eight letters.

The key to identifying the next cluster of plain-text occurs eleven cells later. Eleven is the number of letters in the Latin word for seventeen, *septendecim*: thus uniting with *profecto*, the Latin of the first key. The third cluster of plain-text begins after a further nine cells. The key on this occasion is nine, the number of letters in the word *seventeen*; it is consistent as a translation of the Latin *septendecim*.

Very clearly, all four keys (17+17; *profecto*; *septendecim* and *seventeen*) define Oxford and his

earldom. At the same time, attached to the plain-text in the midst of these three clusters are two words: *rune*, with an ELS of -33, and *scamp*, with an ELS of -15. The archaic meaning of *rune* was "whisper, secret talk" or "whisper, talk in secret." *Rune* occurs on all eleven grilles, each having confirmed that the 17th Earl of Oxford was secretly William Shakespeare. This word therefore made an excellent choice for a code word that would attend all hidden statements.

Scamp did not formerly enjoy its current definition of a lovable rascal. In Middle English it described a "knave, a disreputable person, a rogue." How well this fits Shakspere, the tax defaulter; the grain hoarder; the moneylender; his court writ against the life of William Wayte (stepson of James Gardiner, a convicted criminal); his bed and board with George Wilkins, a known pimp and woman beater. Both Wilkins and Shakspere lived with Christopher Mountjoy, for whom court records show that he ran a vice ring, and controlled several brothels. The French Church in London described the entire household as "debauched." See Figure 1.



Figure 1

SO TEST HIM, HE I VOW IS – WHISPER, SECRET TALK – E DE VERE, AS HE SHAKSPEARE: SCAMP! ME, I.B.

The initials I.b. are the same as those of Ben Ionson, read in reverse like *rune* and *scamp*. They also occur at the foot of his opening poem in the First Folio. It is therefore by turning to William and Elizebeth Friedman -famous for their codebreaking achievements in the last century-that the comment they made regarding plaintext, and any name it contains as an acrostic, is most informative. "Acrostic devices have this advantage . . . they leave no doubt that the author of the open text must also have been responsible for any hidden message-once it is established that one exists. . . . If, therefore, any genuine messages of this kind exist, they must be taken as conclusive." The author of the "open text" on the Monument was I.B., Ben Jonson, a known Latin scholar; moreover, he was a man known to have loved Shakespeare "this side of idolatry." He therefore had a motive for revealing the truth, and the ability to obtain the means for expressing it secretly.

Immediately beneath the wall-mounted bust of Jonson's "scamp" is a row of tombstones, one of which, although unnamed, once marked the grave of the man named above. Ground-penetrating radar has recently proved the grave is empty, despite an epitaph that warns, with a curse, anyone who moves his bones. The reason for the empty grave was to prevent the "scamp" Shakspere from being mistakenly reinterred as William Shakespeare at Westminster Abbey. See Figure 2.

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Figure 2

whisper, talk in secret: scam! w. S. e.g. vEl

Note that the key to the number of columns is defined by the source of the plain-text, in which "Shakspeare" is spelled the same as in the sixain above. Also, the key that identifies the first letter of plain-text as the twelfth cell confirms the name of Edward de Vere (which contains twelve letters) in full, thereby complementing the Latin key word *profecto* on the monument above. The third key repeats the number 17, thus retaining consistency between the monument and the gravestone.

The misdirection of Shakespeare to Stratford-upon-Avon was part of a scam. "Scams traditionally resided in confidence tricks, where an individual would misrepresent themselves as someone with skill and authority." Yet, it appears that the word scam was absent in English literature until the last century, when it was defined as: "US carnival slang. Possibly from scamp ('swindler, cheater')." Was this Jonson's hapax legomenon having preceded its wider use later? Or was it lack of a fifth line of cipher-text that enforced an apocope for scamp? Incidentally, Shake-speare himself was not above shortening a word when need arose; e.g., "attent" in Hamlet (1.2.400). Either way, it introduces the name Vere as the exempli gratia of William Shakespeare, suitably initialled. Vere is formed by an arithmetical progression letter skip of -1, commencing with -5 at the only V in the entire legend. This then coincides with the letters W, S, e

and *g*, which are part of the key to the number of columns.

Another important observation is that, as a rule, these cipher-texts commence their first letter of plain-text close to their beginning. This not only enables the number of letters in the key to be few, it also conforms to the cryptographic rule of the Greek tragedians (Thompson & Padover). It was their practice to choose letters in the first two lines, which then provide the name of the author. The application of this rule is frequently recognizable within these cipher-texts.

The First Folio is without doubt the most valuable record of Shake-speare's plays. Its first page is fronted by a cartoon engraving of somebody quite unrecognizable, but presumed to be William Shakespeare. Facing it is a poem by Ben Jonson, which commences with cipher-text. See Figure 3.

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Figure 3

whisper: secret talk, e. de vere; re: he Shakespeare

The plain-text is brief, lacking the detail reserved for the monument, situated in the safety of Stratford-upon-Avon, four days' ride from London. Jonson had twice been arrested; once for co-authoring

The Isle of Dogs with Thomas Nashe, and again for writing *Sejanus*. He had also been escorted by Richard Topcliffe, the Queen's head of police, to visit his private torture chamber: possibly it was meant as a warning.

Jonson's key to the number of columns needed for his poem's plain-text is again 17 + 17: but this time spelled in Latin, as also appeared on the Stratford monument. The next key, pointing to the first letters of plain-text, *E de Vere*, marks the first cluster, and is consistent with the earlier grilles that also name de Vere. The word *run* is a further example of an apocope, i.e., *rune* spelled without the final *e*. In fact, the Old English word *rune* was sometimes spelled without an *e* (OED). Jonson also made use of the interchangeability of the letters *u* and *v* in the Latin alphabet. This allowed the spelling of *run* and *Uere* (for *Vere*) to occur without contradiction.

Jonson's three grilles, c. 1623, were long preceded by one that emerged from among the poetic commendations received by Edmund Spenser after writing *The Faerie Queene*. Before its publication there had been an exchange of tributes between Spenser and his admirers. Spenser had praised Oxford highly for his affinity with the Muses, but had received no reply. He did, however, receive excellent praise from "Ignoto" (the Unknown). Ignoto's style is worthy of Shakespeare, but in 1590, he was still unknown. His identity remains a mystery to this day. Fortunately, this may now change.

Once again, perfect consistency is evident in the construction of the cipher-text and its keys. The number of columns is yet again 17 +17. The key to the first letter of plain-text is also 17. This is followed by the key to *rune*, which occurs in the column headed by the final letter of *Edward de Vere*. Hence, there need no longer be doubt that Ignoto was indeed the 17th Earl of Oxford, and that his poem was a response to Spenser. It is also evident that Oxford felt obliged to remain anonymous, thus avoiding public recognition as the poet of the Sonnets, should they become known. Spenser referred to this in his poem to Oxford, with the archaic word *gree* (to give satisfaction for an injury). Oxford's response began with the following cipher-text. See Figure 4.

Spenser's *Faerie Queene* was first published in 1590, but had been completed in the previous year. The date is important, because in the summer of 1588 Oxford's wife had died. That same year, Queen Elizabeth's court artist, Nicholas Hilliard, painted the miniature of a grieving

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0	-	-1	8	L	D	1	. 1	T	н	1	11	2	5			ŧ.	2	5			-1	.8	£	Ť	ж.	A	T.	٧	x	τ.	.0	5	10
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nobleman taking a lady's hand (his wife's?) as it reached down through a cloud from heaven to console him. The inscription reads: *Attici amoris ergo*. In literal English, this translates to "Because of Attic Love."

Professor Martin Fido's biography of Shakespeare makes it very plain. "Pederastic infatuation sums up very well what confronts us in the sonnets. No amount of hot air about Elizabethan friendship can evade the fact that no other Elizabethan wrote a long sequence of sonnets to a boy." Shakespeare's sonnets addressed to the fifteen-yearold 3rd Earl of Southampton (b.1573) would have been Oxford's distress is heard in Sonnet 29, which speaks of his disgrace, in Sonnet 36, when he confesses to the enforced separation from his love, and in Sonnet 72, where he admits to blame and the burial of both his body and name. In Sonnet 81 he confirms that the subject of his verse will enjoy eternity while his fate is to be forgotten. But it is in Sonnet 76 that he reaches out for a last grasp at his elusive immortality. He names himself as the poet of the sonnet—therefore, of all the sonnets. This is confirmed by Tom Nashe with an ELS of +19, and complemented by *rune* with an ELS of -19. See Figure 5.



Figure 5

By tradition, a sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines. This is corroborated by the key with the same number of columns in the cipher-text. The number 17 is again used to identify the first letter of plain-text in the row of that number. Also, the poet reuses this number in its written form with nine letters, to coordinate the ninth column. There also seems to be a note of defiance evident, for he abuts the plain-text between "My Name" and "My Argument." *Rune* appears twice between the abutments, with *N* adjacent to *DL*, and the *N* used twice for the same word spelled in different directions, thus forming a double acrostic of seven letters. By first reading upwards, the import of the plain-text is: (Whisper, secret talk) My Argument: Lo, E de Vere my Name. Then, reading downwards, as though in confirmation: I, T. Nashe, (whisper talk in secret).

The inclusion of Nashe invites acceptance that the sonnet was written (or modified) when he was acting as secretary to Oxford at Wilton House-once described as: "a paradise for poets." The Queen, it was said, had requested "Shake-speare" to write a play showing Falstaff in love. Apparently he was given two weeks to complete the task, in time for its first performance at Windsor as entertainment for Count Mümpelgart's visit to England in 1592. To complete his commission Oxford took Nashe. Why else would Nashe boast, when returning to London, that he had been "with my Lord in the country"? Nashe also described his recent stay at a "Nobleman's house," in which there dwelt "rare qualified men and selected good scholars." To this, his publication of Strange Newes, written after the death of Robert Greene in September 1592, refers to "his verie friend" to whom he wished "new strings to his old tawnie Purse." Oxford's purse was near empty at that time; moreover, tawny was the colour of Oxford's livery, and verie is a pun on his family name. Nashe's connection to Oxford as the unnamed "Lord," and to The Merry Wives of Windsor (completed, according to Shakespearean scholar Edward Dowden, in 1592) combine to make Nashe's association with Oxford that year a certainty.

The opening words of *Strange Newes* are written in cipher-text. Their proximity in time to that constructed by de Vere, both as Ignoto and again in Sonnet 76, must be very close: for Nashe's plain-text confirmed Oxford's authorship of Sonnet 76 by requesting he be tested to prove it. Nashe shows his sensitivity to Oxford's plight by using the word *privilie* as an abutment to *E. Vere*. The two grilles, being identical, allow *rune* the freedom of position. Jonson would make the same request, also in plain-text, when constructing the Stratford monument's cipher. See Figure 6.



Nashe used two keys for the number of columns required for his plain-text. This may have been a precautionary attempt against the plain-text being discovered with a single ELS. The existence of two keys is hinted at in the cipher-text by the double meaning attached to the phrase "certaine letters" — i.e., the letters needed to construct an ELS. It is also noteworthy that Nashe chose the coordinate system first employed by Oxford in Sonnet 76. Here, Nashe uses *de Vere* with coordinates (2, 4) to locate L for his eight-letter acrostic.

Together with the code word *rune*, this identifies Oxford as the person Nashe was addressing in *Strange Newes*. Also, by 1592, the code word *rune* appears to have already become known to several members of Oxford's literary circle.

The successful testing of Oxford through the study of his biography, with innumerable similarities between events in his life and those depicted in the plays and poems he wrote, has already been achieved. Nevertheless, all these labors have yet to receive the widespread acknowledgement they deserve. The reason for this was identified by William and Elizebeth Friedman. "In fact the historical argument can never produce certainty either way: there is always a counterargument, always an appeal to the lack of evidence, a counter interpretation of what evidence there is, much inference, some coincidence. . . . It is with relief that we turn to the more certain ground of cryptology."

Although the Friedmans' examination of Shakespearean Ciphers did not extend to examining the Stratford Monument, or Thomas Thorpe's asyntactic dedication at the front of Shake-speares Sonnets, it did placate the Folger Shakespeare Library, which at the time was troubled by press coverage given to claims that Francis Bacon had been Shakespeare. The Friedmans exposed the "acclaimed" coded references to Bacon as fanciful imagination born from self-deception. In short, the assumed codes were not empirical. They could not be independently repeated. In contrast, equidistant-letter sequences are arithmetical structures that lend themselves to independent confirmation. When they possess corroborative and consistent keys, accompanied by a code word that repeatedly appears, there can no longer be constructive doubt concerning their mathematical authenticity. This becomes even more evident when submitted to a probability evaluation; because numbers, when correctly applied, cannot be gainsaid.

The next known appearance of cipher-text made its appearance in 1609, with the surreptitious publication of *Shake-speares Sonnets*. Its sale was short-lived, causing biographer Ian Wilson to speculate: "Although hard evidence is lacking, some form of suppression has to be suspected."

The edition published by Thomas Thorpe was prefixed by a dedicatory address to "our ever-living poet." Yet, by convention, "ever-living" refers to the memory of a deceased person, whereas Shakspere was then forty-five years old, in good health, and living as a trader in wool in his native Warwickshire. In fact, the words "our ever-living" form a paragram (a pun obtained by exchanging one letter for another; e.g., *s* for *g*). When these thirteen letters are rearranged, as author John Michell pointed out, they spell *Nil Vero Verius*, Oxford's family motto (Nothing is truer than truth). Furthermore, the entire preface printed by Thorpe is a remarkable piece of cipher-text in which the names of both de Vere and Henry Wriothesley have been enciphered as plain-text.

In *The Elizabethan Review* of autumn 1997 and again in the *De Vere Society Newsletter* of February 1998, the late Dr. John Rollett made public the fact that the dedication, written in the form of three inverted triangles of six, two and four lines—the same numbers of letters that spell "Edward de Vere"—make an astonishing announcement. When the words in the dedication are selected in the same 6-2-4 order, they read: "These Sonnets All By Ever The Forth." *Ever* can be read as *E. Ver*, an alternative spelling of *Vere*. See Figure 7.



Figure 7

Upon further investigation he was able to discover the letters *esley* adjacent to the letters *ioth* both with an 18 ELS. The missing letters *wr* were then located to complete the name, *Henry Wr-ioth-esley*, 3rd Earl of Southampton, and the subject of the sonnets. See Figure 8.



Figure 8

Surprisingly, this was not intended to be the primary secret concealed by the cipher-text. The evidence of the two keys, "Shake-speares Sonnets" and "Seventeen" give pride of place to de Vere. It is revealed in two vertical columns, one column having been split into two parts. The keys then reveal the plain-text: To de Vere His Epigram. See Figure 9.



Figure 9

The transposition between si in his was caused by the need to include an i in the unusual spelling of *onlie*, appearing in the ninth cell. The other three transpositions in the word *epigram*, i/p, r/g, and m/a, when retransposed, confirm the anagram.

In the second grille we find the family name of the 3rd Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley. To accompany his name is the grille's code word *rune*, together with a cluster of Latin words discovered by Jonathan Bond: *Pro Pare Votis Emerite*. In literal English, Veteran, thou art visible to Wishes. See Figure 10.



Since de Vere had died before 1609, the "veteran" would seem to be Southampton: a veteran of the war in Ireland, and the subject of the Sonnets, whose secret identity is revealed. However, this could perhaps also apply to de Vere, a veteran of the stage. Although he had since died, he was, nevertheless, "ever-living" in

memory; this could then be applied to his identity as Shake-speare. Unfortunately, the key to the number of columns does not reveal which party was intended.

For the encoder to have enciphered so much information into 144 letters is a masterpiece in cryptography. But, at the same time, its asyntactic cipher-text sent a clear signal that some form of secret had been concealed within the text. As David Kahn remarked: "the method's chief defect, of course, is that awkwardness in phrasing may betray the very secret that that phrasing should guard: the existence of a hidden message."

It is therefore remarkable that Thorpe's dedication, which struggles to remain even remotely grammatical, managed to escape detection for so long. One can only infer that group-think, interpretation bias, and a simpleminded approach to truth by tradition had long ago developed into the joint adoration of an idolum of Shakespeare: a fallacy. Together, these attributes would dominate any suggestion that a cryptogram even existed. What need would a merchant's son have had for secretly writing poetry? None whatsoever!

Fortunately, Leonard Digges (1588-1635) was among the genuine scholars of his day. He too left his mark in print with a cipher-text written to memorialize Shake-speare. See Figure 11.



It first appeared in print in John Benson's 1640 edition of the sonnets. Coincidentally, it had taken seventeen years after the First Folio was published for its author's personal poems to reach the public. When they did, some masculine pronouns in the original text had been changed to feminine ones, thus masking the male gender of the poet's adoration. This should provide sufficient reason to indicate why the poems of an Elizabethan aristocrat were suppressed so soon after their original printing thirty-one years earlier. Digges's grille is noticeable for the manner in which "17" dominates its structure. It also has a similar design to Ignoto's grille.

By the time Digges's poetic tribute to Shake-speare was printed, both he and Jonson were dead. Yet the appearance of his poem and that of another encoder, which appear together in Benson's *Poems Written by Wil. Shake-speare gent* (17+17 characters), must certainly have involved the publisher in the encipherment of de Vere's name, for it is revealed in his *Letter to the Reader* (17 letters).

Also, in the same small volume, Droeshout's caricature of Shakespeare, attired in the expensively embroidered clothes that appeared in the First Folio, is redrawn by William Marshall. He has added a nobleman's cloak draped over the figure's shoulder. "In Elizabethan and Jacobean England, strict dress codes known as sumptuary laws were well known by all the people. The penalties for violating sumptuary laws could be harsh. . . . Only men above the rank of gentleman could wear a cape over their clothing." Then, to add further ridicule to the figure, the verse beneath Marshall's figure regales it with question marks that actually question the very attributes that were intended as praise. See Figure 12.





The verse itself is written in cipher-text that extends over 26 columns, corroborated by a key which consists of both Shake-speare's real name and his title. The first letter of plain-text (E) appears below the number 17 in letters, and the code word *rune* completes the short announcement referring to the caped figure above: vere: whisper, secret talk. *Vere* has an ELS of – 48. If asked: the number is corroborated to Lord Oxford, not by repeating 17, but by the number of letters in his combined name and title—Edward de Vere Earl of Oxford (24 letters)—repeated. Benson's cipher-text, however, has the most to conceal. Much like its predecessors, it details in elliptic plain-text Oxford's close relationship with Wilton House, home of "The Most Noble and Incomparable Paire of Brethren William Earle of Pembroke . . . and Philip, Earle of Montgomery." The brothers' agreement to be joint dedicatees to Shakespeare's collected plays in the First Folio cannot be distanced from Montgomery having married Susan Vere, Shake-speare's daughter; while Pembroke, too, had once been affianced to her sister Bridget Vere. Susan and Bridget Vere are therefore closely related to the Pembroke family; while the written history of the House confers to Shake-speare a public presence at Wilton, joined by many other famous names of literature and the arts.

Ben Jonson too gave voice to this connection in the First Folio, with his cryptically ambiguous reference to Shake-speare as "Sweet Swan of Avon." The Hampshire/Wiltshire River Avon flowed through the grounds of the Wilton estate in the 16th century, as its tributary still does today.

The Benson plain-text, with its key of 17 +17 written in Latin numerals, conforms to the design of previous grilles, including the code word *rune* spelled with an ELS of 19. See Figure 13.



Figure 13

The plain-text states: 'Me, lo: E. Vere: Re: Mary S. [Sidney] owed [was indebted to] his rote; rune (whisper, secret talk).'

The word *rote* is archaic, and derived from ancient French, where it was defined as "companionship, or company (of actors)." The modern meaning of "learning by rote," as practiced by actors, is derived from this word.

On 24 October 1603 King James and his court returned to Wilton House, having just learned from the Countess of Pembroke that "Shakespeare" had arrived. The previous court visit had been as recent as August. Earlier that month, James had reinstated the £1000 annuity to the man he called "Great Oxford," as well appointing him to the Privy Council, and restoring his family's estates at Waltham and Havering. This would also have been when the King first learned Oxford's pseudonym was William Shakespeare, the great English dramatist. Consequently, with Oxford's arrival as a house guest at Wilton coming so soon after this show of royal benevolence, it seems that Oxford encouraged Lady Pembroke to reacquaint the King with his pen name, so as to draw him back to Wilton by informing him that "we have the man Shakespeare with us." The King would have immediately understood Oxford's irrepressible humour, and he and the court returned to Wilton to enjoy the entertainment implied by the letter. The suggestion that Shakspere-a man with no social upper-class leverage-was intended to excite the King by use of his name is recognized to be so absurd by Stratfordians, such as Katherine Duncan-Jones, Sir Sidney Lee and E.K. Chambers, that they reject the suggestion outright. But then, they are left with no explanation as to why James and his court felt compelled to revisit Wilton, from which they had departed only eight weeks earlier!

The King's Men were then summoned from their winter retreat in Mortlake to entertain the court. According to local historian W. Michael, one or two plays were then directed by Shake-speare. "The earl (of Pembroke) was one of the great patrons of Shakspeare (sic) who is said to have assisted in some of his own plays which were performed at Wilton House in the presence of the King." Mary Sidney, the widowed mother of Pembroke and Montgomery, was therefore able to jointly celebrate the forthcoming marriage of her son to Oxford's daughter, Susan; while the King added his delight to her for the memorable entertainment she had organized.

Thereafter, according to the diary of Victorian poet William Cory, who was resident at the House in the summer of 1865 as tutor to the Baroness Lea's young son, he learned from her: "To commemorate it a temple was built at Wilton, and known as 'Shakespeare's House." This of course adds further to the absurdity of Shakspere, rather than "Shakespeare," having been the intended reason for King James's return to Wilton House. Benson's plain-text refers to the Wilton incident by artfully concealing the truth in cipher-text addressed to the man popularly regarded as William Shakespeare.

Benson's 1640 work was not the final example of a poem having employed cipher-text to conceal Shakespeare's identity. In 1658 Sir Aston Cokayne published *Small Poems of Divers Sort*. One poem was dedicated to William Dugdale in admiration of his illustrated book, *Antiquities of Warwickshire*. Dugdale was born in the same county as both Michael Drayton and "Shakespeare," names that Cokayne's poem focuses upon, since his own estate was at Polesworth, some three dozen miles north of Stratford-upon-Avon, and barely five miles from Drayton's birthplace. See Figure 14a.

Now Stratford upon Avon, we would choose Thy gentle and ingenious Shakespeare Muse, (Were he among the living yet) to raise T' our Antiquaries merit some just praise: And sweet-tongu'd Drayton (that hath given renown Unto a poor (before) and obscure town, Harsull) were he not fal'n into his tombe, Would crown this work with an Encomium. Our Warwick-shire the Heart of England is, As you most evidently have proved by this; Having it with more spirit dignifi'd, Then all our English Counties are beside.

Figure 14a

Cokayne would have seen Dugdale's illustration of the Stratford monument with its farcical depiction of "Shakespeare" as a wool merchant. His response was to follow Marshall's example in Benson's edition by composing his own cipher-text along similar lines. See Figure 14b. guarantee that it is quoted exactly," OED]; *Rune* ["whisper, secret talk"], *Lo* ["behold," OED] *Vere!* In summary, there exist eleven different grilles, all of which conceal in plain-text the code word *rune*. Six of them include de Vere's name in some form, each corroborated by the cipher key for seventeen, or the name *Vere*. The grilles by Benson and Marshall include *Vere*, but the actual column is not specified by a key. There is another point to consider. With the possible exception of *Strange Newes*, all other avenues for preserving the cipher-text were entrusted to media that

In both grilles the major keys are virtually the same,

except that Cokayne works from the bottom up. He

therefore positions the final letter of his plain-text,

forms part of a small cluster with sic and lo. By

combining this cluster of plaintext with that of the

which concludes with an ELS of 24, to connect with the

final letter of his cipher-text. The code word rune then

accompanying ELS of 24, the result announces: Sic ["to

had the greatest chance of surviving into the distant future-the Stratford monument, Shakspere's grave, the First Folio, The Faerie Queene, Thorpe's dedication, and Benson's edition of the sonnets and poems. Taken together, this conforms to a consistent structure of scientific proof. It is accomplished firstly by a probability value, based upon the name Vere appearing solely by chance as an ELS in each of the six grilles that are signaled directly, either by the key of 17 or by the name of Vere. For this to occur in all six grilles by coincidence would be expected to occur only once in 2.1 x 10 $^{-36}$ attempts. By comparison, the odds of winning Powerball or Mega Millions are approximately one in 175 million. To win first prize in those lotteries four times is one chance in 9.4 x 10 $^{-32}$. Those are far better odds than Vere occurring by chance on the six grilles in the columns designated. It follows that the chance of de Vere's name appearing as an equidistant letter sequence in each of the allotted six columns solely by chance may be safely disregarded. It would be fantasy.

Secondly, the code word *rune* confounds still further all present teaching attached to the idolla surrounding Shakespeare as Shakspere. The code word appears on all eleven grilles, but is free to locate anywhere with an ELS of any number. Omitting Jonson's First Folio grille with its archaic spelling of *run*, the probability that *rune* has appeared by chance on the remaining ten grilles is 1.261×10^{-10} , equal to about one chance in ten billion—about 57 times more difficult to achieve than the chance of winning Powerball.

Figure 14b





follows that the words *vere* and *rune* are there by the deliberate intention of each author or publisher — Oxford, Jonson, Nashe, Spenser, Digges, Cokayn, Marshall, Thorpe and Benson. Are they all to be thought liars and hoaxers? One would hope not. Why would they be? Instead, they were parties to an operation aimed at conveying the truth about England's greatest poet to a future generation with the freedom to openly question his authorship. It is upon the integrity of those men, as personal witnesses to the truth—and those who value it—that the success of their mission resides.

[David Roper taught mathematics for many years at schools and colleges. He now lives in semi-retirement with his wife in the west of England. His latent interest in Shakespeare and the dubiety of his authorship was rekindled firstly by Charlton Ogburn's book in 1988, later followed by Ogburn's appearance on Yorkshire Television, during which he challenged anyone to solve the riddle of the Stratford Monument.]

Notes and References:

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- For the gravestone see: https://www.stratford-upon-avon.org/ shakespeare.
- For *Strange Newes*, see: http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/ Nashe/Strange_News.pdf.
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- For the *Faerie Queene*, see: http://spenserians.cath.vt.edu/ TextRecord.php?&action=GET&textsid=63.
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- For Thomas Thorpe's dedication, see: https:// www.wikiwand.com/en/Shakespeare%27s_sonnets. Henry Wriothesley's grille is reproduced by kind permission of Professor Hermann Burchard.
- For John Benson's Letter, see: http://www.rarebookroom.org/ Control/shapms/index.html.
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"Authors of Greek tragedies constructed their first eight iambic lines so that they not only made sense but also provide letters to make eight other iambic lines, the first two giving the writer's name."

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John Rollett's discovery of Henry Wriothesley's name and the 6-2-4 word skip was examined by three experts in cryptography from American Academia and Intelligence (The USA National Security Agency) and was recommended for publication. My set of grilles was also peer-reviewed for the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, and subsequently appeared in volume 31, No.4, in the winter of 2017.

The previous Earl of Pembroke commissioned a study of "Shakespeare's House" at Wilton. The study confirmed that it did date back to the time of Mary Sidney (reported by Wilton's Estate Manager to the author).

The probability values were calculated by counting the number of letters that appear in each cipher-text, and treating them as denominators for the number of times that the letters r, u, n, e, and v occur as numerators for *rune* and *vere*. E.g., Thorpe's cipher-text contains 144 letters, of which nine are R; three are U; thirteen are N; and twenty-three are E. For *rune* to occur by chance, this can be expressed as 9/144 x 3/143 x 13/142 x 23/141 = 8073/412,293,024. But we allow *rune* to occur anywhere on the grille with an ELS of two or greater. With an ELS of two, *rune* will occupy ten cells. With an ELS

of three, *rune* will occupy thirteen cells. And so on; each time the number one is added to the ELS, the number of cells required increases by three. Fortunately, this can be treated as an arithmetical progression, for which a formula exists. The total number of places that *rune* can occupy, in an ELS on a grille of 144 cells, is 3,105. That number is then multiplied by 8073/412,293,024, which represents the one chance that *rune* occupies a separate place on the grille. The result is 0.0608. By repeating this exercise for a further nine grilles, and assuming they each occurred by chance, the product is 9 x 10⁻¹¹.

The same method is used for *vere*, but with the exception that *vere* is restricted to appear in the column of its key. It cannot wander across the grille, as with *rune*. We therefore imagine each particular cipher-text to be uploaded into a computer, and the letters shuffled. The computer then prints out the result onto a grille specified by the known key for each grille. The chance that *vere* will appear as an ELS in the column appointed by its key; e.g., in the case of Thorpe's cipher-text, this is 2×10^{-6} . Therefore, the product obtained from these six cipher-texts is 2×10^{-36} : a number within touching distance of winning the US lottery four times. In short, it is implausible that *vere* could have occurred by coincidence on all seven grilles in line with the key for which it was assigned. Moreover, these have all been found concealed in cipher-texts that are part of the few important statements written by those who were acquainted with the living Shake-speare. That is no coincidence!

Acknowledgments:

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The author gratefully acknowledges those, past and present, who contributed to the truth of these ciphers. Dr. John Rollett, R.I.P. for his initial work on Thorpe's dedication. Dr. James Ferris, for discovering "de Vere's name" in Sonnet 76. Art Neuendorffer for the wealth of material involving ELS appearances of *Vere*, and drawing attention to the word *rune* that often accompanied it. Acknowledgment is further extended to the late Professor Albert Burgstahler, and to Professor Peter Sturrock, author of *AKA Shakespeare*. Their many correspondences in the past have been a welcome and added inspiration to the discoveries made in this article.

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GOOD NEWS!

Verus Publishing, an independent publisher, is slowly issuing all of Shakespeare's works under the name of Edward de Vere. This is the first time that Oxford's works will appear under his own name; we are thrilled about this new project—it is long overdue. Each book will include a biography of Oxford, but (at least at present) includes only the poem or play text, with no glosses or annotations. We have been in contact with them and we will link to their site on our SOF website and announce how to purchase their editions. We will provide more details at our Symposium on October 2-3.

- John Hamill

by Janet Wingate

I'm extremely wary of presenting something new in the Dedication to the Sonnets. We already have so much persuasive evidence of hidden meanings in it that suggesting more begins to strain the bounds of credibility (if it hasn't already).

> TO. THE.ONLIE. BEGET TER.OF. THESE. INSVING. SONNETS. M.W. H. ALL.HAPPINESSE, AND.THAT.ETERNITIE. PROMISED. BY. OVR.EVERLIVING.POET. WISHETH. THE. WELL-WISHING. ADVENTVRER.IN. SETTING, FORTH.

T, T.

Robert Prechter found the hidden names of various people widely theorised to have been written about in the Sonnets (e.g., Henry Wriothesley, William Herbert, Philip Herbert, Emilia Bassano, etc.) all spelled out consecutively, while the name Elisabeth was repeated consecutively twenty-three times, progressing from every E in the text, all of which defies the odds of random chance.¹ John Rollett discovered the name Henry Wriothesley in an eighteen-column even-spaced letter grid, and concluded the odds of coincidence were infinitesimal. He noticed the physical layout of the Dedication, with its pattern of inverted triangles of six, two and four lines. Counting every 6th, 2nd and 4th word, he found the phrase "These Sonnets all by E.Ver," followed by the words "the forth," which he could not explain.² Kathryn Sharpe explored that enigma, arguing that the phrase should be extended further (using the same 6-2-4 pattern) to include the second T of Thorpe's initials, thus reading "These sonnets all by E.Ver the forth T." Since the fourth T in the text occurs in the word "Begetter," her solution was: "These Sonnets all by E.Ver the Begetter," meaning that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, is the writer of the works.³

More recently, Alexander Waugh has offered a detailed Masonic/pantheistic explanation that "the forth T" (or fourth T) is actually a code name for Oxford. He also discovered an anagram in the words "Our Ever-Living Poet Wisheth": G VV VERO NIHIL VERIUS

THE POET, suggesting that "These sonnets all by G(od) and the poet deux Vere," with the de Vere family motto present as well. Waugh further finds an upside-down image of a funeral urn in the page layout. His YouTube presentation of this particular aspect of the topic (Alexander Waugh, Shakespeare's Funerary Urn – Discovered!) is essential viewing for those who don't dismiss these things out of hand.⁴

However, Waugh has gone much farther than just explaining the "face value" of the Sonnets' dedication page; this is where my particular interest in the subject began. At the Shakespeare Authorship Trust Conference in 2017 he presented a fascinating lecture called "A Grave Problem 2," where he displayed the words of the Dedication laid out in a nineteen–column letter grid.⁵ He found that it revealed that de Vere's body lies in South Cross aisle (now Poets' Corner) of Westminster Abbey. Further, using geometry based on the Dedication's layout, he pinpointed where the tomb lies —directly under the statue of "Shakespeare"! I encourage readers to watch his presentation on the SAT YouTube channel.⁵

My curiosity was piqued because Waugh presented his findings using only the left side of the nineteen-column letter grid. He tantalised us, knowing that there was more to be found on the right side. I decided to see if I could find what he had found; in the interests of science, if two people independently find the same thing, then it is far less likely to be a coincidence. (I am aware that Waugh's findings on the whole of the grid can be seen in his YouTube videos called "Where is Shakespeare REALLY Buried? 1-4,"⁶ but I did not look at his solutions until after trying to find my own.)

In deciphering the grid, Waugh's premise was that the key lay in symbols of Jesus Christ. One had to look for a cross or other Christian symbol that would lead to the hidden text. Furthermore, everything had to be repeated three times to validate it; once was not enough.

So I tackled the right side of the grid. At the outset I was actually looking for evidence of Waugh's other hot theory, namely that Oxford was involved in a scandal with Penelope Rich, whereby Penelope surrogated a son for Oxford with the Earl of Southampton, a son who officially became the man known as Henry Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford. (You can see his talk upon this subject at the 2015 SOF Conference called "Vulgar Scandal mentioned in Shakespeare's Sonnets."⁷) While looking for symbols of Christ, I was also looking for Penelopes and Riches and so on, to no avail on the latter points.

Instead I found something else.

As a symbol of Christ, at first all I could find was GG in column 13 (see Figure 1). I took this to mean God and also sacred Geometry, based on Waugh's finding on the Dedication page ("These Sonnets all by G(od))"; by the fact that geometry is sacred to the Masonic order, where a capital G is found within the triangle of the compasses; and also that geometry had led to the pinpointing of Vere's tomb.



I saw that GG could be incorporated into a Christian cross as: IN SIGNO G – in the sign of God (Figure 1).

1	2	3	4	5		7	8	9	10	11	12	1.5	14	15	18	17	1.0	19
т	0	т	н	E	0	N	L	1	E	B	E	G	E	Т	Т	E	R	0
F	T	н	E	5	E	1	Ν	5	٧		N	G	5	0	N	N	E	T
5	M	r	W	н	A	L	1.	н	A	P	P	1	N	E	5	5	E	A
N	D	т	H	A	т	E	т	Ε	R	N	1	Т	1	E	P	R	0	M
1	S	E	D	8	¥.	0	V	R	E	٧	Ε	R	L.	1	V	1	N	G
р	0	Ε	T	W	1	5	H	E	T	н	Т	н	E	W	E	L	L	W
1	5	н	1	N	G	A	D	V	E	N	T	V	R	E	R	1	N	S
E	T	T	1	N	G	E	0	R	T	н	T	T		-				-

Figure 1

The next step was to try out a triangle as in the Masonic symbol, which to my surprise revealed three symbols of Christ at the apex: *I*, *I*, *I*, as in Iesus, repeated three times (see Figure 2), which seemed to confirm that a triangle was the right choice.



Figure 2

The word down the center of the triangle was TRUTH, albeit an anagram, which could be placed into a cross with the three I's to make another confirmatory symbol of Christ (Figure 3).

1	2	3	4	.2	6	7	8	. 9	10	11	32	13	34	35	16	17	18	29
т	0	т	H	E	0	N	L	1	E	в	E	G	E	T	т	E	R	0
F.	T	н	Ε	S	£	1	N	S	V	1	N	G	S	0	N	N	Ε	Т
5	м	r	W	н	A	L	L	H	A	p.	P	- 1	N	E	5	S	E	A
N	D	т	н	A	T	Ε	т	E	R	N	1	1	1.	E	P	R	0	M
1	5	E	D	B	Y	0	٧	R	E	V	£	R	L	1	٧	1	N	G
P.	0	E	T	W	1	5	н	E	T	AH.	т	H	E	w	E	L	L	W
I.	5	н	1	N	G	A	D	V	3.	N	T	V	R	E	R	1	N	5
E	T	т	1	N	G	F	0	R	T	H	T	T				N		

Figure 3

This begged the question what truth one was supposed to find. Looking in the remainder of the triangle I could see what amounts to HEN WR THE TRUE RTH ERL. If R = 17 in simple genatria (Tudor alphabet; Waugh's argument uses the column numbers to represent the alphabet as in gematria), then are we being told that Henry Wriothesley is the true 17th Earl? He wasn't, but could he be the 18th? The R is in column 9, which represents the letter I. It also contains a hidden extra letter, the letter J. This was first used in 1524 by the Italian Gian Giorgio Trissino, so wouldn't have been unheard of in the Tudor period. More importantly in those days, numbers written in Roman numerals replaced the final *i* with a *j*, e.g., Henry viij. I think the hint is that we should add one extra numeral to 17, and Henry is the 18th (xviij) Earl. T T T remaining is a further confirmation three times in Christ as T is a Tau cross (Figure 4).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7			10	11	32	\$5	14	15	16	17	18	10
т	0	т	H	E	0	N	L.	1	E	В	E	G	Ε	Т	т	Ε	R	0
F	T	н	E	\$	E	1	N	S	۷	1	N	G	5	0	Ν	N.	ε	Т
S.	М	r.	W	н	A	L	L	H	A	P	P	1	N	E	5	S	Ε	A
N	D	T	н	A	т	Ε	T	ε	R	N	1	T	1	E	p	R	0	M
1	5	E	D	8	Y	0	v	R	E	V	Æ	8	È	1	٧	1	N	G
p	0	E	T	W	1	5	н	E	T	H	Т	н	E	W.	E	L	L.	W
T	S	н	1	N	G	A	D	٧	E	N	т	V	R	Ε	R	1	N	5
E	T	T	1	N	G	F	0	R	T	H	T	T				1	-	

Figure 4

I was excited, and wondered if I'd found what Waugh had found, but I was doubtful; I'd been led to believe from his presentation that his findings were to do with Penelope Rich and a surrogate Earl. After more hunting in despair I contacted Waugh. I told him that I had found something, but felt it wasn't necessarily what he had found, and could he give me a hint where to start looking? In the true spirit of enquiry Waugh replied: "To get you started: Locate the capital I which contains the message 'E[dward] [D]e [V]ere LIES HERE' and turn it into a cross. That is your first symbol—Now consider a pun on 'LIE'—that is all I shall say." This is what I found (Figure 5):

1	1	3	4	5	6	7			10	11	12	13	14	15	16	\$7	18	19	1	2	3	4	5		7	н	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	3.8	19
т	0	T	H	E	0	N	L	1	E	B	E	G	Ε	T	Т	Ε	R	0	T	0	T	н	Ε	0	N	L		(f	8	E	G	Ε	T	T	Ε	R	0
F	T	н	E	S.	Ε	1	N	S	V	1	N	G	S	0	N	N	Ε	T	F	T	н	E	5	E	1	N	5	V	1	N	G	5	0	N	N	Ε	T
S	M	r	W	H	A	L	L	н	A	Ρ	P	1	N	E	S	5	Ε	A	5	M	r	W	н	A	L	1	11	A	P	P	1	N	E	S	S	E	A
N	D	T	H	A	Т	E	T	E	R	N	1	Т	L.	E	P	R	0	M	N	D	Т	H	A	T	E	T	E	R	N		Т	1	Ε	ρ	R	0	M
1	S	Ε	D	в	Y	0	V	R	E	V	E	R	L	1	٧	1	N	G	1	5	E	D	8	Y	0	V	1	E	V	E	R	L	1	۷	1	N	G
p	0	Ε	T	W	1	5	H	E	T	H	T	H	Ε	W	E	L	L	W	P	0	Ε	T	W		5	н	E	т	H	Т	H	Ε	W	E	L	L	W
1	S	н	1	N	G	A	D	V	E	N	т	V	R	E	R	1	N	5	1	5	н	1	N	G	A	D	V	E	N	т	V	R	E	R	1	N	5
E	T	T	1	N	G	F	0	R	T	H	т	T			-		1100		E	T	т	1	N	G	F	0	R	T	н	T	T						

Figure 5

This is what Waugh found also, reading within it, "HEED VERE'S PATERNITIE LIE" (I read "DE VERE, HE LIES, PATERNITIE"—much the same meaning, perhaps less fluent). But I didn't confirm this with Waugh yet, preferring to continue working independently. (I should perhaps say in advance, that after this particular finding, my experiment to discover the same things as Waugh turned out to be something of a failure. When I did finally watch his videos, I found that we had uncovered different things, and that our interpretations of common findings were not the same. However, there was some intriguing overlap.)

The next step was to try to find where the PATERNITIE LIE lay. In his email, Waugh pointed me to the work of John Rollett. I read of his discovery of the name Henry Wriothesley in an eighteen-column grid. The name began to appear now in the nineteencolumn grid, but only WIOTHESLEY. Where were Henry and the missing *R*? Figures 6 and 7 show where they are.



Figure 6

The solution is not perfect. The name HENRI (appearing in columns 9-12) is here an anagram using the letter I instead of Y; it joins the missing R (in column 9) in the form of a T cross. If we add a final E to the name (using the E in column 12 adjacent to the I), the cross shape is lost, but it now forms a more English HENRIE; the resulting zigzag shape is symmetrical, and the name still falls within the greater PATERNITIE cross. Perhaps in view of the amount of information squeezed into a small space, and validated in Christ, it is acceptable.

Figure 7

The next step could be considered further validation, and that is to balance the picture with a matching diagonal, ever mindful of geometry as GG below suggests.

In the second diagonal (starting with the *L* at the top of column 8 and going down toward the right to the *H* in column 13), if we skip over the overlapping *SH* in column 9 (which has already been used in WIOTHESLEY), we find the letters *LARNVETH*, an anagram of NVTH EARL. Using gematria and Roman numerals, we find 13 (*N* is the thirteenth letter in the alphabet) + 5 (Roman numeral V) =18th Earl, Henri Wriothesley. This is further supported by the letters *H* and *W* appearing in the same row in columns 13 and 5, again adding up to 18 (Figure 8).



Figure 8

If we take Henry Wriothesley to be Oxford's son, it begs the question as to who is his mother. Mindful of Christian symbolism, the pattern revealed in Figure 8 reminded me of an upturned Chi Rho cross; I extended it one row and came up with this, using all of column 9 and the bottom two rows of columns 8 and 10 (Figure 9): HE IS VERE TUDOR. Again, we are reusing a letter (the V in VERE is also the U in TUDOR), so perhaps it is admissible. The implication is that Queen Elizabeth is his mother. There is also a triangle with VERE where HENRIE and WIOTHESLEY overlap, if we were still unsure from whom Wriothesley descends.



Figure 9

The word TUDOR also adjoins HEN (columns 10-11) in the triangle of TRUTH on the one side, and VERE joins W (column 15) on the other, connecting them as one person (Figure 10).

1	3	2 . 1	4	5		7			10	11	12	2.0	34	.15	36	17	.1.8	29
T	0	τ	H	E	0	N	1	1.	E	8	E	G	E	T	Т	E	我	0
F	T	н	E	5	E	1	N	S	V	1	N	G	5	0	N	N	E	Т
5	M	r	W	H	A	L	L	H	A	P	P	1	N	E	5	5	E	A
N	D	T	H	A	T	E	т	E	R	N	1	T	J	E	P	R	0	M
1.	5	E	D	8	Y	0	V	R	E	V.	Æ	R	0	1	V	1	N	G
p	0	E	T	W	1	5	H	E	T	H	Т	H	Ε	94.	E	L	L	W
1	S	н	1	N	G	A	D	V	E	N	т	٧	R	E	R.	1	N	5
E	T	T	1	N	G	F	0	R	T	н	T	T				1		

Figure 10

At this point we need to repeat the finding that HENRY is a Tudor at least once more, to validate it. Late one night my eyes fell upon the letters forming MESSAGE TO in the figure of a cross (Figure 11):

1	2		4	.5		7			10	11	12	1.9	14	15	38	17	38	39
т	0	т	H	E	0	N	L	1	E	8	E	G	E	T	T	E	R	0
F	T	н	E	S	E	1	N	5	V	T	N	G	5	0	N	N	E	T
5	M	r	W	н	A	L	L	H	A	p	p	1	N	E	S	5	E	A
N	D	Т	H	A	т	E	Т	E	R	N	1	T	1	E	P	R	0	M
1	S	E	D	в	Y	0	V	R	E	V	E	R	L	1.	٧	1	N	G
P	0	Ε	T	w	1	5	н	E	T	н	т	н	E	W	Ε	L	L	W
1	5	H	1	N	G	A	D	v	E	N	т	V	R	E	R	1	N	S
E	Т	т	1	N	G	F	0	R	T	н	т	T						

Figure 11

Message to whom? MESSAGE TO ER IN..? Keeping the balance of a tau cross, ER presumably means Elizabeth Regina, so IN what? (Figure 12):

1	2	3	4	5	4	.7			10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	28	19
τ	0	T	H	E	0	N	L	1	ε	8	E	6	Ε	T	T	E.	R	0
F.	T	н	E	S	E	1	N	S	٧	1	N	G	5	0	N	N	Æ	T
\$	М	r	w	н	A	L	L	н	A	p	P	1	N	E	5	5	Ŧ.	A
Ν	D	т	н	A	т	Ε	τ	E	R	N	1	т	-1	E	P	R	0	M
1	5	Ε	D	8	Y	0	۷	R	E	٧	ε	A	L	1	٧	1	N	G
p	0	Ε	T	w	1	S	H	E	T	н	т	H	Ε	W	ε	L.	L	W
1	S	H	11	Ν	G	A	D	V	E	N	т	٧	R	Ε	R	1	N	S
E	т	T	t.	N	G	F	0	R	т	н	T	т						

IN REVENGE. The adjacent *I-I-I* (three times Iesus, columns 13-15) seems to confirm the finding. In revenge for what? The word SONNE seems very significant here (Figure 13).

1	2		.4	5		7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Т	0	т	н	Ε	0	N	L	1	E	8	E	G	Ε	T	т	E	R	0
F	τ	н	E	S	Ε	1	N	s	٧	1	N	G	5	0	N	N	E	Т
S	M	r.	W	H	A	L	L	H	A	Ρ	Ρ	1S	N	E	\$	5	E	A
N	D	Τ	н	A	Τ	E	т	Ε	R	N	1	T		E	P	R	0	M
1	S	E	D	8	Y	0	٧	R	E	٧	Ε	R	L		V	1	N	G
P	0	E	T	W	1	\$	н	E	T	н	T	H	E	W	E	L	L	W
1	S	H	1	N	G	A	D	V	Ε	N	т	V	R	E	R	1	N	S
ε	T	T.	L	N	G	F	0	R	T	H	Τ	T						1

Figure 13

Moving on, we find letters forming the words SILENT PRISON in two crosses (Figure 14):

1	2	3	4	3	6	7		9	10	11	32	13	14	15	16	17	10	19
Τ	0	T	H	E	0	N	L	1	E	В	E	G	E	T	Т	E	R	0
F	T	н	E	5	E	1	N	S	٧	1	Ν	G	5	0	N	N	E	T
5	M	r	W	н	A	L	L	н	A	p	P	1	N	E	\$	5	E	A
N	D	т	H	A	т	E	т	Ε	R	N	1	T	1	E	P	R	0	M
1	5	E	D	В	Y	0	V	R	E	V	Ε	R	L	1	V	1	N	G
p	0	E	T	W	1	5	н	E	T	н	Т	H	E	W	E	L	L	W
1	5	н	1	N	G	A	D	٧	E	N	т	V	R	E	R	1	N	5
E	T	T	1	N	G	F	0	R	T	н	т	T		1			0.000	

Figure 14

The words SENT TO are nestled within them (Figure 15). Presumably someone (de Vere?) was SENT TO SILENT PRISON or was forced to be silent. By whom?

1	2		4	.5		7		.9	10	11	32	13	34	15	16	17	18	39
т	0	т	H	E	0	N	L	1	E	в	E	G	E	T	T	E	R	0
F	T	н	E	5	£	1	N	S	۷	1	N	G	5	0	N	N	Ε	T
5	М	r	W	н	A	L.	L	H	A	р	P	A.	N	E	5	5	E	A
N	D	Τ	H	A	T	E	т	E.	R	N	1	T	1	£	P	R	0	M
1	5	E	D	В	Y	0	V	R	E	٧	E	R	1	1	٧	1	N	G
р	0	Ε	T	W	1	5	н	E	T	н	T	H	Ε	W	Ε	L	L	W
1	5	н	1	N	G	A	D	V	E	N	T	٧	R	Ε	R	1	N	5
Ε	т	т	1	N	G	F	0	R	T	H	T	т		-	1		1.1	

Figure 15

Nestled in the other hollow we find I, VERE, (+W = deux V?) and WIVE, ER. If this finding is not a coincidence, we can assume that de Vere was forced to be silent about their shared SONNE, Elizabeth being his "common law wife." The whole formation makes another complex cross (Figure 16).

т



Figure 16

Next I found, in the shape of an H, an anagram of a Latin phrase, NON EST PRO ME, i.e., "He (Henry) is not for me" (Figure 17).

1	2		4	5	6	7			10	33	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
т	0	Т	H	E	0	N	L	1	E	в	E	G	ε	т	T	Ε	R	0
F	T	н	E	S	E	1	N	S	٧	1	N	G	s	0	N	N	Ť.	T
S	M	r	W	н	A	L	L	н	A	P	P	1	N	E	s	5	ε	A
N	D	T	H	A	Т	ε	T	E	R	N	1	Т	1	E	P	R	0	M
1	5	E	D	В	Y	0	V	R	E	٧	E	R	L	1	٧	1	N	G
P	0	E	T	W	1	S	H	E	T	н	T	H	.E	W	Ε	L	L	W
1	5	н	1	N	G	A	D	V	Ε	N	T	V	R	E	R	1	N	S
E	T	т	1	N	G	F	0	R	Т	н	T	Т						-

Figure 17

To reconfirm that Henry is a Tudor we have MATER (Latin for "mother") and ROSE (for Tudor) on top of him. Henry is a Tudor rose, but he is also *sub rosa*, and not for Oxford to acknowledge (Figure 18).



Figure 18

Although my findings have largely differed from Waugh's, one of his discoveries seems particularly relevant to this Latin section of the grid.⁸ In the central upside-down cross (columns 15-19), Waugh found the Latin phrase SINE PROLE M, which means "without male issue" in heraldry. Situated directly over H(enry) NON EST PRO ME, it brings home the fact that Oxford could not acknowledge Henry Wriothesley as his legitimate heir—and neither could the Queen. Waugh also found the upward diagonal E IPSE O (columns 14-19), "E(dward) O(xenford) himself," like a confirmatory signature over the entire issue (Figure 19).



Figure 19

Furthermore, Waugh found in another inverted cross (or as he remarks, a phallic symbol, centered in column 14) VERE'S LINE, which overlaps the TRUTH triangle, as well as SONNE and again draws attention to a paternity issue (Figure 20).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7			10	11	13	13	14	15	16	17	-18	1.9
т	0	Т	H	E	0	N	L	1	E	в	E	G	E	Т	Т	E	R	0
F	T	н	Ε	s	Ε	1	N	s	V	1	N	G	S.	0	N	N.	E	T
5	M	r	W	н	A	L	L	н	A	P	P	1	N	E	S	5	E	A
Ň	D	Т	H	A	Т	ε	T	Ε	R	N	1	T	1	E	P	R	0	м
T.	5	E	D	B	Y	0	٧	R	E	V.	E	R	D	3	٧	1	N	G
P.	0	E	T	W	1	S	н	E	T	AH.	Т	H	Đ	W.	E	L	L	W
1	s	н	1	N	G	A	D	٧	Æ	N	Т	V	R	E	R.	1	N	S
E	T	T	1	N	G	F	0	R	T	H	T	T				1		

Figure 20

If Waugh's theory is correct that Oxford asked Southampton to surrogate a son for him, it makes more sense if Southampton himself was already Oxford's son, because then the bloodline of the Veres and the Tudors would continue in Henry Vere, the official 18th Earl. Waugh's theorised scandal would therefore be all the greater, because it would be playing with the Royal line of succession.

Two final touches: In the upper right corner (Figure 21, columns 13-19, rows 1 and 2) is a cartouche of the family—ER, EO and SONNE—confirmed three times in a symbol of Christ (the three T's within), framed by GG.

1	3		4	5	-6	7			10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
т	0	Τ	н	E	0	N	L	1	Ε	в	Ε	G	E	T	T	E	R	0
F	T	н	E	5	E	T	N	s	V	×.	N	G	5	0	N.	N	£	т
5	м	r	W	н	A	L	L	н	A	p	P	1	N	E	5	5	ε	A
N	D	т	H	A	т	E	т	E	R	N	1	т	1	E	P	R	0	M
1	S	E	D	В	Y	0	V	R	E	V	Æ	R	L	1	٧	1	N	G
₽	0	Ε	T	W	1	5	H	E	Т	H	Т	н	Ε	W	E	L	L	W
1	S	н	1	N	G	A	D	V	E	N	т	V	R	E	R	1	N	S
E	T	т	1	N	G	F	0	R	т	н	т	T						-

Figure 21

In Figure 22, two "signatures" appear in the bottom right corner, where signatures are normally found on documents, both confirmed three times in Christ. Each lies within a double Tau cross, and has two other Christian symbols with it: I, VERE, (I, I) (columns 15-17) and WILL S, (I, G) (columns 17-19)

1	2	- 8	4	5	6	7			10	11	12	13	3.4	15	16	17	18	19
т	0	T	H	E	0	N	L	1	E	В	E	G	Ε	T	т	E	R	0
F	T	H	E	5	E	1	N	5	٧	1	N	G	S	0	N	N	E	T
5	м	r	W	H	A	1.	1	H	A	р	P	1	N	E	\$	\$	E	A
N	D	τ	H	A	т	Ε	т	E	R	N	1	т	1	E	P	R	0	M
1	5	E	D	B	Y	0	٧	R	E	V	E	R	L	1	V	1	N	G
p	0	ε	T	w	1.	S	H	Ε	T	н	T	H	Ε	W	Έ	L.	1	W
1	S	н	1	N	G	A	D	V	E	N	т	V	R	E	R	1	N	S
E	т	т	1	N	G	F	0	R	T	н	T	T						-

Figure 22

I believe the number of Christ-confirmed reiterations of this paternity theme in the grid have certainly reached three, and have gone beyond the bounds of coincidence as far as I'm able to judge. Where better but in the Dedication to the Sonnets to hide the secret information about whom they were written, and why?

I was inspired to write this up after reading Paul Altrocchi's article about the Queen Elizabeth Pregnancy Portrait.9 He suggests the portrait may have been commissioned by de Vere as a vehicle in which to hide, by means of symbolism and metaphor, the fact that he and the Queen had had a son together. The portrait appears to have been substantially modified over the years, to the point where, at the time of Altrocchi's writing, it was no longer considered to be of Queen Elizabeth, but of an unknown pregnant woman. He makes a very good case, analyzes previous interpretations of the portrait, and comes up with the summary that Edward was left grieving after the birth of his son by the Queen, forced into silence, and never allowed to claim openly what was rightfully his. The Sonnets themselves have been considered to be an opus on this very theme, for example by Percy Allen and B.M. Ward back in 1936 and by Hank Whittemore more

recently.^{10, 11} I believe that the more differing media there are all pointing in the same direction, the more there could be some truth to the matter.

I offer my interpretation in a spirit of enquiry. It is not exhaustive, nor perfect, and I welcome constructive criticism and new ideas relating to it.

[Born in Bermuda, Janet Wingate studied English Literature at St Hilda's College, Oxford University, where she met her future husband, Czech emigre Vaclav Pinkava, son of the psychologist and writer Jan Kresadlo (a pen name!). After the fall of the Communist regime, they moved in 1992 with their growing family to the Czech Republic, where Janet has lived ever since, teaching English, doing drama, painting on silk, and delving into the authorship question.]

Endnotes:

- 1. Robert Prechter, Jr., "The Sonnets' Dedication Puzzle," parts 1 and 2, *Shakespeare Matters* (Spring and Summer 2005).
- John Rollett, "Secrets of the Dedication to Shakespeare's Sonnets," *The Oxfordian* II (1999).
- 3. Kathryn Sharpe, Letter to the Editor, *Shakespeare Matters* (Winter 2007).
- 4. Alexander Waugh, "Shakespeare's Funerary Urn Discovered!" https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=hgkitTN86xY
- 5. Shakespeare Authorship Trust Conference (2017) 6 Alexander Waugh, "A Grave Problem 2,"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGiq_u48Rec&t=1515s

- 6. Alexander Waugh, "Where is Shakespeare REALLY Buried? part 1/4" https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=XqV44taFNUc&t=1752s
- 7. SOF Conference (2015), Alexander Waugh, "'Vulgar Scandal' mentioned in Shakespeare's Sonnets," https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6I70pqgQEY&t=1521s
- 8. Alexander Waugh, Where is Shakespeare REALLY Buried? part 2/4 https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=38dk0ctTUNM
- 9. Paul Altrocchi, "The Queen Elizabeth Pregnancy Portrait," *Shakespeare Matters* (Winter 2002).
- Percy Allen & B.M. Ward, An Enquiry into the Relations between Lord Oxford as "Shakespeare," Queen Elizabeth and the Fair Youth of Shakespeare's Sonnets (1936).
- 11. Hank Whittemore, The Monument (2005).

BOOK REVIEWS

Shakespeare in a Divided America: What His Plays Tell Us About Our Past and

Future by James Shapiro (Penguin Press, 320 pages, \$27.00)

Reviewed by Michael Dudley

When it comes to Shakespeare, James Shapiro is rather fond of dates. Having previously explored A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599 and The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606, Shapiro now turns his attention to the role of Shakespeare's works in eight

specific years in American history. Through examining historical events, Shapiro seeks to discover how Americans have been affected by and used (or, in some cases, exploited) Shakespeare's plays as they concern matters of race, class, gender, nationality and conflict.

A professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University, Shapiro here takes a decidedly—if inadequately—political approach to the Bard, and in the process uncovers how the deep inequalities at the heart of American society are both exposed by and reproduced in the culture.

The book's subtitle is rather misleading: a political analysis of the plays themselves is not at all what Shapiro is concerned with here. Rather, his focus is on actors (both political and theatrical) and the extent to which they influenced contemporary debates over the past 220 years through their relationships with Shakespeare.

Accordingly, fears of miscegenation in 1833 reference *Othello*; westward expansion and gender intersect in 1845 through a cross-dressed Romeo; rival performances of *Macbeth* in New York City trigger deadly populist riots in 1849; and in 1865, Shakespeare's writings are seen to have motivated both US president Abraham Lincoln and his assassin, actor John Wilkes Booth.

In the 20th century, anxieties over immigration in 1916 are mapped onto the monstrous character of Caliban from *The Tempest*; postwar sexism in 1948 gets the Cole Porter musical treatment via *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me Kate*; and the crowd-pleasing 1998 film *Shakespeare in Love* reveals America's attitudes towards



adultery and homosexuality. Finally, a notorious 2017 New York City outdoor production portrayed—and assassinated—a very Trump-like Julius Caesar, to rightwing outrage on social media.

These incidents and themes are genuinely fascinating, and Shapiro's own political and social views lend the proceedings a strong liberal perspective. As well, the bibliographic essay at the end reveals the depth and extent of his impressive scholarship. Yet, *Shakespeare in a Divided America* feels oddly unbalanced and overcautious, its promise remarkably unfulfilled.

Matters of gender and sexuality take up no fewer than three chapters; while important, they come at the neglect of other relevant sources of division, such as involvement in foreign wars—a topic Shakespeare addresses powerfully in *Henry V*.

That a book purporting to describe a divided America could have failed to include a chapter on the upheavals of the 1960s is a frankly baffling omission, made all the more so when one considers he could have used that opportunity to discuss playwright Barbara Garson's famous and controversial 1967 mash-up satire *Macbird!* in which President Lyndon Johnson was depicted as a Macbeth-like figure usurping the throne by assassinating President John F. Kennedy.

Similarly, how could Shapiro have overlooked the place of Shakespeare in the post-9/11 era, when this theme has been the subject of numerous articles and at least one book, 2011's *Shakespeare After 9/11: How a Social Trauma Reshapes Interpretation*?

Perhaps Shapiro's most important omission is his lack of engagement with the politics of Shakespeare himself, which are resolutely conservative, faithful to the established order and contemptuous of populism potentially instructive counterpoints to the wrecking ball of Trumpism. To do so, however, might have entailed getting uncomfortably close to the question of whether "Shakespeare" was, in fact, the pseudonymous nobleman Edward de Vere, a theory Shapiro attempted to discredit with his 2010 book *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (reviewed in the *Free Press* in May 2010).

Absent these events and contexts — and despite his nominal liberalism — Shapiro's ultimately conservative approach leaves readers with an incomplete understanding of both Shakespeare and a divided America.

[Michael Dudley is a librarian at the University of Winnipeg. This review originally appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on May 31, 2020, and is republished here by permission.]

Who Wrote That? Authorship Controversies from Moses to Sholokhov by Donald Ostrowski (Cornell University Press, 2020)

Reviewed by Michael St. Clair

The goal of this book is to introduce the readers to arguments and methods in various fields of historical study that have been used to deal with issues of authorship attribution. It discusses nine prominent historical authorship controversies in order to lay the foundation for a field of authorship studies.



Donald Ostrowski is research advisor in the social sciences and lecturer at the Harvard Extension School, where he teaches world history. He also chairs the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies' Early Slavists Seminars at Harvard University. As he explains, the manuscript he originally submitted for consideration was a comparison of the William Shakespeare and Andrei Kurbskii authorship controversies. He "half expected it to be turned down because university presses in general have tended to steer clear of any whiff of the Shakespeare controversy" (ix). But the acquisition editor wondered about the potential market, so he proposed increasing the number controversies, while abridging the Shakespeare and Kurbskii sections.

Ostrowski says he became interested in the 1970s in the "authorship question pertaining to Tsar Ivan IV (1533-1584) and his erstwhile servitor Prince Andrei Kurbskii (d 1583). The two of them supposedly had a correspondence with each other, but their authorships of those letters were challenged in 1971.... The mainstream of scholarship in Russian studies has generally rejected that challenge and continues to hold the traditional attribution to be correct" (2). However, in the 1990s Ostrowski found himself more and more interested in the attribution of the Shakespeare plays (the author of which, whoever he was, was Kurbskii and Ivan's contemporary). The challenge to Shakspere of Stratford also was rejected by mainstream scholarship in English studies. Ostrowski refers to "the efforts of those in the mainstream scholarship to deny there was any controversy" (2). He finds that there "were similarities in the types of arguments used by the defenders of the traditional attributions to Ivan IV, Andrei Kurbskii, and William Shakespeare on the one hand, and the arguments used by those who challenged the traditional attributions to those individuals on the other

hand" (2). He is against "silo scholarship," i.e., the failure of scholars to cite to similar work being done on topics of authorship attribution in other historical periods or in other areas of the world.

Ostrowski stresses the need for an open mind in these discussions as well as the need to avoid "confirmation bias," that is, a refusal to look at arguments and evidence that go against our initial understanding, a form of "premature cognitive closure."

It will warm the hearts of Oxfordians to find Ostrowski quoting Michael H. Hart's book, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History* (2d ed.), in which Hart admits that "he followed the crowd" and did not "carefully check the facts" in his first edition, and there attributed the Shakespeare canon to "the Stratford man." When Hart did carefully check the facts, he found that "the weight of the evidence is heavily against the Stratford man. and in favor of da Vara. the 17th Earl of

Stratford man, and in favor of de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford." Hart's change of mind opened Ostrowski's own eyes to the need to stop following the crowd and look at the evidence when assessing authorial controversies.

What are the principles of attributing a text to a particular author? For modern texts, there is documentation in the form of draft copies, references by the author and others to the text as it is written, records of contracts with publishers, etc. With medieval and early modern texts, it is rare to have such information, much less manuscripts in the author's own hand.

The question of authorship always matters. If we think of students in class, they must hand in work that they wrote, not someone else's. In literature the community gains a greater appreciation of a text by knowing who the author is.

In his Introduction, Ostrowski surmises that "many readers of this book will not have heard of Rashid al-Din (chapter 5) or Andrei Kurbskii (chapter 7). I dare say most of the chapters in this book are likely not of compelling interest to Oxfordians, such as Did Moses Write the Pentateuch? (chapter 1), Who wrote the Analects? (chapter 2), Who Wrote the Secret Gospel of Mark? (chapter 3), Did Abelard and Heloise Write the Letters Attributed to Them? (chapter 4), Who Wrote the Compendium of Chronicles (Jami al-Tawarik) and the Collection of Letters Attributed to Rashid al-Din? (chapter 5)"

In chapter 6 Ostrowski grapples with the authorship question, which he limits to William of Stratford versus Edward de Vere. He gives a two-page excellent overview of the Oxfordian position and then deals fairly and with an open mind, citing evidence and arguments from both sides.

Ostrowski criticizes the established scholars in the field of English literature for clinging to an issue of faith that has been reinforced by an extensive superstructure of conjecture. The most delicious quote in the whole book (126) is from the fervent Stratfordian James Shapiro, Professor of English Literature at Columbia University, who told an interviewer what he says in the classroom to any student who asks about the Shakespeare authorship controversy: "That's rubbish and I'll fail you if you ask that question again" (interview with Brooke Gladstone, On the Media, WNYC, April 22, 2016).

No new material appears in his chapter, but Ostrowski provides a competent summary of the principal arguments back and forth. One of the main arguments against de Vere's authorship is that the traditional chronology of the plays includes a number of which seem to have been written after de Vere died in 1603. But the traditional chronology was created to fit the life of Stratford, and so would exclude anyone with a different life span. He also summarizes such controversies as the meaning of the phrase "Sweet Swan of Avon" in Ben Jonson's poem in the Preface to the First Folio.

Ostrowski points out the circularity of Shapiro's argument that it's insulting and class discrimination to question William of Stratford's authorship of the plays. What is curious, of course, is that although William of Stratford had a commoner background none of the plays or poem is about commoners, whereas all the plays and poetry are about well-born people or about the court and courtiers and are written from an aristocratic point of view. The plays demonstrate awareness of the inner workings of courtly intrigue and politics that William of Stratford could not possibly have had. De Vere served at the court and knew Queen Elizabeth personally. Elizabeth's sectary of state and later treasurer, Lord Burghley, was de Vere's guardian for nine years and later his father-in-law.

As to William of Stratford's imagination, Stratfordians argue the plays show imagination and, since he wrote the plays, he must have had a great imagination. Not one contemporary, however, ever provided evidence that William had such a great imagination. Indeed, many Stratfordian speculations about the author have no grounding in evidence-such as how William of Stratford had access to books, or where he gained the extraordinary knowledge evident in the plays of medicine, law, falconry, politics, etc. There is, of course, no evidence that William of Stratford owned, borrowed, or had access to any books. Stratfordians suggest instead that much of William's particularized knowledge could have been acquired from talking in taverns with sailors or feverishly browsing in London bookstalls. On the other hand, we have direct evidence that Edward de Vere was a university-educated person of high birth. He knew Latin, French and Italian

and traveled to the places in Italy where eleven of the plays are set. A Geneva Bible that belonged to de Vere has underlinings and glosses of 1,028 verses, of which about twenty-five percent are reflected in the plays and poems.

Ostrowski effectively argues that if we cannot use the life of an author as a means to understand his or her work, then we are eliminating one of the most important scholarly tools at our disposal. No connection has been found between the plays and poems and the life of William of Stratford, whereas the life of deVere opens up many fruitful lines of historical inquiry.

Ostrowski finds that the Stratfordians have succeeded in belittling the anti-Stratfordians (here, Oxfordians). He wonders that only a few establishment scholars in the field of English literature are anti-Stratfordians, and that most anti-Stratfordians are "amateur scholars" or specialists in other fields. He concedes that William of Stratford is one of the pillars of the general public's belief system. To poke at that pillar is to threaten their world view and risk angry and emotional responses.

Ostrowski concludes the chapter by stating that it is highly unlikely that William of Stratford wrote the plays and poems and "highly likely that Edward de Vere wrote or was involved in writing them" (236).

Ostrowski's outstanding characteristic as an author is his ability to fairly and carefully summarize arguments; as noted, his two-page summary of the Oxfordian case is excellent. (For a longer summary of the case, I like Hank Whittemore's 100 Reasons Shake-speare was the Earl of Oxford.) Readers interested in the field of authorship controversies will find this book of interest, though several of the chapters, while competently summarizing the issues, deal with highly specialized areas, such as Biblical scholarship and Patristics (Moses authorship and Secret Gospel of Mark), and Sinology.

[Michael St. Clair is a professor emeritus of Psychology at Emmanuel College in Boston. He is the author of several books.]

Archives Matter

by Bill Boyle

As I worked earlier this year on linking a number of Shakespeare Fellowship columns, reviews, letters, and news notes published in *The Shakespeare Pictorial* from 1929 to 1939 (now catalogued in SOAR [Shakespeare Online Authorship Resources]) to PDF copies of these materials now available through the Internet Archive, I came upon an interesting column that revealed something new about a famous anti-Stratfordian quote from Walt Whitman. It demonstrated the effect of the early discoveries about Oxford that followed the publication of Looney's "*Shakespeare" Identified* in 1920, and further demonstrated the simple fact that any new fact that comes along must be "interpreted" as to how it fits in the overall puzzle we are trying to solve.

In January 1929 the newly formed Shakespeare Fellowship had begun contributing a regular column to *The Shakespeare Pictorial* under the auspices of Colonel Bernard R. Ward (father of Capt. B.M. Ward). According to the note at the head of the very first column, "In the interest of Shakespearean research this column is placed at the disposal of the Shakespeare Fellowship who are alone responsible for the opinions expressed below." The *Pictorial* was a mainstream venue (published in Stratfordupon-Avon no less!), but was open to publishing new research on the authorship controversy.

The column that caught my attention was in the September 1929 issue, "What Lurks behind the Shakespeare historical plays." It must have been written by Col. Bernard R. Ward. In it he reports on a section of a new book about Walt Whitman which includes his famous anti-Stratford skepticism about the "wolfish earls," but expands on it to cite Whitman's stated agreement with a friend, William O'Connor, that there must have been some ulterior design behind the creation of the Shakespeare works. The column notes that the newly emerging picture of Shakespeare as the paid head of an Elizabethan Propaganda Office demonstrates that O'Connor's and Whitman's instincts about some sort of "ulterior design" in creating the history plays were indeed correct. It was the discovery by Ward's son, Captain Bernard M. Ward, of the 1000-pound annual grant to Oxford in 1586 that opened the door to this point of view, i.e., that the grant must have been connected to government involvement in and sponsorship of the historical works. This has become an important part of the overall Oxfordian theory, though it is not something that Oxfordians agree upon.

In 1928 B.M. Ward published the first book-length biography of Edward de Vere, *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, 1550-1604, from contemporary documents. In it

Ward explored Oxford's life without discussing the Shakespeare authorship theory (apparently at the insistence of his publisher, John Murray), though he did cite his discovery of the 1000-pound annual grant. He concluded that the award of the grant was just Elizabeth's way of helping Oxford provide court entertainment for her, dismissing any idea that it was related to the secret service.

Just a year later, his father, Col. B.R. Ward, was touting the discovery as "proof" that Oxford was the head of a propaganda department in Elizabeth's government, and both Wards published articles in 1928-29 on this point of view. Several of them are reprinted and discussed in Ruth Loyd Miller's *Oxfordian Vistas* (Vol. 2 of her 1975 edition of *Shakespeare Identified*, Chapter XXII, "Lord Oxford's Office"). See, e.g.: Col. B.R. Ward, "Shakespeare and Elizabethan War Propaganda," (*Royal Engineer's Journal*, Dec. 1928); Capt. Bernard M. Ward, "Shakespeare and the Anglo-Spanish War, 1585-1604" (*Revue Anglo-Americaine*, Dec. 1929); and Capt. Bernard M. Ward, "John Lyly and the Office of the Revels" (*Review of English Studies*, Jan. 1929).

The then newly discovered fact of the 1000-pound grant does shed new light on Whitman's instincts about Shakespeare and a possible grand design to his work. In a broader sense, the entire matter of new discoveries about Oxford and his life, and how such new discoveries are first published, interpreted and reinterpreted, is also an important part of our history. As we enter the second century since Looney's landmark book, the reasons for the 1000-pound grant continue to be debated. Nothing's easy in the Shakespeare authorship debate.

(From the Shakespeare Fellowship page in the *Shakespeare Pictorial*, Sept. 1929, p. 16.):

WHAT LURKS BEHIND SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORICAL PLAYS. Col. B. R. Ward

The foregoing heading is taken from Part 4, *November Boughs*, of a book entitled *Complete poems and prose of Walt Whitman*, 1855-1888: *authenticated and personal book* (handled by W. W.) *portraits from life ... autograph*. Only 600 copies of this book have been printed. Dr. Cecil Reddie, one of our members, possesses a copy numbered 281. It contains Whitman's signature in ink. It seems that by a flash of intuition Walt Whitman anticipated our discovery of a national purpose behind the Elizabethan historical plays.

Dr. Reddie has kindly copied out the following paragraphs [written by Whitman] which immediately follow the intriguing query quoted above. We all know how much *mythus* there is in the Shakspere question as it stands to-day. Beneath a few foundations of proved facts are certainly engulf'd far more dim and elusive ones, of deepest importance....

Coming at once to the point, the English historical plays . . . form . . . the chief in a complexity of puzzles.

Conceived out of the fullest heat and pulse of European feudalism-personifying in unparallel'd ways the mediaeval aristocracy, its towering spirit of ruthless and gigantic caste, with its own peculiar air and arrogance (no mere imitation)only one of the "wolfish earls" so plenteous in the plays themselves, or some born descendant and knower, might seem to be the true author of those amazing works—works in some respects greater than anything else in recorded literature. It is impossible to grasp the whole cluster of these plays . . . without thinking of them as, in a free sense, the result of an essentially controlling plan.What was that plan? Or rather, what was veil'd behind it?-for to me there was certainly something so veil'd.

All the foregoing to premise a brief statement of how and where I get my new light on Shakspere. Speaking of the special English plays, my friend William O'Connor says: — They seem simply and rudely historical in their motive, as aiming to give in the rough a tableau of warring dynasties—and carry to me a lurking sense of being in aid of some ulterior design, probably well enough understood in that age, which perhaps time and criticism will reveal.

Walt Whitman has been thoroughly justified in accepting William O'Connor's impression as to the historical plays. They certainly were written as William O'Connor put it "in aid of some ulterior design." Our recent researches have shown that the Elizabethan historical plays were produced under the auspices of a Government Propaganda Department presided over by one of Walt Whitman's "wolfish earls." Not only was the Earl of Oxford head of a Secret Service Department of State, but as Captain Ward showed in an article published in July last year in The Review of English Studies ["The Famous Victories of Henry V: Its Place in Elizabethan Dramatic Literature"] - he was also almost certainly the author of The Famous Victories of Henry V, and therefore the originator if not the actual author of the three plays that grew out of it -I and *II Henry IV* and *Henry V*. Thus we see that Walt Whitman's intuition as to the true author being a "wolfish earl" and William O'Connor's impression as to an ulterior design lurking behind Shakspere's historical plays have both been amply justified by our recent researches and discoveries.

From the Archives: Studying the Authorship Question

During Difficult Times

James Warren found the following item, and sent it along to us with his introduction:

Here's a piece by Eva Turner Clark, from the October-November 1940 issue of the Shakespeare Fellowship (American Branch) *News-Letter* that seems particularly apt for us today. It concerns some aspects of how study of the Oxfordian answer to the Shakespeare Authorship Mystery can be of value to Shakespeare Fellowship members during difficult times.

"If We Have Leisure!"

"We do not need to be reminded that the days we live in are full of problems and anxiety, both foreign and domestic. That is a self-evident fact! What we must consider in such times of stress is how to keep our minds steady. We must not allow ourselves to become 'jittery.' We all need a certain amount of idle amusement—that is good for the human animal—but there are times when the lighter things do not satisfy. The question arises, can we use our leisure to better advantage?

"Members of the Shakespeare Fellowship have found an answer to that query. They have found it in

the study of the plays and poems of Shakespeare in the light of new discoveries which show them to have been written by Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, scholar and courtier, a knowledge of whose life makes the writings more comprehensible. Reading of the plays, with the background now given to them, will be found stimulating to an unusual degree and will help us to retain our sanity in a world given over to insanity.

"Shortly after the outbreak of the present European War, an English newspaper printed some lines that should make an indelible impression on all our minds. We quote: 'Literature is the brooding human spirit of today, of yesterday and of tomorrow. It can bind hearts that are broken by evil. The task of politics has its day and ends: the task of art is eternal.'

"In pursuing our investigations as to the authorship of the Shakespeare plays, we are following an art that is eternal, for the superb plays are as nearly eternal as anything in the literary field of this transitory world can be. Research into the mystery of authorship often brings results which thrill the student as few things can.

"Members of the Fellowship who have been active in research are happy to find an increasing interest in the problem of authorship. While we are no longer uncertain as to the identity of the author, there are innumerable details yet to be cleared up which should occupy the minds of hundreds of students, even thousands, and give them great satisfaction in the doing."



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