



# THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD NEWSLETTER

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## SOF to Sponsor Looney Centennial Event

On March 4, 2020, the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship will sponsor a symposium, open to the public (no cost to attend), at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, marking the centennial of J. Thomas Looney's landmark book, *"Shakespeare" Identified in Edward de Vere the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*.

A group of leading scholars will reintroduce "JTL" and his thesis to the world, 100 years to the day after *"Shakespeare" Identified* was first published. They will discuss the importance of this book, which continues to be corroborated by newly discovered and analyzed evidence.

Why have some of the greatest minds of our time, from Sigmund Freud to US Supreme Court justices across the ideological spectrum, been persuaded by the evidence that Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, was the author behind the pseudonym "William Shakespeare"? Why have so many embraced this Oxfordian hypothesis, including respected scholars and historians like David McCullough; professors of theatre, English, humanities, law, and other fields; judges, attorneys, scientists; some of our finest Shakespearean actors; and thousands of thoughtful people across the globe? The answers begin with JTL's revolutionary book, published on March 4, 1920. *This is the most underreported literary news story of the past century.*

The centennial symposium will take place at the National Press Club (NPC), 529 14th St. NW, near the White House. It will run from 1:00 to 4:00 PM (doors open at 12:30) in the NPC's Fourth Estate Room.

We welcome journalists, researchers, teachers, students, and everyone — people of all persuasions or none on the authorship question. Free refreshments will be provided. The



J. Thomas Looney

presentations will be videotaped for later viewing on the SOF website and YouTube channel. No tickets are required for this free event and there's no deadline to register (walk-ins welcome), but, if possible, please informally RSVP to SOF centennial committee chair Bryan H. Wildenthal ([bryanw@gmail.com](mailto:bryanw@gmail.com)), to help us monitor the expected level of attendance.

Following is a summary of the symposium speakers and their scheduled presentations. The moderator will be award-winning journalist Bob Meyers, past president of the National Press Foundation, reporter at the *Washington Post* (including on its Pulitzer Prize-winning Watergate investigation), editor at the *San Diego Union*, and director of the Harvard Journalism Fellowship for Advanced Studies in Public Health. Meyers is the author of two books; one was adapted for an acclaimed TV film and the other won the American Medical Writers Association

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## From the President:

Wow! What a year! As we start the new year (and a new decade), I can say that, while we have made some progress, we still have a long way to go. We obtained some press attention last year, but unfortunately, it did not spread to other outlets as much as we hoped it would.

This year we have to be more proactive and convince the press that we have a compelling story that is worthy of reporting. We are planning some activities that hopefully will give us some coverage. On March 4, 2020, we are sponsoring an event at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the publication of J. Thomas Looney's *"Shakespeare Identified"* (see page 1). This landmark book revealed the true author behind the name "Shakespeare"—Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Since that time mountains of additional research have corroborated Looney's thesis, but a century later it has not yet been accepted by most of academia and the public. We have contacted media outlets about the Washington event; hopefully, some of them will come and report on the activities we present. While we have the **Facts** about the Shakespeare authorship question, we face the reality of confronting **Tradition** and **Faith**—two forces that continuously repeat to the public that Will Shaksper of Stratford-upon-Avon was the real Shakespeare. People take comfort in their traditions, and are often unwilling to disturb them. This is what we have to overcome, and that is not easy.

I also want to remind you that we have two new members on our Board of Trustees, Ben August and Richard Foulke, who have joined our efforts to promote the fact that Oxford is the real author of Shakespeare's works. They are energized and active in their participation and ideas in this issue—as all our members should be. All of us have a duty to spread this information; most people are not even aware that the Shakespeare Authorship Question (SAQ) even exists. Please let us know if you have any suggestions as to how we can promote the SAQ and get the public's attention.

We have other initiatives aimed at reaching the public to promote Oxford as the real Shakespeare. Two of them were begun last year: a successful Podcast series, "Don't Quill The Messenger," and the hiring of a Public Relations Director, Steven Sabel, who is doing his best to get the media to acknowledge us (see page 27). We will continue with the "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" video contest, expanding it to more countries, and we continue to fund the Research Grant Program. We continue to publish our scholarly annual journal *The Oxfordian*, and this quarterly *Newsletter*, and we are also publishing a Brief Chronicles book series. Our annual meeting will be in Ashland, Oregon, October 1-4, 2020. We will also have a special Pre-Conference seminar in Ashland immediately before the conference, on September 29 and 30. Please see pages 8-9 for full details. These initiatives and projects are all aimed at reaching the public to promote the SAQ and get out the word that Oxford was the real

Shakespeare. All of them require funding and warrant our continuing request for funding.

On a different subject, the Board of Trustees has decided to employ a consistent convention in our official documents and publications for the name of the true author. The first time he is mentioned in an article or other communication, he will be identified as "Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford." Thereafter we will use "Oxford," "Edward de Vere" or "de Vere" (with a lower case *d* unless it's at the beginning of a sentence). Readers who are new to the authorship question sometimes assume that a reference to someone by name in one place, then by title in another place, is to two different persons; they may think that references to "Edward de Vere" and "Oxford" are not to the same individual. The same is true of other frequently mentioned members of the nobility such as Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, and William Cecil, Lord Burghley. While this might seem to be a minor point, we want to minimize possible confusion.

Please be generous if you want us to continue to expand our mission! Donate!

John Hamill, President

## Letter:

As reported in the Fall 2019 issue of the *Newsletter*, at our 2019 Conference Bill Boyle discussed the word "misprision," a word used in Sonnet 87. He argued that "the key to understanding the presence of the word 'misprision' in Sonnet 87 is to see that it may well be an open, overt, legally covert reference to what must have been the legal mechanism by which Southampton was spared," i.e., that Southampton's conviction of treason for his role in the Essex Rebellion (and his death sentence) was, in effect, subsequently commuted to the lesser offense of misprision of treason, thus sparing him from execution.

This can be explained by a different understanding of the "Essex Rebellion": Being shocked, unnerved and outraged when the Earl of Essex barged into the Queen's chambers upon his return from Ireland, and his talk in making threats toward the Crown, the Queen and her chief secretary, Robert Cecil, concluded that he was an intolerable threat and that they needed to move quickly. The "Essex Rebellion" was in actuality a staged phony rebellion, a sting engineered by Robert Cecil, and the performance of the Shakespeare play *Richard II* was part of the staging. Essex and the others they were after did not actually organize a rebellion, but were charged with having done so and everyone was speedily dispatched. This could have been easily done by following them in the streets and forming a crowd around them. Cecil and the Queen were not really interested in Southampton and he had people who pleaded to save him; therefore, the charge of treason was commuted to misprision of treason.

Margaret Becker  
New Bloomfield, PA

## The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

Published quarterly by the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, P.O. Box 66083, Auburndale, MA 02466-0083. <https://ShakespeareOxfordFellowship.org>.

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 an annual scholarly journal, *The Oxfordian*.

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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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."

Advertising Rates: \$100 for full page, \$60 for half-page, \$35 for quarter-page.

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## 2020 Research Grants Announced

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship has announced the award of two research grants for 2020:

1. **James Warren** has been awarded \$4,000 for research on the early decades of the Oxfordian movement and into the life of John Thomas Looney. The research will be conducted at the British Library, the University of London, Brunel University and other locations in England. This is a continuation of the research that Warren began in 2018, and for which he received a research grant in 2019.

Warren said, "I am grateful to the SOF for supporting my work. I now plan to make two trips to London in 2020. The first trip, for only one week, in March, is needed to find scores of Oxfordian materials that I hadn't previously known about, but recently learned about from reading through correspondence of Oxfordians between 1920 and 1945 and from references to them from the papers I got from Alan Bodell (J. Thomas Looney's grandson) that are most critically important to find and

study as part of the research for the book, *J. Thomas Looney's "Shakespeare" Identified: The 100th Anniversary of the Book that is Revolutionizing Shakespeare Studies*, that I am in the middle of writing. The main research trip to London and elsewhere in England, though, will be in June and July, and will include continuing to search for a wider range of Oxfordian materials important for getting a better understanding of the early decades of the Oxfordian movement and of the life of Looney."

2. **Emma "Eddi" Jolly** has been awarded \$2,000 for research in Public Record offices and libraries in England concerning evidence on or about Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, in particular trying to locate the so-called "Flemingii" manuscript connected with Oxford. This is the third grant awarded to Jolly: she received one in 2016 to look for evidence of Oxford in France, and in 2017 she received a grant similar to the present one to look in English libraries and public record offices for evidence of de Vere.

The SOF Research Grant Committee is chaired by SOF President John Hamill.

## What's the News?

### Reports from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Convention in Baltimore, November 22-24, 2019

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship was present at the recent convention of the NCTE in Baltimore, Maryland. It was attended by some 8,000 English teachers, from all over the United States. The SOF had an exhibit booth, staffed by four members: Dr. Roger Stritmatter of nearby Coppin State University; Professor Shelly Maycock of Virginia Tech (who first proposed that the SOF be represented at the event); filmmaker and college teacher Cheryl Eagan-Donovan; and Wally Hurst, who recently retired from his position as an instructor and theater director at Louisburg College.

#### Wally Hurst reports:

This conference was our initial attempt at a gathering of this size and scope. We hit the ground running, and reached many hundreds of friendly English teachers, most of whom taught Shakespeare in their classrooms back home. The Declaration of Reasonable Doubt was a great eye-catcher, along with *Nothing Is Truer Than Truth* playing and the great display materials. It seemed as though we stayed busy for three straight days, talking to folks and enjoying our conversations with them.

After the initial greetings, these curious attendees often expressed specific interest in the authorship question. We gave them a packet of materials to get started if they wanted to include the authorship question in their curriculum along with the plays they were teaching. Many expressed particular interest in getting their students engaged with the study of Shakespeare by including this topic, thereby making the subject more exciting. Others had heard about the authorship controversy, and were interested in learning more, but had no idea how to incorporate it into their teaching.

What an astounding response it was! We had more than 100 signups for our mailing list to receive the materials by e-mail as a Google document. Moreover, well over 100 teachers stayed and talked to us for a significant amount of time about the issue, the evidence, and the basics of teaching the controversy to students. They were pleasant conversations, upbeat, friendly, and well-received by those who took the time to get to know us. We expect a significant uptick in visits to our website, and because we gave away all 300 copies of Lynne Kositsky's wonderful book for young readers, *A Question of Will*, before the first day was over, we expect orders for that book to increase in the next few months.

We all agreed that this conference was the ideal place to meet these teachers, most of them middle school and high school teachers, the vast majority NOT wedded to the traditional theory/myth/cult of Shakespeare authorship. Over 95% of those we spoke to were more than willing to question the traditional attribution, much more so than their colleagues from the college ranks. They are hearing questions from their students, too, which is certainly encouraging.

Thanks to the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship for sponsoring us and our attendance at the conference. We'll need another great crew for the Denver event next year; we'll need to get space to show *Nothing Is Truer Than Truth* to more people, and perhaps get a presentation or two, more books (!), and a banner under our SOF banner that reads "Subversive Shakespeare!"

We all believe unequivocally that this conference is our best chance to begin the wholesale recognition and teaching of the Shakespeare Authorship Controversy, and we strongly encourage any other organizations to explore this avenue, and others like it, around the world.

#### Cheryl Eagan-Donovan reports:

I joined Professors Roger Stritmatter, Shelly Maycock, and Wally Hurst to represent the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship at the convention of English teachers from around the country in Baltimore last week. Preview copies of Roger's new book for educators, *The Shakespeare Authorship Sourcebook*, were available, as well as several other teaching resources including my documentary film, *Nothing Is Truer than Truth*, and the *Shakespeare for Bullies* curriculum.

We spoke with hundreds of elementary, middle school, and high school teachers about Shakespeare in the classroom and the authorship question. A surprising number of teachers were already aware of Edward de Vere as the leading candidate for the authorship, and most were very receptive to the study of the topic as a way to engage students that was consistent with this year's theme for the convention: "Spirited Inquiry."

The opening night speaker was George Takei, best known for his role as Mr. Sulu in the groundbreaking TV series *Star Trek* (a role he repeated in the *Star Trek* movies); he is also a leading activist for LGBTQ+ rights. He spoke about the importance of being a responsible citizen, his new graphic novel about his experiences as a five-year-old in an internment camp for Japanese Americans, and his first acting role in *Macbeth*. It was a thrill to meet him in person and talk with him about *Shakespeare for Bullies*. He told me, "I'm a Shakespeare fanatic!"

The conference is also a great opportunity for SOF members who teach to learn about trends and approaches to teaching Shakespeare in the classroom at the panel





Professor Roger Stritmatter greets educators at the NCTE Conference



presentations (several of which were focused on teaching Shakespeare) and also to meet authors who might be interested in the authorship question. Two of my colleagues from Lesley University were at the conference signing and promoting their books; both of them supported my film and have big followings—as does George Takei, who is known for his activism but also loves Shakespeare! It's a great way to connect with authors and other organizations we might want to work with.

Photos by Shelly Maycock

## ***Elizabethan Review* Now Available on SOF Website**

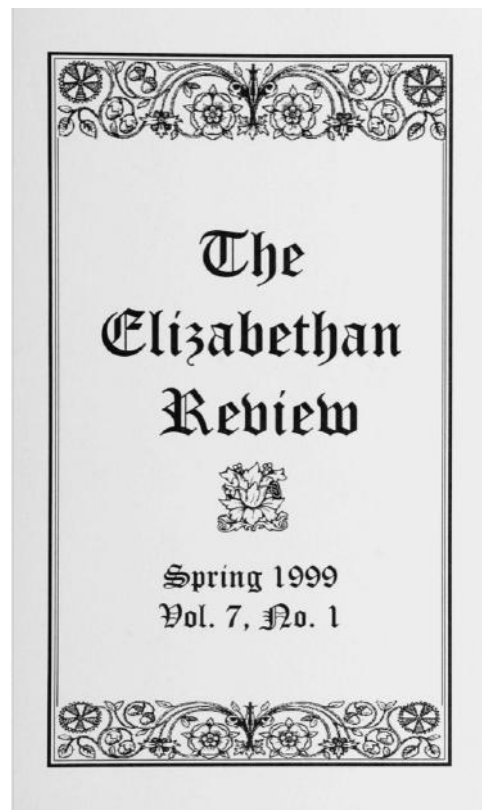
All issues of *The Elizabethan Review*, published by Gary Goldstein from 1993 to 1999, are now available for free download [on the SOF website](#). Goldstein founded the semiannual journal in the spring of 1993 because there were no peer-reviewed publications publishing Oxfordian research on the Shakespeare authorship issue. Thirteen issues of the journal were published from 1993 to 1999.

The editorial well consists not only of research papers, but essays, short notes, and book reviews on topics covering the full spectrum of the English Renaissance. Contributors included Warren Hope, Diana Price, John Rollett, Roger Parisious, Richard Desper, Peter Dickson, Noemi Magri, Peter Moore, and Ron Hess, among many others.

The World Shakespeare Bibliography, the Modern Language Association International Bibliography and the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature all agreed to index the contents of *The Elizabethan Review*. Some fifty colleges and universities subscribed to it, including Harvard, Stanford, the University of Chicago, and other leading institutions.

When *The Oxfordian* began publication in 1998, submissions to the *Review* declined so that it became difficult to sustain its publication and Goldstein stopped publishing the journal in 1999. In 2018, Goldstein became editor of *The Oxfordian*.

*The Elizabethan Review's* new home on the website of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship means its research will be freely available to everyone interested in the period and especially the Oxfordian case. Having these articles available is a great research tool for authorship scholars. Thanks to Gary Goldstein for allowing us to post these articles and to Lucinda Foulke for posting them!



### Advertisement

### **Available from Laugwitz Verlag**

#### **New!**

A. Bronson Feldman, **Early Shakespeare**, edited by Warren Hope (2019)

Feldman, a scholar with wide-ranging interests, uses biographical, historical and psychological approaches to analyze Shakespeare's first ten plays. The result is a book that sheds light not only on the plays themselves, but also on their author, the court of Elizabeth, the conflicts of the time, and the culture of the period. Though completed just prior to Feldman's death in 1982, this book is a major contribution to the scholarship associated with J. Thomas Looney's discovery that Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, was the true author behind the pen name William Shakespeare.

Sten F. Vedi / Gerold Wagner, **Hamlet's Elsinore Revisited** (2019)

New discoveries about Shakespeare's knowledge of Denmark, arising from a thorough analysis of historical documents, confirm the Oxfordian Theory.

#### **Also Available** (the following books all edited by Gary Goldstein)

Gary Goldstein, **Reflections on the True Shakespeare** (2016)

Noemi Magri, **Such Fruits Out of Italy: The Italian Renaissance in Shakespeare's Plays and Poems** (2014)

Robin Fox, **Shakespeare's Education: Schools, Lawsuits, Theater and the Tudor Miracle** (2012)

Peter R. Moore, **The Lame Storyteller, Poor and Despised** (2008)

All available from [www.laugwitz.com](http://www.laugwitz.com), and from the German branch of amazon, at [www.amazon.de](http://www.amazon.de).

For new and used copies of some of the older books, see [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

## Czech Scientist Says He Has Determined Who Wrote What in *Henry VIII*

According to an article in MIT's online journal, *Technology Review*, a Czech computer scientist has figured out exactly which parts of the play *Henry VIII* were penned by Shakespeare and which were written by the person believed to have been his collaborator on that work, John Fletcher. The idea that Shakespeare and Fletcher collaborated on that play was first proposed in 1850 by James Spedding.

Petr Plecháč of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague claimed to have solved the problem by using machine-learning algorithms. "Our results highly support the canonical division of the play between William Shakespeare and John Fletcher proposed by James Spedding," says Plecháč.

As reported in *Technology Review*, "The technique uses a body of the author's work to train the algorithm and a different, smaller body of work to test it on. However, because an author's literary style can change throughout his or her lifetime, it is important to ensure that all works have the same style. Once the algorithm has learned the style in terms of the most commonly used words and rhythmic patterns, it is able to recognize it in texts it has never seen."

Plecháč used the texts of *Coriolanus*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* as his samples of Shakespeare's style, believing that all of them were "late" works. For Fletcher's work, he used the texts of *Valentinian*, *Monsieur Thomas*, *The Woman's Prize* and *Bonduca*.

Plecháč concluded that each author wrote about half the play, but that his "algorithm allows a more fine-grained approach that reveals how the authorship sometimes changes not just for new scenes, but also towards the end of previous ones."

Here is a link to the article: <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/614742/machine-learning-has-revealed-exactly-how-much-of-a-shakespeare-play-was-written-by-someone/>.

## Authorship Seminar to Be Held at the University of New Mexico

Daniel Steven Crafts has announced that he'll be teaching a class on the Shakespeare Authorship Question at the University of New Mexico, 1634 University Blvd. NE, Albuquerque (505-277-6179). The two-part program will be held on Monday, March 9, 2020, from 10 AM to noon. It is described as follows:

That the man from Stratford wrote the poems and plays we attribute to "Shakespeare" is simply a hypothesis, and one that stands on shaky legs indeed. A careful examination of the facts indicates that this is a very complicated subject and by no means one that can be lightly dismissed. More and more genuine research is appearing and the list of signers of the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt (<https://doubtaboutwill.org/declaration>) grows continually.

This class (in two parts) will examine the facts as we know them:

- Did the man from Stratford write the plays and poems?
- If not, who did?

The class is open to the public; the registration fee is \$20 ([cregistration@unm.edu](mailto:cregistration@unm.edu)).

A composer, Daniel Steven Crafts wrote for legendary opera star Jerry Hadley until Hadley's tragic death in 2007. Their first collaboration, a setting of poetry by Carl Sandburg, *The Song & the Slogan*, premiered in 2000, was made into a TV program for the PBS network, and won an Emmy in 2003 for Best Music. To date Crafts has completed twenty-one operas, fourteen symphonies, six concertos, and fifteen large orchestral works, as well as a variety of shorter pieces. He is the creator of new sub-genre of classical opera known as Gonzo Opera. His interest in the Shakespeare authorship question began several decades ago and he now teaches classes at the University of New Mexico Extension program and the Corrales Center for the Arts. Website: [www.dscrafts.net](http://www.dscrafts.net).

## New SOF Web Page Celebrates Oxfordian Centennial

If you haven't already done so, be sure to check out the new page on the SOF website that is dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of J. Thomas Looney's book, "*Shakespeare Identified*": <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/shakespeare-identified-100/>. It's great to see so much information in one place about Looney, his book, and the events scheduled for 2020 to commemorate it.



## 2020 Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship Annual Conference

### October 1-4, 2020, at the Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites, Ashland, Oregon;

### Special Pre-Conference Seminar on September 29-30

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship (SOF) will return to Ashland, Oregon, home of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF), for this year's annual conference, October 1-4, 2020. This is the fourth time since 2005 that a Shakespeare authorship conference has been held in Ashland. The OSF has won two Tony awards, and has presented many memorable productions during our conferences, ranging from *Richard III* (2005), starring Oxfordian James Newcomb, to *Pericles* (2015), directed by Joseph Haj, artistic director of the Guthrie Theatre.

The 2020 SOF Conference is dedicated to celebrating the centennial of the publication of "*Shakespeare Identified*" by J. Thomas Looney, the book that launched the Oxfordian theory a century ago. The Call for Papers has been posted online (and is on page 9); proposals from past Oxfordians of the Year, including Alexander Waugh, Roger Stritmatter, Tom Regnier, Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, Ramon Jiménez, and Hank Whitemore, have already been received. Registration is now available online and by mail. The spacious Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites will serve as the conference center. The hotel features a free breakfast buffet, free Wi-Fi, and free parking. Discounted group room rates of \$139 to \$159 per night are available for SOF conference participants. Reservations are best made by calling the hotel directly at 541-482-8310 or 855-482-8310; to get the special rate, callers should identify themselves as attending the SOF conference. Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites reservations may also be booked online; the SOF group ID number is 240854.

The Conference will convene on Thursday morning, October 1, with paper presentations on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, followed by a matinee of this delightful comedy at the OSF's Angus Bowmer Theatre. That evening the SOF will host its annual opening reception. Presentations on Friday will explore the legacy of "*Shakespeare Identified*." Among the presenters is James Warren, editor of the Centenary Edition of "*Shakespeare Revealed* and *An Index to Oxfordian Publications*."

Saturday's sessions will include paper presentations on *The Tempest*, which conference attendees will see in production that evening at the OSF's Allen Elizabethan Theatre. Plenary sessions will conclude on Sunday at noon, followed by the annual SOF awards banquet.

Early registration for the Conference is already available. SOF members are encouraged to register now at reduced rate of \$250, and to order their theatre tickets early to guarantee availability. The full Conference registration fee includes all lectures, lunch buffets for all four days of the program, and the hosted opening

reception on Thursday evening. The early registration fee for non-members is \$275. After September 1, registration fees for both categories will increase by \$25. Individual day registrations are also available at \$75 per day. Registrations can be made online (<https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/2020-sof-conference/>) or by using the mail-in form enclosed with this issue.

The SOF has reserved 100 OSF theatre tickets at a special discounted price for two productions: the matinee performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on Thursday, October 1, and the evening performance of *The Tempest* on Saturday, October 3. These tickets may be purchased for \$60 each, and are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Conference registrants are restricted to purchasing no more than two tickets for each show. The SOF group ticket order will close 30 days before the conference convenes.

Also playing in the Allen Elizabethan Theatre will be *Bernhardt/Hamlet*, a play set in 1897 and described as a "profoundly funny comedy about Sarah Bernhardt, a woman who unabashedly shattered society's expectations and glass ceilings on her way to becoming a legend." Another derivative drama in production at the Thomas Theatre is *Everything that Never Happened*, a fantasy based on *The Merchant of Venice* that follows the lives of Jessica and Lorenzo. For further information of the 2020 Oregon Shakespeare Festival program see: <https://www.osfashland.org/>

The Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites is located just fifteen miles from Rogue Valley International-Medford Airport, and only two miles from downtown Ashland and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival theatres. Cascade Shuttle provides regular transportation between the airport and hotels. Taxicab, Uber and Lyft services are also available in the Rogue Valley.

Transportation between the Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites and downtown Ashland may be scheduled with the hotel concierge for a fee of \$5 per round trip. For conference attendees needing transport between the hotel and theatres for the *Dream* and *Tempest* productions at OSF, the SOF will provide roundtrip bus service for a modest fee of \$10 total.

### Pre-Conference Seminar

For the very first time, in 2020 the SOF will offer a two-day pre-conference Shakespeare authorship seminar on Tuesday and Wednesday, September 29 and 30. The focus of the seminar will be Shakespeare's history plays. The full seminar registration fee is \$125, and includes theatre



tickets to both parts of *Bring Down the House*, a two-part adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry VI* trilogy performed by an all-female cast, directed by Rosa Joshi, and adapted by Joshi and Kate Wisniewski of the Upstart Crow Collective.

The seminar will convene midday on September 29, followed by a matinee performance of *Bring Down the House, Part 1* at the Thomas Theatre. An evening reception for seminar attendees and faculty will follow the play. On September 30, the seminar group will meet at Hannon Library on the campus of Southern Oregon University in Ashland for a full-day educational program, including lunch, followed by an evening production of *Bring Down the House, Part 2*. The seminar faculty includes Ramon Jiménez, Tom Regnier, Steven and Annie Sabel, and Susan Stitham. Seminar attendance with theatre tickets will be limited to the first 40

registrations. Seminar participation without theatre tickets is \$75.

Please plan to join us for what promises to be an outstanding educational and theatrical program, and celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of J. Thomas Looney's brilliant vision in "*Shakespeare*" Identified. Contact program chair Earl Showerman, at [earlees@charter.net](mailto:earlees@charter.net) if you have any questions about the SOF 2020 Ashland conference, the pre-conference seminar on Shakespeare's history plays, or securing reservations at the Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites.

You can register for the Pre-Conference Seminar online (<https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/2020-sof-conference/>) or by using the mail-in form inserted with this issue of the *Newsletter*.



## Call for Papers

The Program Committee of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship invites proposals for papers to be presented at our annual conference at the Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites, in Ashland, Oregon, from October 1 to 4, 2020. The "first call" deadline for proposals is June 1, 2020. "Final call" submissions are due August 1.

Proposals for papers should be 100-300 words in length, and may be sent to Earl Showerman at [earlees@charter.net](mailto:earlees@charter.net). Proposals addressing topics listed below will be given preference:

- The impact of J. Thomas Looney's "*Shakespeare*" Identified on the past century of Shakespeare authorship studies.
- Oxfordian commentaries on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*.
- Legitimization of the SAQ in academia, in secondary education, and with the media.
- Deficiencies in the traditional attribution of authorship with a focus on the abundance of erudition and rare sources manifest in the Shakespeare canon. Examples include Shakespeare's familiarity with Italy; his proficiency in Latin, Greek, Italian, French, and Spanish languages; his knowledge of music, law, history, medicine, military and nautical terms, etc.

- Revelations from Oxford's life that support his authorship of the Shakespeare canon, including new documentary discoveries, new interpretation of documents or literary works that affect authorship, Shakespeare characters that relate to Oxford's biography (e.g., William Cecil/Polonius in *Hamlet*), new facts on Oxford's travel, education, books, and connections, or new evidence for dating of a play or poem.
- Historical information relevant to the SAQ and/or people of the era with literary, theatrical, political or social relevance to the Shakespeare canon, Oxford, or Shakspeare of Stratford (e.g., Jonson, Southampton, Essex).

Presentations customarily should be designed to be delivered in thirty to forty-five minutes, including time for questions and answers. Proposals submitted by members of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, De Vere Society, or other Shakespeare-related educational institutions will be given special consideration.

The Program Committee supports innovative ways of presentation, including panels, discussion groups, and dramatic performances. In 2018, the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship Conference included a debate on the identity of the "Dark Lady" of Shakespeare's Sonnets. Proposals for another debate in 2020 must include the subject to be debated and suggestions of parties who would be qualified to participate.



# SHAKESPEARE

## OXFORD FELLOWSHIP

### 2020 Conference Registration (Ashland, Oregon)

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## Rereading Shakespeare's *King John* and *The Troublesome Reign*

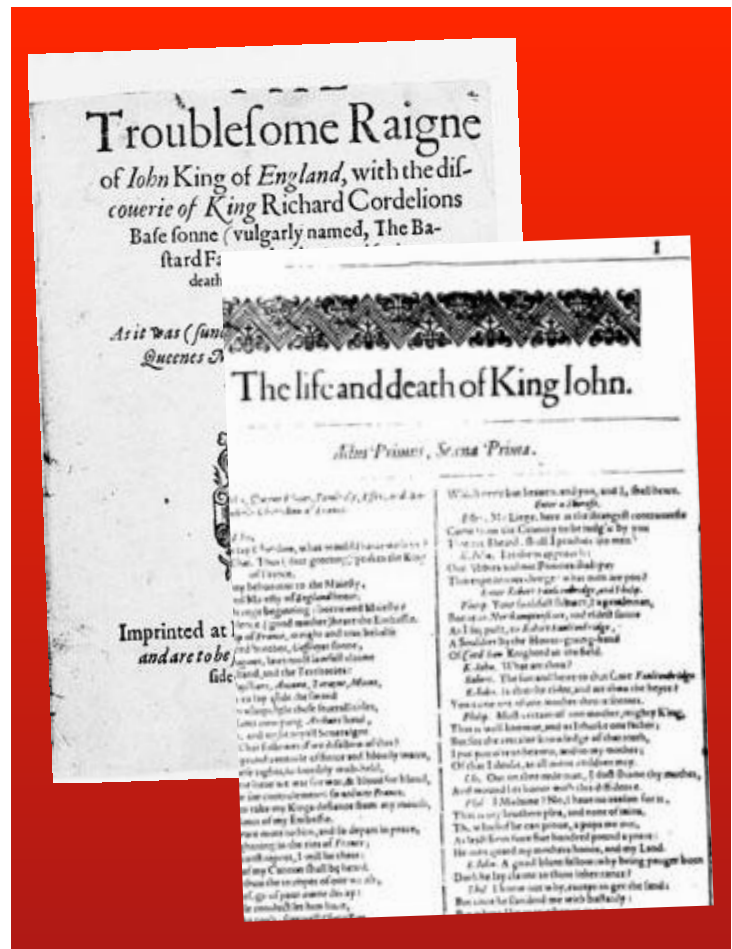
by Michael Hyde

Oxfordians should focus more on the issues of authorship and chronology raised by Eric Sams and Ramon Jiménez in their respective arguments that both the First Folio *Life and Death of King John* (1623) and the anonymous *Troublesome Reign of King John* (1591) were in fact written by the same author, either William Shake-Speare or Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. Sams offers the heretical idea, contrary to Stratfordian orthodoxy, that the supposed “Lost Years” of Shakespeare actually place young Will in London with the Queen’s Men as early as 1584, acting in and writing early versions of the Shakespeare history plays. Jiménez advances the even more radical claim that both versions of *King John*—early and late—were written by Edward de Vere, and are derived from texts that de Vere had written as early as the mid-1560s.

The 1591 title page of *Troublesome Reign (TR)* states that it was performed first by the Queen’s Men. Oxfordians note that the two Dutton brothers joined the Queen’s Men by 1583 after leaving Oxford’s Men; and that Oxford’s mentor and protector Sussex (then Lord Chamberlain) was the first noble placed in charge of the newly formed company. So we have the intriguing but opposed arguments of Sams and Jiménez that the same author wrote the 1591 anonymous text, and its 1611/1622 editions with their title page attributions to “W. Sh.” and “W. Shakespeare,” respectively, as well as the First Folio text of the *King John (KJ)* historical drama. But they totally disagree as to whether this author was the Stratford actor or Edward de Vere.

The title page of *TR* from 1591 states that it had been performed “sundry times” in London by the Queen’s Men, whose years of performance have been firmly established by McMillin & MacLean (Appendix A): from 1583 to as late as 1603—although the records do not state which plays were performed, whether in London, at Court, or on provincial tours. One or both of the Duttons are recorded six times as receivers of payments through 1593. Can we combine the strong external evidence of common authorship with internal evidence, readings from the texts that support either Sams or Jiménez? If so, the oft-repeated Stratford case against early versions of Shakespeare’s plays (i.e., as early as 1583 or even the 1560s), becomes more untenable, as does the attribution of authorship to the Stratford actor born in 1564.

The Queen’s Men performed at least four plays which in turn became key sources of no fewer than six Shakespeare plays—*King John*, *Henry IV Parts One and Two*, *Henry V*, *Richard III*, and *King Lear*. Again, these were being acted and performed in the mid-1580s



between Will’s nineteenth and twenty-fourth (lost?) years of age. As McMillin cautiously admits, “The relationship between Shakespeare’s plays and those of the Queen’s Men is important enough to warrant open-mindedness” (161).

I challenged myself to read both texts of *TR* and *KJ*, looking for critical passages to prove or disprove these arguments. My answers, however, partially derive from this close reading, whether supportive of orthodoxy or Sams or Oxfordians. What I found were key passages in the First Folio text of *King John* that are not in *TR*, in paraphrase or verbatim, whose singular distinction is powerfully suggestive of the life and letters of Edward de Vere. Five of these passages relate to charges of bastardy made against de Vere by his older half-sister Katherine and her husband Lord Windsor, reminding us that de Vere was both slandered and sued for his earldom and his lands first in 1563 (Nelson 40-41) and again in 1585 (14-19). Nelson’s Chapter Three on the “Doubtful Marriage” of Earl John, the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, piles up contemporary evidence portraying him as a philanderer, a bigamist, and a thug whose second marriage to Margery Golding was “irregular.” Hence, Edward de Vere and younger sister Mary could have been adjudged illegitimate and Edward would have lost the earldom

with its lands and titles. Five more passages relate to de Vere's short poem, "Were I a King," which poses the "doubtful choice" offered by the poet of "A kingdom, or a cottage, or a grave." Two other *KJ* texts echo and make use of the de Vere family motto said to have been coined by Edward de Vere himself, "Vero Nihil Verius." Still others clearly have links to the hybrid allegorical history play *Kynge Johan* by John Bale (circa 1537, revised 1558-1561), who acknowledged the 15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford as his patron in the preface to the manuscript of his works (Anderson 13-14).

Textual revisions appearing in *KJ* recall the de Vere family office as Lord Great Chamberlain, and their ceremonial duties at coronations. In Act Five of *KJ*, King John nearly gives up, but then regains, his crown from Cardinal Pandolph in a scene that attaches greater symbolic importance to the crown and the divine right of kings than in *TR*. Finally, the familiar "mote-beam-eye" passage from the Geneva Bible (Matthew 7.3-4) is the crux of Arthur's successful appeal to Hubert's conscience in the mock-execution scene which opens Act Four of *KJ*. The same passage is both echoed and creatively altered at least twice in writings that survive from de Vere's life: in a letter to Burghley in 1572, and in his "Knight of the Sun-Tree" oration to Elizabeth in 1581 (Anderson 171).

### Bastardy

Philip, bastard son of Richard I with Lady Faulconbridge, explains to King John in Act One of *KJ* that his younger brother Robert only makes claims of illegitimacy against him "except to get the land./But once he slandered me with bastardy"(1.1.73-74). Oxfordians will recall Lord Windsor's suit against the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl, young Edward in 1563, after Earl John's death in 1562. Edward de Vere himself sired a bastard son with Anne Vavasour in 1581, and was thereafter sued a second time for illegitimacy in a land/title case in 1585 over the "doubtful marriage" of Earl John to his mother Margery (Nelson, above). Curiously, Philip says that Robert's suit "a' pops me out . . . five hundred pound a year" (the figure is given as 2000 marks in *TR*), while Oxfordians will note the thousand-pound annuity granted by the Queen to de Vere in 1586.

In *KJ* Robert further explains that Philip's illegitimacy is proven by the date of Lord Faulconbridge's return to England, when afterwards Philip "came into the world/full fourteen weeks before the course of time" (1.1.112-113). In *TR* the time disparity of the term of pregnancy is shortened to just six weeks. Nelson marvels (145) that de Vere's doubts about Anne Cecil's date and term of pregnancy rested on an assumption that her full term was twelve months, not nine, thereby creating a larger gap of weeks, perhaps as many as "full fourteen." According to Burghley's notes, de Vere "confessed to my Lord Haward that he laye not

with his wiff but at Hampton Court and that than the child cold not be his because the child was born in July, which was not the space of twelve monthes."

In the *KJ* text, after losing his lands but being knighted by King John, Philip stoutly asserts: "And I am I, howe'er I was begot" (1.1.175). While in context Philip is proudly claiming both his legacy from Coeur de Lion and his new knighthood, Oxfordians will at once recall de Vere's passionate letter to Burghley of 30 October 1584 (Nelson 294) where he asserts: "for I mean not to be yowre ward, nor yowre child, I serve her Majesty and I am that I am." Hank Whittemore's blog rightly lists de Vere's "I am that I am" assertion as his "Reason Nine" for supporting de Vere as the Shakespeare author, although his use of sonnet 121, line 9 ("No, I AM THAT I AM and they that level...") somewhat jumps the gun in proving that de Vere was the Shakespeare author! De Vere's statement of "I am" selfhood, echoing the revelation of Jahweh himself to Moses, was bold and resonant in multiple ways; in my view it was related to his fears of losing the earldom of Oxford and its lands.

Losing his father at age twelve in 1562, accused of illegitimacy by his half-sister and her husband in 1563 (thus threatening his title), becoming a ward of Court under Burghley until 1571 (in effect Burghley's child for nine years), prevented by law from suing for his livery and patrimony until the latter date, heavily indebted to the Crown by the mid-1570s, accused again in a land/title case of being an illegitimate bastard as late as 1585—de Vere continually faced threats to both his title and the earldom for three decades up to 1585. His outburst in the letter to Burghley resonates in Philip's defense of his own begetting by Richard I. His identity was his title, his name itself was his legacy, and his nobility was all.

Philip's ending soliloquy in Act One of *KJ* boasts: "Well, now I can make any Joan a Lady." Oxfordians will recall not just Earl John's bigamous marriage to Joan Jockey (Nelson 15), which put in peril his legal marriage to Margery Golding, but the fact that William Cecil and his daughter Anne only became nobility thanks to Elizabeth's making the father Lord Burghley so as to accomplish the marriage of Anne to ward Edward in 1571. The Cecils were upstarts compared to the Veres and Anne only became a Lady thanks to de Vere's title (Anderson 47-51).

Indeed, Philip's earlier lament over losing his title and lands to his brother echoes de Vere's juvenile poem on the loss of his good name and reputation, not to mention the near total loss of lands and estates de Vere had suffered by 1590-1591: "I have disclaimed Sir Robert and my land; Legitimation, name, and all is gone" (1.1.247-248). "E.O."s poem "The Loss of my Good Name" (Stritmatter ed.) wonders what "mysterious disgrace" causes the poet to bewail that "The only loss of my good name is of these griefs the ground." Philip's lament that his bastardy means that "Legitimation, name,



and all is gone” recalls E.O. (Edward Oxenford) and his juvenile poem. My argument is that the threat of illegitimacy and bastardy were “of these griefs the ground” as Oxford faced losing his good name, his earldom and titles and “all.” My reading of these passages on Philip’s bastardy convinces me that the *KJ* reviser of *Troublesome Reign* inserted passionate language about illegitimacy drawn from the life and letters of Edward de Vere.

### “Were I a King”

Multiple passages of *KJ* recall and echo de Vere’s short poem “Were I a King,” first printed in *Paradise of Dainty Devices* in 1576, worth quoting here in full from the recent Stritmatter edition, where it appears as “E.O. 16”:

Were I a king I could command content;  
Were I obscure, unknown should be my cares;  
And were I dead, no thoughts should me torment,  
Nor words, nor wrongs, nor loves, nor hopes, nor fears.  
A doubtful choice of three things one to crave,  
A kingdom, or a cottage, or a grave.

*King John* is ever mindful of the discontents of kings and would-be kings, especially in its tracing of the downward trajectory of young Prince Arthur’s claim to the English throne, whatever his rights under the laws of primogeniture. Initially, Arthur objects to his mother Constance’s belligerent interference on his behalf, saying “I would not care, I then would be content” not to be king (2.1.43-44)! Previously in Act One he denies regal ambition, “I would that I were low laid in my grave” (1.1.164), rather than become king. Arthur has a preternatural sense of his destined little grave, and therein wishes to avoid the cares and fears of being or becoming king in *KJ*, quite unlike the Arthur of *TR*, who goes along with the plans to take the English throne put forth by his mother Constance and the French alliance which she summons to battle against the English.

King John’s oblique line of blank verse instruction—rhetorically a stichomythia—tells Hubert to carry out the murder of Arthur and morbidly continues this language of death and the grave: “Death. My Lord? A grave. He shall not live. Enough!” (3.3.66). Arthur’s destined end is later summarized, ironically as he seems to have foretold, as he attains in death “His little kingdom of a forced grave” (4.2.98). Compare *Richard II*, where Richard plays upon the same kingdom for a grave conceit underlying de Vere’s poem: “And my large kingdom for a little grave/A little little grave, an obscure grave” (3.3.153-154).

Ultimately, King John himself is viewed as a corpse onstage by his own son Henry, as is Arthur’s body by the nobles. Henry’s valedictory words again echo de Vere’s poem, “When this was now a King, and now is

clay” (5.5.69). In fact, the kings and would-be kings of *KJ* really only seem to have two choices, a kingdom or a grave.

### Nothing Truer Than Vere

Oxfordians who believe that the de Vere family motto of “Vero Nihil Verius” is interwoven in the texts of Shakespeare’s plays and poems find strong support in several key passages of *KJ*, although once again not in *TR*:

But truth is truth, large lengths of seas and shores  
Between my father and my mother lay. (1.1.105-106)

While Robert’s rhetorical figure is a polyptoton, using the same root word as different parts of speech, the “truth is truth” proverb is the figure of plocé, repeating the same word in the same line as occurs later in *KJ* with a “true/true” repetition in lines 3.1.27-28. Oxfordians will recall the many punning repetitions in Latin (*Vere*, *Veritas* et al.) throughout the varied dedications to de Vere as patron by Anthony Munday, John Lyly and others. Here the heavy rhetorical emphasis by Robert with the *t/l/s* alliterations in one line of blank verse highlights his suspicions of Lady Faulconbridge’s adultery with Richard I—as de Vere doubted Anne’s chastity upon his return from Italy in 1576.

The final reversal of loyalties by the fickle inconstant English nobles of *KJ* occurs after the last dying words from the French Count Melun in Act Five:

Why should I then be false, since it is true  
That I must die here and live hence by truth.  
(5.4.28-29)

Once again emphatic repetition invokes the parallelism of *true/truth* and *here/hence* in lines heavily end-stopped with the words *true* and *truth*. Melun’s truth is that Salisbury and Pembroke are facing their own deaths if they do not heed his warning that the Dauphin already plans their demises. Oxfordians may point with justification to the final speech of Philip in *KJ*, revised and echoing the similar closing words of *TR*, that the truest truth is loyalty to the anointed monarch of England, “Nought shall make us rue/If England to itself do rest but true” (5.7.124).

Philip is the truest most loyal knight; he is truly begotten by Richard I, and England remains “true” to itself due to his loyalty in both *TR* and *KJ*. Philip is the embodiment in *KJ* of the Verity (Vere) character of Bale’s *Kynge Johan*. In fact the allegorical character Veryte of *Johan* is thanked for his intervention by Majesty (Henry VIII) as follows: “I perceive, Veryte, ye have done wele your parte . . . to call our Commynalte to true obedyence, as ye are God’s Veryte” (Camden Society repr. 1838). The same punning on *Vere/Veritas*

occurs in Bale's drama: *Veryte, true, God's Veryte*; and Verity states flatly to the clergy, "I am Veritas that come hyther you to blame."

The most quoted line of *KJ* is the King's admonition to Cardinal Pandulph "that no Italian priest/Shall tithe or toll in our dominions" (3.1.153-154). These words could come from the strongly anti-Papist and pro-Henry VIII rhetoric of John Bale's *King Johan*. As Mark Anderson observes (13-14), Bale not only credits the 15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford as his patron in 1537, he also creates in his morality play the knight of Verity as the heroic figure who defends England—a clear tribute to the 15<sup>th</sup> Earl John. The retelling of the King John story served both Henry VIII after his excommunication as anti-papal propaganda; likewise his excommunicated daughter Elizabeth I in both these plays, which came decades later. John's excommunication in 1209 is the historical foundation of the fiercely anti-Catholic tenor of both plays. We know for certain that the 15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford was Bale's patron, and hence a strong supporter of Henry VIII. It is further proposed by E.K. Chambers and others that the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl's players were most probably the performers of *Kynge Johan* at Ipswich during Elizabeth's visit of August 1561, which was followed by her progressing to Hedingham (Jiménez 220). A major source of both *TR* and *KJ* was Foxe's *Monuments and Martyrs*; Bale collaborated with Foxe over the last fourteen years of Bale's life (d. 1563; Jiménez above). Jiménez states, "thus the two major sources for *Troublesome Reign* were written by the two leading anti-Catholic polemicists of the time" (160) and available to de Vere by 1565.

### Lord Great Chamberlain

My next reflections on texts in *KJ* are lines and scenes which seem drawn from the historical roles and offices of the Earls of Oxford. As Lord Great Chamberlain, the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl placed the crown on the head of Henry VII; the 15<sup>th</sup> Earl participated in the crowning of Anne Boleyn as Queen; and Edward, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl, participated with ceremonial towels in the coronation of James I in 1603. Edward de Vere took his ceremonial "office" as Lord Great Chamberlain very seriously, as letters to Burghley show. Moreover, the actual transfers of the crown in *KJ* are very different and much more symbolic in that play than in *TR*, in ways that show the English crown itself as an object of divine favor, as more than an earthly crown.

In the first scene of Act Five of *KJ*, John has actually surrendered his crown to Cardinal Pandulph, who then gives and returns it to the King. John calls his crown "the circle of my glory" (5.1.2). In *TR Part Two* at the end of Scene Two, the King keeps his crown without any ceremony of giving and returning by Pandulph, no symbolic transfer of divine right away from and back to the King of England. At the start of Scene Four Pandulph merely states, "Receive thy crown again, with

this proviso/ that thou remain true liegeman to the Pope." We note the different and extremely ceremonial treatment of the transfer of the crown from John to son Henry in the final scene of *KJ*. After John's death, Philip is the first to kneel to Prince Henry in "true subjection everlastingly" (5.7.105)—a strong parallel to Veryte's "true obedience" in Bale's *Johan*. This occurs before Henry has been acclaimed and newly crowned as King. But Henry's accession to "the lineal state and glory of the land" clearly points to his pending coronation. One almost expects Philip to be appointed Lord Great Chamberlain as the truest knight of Henry III—not merely the newly knighted Richard Plantagenet—for the ceremony to follow.

### Mote and Eye

O heaven, that there was but a mote in yours,  
A grain, a dust, a gnat, a wandering hair. (*KJ*  
4.1.92-93)

Arthur's clever and timely recollection of Matthew 7.3-4 strikes Hubert's conscience, literally the mote in Hubert's eye or in the other figures (*a grain-dust-gnat-hair*). Thus he is spared execution in the opening scene of Act Four of *KJ*. Unless we can identify other Elizabethan poets who made this same usage and clever "conceit" of the *mote/eye/beam* passage of Matthew, those in de Vere's writings are stunningly similar, more than coincidental. They are quoted fully below, showing both a disturbed conscience (like Hubert's) in the "Knight of the Sun-Tree" oration of 1581 and utter lack of conscience on the part of French Catholics during the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572:

"that he was troubled, when every Moate fell in his eye in the day and every Ant disquieted him in the night." (Nelson 263)

"And thinke yf the admiral in fraunce was an ey(e)sore or beame in the eyes of the papistes, that the lord tresorer of England is a bloke [=block, impediment] and a crosebare in ther way." (letter 1572, Nelson 87)

The Matthew 7.3 quotation is not annotated in de Vere's Geneva Bible at the Folger Shakespeare Library (per Roger Stritmatter). Yet in each case the conceit in de Vere's known words involves conscience or its lack, guilt or absolution, as in *King John*. Harry embellishes the conceit in *Henry V* (4.1): "That every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed—wash every mote out of his conscience." To my knowledge only de Vere can be shown to have creatively used this passage from Matthew, which made its way into Shakespeare texts like *King John* and *Henry V* (note similar Shakespeare

passages with *mote/eye* in *Hamlet*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Rape of Lucrece*).

### Conclusions

I want to stress open-mindedness in these comments, but my strong sense is the inescapable view that the *KJ* text revisions, especially those on bastardy relating to Philip, are mindful of de Vere and strongly suggest his authorship. Philip is a fighting Vere, like the knight Verity in Bale's morality play *Kynge Johan*, and like the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl Edward's cousins Francis and Horace. Like de Vere, Philip's nobility is derived from his bastardy. Many commentators have noted, particularly Jiménez, that Philip's character and expanded role are the greatest insertion and alteration in the plot and text of *KJ*.

I find no support for Eric Sams's view that William of Stratford wrote both plays; as usual, there is simply no new evidence for Will Shakspeare of Stratford as an author other than the attributions made by Hemings and Condell et al. in the First Folio of 1623. However, Sams was the most extreme and stubborn proponent of the view that *TR* and *KJ* share common authorship, and were regarded as Shakespeare's from late Elizabethan times to 1764. I conclude that my internal evidence from passages of *KJ* above is suggestive of, though not definitive for, de Vere's authorship of *KJ*. However striking the echoes of the Bible in the *mote/eye* passages, or of de Vere's "Were I a King" poem, or the parallels of Philip and Veryte as true de Vere knights in *Kynge Johan* and *TR* and *KJ*, more external evidence is needed to finalize a de Vere authorship attribution for *KJ*.

I believe such evidence has recently been catalogued and presented, especially for *Troublesome Reign*, in Ramon Jiménez's book, *Shakespeare's Apprenticeship, Identifying the Real Playwright's Earliest Works*. Readers are invited to peruse that book in full, especially Section III (148-221). His approach ties together the available evidence, both external and internal, that de Vere is the author of *TR* and that *TR* and *KJ* share common authorship. He convincingly demolishes (198 passim) the attribution by Brian Vickers of *TR* to George Peele—an attribution largely based on shaky internal evidence using computerized word counts and parallel passages.

I have also painstakingly reread the *Troublesome Reign*, as I have *King John* of the First Folio. There is some legal terminology in *TR*, notably Philip's being (he thinks) "heir indubitate" in the first scene and of Prince Henry being described as "heir apparent" in the last scene. Both are simple references to primogeniture, not complex legal claims reflecting a legal education. Both parts of *TR* have prologues addressed to "The Gentleman Reader," with the first recalling "Scythian Tamburlaine" and audiences giving "applause to an infidel" (suggesting a date of 1587 or after). But this seems a late insertion by the publisher in the 1591 printing. These are the two chief items that might contradict Jiménez's core

argument that *TR* was initially composed as early as 1565 by de Vere, then reused by the Queen's Men in the 1580s. But neither dissuades me from agreeing with Jiménez and Sams of the common authorship of *TR* and *KJ*.

E.K. Chambers is probably right in his orthodox view of the relationship of *TR* to *KJ*—i.e., that the later *KJ* reviser had the *TR* text literally in front of him, scene by scene in the same order, although three scenes are omitted in *KJ*, including Philip's ransacking of the monastery and finding a nun hidden in the priest's bedroom. I heed Chambers's warning about any question relating to Shakespeare texts or authorship—"It is no use guessing"—but I believe that the 1598 reference by Meres to *King John* as a tragedy by "Shakespeare" is to the much revised and improved (de Vere?) version, not to *TR* as performed by the Queen's Men.

McMillin and MacLean are vague about how the Shakespeare author knew so well the history plays performed by the Queen's Men, avoiding and mostly dodging authorship issues. They come close to supposing that Will of Stratford acted in some of the historical dramas presented by the Queen's Men, whether in London or on a countryside tour. However, they offer no support for young Will as an author in the 1583-1588 period, only for him as an actor (160-166, "Shakespeare a Queen's Man?").

Mark Anderson's suggestion that de Vere wrote the Queen's Men plays, but that collaborators revised or completed the playscripts (208, 248-249), seems to me much closer to the facts. No young or lost Will Shakspeare is to be found. We also know that Oxford's Boys shared court performances with the Queen's Men in 1583 and 1584 (McMillin & MacLean 11). At the same time John Lyly was managing performances at Blackfriars by the same newly formed boys' company (Nelson 248). Hence it is probable that de Vere saw the Queen's Men history plays being performed in London, especially at court where his new boys' company was also performing. Alas, we do not have specific dates of performances of *TR* during this period as we do for *Famous Victories* (by mid-1587; McMillin & MacLean 89-90). All I can state in conclusion is that the reviser of *TR* would have had its text after publication in 1591 to use as his baseline, or even sooner if he had access to Queen's Men playscripts, a prompt copy or his own manuscript (Jiménez 161, 167).

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### *Looney Centennial Event (continued from page 1)*

Award for Excellence in Biomedical Writing.

The opening speaker will be James A. Warren, a retired US Foreign Service officer and editor of a new scholarly edition of ["Shakespeare" Identified](#). Warren was a diplomat with the State Department for more than twenty years and served as executive director of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. He will explore how JTL's insights have revolutionized our understanding of the works of Shakespeare, the Elizabethan era and theatre, and the nature of genius and literary creativity.

Attorney Tom Regnier will focus on why the evidence supporting Oxford—and refuting the traditional claim that businessman and actor William Shaksper of Stratford was the author—has persuaded some of the greatest minds of the last 100 years. Regnier practices law in South Florida, earned his JD *summa cum laude* at University of Miami School of Law (where he has taught as an adjunct professor), and his LLM at Columbia Law School (where he was a Harlan F. Stone Scholar), and has also taught at Chicago's John Marshall Law School.

Filmmaker Cheryl Eagan-Donovan will discuss her documentary film, [Nothing Is Truer Than Truth](#), and how Oxford's travels as a young man in continental Europe, especially Italy, influenced the Shakespearean plays and poems. She publishes frequently on screenwriting and film and teaches at several universities in the Boston area.

Author Bonner Miller Cutting (BFA, MMus) will further explore JTL's evidence-based methodology and how it led him to the true author. Cutting will point out facts that have corroborated Looney's deduction that the author was Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, including her groundbreaking research into Queen Elizabeth's mysterious grant to Oxford of 1,000 pounds per year, an extravagant stipend (see page 20).

Professor Roger Stritmatter will survey the numerous connections between the works of Shakespeare and Edward de Vere's life, private letters, early surviving poetry, and markings in his personal copy of the Geneva Bible (subject of Stritmatter's historic 2001 Ph.D. thesis). Professor of Humanities and Literature at Coppin State University in Baltimore, Stritmatter has been deeply engaged in Shakespeare studies for three decades, publishing dozens of scholarly articles in leading academic journals. He is coauthor (with Lynne Kositsky) of a [major book on \*The Tempest\*](#), and (with Alexander Waugh, forthcoming) a massive, new, and comprehensive *Shakespeare Allusion Book*.

JTL's critics have evaded contesting the merits of his logical and fact-based arguments. Most have resorted to *ad hominem* cheap shots and misleading innuendo. Looney has been falsely smeared as a snob or reactionary. Yet Looney himself, a modest, unassuming, and beloved family man and schoolteacher, emerges as a determined scholarly detective and brilliantly original thinker. His thoughtful, persuasive, and gracefully written book, already deeply influential, deserves wider recognition as a watershed in literary history.

The centennial is an international phenomenon. The United Kingdom's [De Vere Society](#) will hold a [celebration on July 4-5, 2020](#), at the Literary and Philosophical Society (Lit & Phil) Library in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England, where JTL did most of his research.

The centennial will be a major focus of the SOF Annual Conference in Ashland, Oregon, on October 1-4, 2020 (see page 8).

For further information on the March celebration, go to: <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/npc-march-4/>





## The First Seventeen Sonnets

by Peter Rogers

It is generally believed—certainly by Charlton Ogburn and Mark Anderson—that the first seventeen sonnets were written between 1590 and 1592 in an attempt to persuade Henry Wriothesley, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton (Lord Burghley's ward), to marry Elizabeth Vere, the eldest daughter of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford (and Burghley's granddaughter). Oxford, they say, was all in favor of this marriage, and Ogburn suggests that Burghley may have prevailed on Oxford to “lend his pen” to further the idea.

If this is so, and if as a result the first seventeen sonnets were written, then his attempt to further the marriage was, to say the least, an odd one. One would imagine that any normal father (of course, Oxford was not a “normal” father) would have had a quiet talk with both parties. But even allowing for Oxford's unique character and abilities, to try and persuade them to marry by means of writing a sonnet seems to me a strange way of going about things. To have written seventeen such sonnets is beyond strange.

In spite of Ogburn's apparent belief in this scenario, when taking the actual sonnets into account he has to confess that “the poet was not trying to push the youth into a particular marriage. He was not interested in the girl” (Oxford's own daughter), “but in the young man and in perpetuating his qualities, ‘truth and beauty,’ as he several times calls them. Any number of young women would serve the purpose.” Ogburn quotes two lines from Sonnet 3:

For where is she so fair whose unear'd womb  
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?

Obviously, the first seventeen sonnets had to have been written to someone, and since, on the face of it, the only occasion when there appeared to have been a motive for their composition seems to have been the promotion of the Wriothesley/Vere betrothal, that is what scholars have always clung to. What other reason could there be for their composition? There appeared to be none. Not that there is any hard evidence that these sonnets were written at that time (as far as I know, it's all pure surmise), but for lack of any better theory it has generally been accepted. However, the closer that one looks at these sonnets, the more problems emerge, and I think Ogburn was aware of them. If he privately came to the conclusion that I have, he may have backed away, the implications being too distasteful to him.

I make no claim to be a Shakespeare scholar—I'm an artist, a painter—but I can claim a little common sense. If Oxford was really trying to promote a marriage between Elizabeth Vere and Henry Wriothesley, why is there no mention of his daughter? Why try to persuade the recipient of these sonnets by writing seventeen of them?

Apart from anything else, it would have amounted to badgering; I can hear the recipient saying, “Ooh, not another one!” Oxford was anything but stupid. He would have known that such unwarranted badgering, in spite of all the flattery, would surely backfire. Furthermore, as Ogburn writes, “it is difficult to believe that even an Elizabethan youth of twenty-one could have been expected to heed such considerations,” those considerations being summed up in the concluding couplets of all seventeen sonnets. I quote four of them:

Sonnet 3: But if thou live, remembered not to be,  
Die single, and thine image dies with thee.

Sonnet 6: Be not self-will'd, for thou art much too fair  
To be death's conquest and make worms their heir.

Sonnet 7: So thou, thyself out-going in thy noon  
Unlook'd on diest, unless thou get a son.

Sonnet 10: Make thee another self, for love of me,  
That beauty still may live in thine or thee.

None of this has anything to do with a prospective marriage between Elizabeth Vere and Henry Wriothesley; I do not believe these sonnets were written toward that end. If that is the case then they need not have been written in 1590, and a far earlier date becomes quite possible. Nor need they have been written to Wriothesley, and I do not believe they were.

I am one of those who believe that Wriothesley was the son of the Queen and that his father was Oxford. Later, many of the sonnets were written to Wriothesley, his royal son, and in them we find a tone of subservience. To quote from two of them (the italics are mine):

Sonnet 26. Lord of my love, to whom in *vassalage*  
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit.

Sonnet 57: Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour  
Whilst I, *my sovereign*, watch the clock for you,  
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour  
When you have bid *your servant* once adieu;

Why don't we get any comparable tone of subservience in the first seventeen sonnets—if, that is, they were written to Wriothesley? But, as I say, I do not think they were. (Incidentally, the sonnets just quoted go to prove the theory put forward recently, and included in the movie *Anonymous*—that Oxford himself was the Queen's son—is not believable. Had he been the Queen's son there would have been no tone of subservience in them. He would never have referred to himself as “your servant.”) But if not to Wriothesley, to whom could Oxford have been writing with such outrageous flattery? Take these lines from Sonnet 17:

If I could write the beauty of your eyes  
And in fresh numbers number all your graces,  
The age to come would say ‘This poet lies;  
Such heavenly touches ne'er touch'd earthly faces.’

This question remained unanswered until, working my way through all the sonnets, I came upon Sonnet 62. It was then that the first inkling of a rather shocking possibility dawned on me. That sonnet begins:

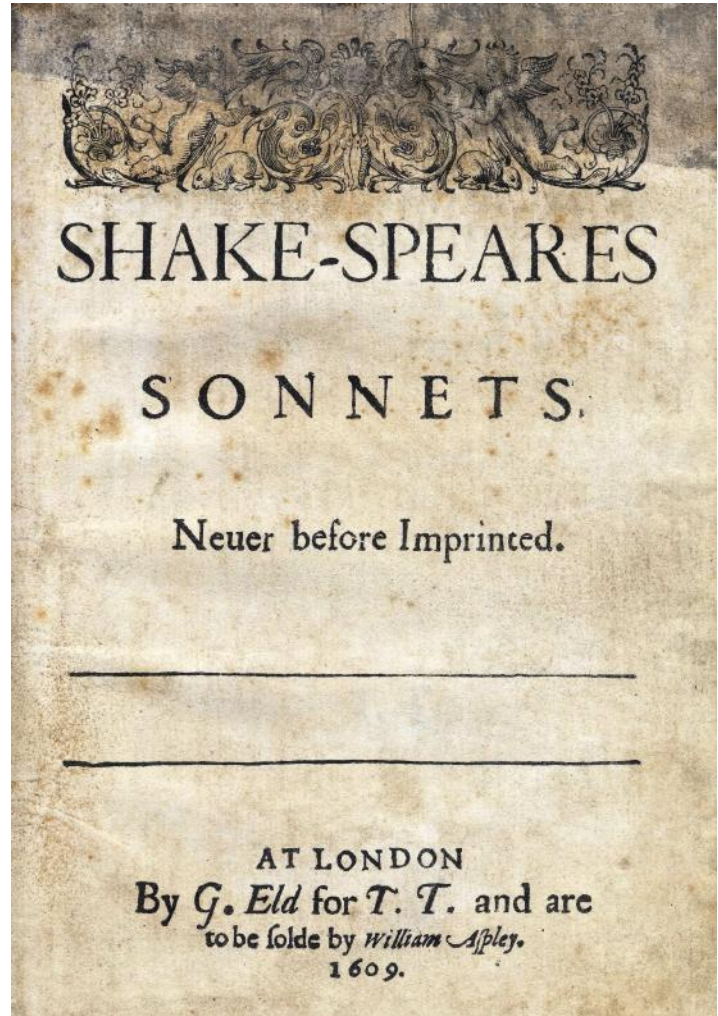
Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye  
And all my soul and all my every part;  
And for this sin there is no remedy,  
It is so grounded inward in my heart.  
Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,  
No shape so true, no truth of such account;  
And for myself mine own worth do define,  
As I all other in all worths surmount.

There can surely be no more forthright confession of blatant and unblushing narcissism in all of poetry or, for that matter, in all of literature. The poet does, however, end the sonnet like this:

But when my glass shows me myself indeed,  
Beated and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity,  
Mine own self-love quite contrary I read;  
Self so self-loving were iniquity.  
'Tis thee, myself, that for myself I praise,  
Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

Oxford looks in the mirror and sees that his vanity is no longer justified, that "Self so self-loving were iniquity." Apart from his looks, however, one can only suppose that his opinion of himself remained unchanged, for does he not say that the "Sin of self-love possesseth [present tense] all mine eye/And all my soul and all my every part" and that "for this sin . . . There is no remedy"? Does he not say that no one else's "truth" is of "such account" as his, and that he is in fact superior to other men in every way ("As I all other in all worths surmount")? Since neither truth nor worth are things that can be judged by looking in a mirror, one can only conclude that time had done nothing to alter his opinion concerning his own truth and worth. So, except for his looks, he still outshone all other men in every way. He probably did, but what gall to say so!

Sonnet 62 was likely written when Oxford was in his forties. By then one might expect his narcissism to have been tempered by time, as it appears it had been to some extent, and yet the degree of it remains shocking. How much more shocking, therefore, might one expect the expression of that narcissism to be in his early work, when a certain amount of youthful arrogance might be expected anyway? Are the first seventeen sonnets evidence of that over-the-top narcissism? Were they in fact written to himself? With that possibility in mind I went back over them more carefully. One of them stood out as being different from the rest. It was the only one that was critical of the addressee, and ruthlessly critical at that. Sonnet 10 begins:



For shame deny that thou bear'st love to any,  
Who for thyself art so unprovident.  
Grant, if thou wilt, though beloved of many,  
But that thou none lovest is most evident;  
For thou art so possess'd with murderous hate  
That 'gainst thyself thy stick'st not to conspire,  
Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate  
Which to repair should be thy chief desire.

In the first four lines the addressee is accused of loving no one but himself, even though he himself is loved by others. We know from various sources that much of the time de Vere had an infectious gaiety and charm, so it is easy to see why he would have been "beloved of many." "But that thou none lovest is most evident" is a harsh remark to make to anyone, but not nearly as harsh as the next line: "For thou art so possess'd with murderous hate." I find it hard to believe that either of those lines could have been addressed by the writer to someone he professed to admire so extravagantly. No recipient of these remarks would ever have taken seriously any further attempts at flattery, or any further expressions of devotion. They are the sort of remarks calculated to end a relationship. No such

problem if addressed to oneself, of course.

Did de Vere have any reason to be “possess’d with murderous hate”? In fact, he had several; there were at least three people whom he might well have felt like murdering. There was the Earl of Leicester, to whom the Queen had given many of Oxford’s estates, so he no doubt hated him. There was his stepfather, Charles Tyrrell. When de Vere’s father died (some say in suspicious circumstances), his widow, like Hamlet’s mother, had an “o’er hasty marriage” with Tyrrell. Since he was a commoner, I suspect that de Vere resented him at the very least, and may well have hated him for marrying his mother so soon after his father’s death. He may have hated his mother, too, for the same reason, because there is scant record of any communication between the two of them after he went to live with his guardian, and none expressive of any affection. Then there was his guardian, William Cecil, who would shortly become Baron Burghley. De Vere undoubtedly hated him, otherwise why did he have Hamlet kill Polonius (a blatant caricature of Burghley) and in so callous a fashion, referring to him as “a foolish prating knave” with the corpse still warm in front of him?

I want to move ahead for a moment to Sonnet 13. In the first two quatrains the poet is once again urging the addressee to pass on his “sweet semblance” to “some other.” We then get an abrupt change of pace:

Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,  
Which husbandry in honour might uphold  
Against the stormy gusts of winter’s day  
And barren rage of death’s eternal cold?

The poet is now talking about his ancestral house. In Sonnet 10 he had referred to “that beauteous roof . . . Which to repair should be thy chief desire.” At first reading “that beauteous roof” had puzzled me because as yet there had been no mention of any ancestral house (at least none that I had recognized), but in Sonnet 13 we get “so fair a house” and now it all made sense—the “beauteous roof” was of course the metaphorical roof of the “fair house.” Which house was de Vere talking about—the house of Southampton or the house of Oxford? Much depends on the answer, because if he is talking about his own house he must have been writing to himself.

“So fair a house”—I can well imagine de Vere using that expression with regard to the ancient and noble house of the Earls of Oxford, but with respect to the house of the Earls of Southampton I doubt it. For one thing, the Wriothesleys were only ennobled shortly before de Vere’s birth, so the house of Southampton had hardly had time to “fall to decay.” Furthermore, there was no particular reason to call it “so fair a house.” On the other hand, the house of Oxford, which had had a long and glorious history, really was “falling to decay”;

de Vere had lost much of his inheritance to Leicester and his mother had married a commoner. It seems to me far more likely, therefore, that the house referred to is de Vere’s. That being so, this sonnet must have been written to himself. It ends like this:

. . . Dear my love, you know  
You had a father; let your son say so.

Since this is more or less what all of the first seventeen sonnets are saying, the implication is that if this one was written to himself, then it’s likely that they all were.

The case for Sonnet 10 being written to himself is a lot stronger than for Sonnet 13. All things considered, it seems to me that it can only refer to de Vere’s own unique circumstances and consequent state of mind. The fact that it is the only one critical of the addressee might lead one to suppose that it is, as it were, an odd man out and does not belong in the group of seventeen, but this is not the case. Sonnet 10 ends:

O, change thy thought, that I may change my mind!  
Shall hate be fairer lodged than gentle love?  
Be, as thy presence is, gracious and kind,  
Or to thyself at least kind-hearted prove;  
Make thee another self, for love of me,  
That beauty still may live in thine or thee.

Since the sonnet ends by saying precisely what the other sixteen sonnets are all saying, it is clearly part of the group. From this we can draw the same conclusion as we did from Sonnet 13. If de Vere wrote Sonnet 10 to himself then he probably wrote all of the first seventeen sonnets to himself.

If so, the question remains: Why did he write them? To begin with, the Queen may have told him that it was high time he got married, and perhaps his guardian, Lord Burghley, under whose roof he lived, harped on the topic, too. No doubt de Vere himself felt duty-bound to produce an heir. Clearly, the subject of marriage must have preyed on his mind. This means, of course, that he must have written these sonnets before his marriage to Burghley’s daughter, Anne, when he would have been no older than twenty.

What brings my imagination up short is the sheer number of these sonnets. Such are the formal constraints of the sonnet that no one, not even a Shakespeare, dashes one off. These sonnets took a lot of time to write and, since they are all saying much the same thing, one has to wonder what it was that motivated him. Was he really obsessed by the thought that when he died there would be no record of his “beauty”? Perhaps he was, and perhaps he wrote the sonnets simply to give vent to his narcissism, but if so he chose a funny way of going about it. It is almost as though someone had ordered him to state on paper exactly seventeen times what the duties

were and why. He had dutifully told himself what his duties were—to marry and father an heir—in each and every sonnet. But when it came to why, instead of repeating that it was to “uphold” his house, which would have become quite boring, he chose a far more enjoyable reason: to “uphold” his own “beauty” in the face of eventual old age and death.

Irrespective of what de Vere actually ended up saying in these sonnets, the question is whether any outside pressure had been put on him to write them. Did William Cecil tell the Queen that Edward was forgetful of his duties and spent far too much time on his amusements—hunting, falconry, fine clothes and weaponry, playing practical jokes, not to mention chasing girls (maybe boys, too) and writing poetry—and that he appeared to have little regard for his responsibilities as the premier nobleman of England? Had he forgotten about the long line of his noble forebears, stretching all the way back to the Battle of Hastings? Elizabeth might have reminded him that no one else could claim to be a seventeenth Earl. She would make him remember that fact by making him write seventeen times what the responsibilities of his unique position demanded. What they demanded was marriage and an heir to continue the line. Perhaps Elizabeth had become exasperated by the young de Vere’s seeming reluctance to take these matters seriously, and hence her schoolmarmish command. Another possibility occurs to me. If it had not been the Queen, but his guardian William Cecil, who inflicted this punishment on him, then de Vere may have indulged his vanity in part simply to annoy him.

This is, of course, speculation upon speculation, but I tend to think that by writing sonnets de Vere was seizing on the task imposed on him as an opportunity to show off. He did this in more senses than one, for he was able to demonstrate his precocious technical ability as a poet on the one hand, and to trumpet his own incomparable beauty and brilliance on the other. A proud young gentleman, he might well have felt insulted by this task. Consequently he let it be known that yes, he was very much aware of his duty to marry and father an heir, but for the rest he gave free reign not only to his narcissism, but in one instance to some of his darkest thoughts.

To sum up: Sonnets 10 and 13 provide clues that de Vere wrote these sonnets to himself. If he did, then they display an extraordinary degree of narcissism. Could de Vere really have been that narcissistic? Sonnet 62 tells us that he could have been. As for why he wrote these sonnets, all I have said is pure speculation, but I like my speculations for two reasons. First, they account for the repetitive nature of the sonnets; second, they account for why there are so many, specifically why there are seventeen. No other theory that I know of begins to address these problems.

Few will welcome these conclusions. Such narcissism hardly jibes with most people’s image of Shakespeare. It is probably something that many would rather disregard; but it is something that we cannot disregard, because unless we recognize this character trait in Edward de Vere the sonnets are, in my opinion, unintelligible. I myself do not care if he was a narcissist. His narcissism pales into insignificance when one considers what he accomplished.

It even becomes understandable when one considers the man as a whole, because de Vere was larger than life. He was more in every respect than most people: more charming and generous, more witty and wise, more dashing and brave; more blessed with talent on the one hand, and more proud and arrogant, more rude and overbearing, more touchy and vain, and more cursed with self-love on the other. No one would ever have called him “a nice man.” “Nice” is an adjective we can reserve for lesser mortals.

The following will prove my point. In her book *Elizabeth the Great*, Elizabeth Jenkins quotes a letter from de Vere written in reply to one from his father-in-law, who had been begging de Vere to explain why was “casting off” his wife so cruelly. De Vere concluded his reply by writing: “I will not blazen or publish it until it please me. And last of all, I mean not to weary my life any more with such troubles and molestations as I have endured, nor will I, to please your Lordship only, discontent myself. Always I have and will still prefer mine own content before others.” “Sin of self-love” indeed! Jenkins calls it “surprising candor,” but it is not so surprising in view of Sonnet 62.\* That he was a narcissist, and knew it, and knew it was a sin, Sonnet 62 makes clear. His self-love, however, would prove his undoing. It was the stumbling block that would in time be the cause of great suffering and emotional turmoil. The Dark Lady would be his nemesis, but, strange to say, she would also be his salvation.

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\* As I wrote, I suspect that Charlton Ogburn may have guessed the truth about the first seventeen sonnets, but because he didn’t want to believe it, he rejected it. In view of that possibility, it is interesting to note that when he quoted the above letter from de Vere to Burghley in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, Ogburn omitted the last sentence.





## The Persistent Mystery of Oxford's Annuity

by Bonner Miller Cutting

In Chapter 7 of *Necessary Mischief: Exploring the Shakespeare Authorship Question*, I discuss the £1,000 annuity that Queen Elizabeth gave Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. This payment, ordered by the Queen in a Privy Seal Warrant dormant, opens the door to questions which I address in the book. What is a Privy Seal Warrant dormant? How long did the payments continue? How much would £1,000 be in modern currency? Was it common for Queen Elizabeth to hand out this much money? What could have been the Queen's motive in directing her Exchequer to pay this sum to Oxford? What might he have done to earn it? Was there something unusual about the document's non-accountability clause?

Before we investigate the Queen's fiscal policy, it must be noted that a strange predicament surrounds the Elizabethan financial records. For all the books and biographies written about Queen Elizabeth, no historian, biographer or archivist—no one with expertise on the Tudors—has gone into the Queen's Exchequer records in the National Archives to transcribe them out of the old English secretary hand and publish them for all to see. Parts of some documents are quoted in history books, but the records as a whole have been left untouched through the centuries. Originally housed in the State Paper Office, they were moved in 1719 to a house in Mortlake, where they suffered water damage. In 1854 they were returned to the Public Record Office (PRO), which is now merged with the National Archives at Kew, their present location. The lack of public availability of the documentary record is a serious problem when trying to determine the sources of Elizabeth's income and details of her expenditures. How much did she pay from her royal Exchequer and to whom? What were the reasons for the payments?

The closest we have to an overview of the Elizabethan Exchequer accounts is found in an article by an American historian F.C. Dietz. For this information, one must turn to the *Smith College Studies in History* published in 1923 to locate Dietz's article, "The Exchequer in Elizabeth's Reign." Here we have the annual totals of Elizabeth's revenue and disbursements in various categories. In addition, Dietz describes the general functioning and organization of the Exchequer, though he does not provide transcripts of any of the Privy Seal Warrants—the Queen's actual orders to her Exchequer—or discuss the language used in them.

A major historical source on all things Elizabethan is *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, the magnum opus by Princeton University's Lawrence Stone. Subsequent

historians rely heavily on Stone's work, and, not incidentally, Stone himself relies on the Dietz article for much of his reporting on the Queen's finances.

### Generosity vs. Parsimony

The article that was first published in *Brief Chronicles* and then in the chapter in *Necessary Mischief* has received favorable commentary from Oxfordians and predictable criticism from Stratfordians. Interestingly, both sides have found the Queen's character to be a major issue. It would appear to be a question of generosity versus parsimony on the part of the Queen. Did she give funds to needy persons out of the goodness of her heart? Or was she a miserly skinflint who denied worthy people their duly earned compensation? When we consider that her contemporaries (along with future generations of historians) adhere to the latter characterization, it would seem superfluous to broach this subject at all. Nevertheless, this question must be further explored.

Writing about Queen Elizabeth in 1597, the French ambassador noted that "she is very avaricious, and when some expense is necessary, her councilors must deceive her before embarking her on it little by little" (Haigh 74). That parsimonious nature (which worsened as she aged) was intensified by the intractable financial difficulties that she faced throughout her reign. According to historian Robert Lacey, she was "hopelessly, helplessly poor" and lived on "a ragbag of odd incomes" (57). When she came to the throne in 1558, Elizabeth inherited a nearly empty treasury (MacCaffrey 380). The wealth that Henry VIII had obtained from the dissolution of the monasteries had largely been spent by Henry himself and Elizabeth's siblings, King Edward VI and Queen Mary Tudor (Dietz 71). But, as Stone writes, Elizabeth's way of solving the financial problems of the Court, primarily by ruthlessly cutting costs, would lead to "disastrous consequences" that ultimately resulted in vast corruption and venality among her courtiers (493).

Queen Elizabeth is known as a master of giving that which cost her nothing. When she did give something of value, it was usually not cash from her Exchequer, but rather preferments. Her gifts were primarily in the form of land that the crown seized from other people, in appointments to administrative offices, in allocations of monopolies on commodities, or in "farms" for imports and exports. Enterprising courtiers and court officials made the land, the office or the monopoly profitable; such opportunities for profit were understood to be compensation for the minimal wages resulting from the royal parsimony (Stone 490). Although she occasionally loaned money, "repayment was always ruthlessly extracted." In addition, annuities were rarely made and were "of modest size and largely confined to personal female friends" (Stone 416, 418, 489).

Thus, the grant of 1,000 pounds annually to Oxford is clearly a departure from her tight-fisted policy. Putting

it bluntly, Stone writes that “money was something that the Queen could not bring herself to give away” (416). Another problem is that this sum was not enough to support Oxford in a style suitable to the rank of an Earl, if, as Stratfordians suggest, the Queen simply wanted to keep up appearances. Stone reports that a nobleman of his rank needed five times that amount—£5,000 annually—to sustain the lifestyle and perform the duties expected of an earl (548). Oxford himself wanted more income from the Queen, and he petitioned for a half dozen or so offices and monopolies throughout the time that the annuity was coming his way. She denied them all (Nelson 337-338, 355-358, 394, 396-397). It is puzzling that Elizabeth would part with money from her Exchequer—even if she had an abundance of cash on hand, which she most assuredly did not—all the while refusing Oxford preferments that cost her nothing.

Digging a little deeper, there is another, more sympathetic way to look at Elizabeth’s management of her royal finances. In his chapter “The Economical Queen,” Wallace MacCaffrey depicts Elizabeth not so much as a parsimonious miser, but instead as a careful money manager. Early in her reign, she demanded that spending stay in line with income in a “pay-as-you-go” policy (382). By the 1570s, her scrimping and saving had made her administration finally free of the debts inherited from her predecessors. MacCaffrey offers that it was her determination to be debt-free (not entirely an avaricious nature) that compelled her close-fistedness. She might well be commended for her policies to keep expenditures from exceeding revenues.

But this interpretation still does not explain the generous grant to the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford: it just adds another layer to the conundrum. Whether we see Elizabeth as simply parsimonious or as a frugal monarch struggling to keep her administration afloat, the £1,000 annuity remains an inexplicable anomaly. What could have inspired the fiscally responsible Queen to give a large monetary sum for many years to a supposedly irresponsible, feckless nobleman?

### The Queen’s Wars

Throughout the earlier years of her reign, Elizabeth had staved off conflicts with France, Scotland, Ireland and Spain, the latter a threat both on the high seas and in the Low Countries. This precarious balancing act came to an end in the mid-1580s when King Philip of Spain launched “the enterprise of England.” War with Spain was effectively underway by 1586. We need to take a close look at this time frame because the Queen began Oxford’s £1,000 annuity on June 26, 1586. To make matters worse, it was a time when the wars put “almost unmanageable demands on her Exchequer” (Hammer 155).

With the prospect of a Spanish attack in the offing, Queen Elizabeth and her councillors had no choice but to ramp up the war in the Low Countries to keep Spain

from establishing an effective base there for an invasion of England. She also needed to shore up her defenses at home. In December 1585, the Queen sent the Earl of Leicester to spearhead the war on the Continent. He found that he was prevented from effective military action by “the persistent shortage of money, the rawness of his troops, and fraying relations among the officers.” After months without pay, his troops were on the verge of mutiny and reduced to wearing rags (Hammer 126, 128).

In *Elizabeth’s Wars*, Paul Hammer gives us some sense of the gravity of her financial problems:

England’s war effort was in sorry shape by the end of 1586. Although Elizabeth was contractually bound to spend only £126,000 a year on the war in the Low Countries, actual spending topped £150,000, while the costs and debts of the States ballooned alarmingly. The latter directly affected English soldiers in Dutch pay ... and forced the illicit diversion of money earmarked for the queen’s troops, which left both parts of the allied army desperately short of money. As the full magnitude of the financial shambles began to emerge during the early months of 1586, Elizabeth became increasingly angry that Leicester’s military administration could not provide accounts to explain where the money was going. (132)

Elizabeth managed to survive the chronic shortages of money by shifting much of the cost of war away from herself and onto her subjects. Her military commanders footed much of the bill to feed and equip their troops. Lord Willoughby found that, in addition to consuming his entire annual revenue, his woods were cut down, his stock sold off, his plate and his wife’s jewels pawned, and his land mortgaged—all to sustain his soldiers in the Low Countries in the 1580s (Stone 455-457). The common people in the countryside were burdened with the costs of the musters: rounding up the men, then training and equipping them for foreign service. The Privy Council transferred the burden of the naval defense of England to the port towns. The townspeople also found that the costs for the construction of Her Majesty’s ships would be borne by them (Hammer 132-135, 141-145, 155, 205, 251).

It is reported that 8,000 English lives were lost in 1588 as a result of the Armada attack, but most of the deaths were not at the hands of the enemy. Many deaths were due to starvation after the men returned to England. The pleas of the admiral for emergency supplies of food and clothing went unanswered by Elizabeth and her councilors. The problem was the government’s “acute shortage of money.” Lord Burghley commented that the deaths would be a useful savings for the crown’s wage bill. Summing up the cold indifference of Elizabeth and Burghley to the plight of her fighting men, Hammer

writes that “the appalling mortality that followed the Armada’s defeat therefore offered the prospect of financial relief for the exchequer” (153).

If a thousand pounds were diverted from Oxford (even for a year), it could have fed a lot of men. Why did this large sum continue to someone who was considered (perhaps then and certainly by history) to be a wasteful, useless ne’er-do-well?

### Alternative Explanations for the Grant

Ignoring Queen Elizabeth’s monetary difficulties, Stratfordians insist that she gave money to Oxford to keep up appearances among her nobility. Not the least of the problems with this explanation is the Tudor penchant for eliminating the old nobility rather than preserving it. It would have been easier (and more cost effective) to simply let Oxford go the way of the Dukes of Buckingham and Norfolk or languish in prison like the Earls of Northumberland and Arundel (Haigh 68). Another difficulty with this proposal is that Oxford was not the only noble person in England who could cut a dashing presence at court. The Queen had four established “favorites” to serve this purpose: historian Simon Adams lists the Earl of Leicester, the Earl of Essex, Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Christopher Hatton (120). Their substantial services to the crown are well documented: Hatton was the Queen’s Lord Chancellor of England; Raleigh fought Spain on the high seas; the Earls of Leicester and Essex were constantly at her side as her Masters of the Horse as well as serving in administrative capacities at home and military posts abroad. Oxford did nothing of the sort, holding no administrative office or diplomatic post and performing no extensive military service (though he complained of his short military stint during the Armada attack). Oxford did fulfill the obligatory duty of sitting on the juries that heard the case of Mary Queen of Scots and later the Earls of Essex and Southampton after the Essex Rebellion, but he was not a member of the Queen’s Privy Council (Ward 256, 292). No significant task that he might have performed on the Queen’s behalf is recorded.

It has been suggested that Oxford was given the annuity to reward him for the service he performed as the Lord Great Chamberlain, the hereditary position that had previously been his father’s. It would appear that the Lord Great Chamberlain’s primary duty was to carry the sword of state before the monarch at ceremonial occasions. Parliament sat thirteen times during Queen Elizabeth’s reign. Upon reaching his majority Oxford was in attendance at eight of them (Ward 351; Nelson 321, 343, 369, 396). We can assume that he carried the sword on opening day. We know of one instance in 1572 when Oxford carried the sword before the Queen at the festivities of the Royal Order of the Garter at Windsor Castle (Ward 192).

Carrying the sword before the Queen was not a duty discharged only by the Lord Great Chamberlain, but one

that could be performed by other noblemen. In the iconic painting of the Procession Portrait depicting the Queen going to a wedding in 1600, the sword of state is carried by the Earl of Shrewsbury (Strong 33). When these facts are considered, does it make sense that the wartime Queen, desperately short of money, would pay a lot of cash from her Exchequer to someone whose principal duty was to walk in front of her carrying a sword on a handful of occasions?

### Considering the Source

In a pamphlet-sized document of about forty pages, it was proposed that Oxford’s annuity came from income that the Queen took from the bishopric of Ely. Written by one Thomas Wilson, it is titled *An Account of the State of England Anno Dom. 1600*, and contains the only contemporaneous comment on Oxford’s annuity (though Wilson does not give the monetary amount). In *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, Lawrence Stone picked up Wilson’s tidbit and subsequent historians have repeated it, thus necessitating a closer look at Wilson’s manuscript as well as his biography (419).

*An Account* is preserved in two manuscripts in the State Papers: Manuscript A is in Wilson’s own hand, and Manuscript B is a nearly identical copy. Published by the Camden Society in 1936, it contains general information about the nobility that is readily available from more reliable sources. It is riddled with obvious mistakes and exaggerations, particularly concerning fiscal matters. Wilson takes pains to list the names of the nobility of England and Ireland; however, only the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford is singled out for several specific comments. Wilson makes a glaring error in the passage about the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl, stating that Oxford had an income of £12,000 in 1575 (17, 22). We know from the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl’s Inquisition Post Mortem that this cannot possibly be true: Oxford’s income from the properties of the earldom was approximately £2,200. Wilson also opined that Oxford’s time was “prodigally spent and consumed all even to the selling of the stones timber and lead of his castles and houses”—the genesis, it would seem, of the wastefulness attributed to Oxford by orthodox biographers beginning with Sidney Lee (*DNB* 20:225-229).

From the biography of Wilson in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, we see that he was a lifelong Cecil follower, owing his education at Cambridge to the patronage of Lord Burghley and his later employment as Burghley’s “intelligencer” (i.e., spy) in Italy. After Burghley’s death, Wilson became a stalwart in Robert Cecil’s administration. That Wilson was an indispensable servant of the Cecil family is evident from the fact that his house adjoined Cecil’s house at Durham Place, and he supervised the construction of Cecil’s Hatfield House. Such a close association between Wilson and the Cecils, both father and son, brings up a question: Did Wilson have some insider information on the revenue going in and out of the Queen’s Exchequer? Or was he just a

minion, instigating propaganda that appealed to his Cecil bosses?

We also need some historical context to evaluate Wilson's assertion that Oxford's annuity came from the bishopric of Ely. Tudor monarchs pursued the wealth of the church with such vigor that it was said that they "prayed more on the church than in it." According to Stone, Elizabeth employed several devious methods to pry away church resources and get church revenues into her coffers (406-411). She constantly moved her bishops from office to office in a veritable game of musical ecclesiastical chairs. Each new appointment entitled the Queen to receive "first fruits and tenths," a fine which was taken out of the clergyman's own salary, stripping him of much of his income. And during the downtime when no bishop was in office, Elizabeth took a large portion of the income from the see into her Exchequer (Stone 410). This practice is surely what Wilson had in mind when he states that the revenues from the vacant bishopric of Ely went to pay Oxford's annuity (22). However, even if this assertion were true—there is nothing to indicate that Exchequer funds were "earmarked" for specific purposes—how would the source of the revenue make it seem like the grant to Oxford was a reasonable thing for the Queen to do, especially as she had a chronically depleted, cash-starved treasury?

Wilson reached the epitome of his career in 1606 when, through the patronage of Robert Cecil, he was appointed Keeper of the Records at Whitehall Palace. One might suppose that the material in his book came from records that he accessed during this employment. But, as noted in its title, *An Account* was composed in 1600-1601; furthermore, Wilson attributes his information to materials gathered by his famous uncle, Dr. Thomas Wilson. But the elder Wilson's death in 1581 precludes the possibility that he could have known about Oxford's annuity or his supposed prodigality.

### Conclusion

I conclude with a question that, surprisingly, has not been asked. Did Queen Elizabeth really pay this money to Oxford? Considering the massive financial burdens of the wars, not to mention their long duration, which forced her to the last resort of selling crown lands, perhaps the money was simply not available in her struggling Exchequer. After all, it is one thing to allocate funds in a Privy Seal Warrant, but were the payments actually delivered? At my request, a researcher in England has scanned Exchequer documents showing that regular payments to Oxford were made quarterly as directed by the 1586 Privy Seal Warrant. So there is a dispositive answer: yes, Oxford did, indeed, receive the money.

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### SONL ACROSTIC SOLUTION

Ren Draya, Richard Whalen, *Preface* [to "Othello, the Moor of Venice," Fully Annotated from an Oxfordian Perspective]: Knowing how Oxford drew on his life experience, wide reading, and his deepest concerns can greatly enrich the reader's appreciation of his literary accomplishments. Theater directors and actors will find new and intriguing ways to interpret the plays.

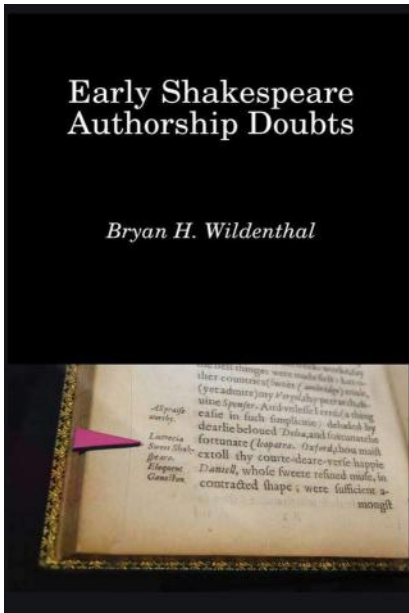
BB. Exeter  
 Erewhon Y. Ferdinand Z. Awning AA. Constrict  
 Ephesus U. New title V. Pistol W. Respect X.  
 Worcester Q. Hellenism R. Arragon S. Lethe T.  
 Hippolyta M. Affidavit N. Rodgers O. Dancing P.  
 Aleppo I. Richard J. Infantry K. Cartwright L.  
 Desdemona E. Rawhide F. Accident G. Yorick H.  
 A. Rosalind B. Eisenhower C. Ninety-six D.



## Book Review

**The Perils of Good Oxfordian Scholarship: A Review of *Early Shakespeare Authorship Doubts* (2019) by Bryan H. Wildenthal (San Diego: Zindabad Press, ISBN 978-1-73271-661-2, paperback edition)**

Reviewed by Dr. Heward Wilkinson



All Oxfordians are likely to be vividly aware that this year is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of J. Thomas Looney's pioneering identification of the person behind the "Shakespeare" pseudonym as Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. This has been claimed, with plausibility, as the greatest piece of literary detective work of all time, overturning 300 (now 400) years of error; Oxfordians are

determined to celebrate this centennial in style, in inadvertent emulation of our Stratfordian colleagues' wild celebrations of the birth and death anniversaries of William Shakspeare of Stratford Upon Avon. The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship has a lavish sector of its website now designated exclusively to this celebration. Such things, of course, are inevitable, and embody, as well as naive identifications, serious reawakening of interest and study, and rededications to honourable vocations. But they may also suppress questionings.

In this context, Bryan Wildenthal's masterly book, *Early Shakespeare Authorship Doubts*, is almost too good for its own good! It sets difficult and challenging standards of thoroughness, conscientious honesty, and textual acuteness, which Oxfordians will find it hard to live up to. In so doing it also brings into view a core paradox, which I touch on later, of the Stratfordian position, to which undoubtedly, in turn, Stratfordians will fail to respond. However, it is also a profound difficulty in the *Oxfordian* position, that the more we come of age and create a genuine Oxfordian tradition in serious scholarship, the more dark and murky the whole situation which comes into the foreground becomes, and the less seriously the Stratfordians will take us, because of the ever-growing complexity and ambivalence of it all.

Oxfordian scholarly success and maturity brings its own intenser problems. Of this development, Wildenthal's book is a true emerging expression and portent.

However, in the process, this book brings to life, also, an inherent uncanniness *in the whole authorship question*, better than anyone I have read since Charlton Ogburn, Jr. Whilst most Oxfordians are endeavouring, so to speak, to *solve* "the Authorship Question," in one sense Wildenthal actually takes us further away from a solution to it. But in so doing he brings *the problem itself into far deeper awareness* and therefore, likewise, the sheer uncanniness of its opaqueness to solution.

In this review, I try to take us through some—all too little—of the detail of Bryan Wildenthal's deeply empirical and brilliantly piecemeal book, onwards right up to the edge of this dilemma and this realisation. The book is so rich and cross-connected in its detail that it is almost impossible to review. All one can hope to do is to give one or two snapshots and epitomes of its way of analysing problems, and of some of the deeper trends and implications which reveal themselves in and through it. There are two Stratfordian dogmas—as they surely are—on which Wildenthal focuses, stated at the outset:

The first of these is the claim that plenty of evidence dating back to Shakspeare of Stratford's lifetime affirmatively documents and proves that he personally was (and was known as) the author of the "Shakespeare" plays and poems.

The second is the claim that nobody doubted the authorship of the works of Shakespeare during his lifetime or for a long time afterwards. (1)

And of the second one, the theme of this book, he writes:

In any event, this book argues that the most important Stratfordian canard is the false meme that authorship doubts and questions were unknown during Shakespeare's own time and did not arise until centuries later. The main reason to give it top ranking is that it seems to be the claim that Stratfordians are most desperate to defend and sustain. They think it is the strongest point in the orthodox wall. In fact, as this book shows, it is their Achilles heel. (17)

And the final conclusion of the rich and intricate enquiry?

Pause and think about it. Doubts and questions about who the author was began arising *more than thirty years before any link to Stratford was first suggested*.

Here we have yet another irony, perhaps the greatest of all the many ironies lurking in the SAQ. For well over a century now defenders of Stratfordian orthodoxy have denigrated authorship doubts as belated and anachronistic. But now we see, in proper perspective, that the Stratfordian theory is the true johnny-come-lately (or should we say “willy-come-lately”?), not proposed until seven years after the purported author died. *Authorship doubts predate the Stratfordian theory itself—by at least three decades.* (321; emphasis in original)

Wildenthal gives us a useful summary of the rich ground (some of it very well worn, for Oxfordians, but illuminated by the revisiting) he covers (66-67):

1. Thomas Nashe, *Preface to Greene's Menaphon* (1589)
2. Robert Greene's *Groats Worth of Wit* and Henry Chettle's *Apology* (1592) (discussed, as a double-edged sword for Stratfordians, under eight headings)
3. Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Harvey, *Pamphlets* (1578 and 1592-93)
4. Thomas Edwards, *L'Envoy to Narcissus* (1593)
5. “Henry Willobie,” *Avisa* (1594)
6. Thomas Haywood, *Oenone and Paris* (1594)
7. William Covell, *Polimanteia* (1595)
8. John Trussell, *The First Rape of Fair Helen* (1595)
9. Sir John Davies MP, *Orchestra* (1595)
10. Joseph Hall, *Virgidemiarum* (1596)
11. John Marston, *The Scourge of Villainy* (1598-99)
12. Francis Meres, *Palladia Tamis* (1598)
13. Gabriel Harvey, *Marginalia* (c. 1598-1600)
14. John Weever, *Epigrams* (1599)
15. *The Parnassus Plays: 2* (c. 1599-1600)
16. *The Parnassus Plays: 3* (c. 1601)
17. The Essex Rebellion and Treason Trials (1601)
18. Charles Fitzgeoffrey, *Affaniae* (1601)
19. Henry Chettle, *England's Mourning Garment* (1603)
20. John Davies of Hereford, *Microcosmos* (1603) and *Humour's Heaven on Earth* (1609)
21. William Camden, *Remains* (1605) and *Britannia* (1607)
22. *Sir Thomas Smith's Voyage* (1605) and the Late English Ovid
23. William Barksted, *Myrrha, the Mother of Adonis* (1607)
24. Thomas Thorpe (publisher), *Dedication and Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1609), OUR. EVER-LIVING. POET. [the most powerful instance—

hidden in plain view, of course!—for Wildenthal, who writes (my emphasis):  
*The centered, all-capitals, and full-stopped format of these words reflects the original and is in keeping with the stunning importance of this most devastating single expression of authorship doubt before 1616.]*

25. Richard Bonian and Henry Walley (publishers), Preface to *Troilus and Cressida* (1609)
26. John Davies of Hereford, *The Scourge of Folly* (c. 1610-11) and “Our English Terence”
27. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britannia* (1612)
28. Ben Jonson, “Poet-Ape” and other pre-1616 writings
29. *Envy's Scourge and Virtue's Honour* (c. 1605-1615)
30. Christopher Brooke, *The Ghost of Richard III* (1614): With an Overview of Five Indications That the Author ‘Shakespeare’ Died Years Before 1616

On the basis of this detailed survey, Wildenthal says:

The Shakespeare authorship question can no longer be *quarantined in time*, no longer marginalized as a contingent product of modern culture. *Doubts and questions about who wrote these poems and plays were an authentic and integral product of Elizabethan and Jacobean culture.* They were present at the creation.

The evidence surveyed in Part IV is more than enough to prove that the SAQ must at least, and at long last, be taken seriously by academics and the mainstream media. The point is not what any particular piece of it may prove but that, overall, questions were raised. Doubts were entertained. They were expressed by many different writers during the very time these works were written and published. (319, my emphases)

The italicised sentence brings into view the mentioned uncanniness of the entire authorship issue, in this time of deep oppression. He draws particularly from the writings of Diana Price and Katherine Chiljan.

But “no longer quarantined in time” *by whom?* Absolutely? Or for a particular scholarly community, which has few communications with that of its opponent? That is the problem. Wildenthal develops repeated polemical questioning in relation to David Kathman, one of the very few recent Stratfordians to engage in argument with Oxfordians at all, and someone who offers useful insights. But he somewhat plaintively engages in comment, both in footnote and text (the interlacing footnotes in this work are a thing of joy, for those of us who love footnotes, but perhaps not so much for the soundbite focused “common reader” of today),

which epitomises the problems this book raises.

I cite below a portion of a footnote, part of the discussion of the implications of the key “OUR EVER-LIVING POET” line in the 1609 edition of the *Sonnets*. The honesty and subtlety of this discussion illustrate both the integrity and scholarship of this book, *and also* the difficulty in engaging with opponents whose own scholarship, at the vital points, does not entertain the scholarly virtues:

601. Ross & Kathman, “Barksted”. . . I do fear Ross and Kathman are correct that if Barnfield’s poem had “appeared ten years later . . . Oxfordians would have brandished it triumphantly, and surely would have made it a centerpiece of their arguments.” I confess I might mistakenly have done so myself. But they do not explore the obvious lesson we should all learn. All sides in the authorship debate need to do a better job of reading each other’s work respectfully to advance the search for truth, not to score points. . . . But the fact that this or that Oxfordian (including me) might well misunderstand or misuse this or that writing is *beside the point*. It does not excuse Ross and Kathman’s refusal (or that of other Stratfordians) to concede the obvious meaning of “ever-living” in the *Sonnets* dedication. Nor does it excuse the inattention to the distinction between that usage and Barnfield’s and *Polimanteia*’s usages. The point is to figure out the truth. Who really wrote the works of Shakespeare? Whoever did appears to have died by 1609 and probably years earlier.” (246, emphasis in original)

Wildenthal then asks, sidelong:

Does anything in the *Sonnets* actually *support* the Stratfordian theory? Our orthodox friends certainly cannot be faulted for lack of desperate effort? Some have suggested a hint in *Sonnet* 145: “I hate, from hate away she threw, And saved my life, saying not you.” Shakspeare of Stratford’s wife’s maiden name was Anne Hathaway. Get it?<sup>606</sup> (248)

And then, as so often in this book, the delightful piquant footnote:

606. *Sonnet* 145, lines 13-14. Compare, e.g., A. Nelson, *Shakespeare of Stratford* (2018), p. 19, (conceding that this “possible pun” is “[l]ess certain – and less probative” than the Will sonnets, discussed in text and notes 607-16) with Chiljan, p. 75, (noting the inconvenient fact that *Sonnet* 145 refers to the poet’s lover, not his wife). And to think our orthodox critics attack *doubters* for straining to find laughably weak linkages to common words? Compare also Part IV, 2.d & notes 67-69.

That is true, and that is one side of the problem, the double standards of orthodox scholars—the Stratfordian paradox—such as Professor James Shapiro, whom Wildenthal reckons (I agree) as less honest than Professor Stanley Wells, who at least conceded that (as quoted by Wildenthal, 4): “‘despite the mass of evidence’ available from Shakspeare’s lifetime ‘there is *none* that explicitly and incontrovertibly identifies [the author Shakespeare] with Stratford-Upon-Avon.’” And it likewise *certainly is* true that some Oxfordians stretch puns and analogies to laughable lengths.

The wider problem, however, is that we are dealing with deeply intractable *belief systems* on both sides of the argument. Why our legendary creator giants, scientific or literary, whose images are found upon our stamps and upon our banknotes, whose homes are marked by plaques, and sometimes invoked by huge signs upon our motorways, and so forth, have this almost religious and devotional impact upon us, is a matter for much enquiry and many books, but it is certainly true, and of none more than Shakespeare, whether we are Stratfordians or Oxfordians. And if, then, any of us are attacked upon the objects of our devotion, which may be fragile in many ways, we are likely to retaliate with non-rational and extreme responses; as the fine lawyer Bryan Wildenthal himself would remind us, lawyers say something along the lines of, “If you have the facts on your side, argue the facts; if you have no facts but have the law, argue the law; and if you have neither fact nor law, argue the man (*ad hominem*).”

This is why it will go on getting worse before it gets better, that Stratfordians will, unashamedly paradoxically, hold us Oxfordians to gross and extreme double standards—lax themselves, but holding *us* to “smoking gun” standards of evidence. We must not expect Stratfordians to respond to our increasingly mature scholarship; the better we get, the more of a threat we are. But we must keep producing it; it is what *neutral parties*, not the Stratfordians, with rare exceptions, will respond to. In the 100<sup>th</sup> year AL (“After Looney”) we owe it to ourselves to continue the maturation increasingly evident in the Oxfordian community, and of which this book is a portent.

On page 203, in footnote 464, Wildenthal says: “*Microcosmos* is one of only three references before 1623 (to my knowledge) that arguably connect Shakspeare the player to any possible role as a writer.” He conducts vigorous argument with Nina Green about various of her “OxMyths” during the book, but here, implicitly, is at least an acceptance (which would be possibly be reinforced by Jonson’s “Poet-Ape”) of her pertinacious arguments for the realistic likelihood that William Shakspeare of Stratford was a frontman (as well as a play broker, etc.) for the actual author. This, giving Shakspeare a real role Oxfordians have often denied, makes the Oxfordian position more vulnerable, and also

more honest and more scholarly, but it also further takes away the possibility of a knockout on either side. We may win, massively, on circumstantial points, but we need to accept that we are unlikely to get a knockout.

There are but two copies of the First Quarto of *Hamlet*, both discovered by flukes. There is just one of *Envy's Scourge* (Wildenthal's no. 29, one of his five indicators of the author's death before 1616, the others being *Thomas Smith's Voyage*, Barksted's *Myrrha*, the 1609 *Sonnets*, and *The Ghost of Richard III*). The one copy was also lacking a publisher's front sheet. In combination with these stunning flukes, by which we have any evidence at all about all this, nearly all the

evidence we have, as Wildenthal shows us, is ambiguous, to the point of uncanniness, in the extreme. The deeper we go into the mystery of the Shakespeare Authorship Question, so evidently integral to its age, the more uncanny and compelling it becomes, and also the less there is the kind of neat knockout proof which powerful *belief* hankers after, or distorts into being.

This honest and uncanny complexity is what Bryan Wildenthal's enthralling book opens up for us. It is a portent of a less polemical, a more mature, Oxfordianism.



## SOF PR & Marketing Update

by Steven Sabel, SOF Director of Public Relations and Marketing Relations Director



It's a great time to be an Oxfordian!

Many of you have heard me say that, or seen it here in print as part of my continual rallying cry to keep us all focused on maintaining the exceptional momentum we have been able to establish in the fifteen short months I have been your director of PR and marketing.

Not every milestone we achieve will be the front page of a major newspaper or new celebrity coming out as an Oxfordian, but each and every mention we receive in print, on the internet, in social media, in a video or radio interview, is another step forward for us all.

Since the stunning coverage we received on our annual conference in Hartford (see Fall 2019 issue of the *Newsletter*), we have continued to produce a string of relevant press releases in our effort to remain in the news where we can. We announced our Oxfordian of the Year, Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, to the world. We highlighted some new publications. We announced our coming March 4, SI-100 event in Washington, DC (see page 1), which received some print in Neosho, Missouri.

Soon, we will release our junket on our Research Grant Project recipients for this year, and start focusing on the campaign elements of our coming Ashland Conference and the expanded Pre-Conference seminar! We experienced great success obtaining very prominent press coverage in the Ashland market during our seminar there last July. I anticipate leveraging that into additional positive press for us this year through the nearly week-long schedule of events the SOF will sponsor in Ashland this year.

In the meantime, I look forward to continuing our promotion of our Speakers Bureau and any local events our members produce or present. We can always use new speakers in every market. We have PowerPoint presentations available for easy adaptation and customization to any speaker. Texts for some of them are also available, so new speakers can read right from cards while they advance the slides of the PowerPoint. It is much easier than you think to give an introductory presentation to a service club, nonprofit group, library guests, or others.

Many people tell me they don't want to join the Speakers Bureau because they are afraid to field questions at the end of the presentation. We are not all experts, and we do not have all of the answers. Often in conversation or when I give a presentation and field questions, if I don't know the answer (or I have forgotten the answer) I simply refer people to the SOF website to find the answer. "You'll find everything you need to know there, or through the many resources and publications you can link to from the site." It's a great go-to line that also drives traffic to our website, which I believe (especially with its new, more accessible design) is becoming one of the best places to capture new and open minds when they arrive there. Imagine how great it is going to be when we add educational resources available there for teachers to use in their classrooms!

With so much happening this year, and so many exciting events and programs to share with the world, I have high hopes of continuing our upward trend of increasing our profile and sharing the truth – converting the world one, Oxfordian at a time!

eVere Yours,  
Steven Sabel

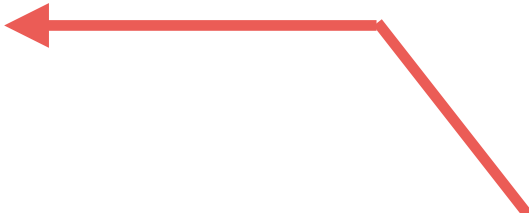


<b>Clues:</b> A. Duke's daughter who says "Call me Ganymede" (8)	44	11	121	147	172	199	90	64		
B. Former head of Columbia University (10)	19	120	215	146	49	96	3	169	75	186
C. Sonnet beginning, "Some say thy fault is youth" (6-3)	59	137	6	210	185	88	-	159	111	31
D. Cinematic role played by Maggie Smith (1966) (9)	60	202	104	162	84	140	9	37	180	
E. TV western co-starring Clint Eastwood (7)	203	112	20	61	152	176	43			
F. An event or condition occurring by chance (8)	100	71	155	41	16	125	177	207		
G. "A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy" (6)	129	21	150	183	93	1				
H. Syrian city mentioned in <i>Macbeth</i> and <i>Othello</i> (6)	194	136	97	67	106	166				
I. Biological father of Philip Faulconbridge (7)	108	48	132	209	80	167	17			
J. "Queen of Battle" (8)	170	22	118	46	142	70	91	195		
K. Sportsman who in 1846 framed a standard set of baseball rules (10)	79	213	52	165	4	103	24	188	145	124
L. Queen who says, "This is the silliest stuff I have ever heard" (9)	94	187	32	135	72	56	214	113	163	
M. A sworn statement made in writing before a magistrate (9)	58	13	173	114	42	127	54	92	208	
N. Composer who wrote the music to "My Heart Stood Still" (7)	126	198	182	50	33	153	69			
O. "You and I are past our ____ days" (Capulet) (7)	47	105	73	164	123	200	7			
P. "Ill-spirited" rebel condemned to death by King Henry IV (9)	179	133	34	110	206	78	156	66	15	
Q. Fusion of Greek culture with older Middle East cultures (9)	8	154	87	212	109	184	35	57	134	
R. Prince who says, "Blinking idiot" (7)	160	18	128	53	82	115	191			
S. Eris's daughter, in myth the personification of oblivion (5)	26	99	197	119	141					
T. City where the duke condemned Aegeon to death (7)	36	107	23	149	168	189	138			
U. "Thane of Cawdor," for Macbeth (3,5)	175	89	10		144	62	201	122	39	
V. Character who tells Falstaff, "The world's mine Oyster" (6)	204	190	25	143	157	171				
W. "Is there no ____ of place, persons, nor time in you?" (Malvolio) (7)	83	178	196	211	102	131	148			
X. 1872 Samuel Butler novel (7)	30	158	68	193	139	117	77			
Y. King of Navarre; son of the King of Naples (9)	28	55	205	101	5	181	130	81	151	
Z. A roof-like cover extending over or in front of a structure (6)	85	40	161	174	116	192				
AA. Compress, squeeze (9)	38	14	2	63	51	98	27	74	86	
BB. Duke who says, "Tennis balls, my liege" (6)	65	12	45	95	29	76				

## ACROSTIC

## Greater Opportunities

by Allan Bell



This puzzle consists of 28 lettered **clues** (A through BB) with numbers beneath each letter. Solve the clue, and enter each letter in the corresponding numbered square of the large grid. When finished the large grid will be a quotation from a book or other literary work. Also, the first letter of each correctly solved clue, when read down, will reveal the name of the author(s) and the work (the title of the work is abridged here). [NOTE: Words on the grid end only with black squares.] Solution is on page 23.

1G	2AA	3B	4K	5Y	6C	7O		8Q	9D	10U		11A	12BB	13M	14AA	15P	16F					
	17I	18R	19B	20E		21G		22J		23T		24K	25V		26S	27AA	28Y		29BB		30X	31C
	32L	33N	34P	35Q	36T	37D		38AA		39U			40Z		41F	42M	43E			44A	45BB	46J
49B	50N		51AA	52K	53R	54M	55Y	56L	57Q		58M		59C	60D		61E	62U	63AA				
64A	65BB	66P	67H	68X	69N	70J		71F	72L	73O	74AA	75B	76BB	77X	78P		79K	80I	81Y			
	82R	83W	84D	85Z	86AA	87Q	88C		89U	90A	91J	92M	93G	94L		95BB	96B	97H				
98AA	99S	100F	101Y	102W	103K	104D		105O	106H	107T	108I	109Q	110P	111C	112E	113L	114M	115R	116Z			
	117X	118J		119S	120B	121A		122U	123O	124K	125F	126N	127M	128R	129G		130Y	131W	132I			
133P	134Q	135L	136H	137C	138T	139X	140D	141S	142J	143V		144U	145K	146B	147A	148W	149T	150G				
	151Y	152E	153N	154Q	155F	156P	157V	158X	159C			160R	161Z	162D		163L	164O	165K	166H			
167I	168T		169B	170J	171V	172A		173M	174Z	175U	176E		177F	178W		179P		180D	181Y	182N		
	183G	184Q	185C	186B	187L	188K	189T	190V	191R	192Z		193X	194H	195J	196W	197S		198N				
199A	200O	201U	202D	203E	204V	205Y	206P	207F		208M	209I	210C			211W	212Q	213K	214L	215B			

## SOF 2019 Research Grant Report

by Michael Delahoyde and Coleen Moriarty

[*Editor's note:* Between 2014 and 2019 Michael Delahoyde and Coleen Moriarty received several Research Grants to examine archives and other sites in Italy for evidence of Oxford's presence there during his 1575-76 trip to the Continent. Below is their most recent update.]

We devoted three summer months in 2019 to searching for traces and news of Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, in Italy, researching in Venice, Mantua, Verona, Rome, Siena, Naples, Bologna, Palermo and Messina. Many of these cities we had not visited in previous years (which had included Florence, Genoa, Milan and Modena/Ferrara).

Realizing that Oxford had succeeded, unfortunately for all of us, in traveling virtually undetected by the political courts or at the city governmental level, we expanded our search in 2019 beyond state archives to include other repositories of 16th-century documents, such as the formidable Vatican Secret Archive, access into which is difficult and exclusive. The Venerable English College in Rome (which served as a hospice and where Anthony Munday, William Stanley, John Milton, and other nobles and notables stayed) lacks records for the 1570s, but the archival director was especially accommodating since his mentor had been an Oxfordian, the Jesuit priest Francis Oborn Edwards, who was also a friend of Bonner Cutting's parents.

Friendly persistence with an archival librarian in Verona resulted this year in the granting of special access to portions of an enormous and nearly unmanageable collection donated a decade ago: the Giusti del Giardino materials, consisting of boxes of unorganized and unindexed documents filling rows and rows of floor-to-ceiling shelves. While Padua was also an intended destination, we carried out a great deal of advance contact, work, and registrations this year; and the Paduan archivist, having explored materials there concerning the 1570s, advised a redirection of efforts to the Marciana library in Venice, where he had previously worked. The Correr library in Venice was another repository explored this year, while the Fondazione Giorgio Cini is another Venice library awaiting the researchers' eventual return.

Oxford would likely have avoided the Medicis, rulers of Tuscany in the 1570s, at most sneaking through Florence, and infiltrating the Siennese social scene through contacts in literary societies and academies. Thus the Accademia dei Rozzi, at one time a resource for records on Siena's theater history, was a new stop this year, as was the destination for those archival materials dating before 1690: the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, whose Accademia degli Intronati was a 16th-century intellectual and creative club, collectively



responsible for the *commedia* titled *Gl'Ingannati* (*The Deceived Ones*), the source play for Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and one regularly performed in Siena on 6 January: the Epiphany, or "Twelfth Night." Promising leads point to Alessandro Piccolomini (1508-1579)—a translator of Classics such as Ovid and Virgil—a writer, philosopher, and playwright whose comedies were produced by the Accademia degli Intronati, and who, despite the communal attribution, is probably responsible himself for having written *Gl'Ingannati*. Very enthusiastic and helpful Siennese librarians made us newly aware of the fact that the city's several ancient *contrade* (districts) have their own archives—one of several further leads concerning private and more obscure collections that we intend to follow up, carrying out some of the research with long-distance aid from among the Italian network of colleagues we have created, before returning on site at some time in the future.

By the end of the summer, new finds concerning the importance of the 16th and 18th Earls of Oxford in the Italian records, with oblique recollections of the 17th Earl in later years, along with the latter's elusiveness in 1575-76, indicate that Edward de Vere had a sensitive diplomatic mission in Venice involving the re-establishment of ambassadorial relations with England, and that, more interested in Italian arts and culture than politics, he subsequently sought and managed to journey through Italy incognito. He may have begun a trend of Englishmen doing so.

Combining this material with finds from previous years, we have much to report. We are preparing a long article for *The Oxfordian* and, hopefully, at least one other piece for a mainstream, high-profile, less academic magazine that features thought-provoking essays. What will interest and appeal to a general readership is the same as that which excites Oxfordian conference attendees and all the supporters of their project: the adventure and progress of two researchers following the footsteps of the Earl of Oxford in his journey towards becoming Shakespeare.



## To Know Or Not to Know

by John Probst

(Is that the answer?)

I say! With out exception or delay,  
what I'm about to write and say,  
is a bit of the old thorns and thicket.  
AH~ yes a bit of the old sticky wicket.  
But being in need of having to be heard,  
I shall begin by writing a tale many would like deferred,  
and others believe to be absolutely absurd.

Well, how does one begin,  
well that's the thing I guess at the start,  
Yes that would be smart. But to the reader beware!  
Take Care(!), be of cautionary mind,  
for what you will find, is a fantastic tale,  
the likes of which does not prevail,  
in anyone else's time, but Elizabeth I  
the Virgin Queen, who because of her love affairs,  
bears responsibility for two great scandalous scenes.

To straighten out this historical mess,  
I must begin but historically digress.  
For the first narrative page, begins when  
Princess Elizabeth at fourteen years of age,  
was under the patronage of a certain  
upper class Aristotelian, a veritable villain,  
who sexually divested and molested her,  
as she purportedly protested, then left her  
within their sexual convolution, a  
pregnant protrusion, and thus  
the beginning of a scandal  
in need of a quick and final solution.  
So from this twosome was born a male royal heir  
in need of a secret upbringing and Aristotelian care.  
Needing to have the child completely disappear,  
he was sent to the house of John, the Sixteenth Earl de Vere,  
where this heir of the Tudor dynasty was taught courtly airs and refinery.  
And he grew in wisdom and in years, and found favor with his royal peers.  
Then when Elizabeth became queen, in her court was daily seen,  
Edward, John's son and royal heir, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of the house of de Vere.  
But only one man knew the relationship between them surely,  
and he was the queen's defender, the honorable Lord Burley,  
who's single aim, was to keep their relationship under "covers,"  
as he watched helplessly, the two became passionate lovers.

Not even they knew their true relationship to each other,  
for Elizabeth knew from none, that Edward was her son,  
and Edward de Vere's was never informed by any other,  
that his lover, Elizabeth, was also his mother.  
And from their love affair wild, was born, a royal child,  
then from his mother's arms was torn,  
and secretly absconded and impounded  
with his real identity hidden and unfounded,  
because Burley, taking matters in hand,  
took this boy in to his own grand homeland,



at Cecil House north of the River Thames on the Strand.  
 And to his parents he was never known, a veritable phantom,  
 but was known to the world as  
 Henry Wriothesley, The 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton.  
 Now at this point I suggest that we stop and take stock,  
 of all that we've written and view just what facts we've got.

### To Wit!

Edward deVere had taken Queen Elizabeth to be his lover,  
 without ever knowing that she was also his mother,  
 and, in turn she bore him a son, whom Edward fathered, no other,  
 and that child, born from his queen lover,..... his mother,  
 made him not only the boy's father,  
 but also his biological ....half brother.

Well from all that we have concluded,  
 I would surmise we have, a historical truth, alluded.  
 For in Renaissance history some chronicler deemed  
 Elizabeth the moniker, the *Virgin Queen*, but in truth,  
 it's all fiction, and an absolute contradiction  
 when following the facts that exemplify  
 her great sexual acts of agility, and virility not to mention fertility.  
 Thus somewhere a long the way, by Jove, I really must say,  
 discounting her having qualities of divinity,  
 wouldn't one surmise, that she, the queen,  
 must have misplaced her .....VIRGINITY(?)!

[Inspired by the movie *Anonymous*]

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