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The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship
PO Box 66083
Auburndale, Massachusetts
02466
USA

Queries may be directed to the editor, **Chris Pannell** at cpannell3@cogeco.ca

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The front cover is a costume display from the restored Globe Theatre in London (photo circa 2013).

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Bob Meyers

Don Rubin

Bryan Wildenthal

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Ron Hess

Richard Waugaman

Ramon Jiménez

Jim Boyd

Wally Hurst

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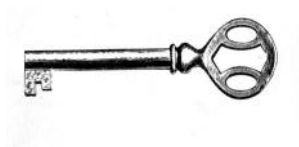


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Barnes 1588.” It contains translations of six of Theocritus’ poems (or idyllia), numbered 8, 11, 16, 18, 21 and 31. The sole surviving copy is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. While the publication date is clear, the date of these translations and the translator’s identity are unknown. There is however, intrinsic evidence in favour of Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford.

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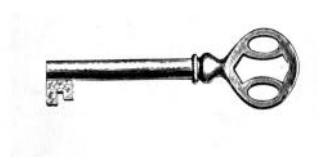
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"Small Latine and Lesse Greeke"

Anatomy of a Misquotation (Part 1: Setting the Stage)

by Roger Stritmatter

As every English literature undergraduate knows, on the testimony of the bard's friend and colleague Ben Jonson in the 1623 *First Folio*, William Shakespeare had "small Latin and less Greek." Indeed, the idea of a bard barely schooled in the classics, at least by 16th century standards, is not only consistent with the established postulates of Shakespearean biography but is reinforced by copious early testimony to the essentially *sui generis* character of Shakespeare's literary achievement, as well as his much-celebrated disassociation from the real world of Elizabethan and Jacobean society.

I am being ironic, of course – this paper was originally written for presentation at a 2014 University of Massachusetts Conference on Shakespeare and Translation, sponsored by the Department of Comparative Literature and the University of Massachusetts Renaissance Center. Since a truly informed discussion of Jonson's *Folio* encomium requires a significant effort at historical contextualization, what originated in a 45-minute presentation at the 2014 Umass Conference will here be presented in two articles, the first of which appears in this issue of *The Oxfordian*.

The belief that Jonson's "small Latin" clause represents an accurate assessment of the educational basis for the works is an unfortunate legacy of traditional beliefs about Shakespeare and a linchpin of the orthodox biographical tradition. While there is no record of Shakespeare's university attendance, which would presumably have involved advanced studies in languages, rhetoric, theology, and philosophy, we are reliably assured that Shakespeare must have attended the Stratford grammar school, where, according to this theory, he obtained a sufficient preparation for the minimal educational attainments manifested in the plays and narrative poems published under his name. As T.W. Baldwin explains in his exemplary Stratfordian account *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, by the standards of the age, "a 'learned grammarian' as was Shakspeare had indeed 'small Latin and less Greek' . . . the standard against which Jonson places Shakspeare's attainments is the highest of which he had knowledge" (I: 3) . . . "Though he had small Latin and less Greek, yet Jonson would call forth the greatest Latin and Greek tragedians to do him honor" (I: 2). It is therefore unsurprising – so goes the paradigmatic reasoning of Shakespeare orthodoxy

– that so little evidence can be found in the works themselves to substantiate anything beyond the most superficial knowledge of classical literature, among other subjects of human inquiry. Perhaps worst of all, as we shall see, the dogma embodied in the misinterpretation of Jonson’s words ignores the larger context of their utterance, abstracting them without justification from the larger rhetorical context of Jonson’s entire poem as well as from the larger political context of London in 1623.

We should be careful, on the other hand, to not oversimplify the Stratfordian position on this question of Shakespeare’s classical preparation. Over the years, at least a few well-informed scholars have wrestled seriously with the question of classical influences in the plays, and many are aware of the extensive evidence for the influence of at least some classical sources on Shakespeare. Nor is there any need here to dispute in any detail the popular but poorly-grounded belief that the Shakespearean works embody knowledge of the classical tradition no greater than that readily obtainable in a few brief years by a young genius attending Stratford Grammar. Abundant scholarship – see, for example, many relevant citations in Walker (2002), Showerman (2011), or Burrow (2013) – now suggests that Leonard Digges, writing circa 1622-1635, was either woefully mistaken or – a more interesting proposition – was being cheekily ironic for some private reason when he claimed that the bard

doth not borrow

One phrase from the Greeks, nor Latins imitate,
Nor once from the vulgar languages translate.¹

On the contrary, that Shakespeare had some Latin is generally now accepted by those who have studied the evidence. However, even so perceptive a scholar as Burrow, in

Roger A. Stritmatter is a Professor of Humanities and Literature at Coppin State University and member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society since 1990 and founding member of the Shakespeare Fellowship in 2000. With Gary Goldstein, in 2009 he established Brief Chronicles: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Authorship Studies, serving as general editor 2009-2016. The 2015 third edition of the Index to Oxfordian Publications identifies 105 articles by him 1990-2014, many in orthodox academic journals. Stritmatter has published on Shakespearean topics in a range of academic journals, including The Shakespeare Yearbook, Review of English Studies, Notes and Queries, and the Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review. He is the author, with Lynne Kositsky, of *On the Date, Sources, and Design of Shakespeare’s The Tempest* (McFarland 2013) and, with Alexander Waugh, *A New Shakespeare Allusion Book: Literary Allusions to Shakespeare, 1584-1786 from Historical Principles* (forthcoming, 2018) and has appeared in two authorship documentaries, *Last Will. & Testament* (2012) and *Nothing is Truer than Truth* (2017). He would like to acknowledge the assistance of Shelly Maycock and the late Andrew Hannas, as well as the University of Massachusetts Department of Comparative Literature and the UMass Renaissance Center for a “place to stand” in developing some of the ideas contained in this essay.

a book titled *Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity* (Oxford, 2013), includes chapters on Virgil, Ovid, Roman comedy, Seneca, and Plutarch, but none on Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, or Aristotle. Orthodox scholars, it seems, are becoming accustomed to acknowledging the Latin or Chaucerian influences in Shakespeare, but are still anxious about a bard who also read Aeschylus and *Beowulf*. Compared to knowledge of Latin, a reading knowledge of classical Greek or Anglo-Saxon was a much rarer thing in Elizabethan England.

If, as I believe, Digges was spoofing his naïve readers, he was also following a tradition long since established by Milton (in 1632) and originating in the authority or misconstruction of Jonson's *First Folio* statements. Jonson's encomium "To the memory of my beloved, the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare, and what he hath left us," therefore, is the rock and foundation of the popular modern image of the bard as an unlettered miracle of homespun English genius. Did Jonson really say that Shakespeare had small Latin and less Greek? If not, how could he have been misunderstood to that effect, for so long and by such distinguished scholars? To gain a more plausible understanding of Jonson's statement, and possibly the motives underwriting the larger cult of the natural bard, let us first consider the historical context in which Jonson's *Folio* encomium was composed. In view of the abundant contrary evidence, we shall see that the widespread, unexamined view that Jonson intended readers to understand a Shakespeare with literally "small Latin and Lesse Greek" is an unjustified relic of the Stratfordian paradigm, one which has not only played a significant role in shaping orthodoxy's response to the authorship question, but has handicapped serious study of the many and pervasive Greek as well as Latin literary influences in the works.

The 1623 Shakespeare Folio, In Context

Most Shakespeare scholars probably do not know that the 1623 *First Folio* appeared in print at the climax of the most serious constitutional crisis – the so-called Spanish Marriage crisis – in the twenty-one year reign of James I. One who has written provocatively about the significance of the crisis is Anabelle Patterson, who asserts "there is no more striking exhibit of the conditions influencing the conventions of political discourse than the political struggle around the Spanish Marriage." No other event, in Patterson's estimation, more profoundly influenced the manner in which "the unwritten rules and contracts evolved, [were] broken, and relearned throughout the century" or the manner in which the "formulae of protected speech and privileged genres, of equivocations shared by authors and authorities" (83) were tested and reshaped. The failure of orthodox scholars to more fully contextualize the *Folio* from a historical point of view, especially in view of Patterson's emphasis on the period as providing a "striking exhibit" illustrating the negotiation between authors and censors to produce published literature, is truly remarkable. Although this phobia of

acknowledging the connection between the Folio and the Marriage crisis has started to diminish in recent years – primarily due to the influence of scholars such as Peter Dickson, who, starting in the late 1990s, have forcefully called attention to the implications of the timing between the two events – the intimate relationship between the Folio and the Marriage crisis remains out of focus in the critical literature.

As Jacobean historian Thomas Cogswell recounts, the “tense atmosphere” of London in 1622-1623 – precisely during the months the Folio was being printed – reveals “a nation on the verge of rebellion” (50) over the ominous geopolitical question of whether Prince Charles (1600-1649), then heir to the Stuart throne, should follow his father’s plan for him and marry the Spanish infanta Maria Anna, sister of the new King Phillip IV, who at sixteen was already reputed to be a great court beauty. On one side were English and international Catholics as well as the Jacobean crown, delighted at the thought of increasing their influence through a union between the Spanish and English monarchies. In 1622, after nearly twenty years of careful planning and preparation, James looked forward to achieving his ambition of brokering an international and interfaith peace that would resolve the bitter struggle between the two faiths through the time-honored ploy of dynastic marriage. If successful, he would not only succeed in achieving international peace and ecumenism by tying his house to the Hapsburgs, he would also enrich England’s coffers with a dowry of legendary proportions, sometimes estimated at as much as 500,000 English pounds.

On the other side was the great mass of English Protestants, led by a coalition of “patriot” Earls and spurred on by many outspoken voices – from the pulpits, in the parliament, and even on the stages and in the streets. These were not only loyal to the Protestant cause on the continent, but fearful of the threat of counter-reformation at home should the marriage occur. In Robert Cross’s account, “Europe’s most powerful Protestant and Catholic states [were on] the brink of a political alliance virtually unprecedented in the post-Reformation period” (“Pretense” 563). In February 1623, the heir apparent Charles Stuart and George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham departed in secret for Spain to pursue the match. Both in England and in Spain, the trip became the “news story of the century,” with “few relations . . . published in Spain between March and September 1623 on any other topic” (Ettinghausen 4).

Ironically, Shakespeare scholars have typically overlooked the explanatory richness of this historical event for contextualizing the Folio’s design and contemporaneous significance. Despite the salient fact that the months during which the Folio was being printed (April 1622 - Nov. 1623) constituted the apogee of this long brewing crisis within the Stuart state, studies of the Folio’s publication characteristically turn a blind eye to this contemporary context. Instead the Folio is conceived – as it was at the Folger Library’s historic 2014 Conference on “Shakespeare and the Problem of Biography” – as an isolated, disinterested, purely “literary” project, a “ghost in the machine,” abstracted from its historical genesis and motivating political context, not

to mention alienated from a believable author. One recent and welcome exception to this avoidance is Emma Smith's otherwise fastidiously orthodox 2015 study, which acknowledges by fitful starts, but far more candidly than Stratfordians have typically done in the past, certain key elements of the many connections between the Folio and the marriage crisis. Those familiar with the scholarly literature in its larger context will recognize that this belated interest in the possible relevance of the marriage crisis is a result of the work of Peter Dickson and others who have not, unfortunately, made it into the footnotes of Smith's book.

Smith's acknowledgment of some connection between the Folio and the marriage crisis, however, is an afterthought in a critical tradition that has already deified the object of its reverence by turning him into a sociological abstraction, constituting, "one of the central cultural expressions of England's own transition from the aristocratic regime of the Stuarts to the commercial empire presided over by the Hanoverians" (Dobson 8). In short, the Folio's "complicity in the humanist enterprise" during the 1620s, to use Leah Marcus' revealing phrase (41), laid the epistemic foundation for the appropriation of Shakespeare as a national icon in subsequent centuries.

Folio Paratexts and Puzzles

A paratext is any element of a literary publication or imprint that serves to introduce the main body of a work. This includes not only obvious elements like title pages, with or without images, epigrams, author names, or other elements, but also – very often in early modern practice – dedicatory poems and essays, justifications, acknowledgments of patrons, and – after about 1600 in England, sometimes, engravings of the author. Paratexts are important ways of understanding how authors, editors or publishers want readers to understand a work; they allow a kind of shaping of the reception of the work. Paratexts are thus – to borrow with modification the language of Anabel Patterson – "entry codes," one function of which is to negotiate the entry of a literary text of controversial status into the public sphere.

Given the controversial circumstances of these texts, early modern scholars also know that paratexts are not intended to be read only at face value. They very frequently include claims, justified in their authors' minds by the social exigencies of production (such as the risk of alienating or angering opponents with sufficient political power to impede publication or retaliate in print or otherwise), that do not necessarily represent the complete or sincere beliefs of their authors. On the contrary, Patterson emphasizes, "disclaimers of topical intention are not to be trusted, and are more likely to be entry codes to precisely that kind of reading they protest against" (65). Just as often, they reveal literary secrets to discerning readers, while at the same time distracting many casual readers with indirection. In light of these considerations, let us examine more closely some of the Folio paratexts.

Before the skeptical reader even arrives at Jonson's eighty-line encomium to Shakespeare, the problem of authorship is already evident in the Folio's Delphic title and preliminaries, which Charlton Ogburn aptly characterizes as "a masterpiece of equivocation" (236) (Figure 1).

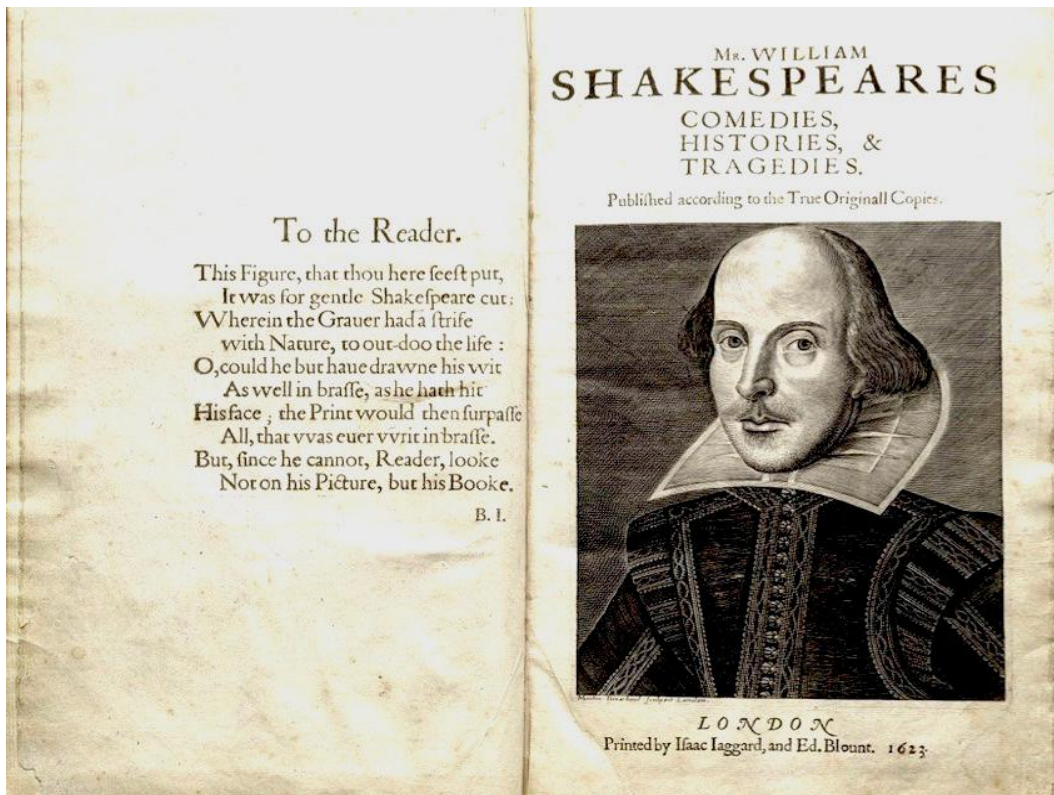


Figure 1. The Droeshout engraving on the title page and Jonson's facing epigram: a "masterpiece of equivocation."

Long a source of anxiety for discerning readers, the Martin Droeshout Folio engraving (Figure 1) is accompanied by a ten-line epigram, signed "B.I." for "Ben Jonson." The engraving appears even more bizarre when compared to Droeshout's other work,² which graphically illustrates the Anglo-Dutch artist's masterful command over perspective, shading, and all the other conventions of the engraver's art (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Martin Droeshout's engraving for the title page of Montaigne's *Essays* (1632) (Hind 225a)

Lacking the trimming oval and ornamentation customarily used in engravings of authors in early modern books (Figure 3), Droeshout's Shakespeare presents "a slightly unfinished look . . . [offering] no particularizing details – only the raw directness of the image, as if to say that in this case no artifice is necessary: this is the Man Himself" (Marcus 18).



Figure 3. Samuel Daniel title page engraving (1609) illustrates the Jacobean norm and contrasts vividly with the spare “iconoclasm” of Droeshout’s 1623 engraving. Image courtesy lib.unc.edu.

As Ogburn effectively summarizes, even many Stratfordians have found the Droeshout an embarrassment if not an abomination. Over the decades, many – including art historians such as Gainsborough and Shakespeare scholars, including Ivor Brown, J. Dover Wilson, J.C. Squire, and Samuel Schoenbaum – have lamented Droeshout’s “pudding faced” effigy, prefixed to one of the most important books ever published. A head preternaturally suspended a few inches off two left shoulders and rising to a hydrocephalous, conspicuously bald forehead, a dark mask-like line running down the left side of the face, two strangely unfocused right eyes calling forth the intervention of the modern neuroanatomist, and a chin “quaintly suggestive of an unduly deferred razor” – all contribute to an effect which has led many to concur with Sir George Greenwood that the engraving embodies “a peculiar expression of sheepish oafishness which is irresistibly comic” (36).

More recently, literary historians such as Marcus have criticized the focus on the engraving, arguing instead that scholars should consider how the entire ensemble of Folio paratexts contributes to what she terms the “iconoclastic” effect of the whole. Greenwood and others prematurely “blame the picture for a broader discomfort arising out of the endlessly circulating interplay among all elements of the title page – the portrait, the words above, the poem” (20). Jonson’s epigram (Figure 1), Marcus notes, “undermines the visual power of the portrait by insisting on it as something constructed and ‘put’ there” (18), activating by intent a latent conflict, in which competing elements vie for the reader’s attention (19).

With its almost sardonic emphasis on the artificial character of the engraving (“which thou here seest put”), and its explicit warning, “look not on his picture but his book” – Jonson’s ten-line epigram, as juxtaposed to the Folio, is “in the precise sense of the term, iconoclastic” (19) – that is to say, it literally attacks the credibility of the portrait it effects to accompany. It even – so says the orthodox Marcus! – sets “the reader off on a treasure hunt for the author” (19) – who, Jonson alleges, will be found not in the engraving, but inside his own book.

“Iconoclasm” is a key term for comprehensively describing the design theme of the Folio paratexts. Marcus helps us to focus on how the various elements set the Shakespeare Folio apart from other books, cultivating a deliberately dissonant effect designed to clue the sensitive reader to the work’s underlying literary deceit. Compared to more typical prefatory materials of the period, the “Protestant,” “rhetorically turbulent” Folio assumes a very particular social ethos, mirroring the conflict over the Spanish Marriage through the dissonance of its claims. In short, the Folio’s design may be understood as symptomatic of the document’s historical genesis during the Spanish Marriage crisis years of 1621-1624, as well as the underlying motive of the falsity of its superficial claims about authorship.

Form, as we might expect given the costs and risks of the production, follows function. The book’s introduction reflects a social landscape marked by “rhetorical turbulence,” a rising social tension over questions of religious and national identity, punctuated by frequent outbreaks of iconoclastic emotion warring with censorious suppression. I mean to argue, in other words, that the antecedents of the mythologizing process by which Shakespeare (as Dobson shows) was transformed into a national icon over the course of the next two centuries are already apparent, on close inspection, in the decontextualizing effects of the Folio’s paratexts, and the consequent misreading of the document’s place in history. By “decontextualizing,” I mean the way in which the Folio seeks to elevate the author – mainly through Jonson’s 180 line encomium (to be considered in detail in the second part of this article) – to the mythic and universal, establishing him as “not of an age, but for all time.” But despite such ideological appeals to timeless universality, the Folio’s design – including Jonson’s “small Latin and Less Greek” clause – cannot reasonably be separated

from the larger circumstances of the Spanish Marriage proposal, not only because its rhetorical posture reflects the iconoclastic mood of England prevailing during the months it was designed and printed, but also because almost all of those involved in its production were directly or indirectly involved in the tumultuous politics of the Spanish match.

The Spanish Marriage Crisis & the First Folio

Accounts of the Folio's publication rarely mention the marriage crisis, and books and articles treating it almost never mention the Folio, even though the Folio is dedicated to the Lord Chamberlain (1615-1630), 3rd Earl of Pembroke, William Herbert, and his brother Philip, Earl of Montgomery. These two were the most senior and influential members of the coalition of patriot Protestant earls, who spearheaded the opposition to the Spanish union in the Privy Council and in parliament. These two sons of Mary Sidney also threw active support behind populist opposition to the match, expressed in pamphlets, sermons, and stage plays. In 1624 Pembroke went so far as to become a prime sponsor of the most conspicuous theatrical opposition to the marriage, Thomas Middleton's controversial allegory, *A Game at Chess*, and even intervened on behalf of its actors imprisoned by the crown (Patterson 82).

Emerging from the confluence of the dramatic international events of 1622-23, "when throats were full of Anti-Spanish rhetoric and the cry for war [against Spain] resounded in parliament" (Dickson, "Epistle" 2), the Folio, patronized by Pembroke and Montgomery, was clearly intended as a major political statement, and was interpreted, as Dickson shows, by the Stuart crown as a direct challenge to its pro-Spanish policies. In promoting the Shakespearean works through their association with the Folio, and likely financial patronage of the book's publication, Dickson argues, the patriot earls sought to redefine English national identity and ideals in the context of the constitutional crisis over the Spanish marriage proposal. This very conscious political agenda of the Folio is indicated by the fact that even orthodox Shakespeareans such as Emma Smith are now starting to acknowledge that the Folio's "closing play depicts plucky Britain both beating and paying tribute to an imperial power (the final conciliation with Rome which ends *Cymbeline*)," adding that "it has been suggested that [the order of the plays in the Folio] was deliberately organized to coincide with, and to echo, an anticipated successful conclusion to the Spanish match negotiations" (Smith 82).

Smith's footnote for this statement is to Gary Taylor's dubiously titled "Making Meaning Marketing Shakespeare 1623," published in Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel's *From Performance to Print in Shakespeare's England*, by Palgrave Macmillan, in 2006. Make of it what you will, but seven years before Taylor published this argument, my article, "Publish We This Peace: A Note on the Design of the Shakespeare First Folio and the Spanish Marriage Crisis," had appeared in the *Shakespeare Oxford*

Society Newsletter (Fall 1998), written in response to Dickson's case for the relevance of the Spanish marriage to the Folio publication. Apparently Dr. Taylor and Dr. Smith missed both Dickson's articles and my articles (and now, since 2011, Dickson's book) in their literature surveys.

The crisis of 1621-24 had been long in coming. For almost twenty years, James had dreamed of securing a peaceful balance of powers on the continent by marrying one of his children into the house of Hapsburg. By the time of the *First Folio*, however, this longstanding scheme had been complicated by two recent dramatic developments. One was the loss of Protestant control over the Palatinate (present day south-west Germany) by James' daughter Elizabeth and her husband Fredrick, the elector Palatine and de facto leader of the Protestant cause in central Europe, early in what was to become the Thirty Years' War between two religious factions battling to control the strategic territories of central Europe. After their humiliating defeat at the battle of White Mountain in November, 1620, Fredrick and Elizabeth appeared to be fighting a lost cause.

In June, 1621, after much importuning, James had commissioned Horatio Vere, the elder cousin of Henry, the 18th Earl of Oxford, to lead a small English contingent to fight on Fredrick and Elizabeth's behalf. But it proved too little, too late. By October 1621, the couple, much to the dismay of the English Protestant faction, had ignominiously become dispossessed refugees in The Hague. To English Protestants, the King's reluctance to intervene on behalf of his own daughter and son-in-law to prevent the loss of the Palatinate in 1620 was a terrible omen of the increasing domination of pro-Catholic elements at court, chief among them the notorious favorite George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham (1592-1628) and the widely despised Spanish ambassador Gondomar. The other event forcing James' hand and inspiring international gossip was the apparently precipitous decision in February 1623 of Prince Charles and Villiers to embark for Madrid to court the Infanta *in propriae personae* (that is, without lawyers). In the colorful account documented by Robert Cross ("Pretense"), the two young power-brokers departed "complete with fake beards and false names." Overnight the episode became a cause célèbre in Spain and among English Catholics, and a scandal among Protestants loyal to Fredrick and Elizabeth's cause.

In England the leaders of the backlash against the marriage plan – both in parliament and the streets – included Southampton, Oxford, Pembroke, Montgomery, and Derby. In other words, the son, two sons-in-law, and the brother of a son-in law, of the 17th Earl of Oxford, were all among the most vocal and influential opponents of the marriage in the months leading up to the Folio release in the fall of 1623. The solidarity of this group was reinforced by close ties of political alliance and consanguinity. As the sons of the literary Mary Sidney, sister of the Protestant hero Sir Philip Sidney, the Herbert brothers had inherited the mantle of leadership of the Protestant

cause in England. The ties among the members of this group were reinforced through marriage. As early as 1597, Pembroke had been betrothed to Bridget Vere, and while that marriage never transpired, Pembroke's younger brother Montgomery in 1605 married Bridget's sister Susan.

The significance of the Susan Vere-Herbert marriage may best be appreciated by considering that the 18th Earl's elder cousins, Horatio (1576-1635) and Francis (1560-1609), in turn, had for decades been the two chief military strategists for the English forces fighting on behalf of the Protestant cause in the Rhineland and the Low Countries. The Vere-Herbert axis thus constituted the vital core of English support for the Protestant cause on the continent. By 1621 the King's reticence to help protect his daughter Elizabeth and her beleaguered husband, the Elector Palatine Fredrick, from the advancing counter-reformation armies was becoming a national crisis. In January of the same year the 18th Earl of Oxford obtained a royal warrant to join his cousin's force fighting in the Palatinate. But long before then, as early as 1600, the Earl's cousin Francis was winning a name for himself in the battle for Ostend in the Low Countries, a fight memorialized by Hamlet as that

little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.
(4.4.17-18)

And yet, in the shadow of the proposed Spanish marriage, these puny military efforts were unlikely to yield a victory for the Protestant side. In the internal English conflict over the Spanish match, Protestants launched a different, more subtle front. At Pembroke's behest, his associate and one-time chaplain Thomas Scott (c. 1580-1626), "the most virulently anti-Spanish pamphleteer" of the period (Patterson 82), emerged as "one of the earliest and most forceful opponents of the match" (Cogswell 50). From 1620 to 1625, Scott authored as many as two dozen pamphlets, most of them contesting the Stuart policy towards Spain or otherwise promoting the Protestant cause both in Europe and England. His anonymous *Vox Populi, Neues from Spayne, translated according to the Spanish coppie, Which may serve to forwarne both England and the United Provinces how far to trust to Spanish pretences*, originally published in the Low Countries in 1620, against the looming backdrop of the Palatinate's defeat by the Catholic League, appears to have provoked James' December 1620 "Proclamation against Licentious Speech in Matters of State" (Clegg 186), which outlawed voicing opposition to the Spanish match. Scott's pamphlet depends heavily on fictional conspiratorial conversations between Spanish functionaries like ambassador Gondomar and their crown supporters such as the Earl of Buckingham. Betrayed by his publisher under pressure from the Jacobean state, Scott fled to the Low Countries to avoid prosecution, but Pembroke's support for his chaplain did not visibly waver.

Opposing the match meant that Scott and the other patriots paid a political price

and even, in some cases, risked their lives in defense of English independence and liberty of conscience. Pembroke's most outspoken allies in the opposition were the Earls of Oxford and Southampton, and in July 1621 both men, along with John Sandys, were arrested for politicking against the marriage. Perhaps the two most radical members of the group, Oxford and Southampton were, by this time, very close allies. In the early 1590's Southampton – the dedicatee of the two Shakespeare narrative poems (*Venus and Adonis* in 1593, *Lucrece* in 1594) and, according to many, "fair youth" of the Sonnets – had been engaged to marry the third Vere daughter, Elizabeth, although she instead married William Stanley, the 6th Earl of Derby. Now the enduring relationship between the Southampton and the Oxford earldoms lived on through the friendship between the "two most noble Henries" as emblemized in the copper plate engraving of them circa 1624 (Figure 4).



Figure 4. The "two most noble Henries," the "patriot" Earls of Oxford (left) and Southampton (right), circa 1624. The date represents the historical present of the image. The engraving itself, apparently a copy of a lost original, dates to the mid-17th century.

Even more than Southampton, the 18th Earl of Oxford seemed destined to be a thorn in James' side over the issue of the marriage proposal. After an inflammatory speech in parliament opposing the marriage in July, he was held in The Tower for five months until December 30, 1621. In the interim, the House of Commons issued a "protestation" affirming freedom of speech and conscience as "the ancient and undoubted Birthright and inheritance of the Subjects of England" (Patterson 85). The outraged King made a dramatic show of ripping up the protestation with his own hands. After Oxford's release at the end of December, Buckingham conspired to keep him away from court, and for three months he was farmed out to the powerless post, far from the court, of Vice-Admiral of the English fleet protecting the channel.

Pembroke's chaplain Scott, returned across the channel from the Low Countries, on March 20, 1622, to the abbey church of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk – said to have been the meeting place for the Magna Carta barons in 1214. There, Scott delivered his assize sermon critiquing the crown policy promoting the Spanish match and the persecution of Oxford, who had by then been released from the tower. Published in 1623 under the title *Vox Dei: Injustice Cast and Condemned*, the sermon is dedicated to Pembroke and subscribed "your Honours most deuoted seruant and Chaplaine" (A3v).

Within days of Scott's provocative March 20 sermon – sometime in early April – the 18th Earl³ was returned to custody by the irate monarchy, and this time he was held for eighteen months and not released until December 30 1623, only weeks after the first sales of the Folio. In a May 16, 1622 letter to the Spanish King, discovered by Peter Dickson, Gondomar, who in 1618 had successfully convinced James to execute Sir Walter Raleigh, conveys his express wish for a repeat performance, this time with Oxford's head on the chopping block. Inveighing against Oxford as "an extremely malicious person [who] has followers," and who was "bad mouthing the king and me," Gondomar goes on to take credit for the jailing, and confesses to "a strong desire to cut off [Oxford's] head" (cited in Boyle 4).

Following shortly on the folio publication, Pembroke's chaplain Scott published *Vox Regis*, a work substantially devoted to justifying his earlier use in *Vox Populi* of fictional techniques of propaganda. In Scott's rhetorical arsenal is the traditional license of the theatre, which allows him to insist that "Kings are content in plays and masques to be admonished of diverse things" (Ev).⁴

Questioning the Role of Heminges and Condell

In light of these events, it is interesting to note that since Hinman's 1963 study of the *First Folio* production schedule, it has generally been acknowledged that the book's printing did not start until spring of 1622. While Peter Dickson, among

others, has proposed that there is a connection between the Folio as a project and the events of the Spanish marriage crisis, even Dickson may have underestimated the closeness of the connection from the literary historian's point of view. Looking more closely at the Folio preliminaries can help us to better understand the close fit between the book and its historical context. These include not only the Droeshout engraving and Jonson's accompanying ten line epigram "To the Reader," signed B.I., which ends "Looke/Not on his Picture, but his Booke," but also dedicatory verses by Hugh Holland, Leonard Digges, and I.[ames] M.[abbe]. Dedicatory epistles to Pembroke and his brother Montgomery – the latter the brother-in-law of the jailed Oxford – and the other epistle "To the great variety of readers," are subscribed by Heminges and Condell, actors in the King's Men.

Even though the epistles are "signed" by Heminges and Condell, an impressively durable scholarly tradition, originating in the early 19th century and receiving significant affirmation by post-Stratfordians such as Whalen (2011), has emphasized the evidence for Jonson's authorship of at least parts of the two epistles. Among the early doubters was George Steevens – often considered the most erudite of all 18th century editors – who noted that the preface to the players "had much of the manner of Ben Jonson" and that Heminges and Condell were "themselves wholly unused to composition" (in Malone 663). After comparing several pages of passages showing the closeness between the wording of the epistles and Jonson's other works, Steevens deduced that "from these numerous and marked coincidences, it is, I think, manifest that every word of the first half of this address to the [general] reader, which is signed with the names of John Heminges and Henry Condell, was written by Ben Jonson" and that Jonson's hand "may be clearly, though not uniformly, traced in the second part only" (as cited in Greenwood, 1921, 12-13). The orthodox Felix Schelling agreed that "neither Heminges nor Condell was a writer, and such a book ought to be properly introduced. In such a juncture there could be no choice. The best book of the hour demanded sponsorship by the greatest contemporary men of letters. Ben Jonson..." (in Greenwood 1921, 16).

The fact that Greenwood's opinion is anticipated by the otherwise entirely orthodox Schelling is a mark of the brittleness of the Stratfordian assumption that the Folio can and should be taken at face value as evidence in the authorship question. Given that no other specimens of writing by either Heminges or Condell survive, Malone may have been overly generous in his supposition that the two actors had "thrown on paper, in the best manner they could, some introductory paragraphs" which Jonson, "not approving . . . cured by a total erasure" (Malone 674). Greenwood seems on more secure ground in suggesting that "whether these worthies did anything more than lend their names for the occasion may well be doubted" (264). This idea is neither new, nor implausible, nor without foundation. Indeed it already seems to be the implication of contemporaneous satiric verses, circa. 1623, surviving in a manuscript from the Salisbury family of Lleweni, Wales:

To my good freands Mr John Hemings & Henry Condall

To yowe that Joyntly with vndaunted paynes
 Vowtsafed to Chawnte to us these noble Straynes,
 How mutch yowe merryt it is not sedd
 Butt yowe haue pleased the lyving, loved the deadd,
 Raysede from the wombe of Earth a Richer myne
 Then Curteys Cowlde with all his Castelyne.
 Associates, they dydd but dig for Gowlde,
 But yowe for treasure mutch more manifollde.

(Campbell and Quinn 735)

The performative emphasis – Heminges and Condell chant the epistles, they do not compose or write them – along with the sly emphasis on the unspoken merit of the deed and contrast between the successful services of Heminges and Condell, which have achieved what “courtesy...with all his Castelyne” could not – give point to the poem’s ironic tone. A *Castellany*, says the *OED*, is “[*It., Sp.*]...the office or the jurisdiction of a castellan; the Lordship of a castle, or the district belonging to a castle.”⁵ The idea that Heminges and Condell are trading in manuscript materials belonging to the “jurisdiction of a castle” suggests that the writer conceives that the unpublished Folio manuscripts, alleged to originate with Heminges and Condell, were actually supplied by such aristocratic “grand possessors”⁶ as Pembroke and Montgomery. The verses, in other words, satirize the use of Heminges and Condell’s names in the volume, implicating them in having lent their names to effect the Folio’s less-than-entirely-honest publication.

Like so much else about the circumstances of the Folio, the significance of the practice of placing the names “Heminges” and “Condell” on the prefaces apparently written by Jonson⁷ has successfully mystified many. In his recent biography of Jonson, Ian Donaldson justly remarks that “the stamp of Jonson’s authority is clearly apparent in the 1623 Folio” (371), but he goes on to assert as a fact that the volume “was edited by the two surviving members of the original company of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men established in 1594” (370). This unexamined view was also endorsed by Emma Smith in 2015, who blithely refers (107-109) to Heminges and Condell as the authors of the epistles.

Enter Pembroke, Montgomery, and Derby

Instead of leading an exploration of the deeper layers of interconnectivity between the Folio and the circumstances of its production, orthodox *First Folio* scholars like Taylor and Smith borrow ideas from Oxfordians without attribution, while promoting a “just so” story of Folio manuscript acquisition that is supported only by the dubious claims of the Heminges and Condell epistles and maintained only at the

cost of perpetuating unfortunate misconceptions about alternative and more plausible scenarios. This theory of provenance, as well as the notion of Heminges and Condell as the editors, is based on the circular evidence of the epistles' own testimony and is contradicted, moreover, by impressive evidence suggesting a contrary scenario, in which the publishers acquired the manuscripts for the unpublished plays from Pembroke and his associates. Not only was Pembroke, starting in 1615, Lord Chamberlain of the Royal household and therefore the senior theatrical official in England with full authority over the King's Men and their archives, he was also the one who had on May 3, 1619 by formal decree prohibited the unauthorized publication of plays in the archive (Chambers I, 136). That orthodox scholars are skating on very thin ice in continuing to perpetuate the Heminges and Condell story of manuscript provenance is further indicated by the 1609 epistle to *Troilus and Cressida*, in which the Shakespeare manuscripts are said to be in the hands of the "grand possessors" – also labeled "grand censors." When we add to this the knowledge that in 1619 the publisher, William Jaggard, it would appear, appealed to members of the Pembroke faction in *Archaio-ploutos* (see analysis below) for manuscripts, it is easy to see that an impressive pattern of facts confirms that the unpublished manuscripts were in the possession of de Vere's descendants and in-laws, and not in any archives controlled by Heminges and Condell. All in all, the account given in the Folio epistle appears to be a public fiction designed to distract notice from the critical role played by the aristocratic patrons of the project in supplying necessary manuscripts – and, no doubt, finances – for the printing. This may also explain the Folio's need for the publisher's colophon (Figure 5) which rather uncharacteristically⁸ insists that the book was printed "at the charges of" the members of the syndicate.

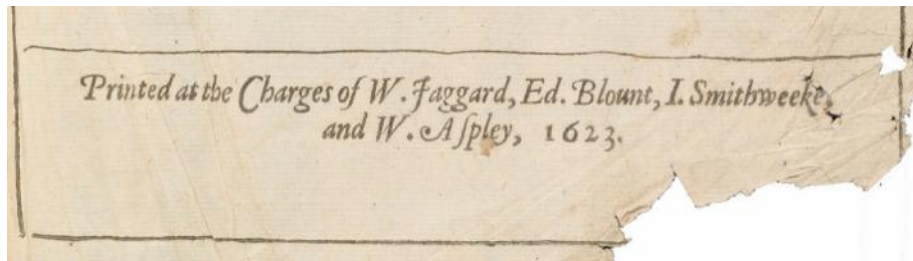


Figure 5. Colophon of 1623 Shakespeare Folio.

By normal Jacobean standards, publishing a book of this size with such prominent dedications to two wealthy arts patrons, at least one of whom had by that time acquired a lifetime of experience patronizing and protecting the theatre and the arts more generally, and was reputed the richest man in England, without any subsidy from the patrons, borders so closely on the preposterous as to recall the habitual reliance of leading Shakespeare biographers on magic formulae like "let us imagine that . . ." (Greenblatt 23). This might explain why Smith must labor so mightily to assure

her readers that “nobody has suggested that the Herberts gave the book any financial subsidy” (109-110), thereby deflecting attention from the clear inference to be drawn from the paratexts that Pembroke and Montgomery would have followed the usual custom of at least partially underwriting the production of a book dedicated to them. (The only evidence against this is the colophon declaration, which Smith does not reproduce or discuss). On the contrary, in Smith’s imaginative and richly metaphorical scenario, of the sort Stratfordians so much enjoy, “this book needed to stand on its own two feet in the literary marketplace of St. Paul’s Churchyard” (110).

The usual failure to acknowledge the central role that Pembroke and Montgomery (and their allies and relatives in the noble houses of Oxford, Southampton, and Derby) play in the marriage crisis⁹ is especially curious given Pembroke’s long and well-documented role as the most powerful protector of the liberty of the stage in Jacobean England and prominent opponent of the Spanish marriage. Emma Smith, while mentioning both the patrons and the context of the marriage crisis, never draws the connection that Pembroke was the most powerful opponent of the match in England during the months the *Folio* was being printed, and she equivocates or even stonewalls over such key questions such as the actual role of Heminges and Condell in the book’s production or the significance of Pembroke’s and Montgomery’s patronage. It is as if the *First Folio* publication and the Spanish Marriage crisis, although happening at the same moment in history in the same place – and to a significant degree involving the same cast of historical agents – have been isolated in separate and distinct boxes, each studied by a different set of scholars and written about for a different audience or even, as in Smith’s book, together in one book but somehow still not as parts of a plausible historical narrative of causes and effects.

For many decades the reluctance of Shakespeare scholars to more closely consider the historical context of the *Folio*’s production, as Dickson suggests, was closely tied to longstanding and deeply held British amnesia over a phase of Jacobean history that many Protestants looked back to with an uneasy sense of national shame. Yet this disassociation of the *Folio* project, including Jonson’s encomium, from the unfolding international politics of the period 1620-24 can be accomplished only by careful avoidance of abundant sociological, historical, and semiotic connections, as evidenced in multiple interlocking relationships among key players in the publication drama including Pembroke, the Lord Chamberlain.

Pembroke, his brother Montgomery, and his in-laws, including his brother-in-law the 18th Earl of Oxford, were all vigorous supporters of the Protestant cause of King James’ daughter Elizabeth and her husband Fredrick of Bohemia, for whose wedding in 1613, *The Tempest* had been performed at Whitehall (Stritmatter and Kositsky 2011). Their dismay at the loss of the Palatinate in 1620-21 and King James’ denunciations of Parliament, compounded by the increasingly despotic power of Buckingham and the Spanish ambassador Gondomar at court, and the destabilizing impact

of Charles' Madrid escapade were, by the spring of 1622, driving the patriot faction to ever more desperate oppositional measures to avert what they saw as the disastrous threat of counter-reformation. To them, James' abandonment of his daughter and her husband was also a betrayal of Horatio Vere and his deceased comrade Francis Vere, the "Fighting Veres," who had by then been leading the Protestant cause in the lowlands for over two decades (Markham 1888).

Some alliances at court were strained or dashed by the controversy, and others confirmed by it. By the summer of 1621 it was rumored that Ben Jonson, who from 1616 to 1619 had been considered a confidante of the Stuart clique, was no longer welcome at court, and was instead reconsolidating his old alliances with Pembroke's faction. In June, 1621, Henry de Vere (the 18th Earl of Oxford), Henry Wriothesley (the 3rd Earl of Southampton), and John Sandys were all arrested for fomenting opposition to the Spanish match in Parliament and the House of Lords. Oxford would not be released until December 30, six months later, and he would be back in jail for a longer stay before the crisis began to unwind in 1623. It is important to emphasize that only in fall of 1621, following the first arrest of the 18th Earl of Oxford, for his vocal opposition to the match and the seizure of the upper Palatinate by Spanish forces, is there clear evidence of Pembroke's resolve to proceed with the Folio project, even though other evidence would suggest that the publishers wanted to print two years earlier.¹⁰ On October 5, Pembroke awarded Jonson with the reversion¹¹ of the post of Master of the Revels, a position Jonson had long coveted. Simultaneously, it was rumored (Ogburn 222)¹² that his annual crown pension would be increased from 100 marks to 200 pounds, a three-fold increase that could only have been justified on the basis of Jonson's performance of some extraordinary service such as the design and editorship of the Folio.

The emergence of a new Shakespeare publisher in the fall of 1621 indicates that Pembroke was not the only "grand possessor" with a publication agenda. Thomas Walkley, having been only in 1618 made a freeman of the Stationer's Guild at a time when no other Shakespeare plays had appeared in print for the past thirteen years, and in violation of Pembroke's May 1619 edict against any further unauthorized publication of the plays from the King's Men repertoire – registered and swiftly published a quarto of *Othello* (Figure 6).

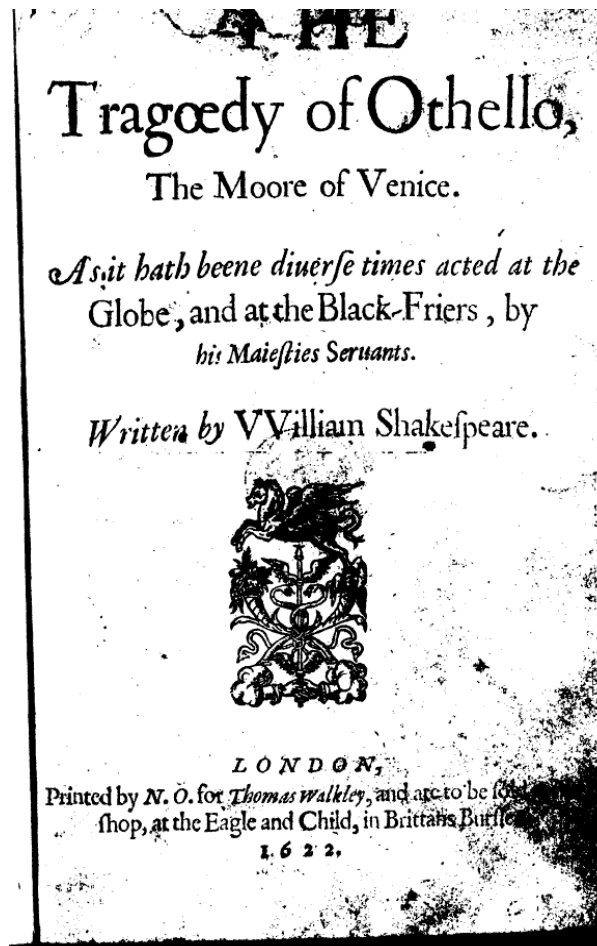


Figure 6. Title page of Walkley's 1622 quarto of *Othello*, "to be sold [at his] shop, at the Eagle and Child" – i.e., as named after the heraldic insignia of the Earls of Derby.

Remarkably – although the exact connection between the two events seems not to have been adequately delineated – this registration occurred on Oct. 6, only one day after Pembroke had granted the reversion of the Mastership of the Revels to Jonson. The list of Walkley's publications between his 1618 induction into the Stationer's Company and the publication of *Othello* in 1622 – assembled by Peter Dickson (161) – confirms the suspicion of a connection between these two events, for nothing is more obvious about Walkley's career than his total reliance on, and dedication to, the Earldom of Derby. His bookshop "at the Eagle and Child," as first identified by Harry Morris (in 1963), took its name from the heraldic devices of the Earls of Derby. As Leo Daugherty explains, the Stanleys of Lathom were "invariably associated, not just in Britain, but in all the courts of Europe, with Ganymede and the Ganymedean Eagle" (49). The conspicuous reference to the Eagle and Child shop on the

1622 *Othello* quarto as well as on other publications by Walkley, suggest a desire to advertise a close association between the printer and the Derby earldom (Dickson, “Derby Connection”). As the house printer of the Earl, Walkley not only sported the Derby arms on his shop and his title pages, but also specialized in publishing works with a direct association to the family’s interests, including the sermons of John Everard (1619, 1622, and 1623), Derby’s controversial Chaplain.

With Thomas Scott, Everard was leading the charge from the pulpit against the Spanish marriage. Unlike Scott, he was not a moderate Anglican, but a theological radical. A colleague and correspondent with Robert Fludd, Everard inherited manuscripts from Nicholas Hill, the materialist translator of Democritus once reported to have served the 17th Earl of Oxford. He was widely condemned during and after his life for allegedly endorsing a range of heresies, including Anabaptism. Over a period of five years, between October 12, 1618, when he registered and then published Everard’s *Arriereban*, and 1623, when he published his *Bellonea’s Embrion*, Walkley became the primary publisher of Everard’s work, publishing also in the interim, in February 1622, Everard’s *Sermons*. Between September and December 1621 – less than a month before the registration of *Othello* – Everard was jailed for speaking out against the Spanish marriage. Was the arrest provoked by Derby’s decision to publish *Othello*?

If so, we must wonder why a “grand possessor” such as the Earl of Derby would wish to authorize a publication of *Othello* in the fall of 1621, if the Folio project was already at that time contemplated and under preparation? The answer seems to lie in the pointed political implications *Othello* would have had for the average English reader in 1621. In this immediate context, the play, having been withheld from publication for nearly two decades and suddenly appearing in print on the eve of the Marriage crisis, could only have been read as an attack on King James as a despotic abuser. As Dickson explains this circumstance:

Although the drama is set in Italy, the supreme villain . . . bears a Spanish name, ‘Iago.’ Iago is the diminutive short form for the name Diego or James, as we see in Santiago, meaning Saint Diego or St. James, the patron saint of Spain. There was already a widespread public perception that the devious Machiavellian Spanish Ambassador Gondomar (Diego Sarmiento de Cauca) had played on King James’ lust for a large dowry and lured him into pursuing this Spanish Match against his better judgment. And since the King and Gondomar sometimes referred to themselves affectionately as the “two Diegos,” there was an implicit but unmistakable political critique of the Spanish marriage and the King’s general policy of détente toward Madrid in having the villain in *Othello* bear the name “Iago.” (156)

Very likely, moreover, the Derby sponsorship of the publication of *Othello* signals the existence of a division among the patriot earls themselves over how to proceed with

such delicate matters as, for example, using one of the plays as a direct intervention in the marriage controversy – something very different from, and far more political than publishing the entire works in one volume. George Buc, having approved the Walkley-Derby plan to print the topically explosive play, was swiftly retired by Pembroke, the Lord Chamberlain. If their respective chaplains are any indication, Pembroke and Derby were united in their opposition to the Spanish marriage, but held markedly distinct positions on other matters of policy and religion, including exactly how to oppose the marriage, with Derby being by far the more radical, if the theology and reputations of their respective chaplains is any indication. In 1621, while Pembroke was carefully laying the foundations for the Folio, Derby fired a warning shot across the bow of the ship of state, warning James of the danger of taking the Protestant loyal opposition for granted.

Publishers, Poets and Translators

If, as Justice John Paul Stevens has suggested, Shakespeare as we have him is the result of an “imaginative conspiracy,” then the shape of the conspiracy is evident in the names, backgrounds, associations, and literary production, of those most intimately connected with the Folio. Closely examining the Folio’s immediate historical context, it becomes difficult to ignore the decisive implications of this wider fact pattern: not only the Folio’s patrons, but at least three of the four contributors of its dedicatory poems – Ben Jonson, James Mabbe, and Leonard Digges – were major players in the 1621-24 outpouring of publications which commented, directly or indirectly, on the marriage crisis. Digges and Mabbe (pronounced *maybe*) were both prominent Hispanists and translators, who had apparently travelled together in Spain during the early years of the Jacobean reign. In 1622 they were both capitalizing on the Spanish vogue that was sweeping the nation and shaping an emerging market for the torrent of Spain-related plays, pamphlets, and translations that has left such an indubitable mark in the record of the period.

One of the strongest links connecting the contributors to the Folio paratexts is the interlocking directorate of their involvement in translations of literary classics from Spanish to English. Remarkably, in 1622 both Digges and Mabbe – the latter described by P.E. Russell as the “first English Hispanist” – both published major translations, *The Rogue* (Figure 7A) and *Gerardo, the Unfortunate Spaniard* (Figure 7B), of Spanish picaresque novels, and both are intricately connected to the Folio project in literary ways that have gone largely unexplained by orthodox scholars.

Digges’s translation of Gonzalo de Céspedes y Meneses’ novel *Varia fortuna de soldado Píndaro*, appearing under the title of *Gerardo, The Unfortunate Spaniard*, also shows signs of its origin in the same milieu, and is pointedly dedicated to Pembroke and Montgomery (Figure 7).

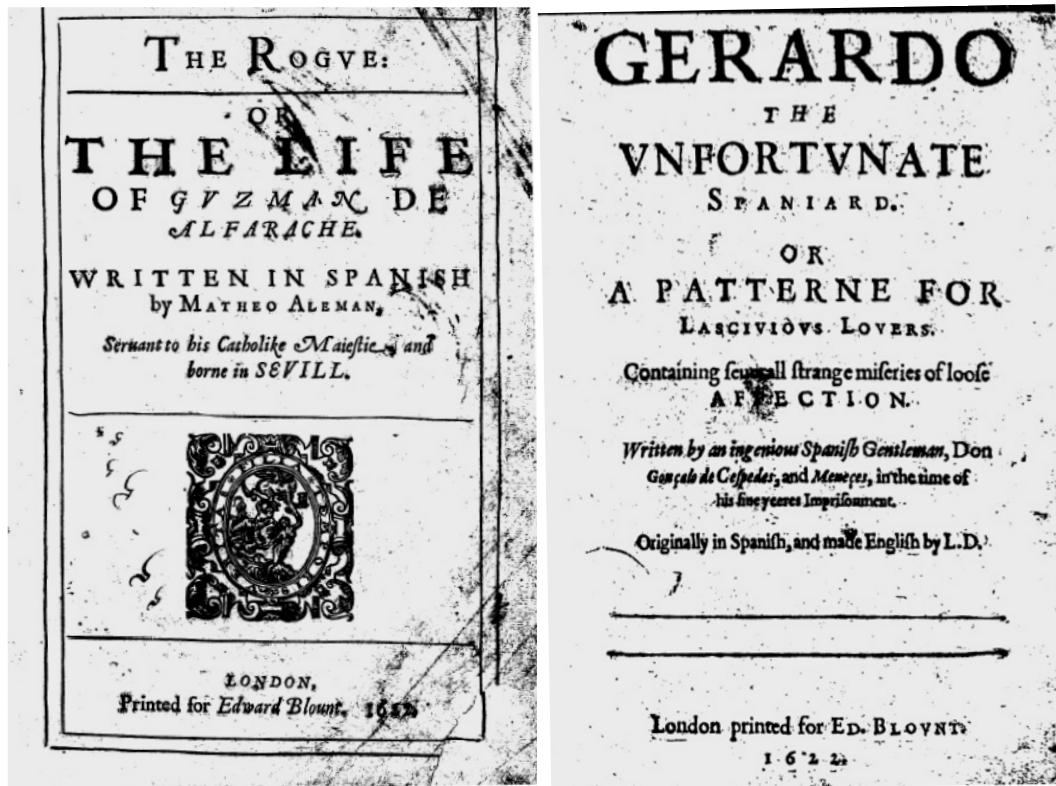


Figure 7. Two translations from the Spanish, both published by Edward Blount in 1622, both by contributors of dedicatory poems to the 1623 Shakespeare First Folio.

Digges was the younger son of the astronomer Thomas Digges and brother of the diplomat Sir Dudley Digges, whose initials appear along with Leonard's in the book's dedication to Pembroke and Montgomery (Figure 8). This translator group also had direct ties to the Folio publishers. As well as being friends of the Digges family, Mabbe's family had also intermarried with the Jaggards. In 1597, Mabbe's sister Elizabeth had married John Jaggard, the elder brother of the printer William.

Beneath the dedication, emphasizing the volume's political character, are printed the initials of both the translator Leonard, and his brother the diplomat and M.P. Dudley Digges (1583-1639). Both Jonson and Leonard Digges, moreover, contributed prefatory verses to Mabbe's *Rogue*. Underscoring the connections tying these international events, then transpiring on the world stage, to the Shakespeare Folio production syndicate and to these picaresque translations, Folio syndicate member Edward Blount published both volumes by Digges and Mabbe (Figure 7).

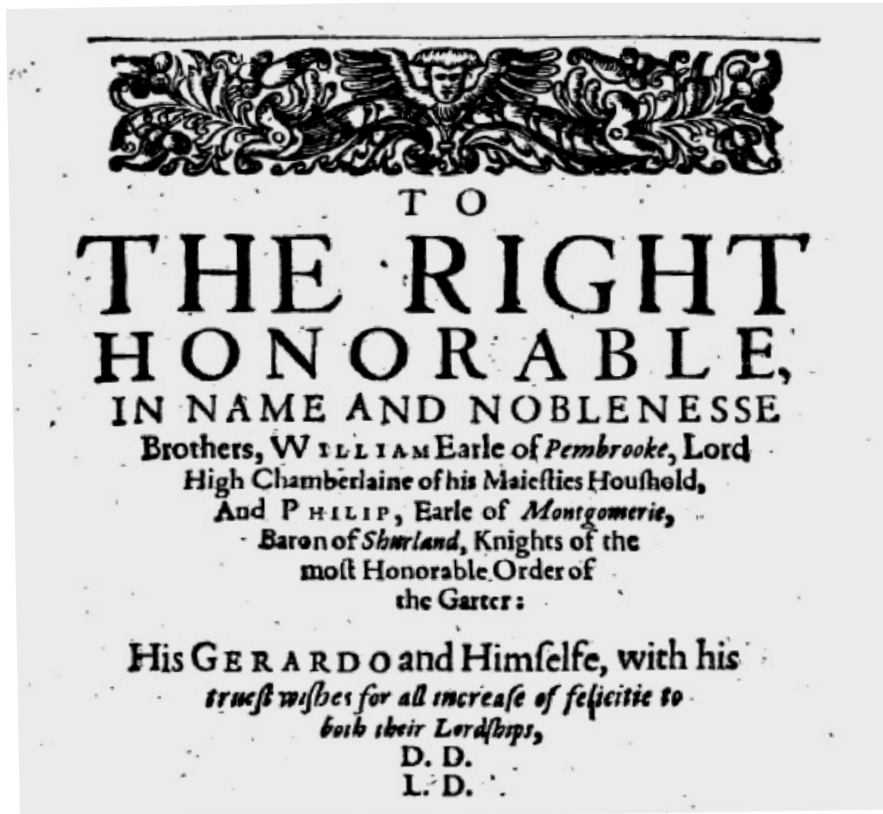


Figure 8. Dedication of Digges' translation *Gerardo* to First Folio patrons Pembroke and Montgomery, with the initials of his brother, the diplomat and Pembroke confidante, Dudley Digges.

Known primarily for his numerous literary publications – among them Lyly's 1632 collected works, Jonson's *Sejanus*, works by William Camden, Samuel Daniel, and Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr*, in which the "Phoenix and the Turtle" by "William Shake-Speare" first appeared – Blount's Protestant sympathies, like those of Pembroke, are well documented. Cervantes editor Anthony G. Lo Ré, for example, has observed Blount's characteristic habit, in his translation of Cervantes, of omitting passages with a strong Catholic flavor, a practice which Lo Ré contrasts with that followed by Cervantes' Catholic translator Shelton.

Although the publishers and patrons of the Folio project, with sympathizers like the house of Derby, were distinctively Protestant in their orientation, the authors of the dedicatory verses (and presumptive editors of the work) display a contrasting, more Catholic profile. Jonson himself, a conscientious Catholic since at least 1605, had been swept up and jailed in the hysteria around the Guy Fawkes 'Gunpowder' attack on Parliament. As a law-abiding Catholic, he detested spies, and may have been

privity to inside information that implicated the Cecil government in the conspiracy, i.e., that significant inducement was offered by government agents to encourage the conspirators to undertake ever-bolder, more precarious and foolish enterprises to give voice to their complaints. Even James Shapiro has dared to think the crisis was in part manufactured by the same government that later prosecuted some of the conspirators.¹³

Together with the Catholic wit, translator and internationalist Hugh Holland, who was a close friend of Jonson's, these Folio editors constituted a group of travelers and translators with strong tendencies towards the conscientious Catholicism of Sir John Strangeway, the Master of the King's Bedchamber to whom Mabbe dedicated his 1622 translation of *The Rogue: or the Life of Guzman de Alfarache*. Mabbe published his pseudonymous translation of the picaresque novel of Matheo Aleman under the name "Don Diego Puede-Ser" (i.e., "Sir Maybe").

Mabbe was a graduate of Magdalen College in Oxford, one of the founders of "English Hispanism" (Fernández, 1) with a long life of Catholic ecumenism. His 1632 translation of Fray Jaun de Santa Maria's *República y policía Cristiana* introduced English readers to the philosophy of governance of Phillip III's theological advisor and confessor to his daughter, doña Maria. Surveying this range of agents directly involved in the production of the Folio as well as those on the scene at one remove, it seems safe to conclude that this group cannot be distinguished on the basis of a particular religious affiliation, but rather seems to represent a broad humanist spectrum of "comparative literature" translators, involving not only strong Protestants like Pembroke or his chaplain Scott, but also "constitutional" Catholics and Catholic sympathizers like Sir John Strangeway, Hugh Holland, Jonson, or Mabbe.

In the months leading up to the publishing of the *First Folio*, the two "noble bretheren" Pembroke and Montgomery, were among those underwriting the translations of Mabbe and Digges, who in turn contributed poems to the *First Folio* and may reasonably be identified as part of the work's editorial team (such as it was), working under the direction of Jonson (who may have joined the publication team only in the final months).

Lacking a unified religious perspective, the group that created the *First Folio* was one formed by an aesthetic aspiration: they were internationalists, sharing an appreciation of literature and great arts that was fundamentally humanist and broadly ecumenical. If they were opposed to the Spanish marriage, this did not mean they were narrowly anti-Spanish; they were opposed to politico-religious tyranny in all forms. The Catholic wing of the group had already enlisted the financial and emotional backing of the Protestant wing to help introduce to English readers books on subjects still banned in Spain by the Inquisition. They were not anti-Spanish. They were anti-imperialists who supported Spanish literature and literary dissidents. To them, "Shakespeare" was a kind of English Cervantes. Thus, while the Folio included a definite,

intentional, and ultimately unmistakable dimension of resistance to the Spanish marriage, those involved in its production were simultaneously introducing the English reading public to some of the greatest masterpieces of Spanish literature.

Bestow, How and Where You List

According to the publishing schedule established in his classic bibliographic study, Charlton Hinman determines that the *First Folio* printing started in or around March/April, 1622, and was completed in approximately nineteen months, by around November 1623. Pembroke had apparently been laying the groundwork for the Folio publication at least since October 1621, when the Upper Palatinate was seized by Catholic troops and Elizabeth and Fredrick took refuge in The Hague.

Originally projected to appear in fall of 1622, the *First Folio* was delayed, perhaps by the hectic 1621-22 printing schedules of the Blount and Jaggard firms, but just as likely by the lack of a final commitment from the cautious Pembroke himself. That the Jaggard firm had itself been preparing for the Folio for at least two years is evident by the remarkable but still poorly understood events of 1619. Early in the year, it seems, Jaggard with the cooperation of Thomas Pavier issued a series of ten oversized Shakespearean and pseudo-Shakespearean quartos,¹⁴ including *Pericles*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *King Lear*, 2 and 3 *Henry VI*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Henry V*. For poorly understood reasons, several plays in the series (*Merchant*, 1600; *Lear*, 1608; *Henry V*, 1608; *Dream*, 1600) were falsely backdated, but William J. Neidig showed by scrupulous bibliographical method in 1910 that the entire series, including the falsely backdated issues, was printed by the Pavier-Jaggard syndicate in 1619. The March 31, 1621 death of Phillip III of Spain had accelerated plans for the Spanish match, and both Southampton and the 18th Earl of Oxford, against the backdrop of these fast-moving events, were also jailed that summer. Oxford's second jailing, as Dickson has emphasized ("Epistle," 2; "Washington Researcher," 2), was closely synchronized with the printing of the Folio, suggesting the very great probability that it was this circumstance that led Pembroke and his allies to finally approve the project. Evidence confirming this delay is a Nov. 1622 advertisement for the Folio (Figure 9A and B), printed for the Frankfurt book fair nearly a year before the book actually became available for sale.

While the exact relation of the Pavier series to the 1623 Folio remains disputed, the impressive sequence of events connecting the Jaggard firm to the Herbert brothers and foreshadowing the Folio publication in the years immediately preceding the crisis, does assume renewed significance in light of the idea that the publishers were jockeying for the patronage and consent of the Pembroke faction to advance the printing. On May 3, 1619, Pembroke, apparently in response to the Pavier series – so Peter Dickson among others plausibly argues – issued an injunction against the

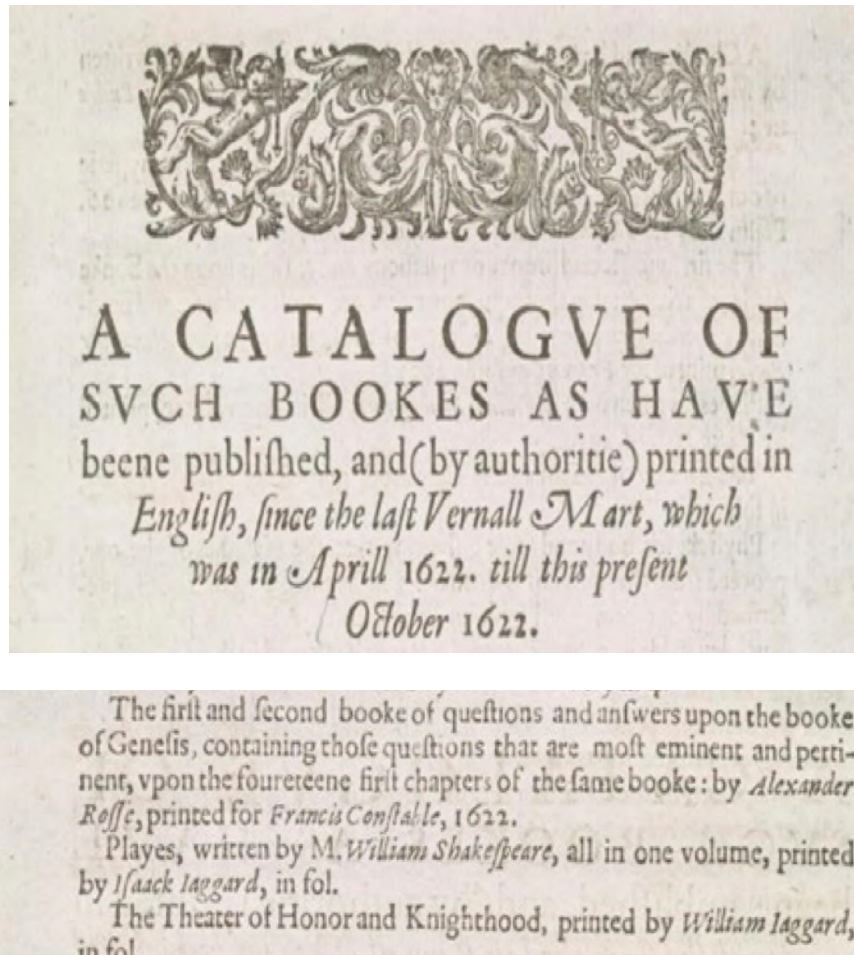


Figure 9. 1622 Frankfurt Book Sale Advertiser showing First Folio (Ashm.1057(14), signature D4 recto and verso excerpts). Images courtesy the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, under creative commons license via Shakespeare Documented.

further publication of plays owned by the King's Men. Although the original text of the decree along with its exact terms is missing, a similar letter, dated 1637 and signed by Philip Herbert, who had assumed position of Lord Chamberlain on his brother's death in 1626, records that the 1619 decree had taken order "for the stay of any further impression of any of the playes or interludes of his majesties servants without their consents" (Chambers, I, 136). For whatever reasons, Pembroke was unready in early 1619 to move the project on his own accord. Prompting from the publishers was, however, forthcoming before the end of the year in the form of a dedication to the "most noble and twin-like paire....sir Phillip Herbert" and

“the truly virtuous and Noble Countesse his Wife, the lady Susan, Daughter to the right Honourable Edward Vere, Earl of Oxenford” in Thomas Milles’ *Archaio-ploutos* (Figure 10).

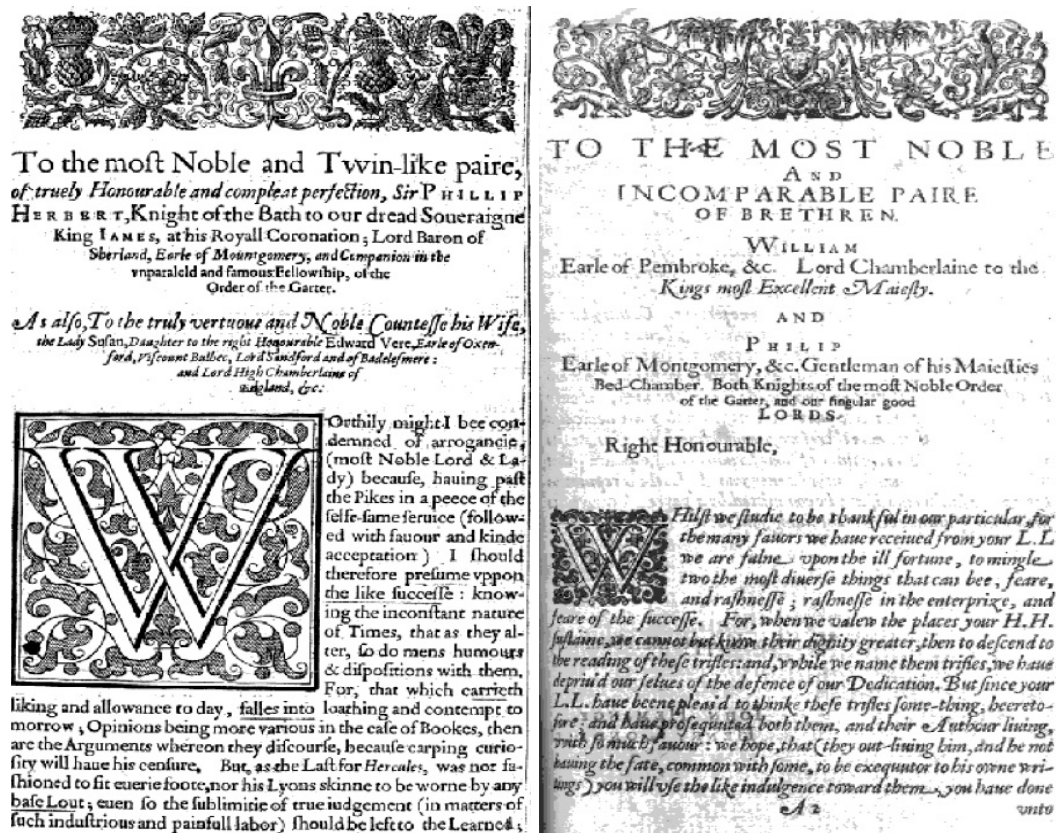


Figure 10. The dedication page to *Archaio-ploutos* (left) is imitated by that of the *Shakespeare First Folio* (right), 1623.

The unsigned dedication, not only invites Montgomery and his wife to enjoy the “Orchard [which] stands wide open to welcome you, richly abounding in the fairest Frutages: not to feed the eie only, but likewise to refresh the Heart,” – but it also solicits the earl and his countess to “plucke where, and while you please, and to *bestow* how, and when you list: because *they are all yours*, and whosoever else shall taste of them, do enioy such freedome but by your favor” (emphasis added).

Especially in the wake of Jaggard’s abortive quarto series and Pembroke’s May 3, 1619 edict, the appeal to “*bestow* how, and when you list” – seems difficult to regard as anything but the publisher’s overt request not only for Pembroke’s approval of the project, but a supplication for missing manuscript materials as well.

As Charlton Ogburn plausibly suggests, “Pembroke, with Buc’s cooperation, was

clamping down on the traffic in Shakespeare's plays, anticipating publication of an authorized edition of the whole collection" (218).

The 1619 dedication's layout and design evidently foreshadow the pattern followed four years later in the Folio printing (Figure 10). As suggested in a previous article, "Bestow How, and When you List" (Stritmatter 2016), the similarity of both design and language between the 1619 and 1623 dedications "are striking enough to constitute a clearly deliberate creative allusion, employing both visual elements of design and linguistic clues to connect the Shakespeare volume to *Archaio-ploutos*" (91).¹⁵ It is almost as if the Jaggard syndicate is laying a trail of breadcrumbs connecting the 1623 Folio backwards to the 1619 request to Susan Vere to supply manuscript materials for it. In the first publication, Montgomery and his wife Susan Vere are styled "the most noble and twin-like pair." In the Folio, the "most noble and incomparable brethren" are Montgomery and his elder brother, Pembroke.¹⁶ The lines directly concerning Oxford, and the preponderance of words addressed to his daughter, "Lady Susan," suggest that Jaggard was pitching to secure the manuscripts to publish Shakespeare's *First Folio*.

Such a theory, it will be seen in the next article, is amply echoed in Ben Jonson's *First Folio* encomium to the author:

To the memory of my beloued

THE AVTHOR

MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE:

AND

What he hath left vs.

Notes

1. The volume in which these lines appears, John Benson's spurious edition of *Poems: Written By Wil. Shake-speare. Gent.* (London: Tho. Cotes for John Benson, 1640, STC 22344), prints page after page of classical mythographic poetry, much of it not by Shakespeare but by John Heywood. Per Benson's introduction the volume also purports to contain "such gentle strains as shall recreate and not perplexe your braine, no intricate or cloudy stuffe to puzzell intellect, but perfect eloquence" (2v). Prominent in the collection, moreover, are Shakespeare Sonnets 153 and 154, long known to represent translations or variations on an epigram by Marianus, originally published in the Greek Planudean anthology in 1494, although also extant during the 16th century in variations in Latin, Italian, and other vernaculars. The relevance of these two poems to the question of the author's familiarity with Greek sources is said by Hyder Rollins to have provoked "almost endless discussion." In what appears to be the most thorough study extant, Hutton determined that "Shakespeare is closer to the Greek epigram than he is to [the Latin translations of Marianus]," adding that "his management of the theme [whatever that means] suggests that he did not draw immediately on the [Greek] epigram" (in Rollins 394).
2. Whether the artist is the Martin Droeshout the younger (1601-1650) or his uncle (c. 1565- c. 1642) has been disputed, with Spielmann, Schoenbaum (1977), the *DNB* and most authorities traditionally supporting the younger, but the 2004 new *DNB* claiming the artist is the uncle. It is clear, however, that no orthodox consensus exists on this topic, with Shuckman (1991) and Schlueter (2007), to cite only two recent orthodox scholars, supporting the older tradition that the artist was the younger man, while both the assembled scholars writing in Smith et al. (2016) and Smith herself steer clear of any serious discussion of the question, with Smith nevertheless pausing long enough to attribute a falsely oversimplified logic to those endorsing the younger man as the artist (2015, 8, 122-124). Schlueter's detailed study, not cited by Smith, cross-examines studies by Edmond (1991) and Schuckman (1991), who took opposite sides on the question, before eventually siding with Schuckman's view that the younger man is the engraver. She admits that in the beginning "I was hoping I would be able to confirm Edmond's argument for the elder Martin," but concludes by definitely supporting the contrary position and believes that "it is likely that any further new evidence will only strengthen the conclusion that the signature on the 1623 engraving of Shakespeare belongs to the twenty-two year old Martin Droeshout" (242). Apparently Smith et al. did not get the memo.
3. Arrested with Oxford were the 3rd Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley, Sir

Edwin Sandys, and John Selden.

4. “Might I not borrow a Spanish name or two to grace this Comedie (of the Spanish marriage) with stately actors? Or must they onely be reserved for Kingly tragedies?” (BV, p. 10).
5. The adjectival form used in the poem does not have a separate *OED* entry.
6. On this term, see the discussion below regarding the 1609 preface to *Troilus and Cressida*.
7. For a reasonable but ultimately unpersuasive alternative hypothesis see Scragg, who argues that while Jonson wrote the second epistle to the readers in general, Edward Blount wrote the first one to Pembroke and Montgomery.
8. If anyone knows of a similar statement on a colophon from this period I would be intrigued to learn of it. To my considerable but by no means comprehensive knowledge this type of wording is unusual if not unprecedented.
9. For a suggestive exception to this general rule, see Samson’s study on the politics of translation in 1623 – which, unfortunately, does little more than to draw some attention to the intriguing temporal coincidence between the Folio and the marriage crisis (106).
10. See, for example, Stritmatter, “Bestow” and the *Archaio-ploutos* discussion below.
11. *OED* 2b “the right to succession of an office or place of emolument, after the death or retirement of the holder.”
12. According to Riggs (271), erroneously.
13. *The Year of Lear*, 101-103.
14. In addition to the eight authentic Shakespeare plays, the series included *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (correctly dated 1619) and *Sir John Oldcastle* (backdated 1600), both attributed to Shakespeare.
15. Although the argument was first developed in Stritmatter (1998), the cited wording was added to a revised version of the case only published in 2016. See reference list for details of both publications.
16. Many scholars are today still confused about the timeline for the printing of the Folio and continue to perpetuate the anachronistic view of a much earlier start date for the printing. Jonathan Bate, for example, in his “more detailed account” for the “General Introduction” to *The RSC Shakespeare: Complete Works*, as recently as 2007 baldly asserts that “materials were gathered and printing began in 1621” (https://www.rsc.org.uk/downloads/case_for_the_folio.pdf).

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Macbeth

A Language-Obsessed, Heretical Play

by Sky Gilbert

Traditional interpretations of *Macbeth* affirm that the play's theme is a Christian, moral one; characterizing Macbeth as a man enduring the epic eternal struggle between good and evil. Beginning with Samuel Jonson and continuing until the present day, common critical practice has assured gullible readers and rapt audiences that – although the subject matter of the play may involve superstition – Shakespeare was not irreligious. I propose that *Macbeth* is a language-obsessed play (like many other Shakespeare plays, including *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Twelfth Night*) based on a medieval cosmology in which Christianity and pagan mysticism exist side by side. It was fundamentally influenced by Navarrus, a 16th century philosopher whose views on equivocation prefigured modern language theory. In *Macbeth's* climactic scenes the witches' pronouncements are polysemous; the meaning of words becomes equivocal, and language offers threatening truths that at first appear to be false.

Focusing on the play's obsession with language as well as its heretical worldview has implications for the authorship debate. Those who see *Macbeth* as a Christian morality drama have linked the play with King James' obsession with witches and the Gunpowder Plot (1606). This places the play's authorship outside the Earl of Oxford's lifetime. In *The Royal Play of Macbeth* (1950), Henry N. Paul offers extensive but dubious proof for a claim that is now accepted by many – that the play was written during the reign of James I. Paul's attempts to date the play in 1606 are significant not only because they have influenced modern critical interpretations of *Macbeth*. His approach to Shakespeare's work arrives with the same erroneous assumptions propagated by critics who believe Shakespeare was the man from Stratford.

Several different attitudes to *Macbeth* are available to us. Twentieth-century cultural critic Alan Sinfield differentiates between two critical positions on the moral message in *Macbeth*: one conservative, one liberal. He says – citing critics such as Kenneth Muir – that “the conservative position insists that the play is about evil” (106). Sinfield finds this opinion deeply hypocritical as Macbeth's malevolent violence is regarded as necessary when he is serving the state, but evil when he is killing the king. In contrast Sinfield summarizes A.C. Bradley's articulation of the play's theme to be: “we must

still not lose our sympathy for the criminal” (107). Sinfield labels this a liberal position. Macbeth is evil, but we all share in this evil through sympathy, which enlightens us all.

You will pardon me for thinking that these critics have been reading a play that is quite fundamentally different from the one the rest of us have been reading. Or perhaps they have slipped into a time warp and stumbled on an 18th century performance by bardolater David Garrick, (provided here by George Winchester Stone, Jr.) who wrote a speech of glorious Christian penitence for Macbeth:

’Tis done! The scene of life will quickly close. Ambition’s vain delusive
dreams are fled. And now I wake to darkness, guilt and horror; I cannot bear
it! Let me shake it off – it will not be; my soul is clog’d with blood – I cannot
rise! I dare not ask for mercy – It is too late, hell drags me down; I sink, I
sink, – my soul is lost forever! Oh! – Oh! (3-4)

Although this melodramatic speech in no way resembles Shakespeare’s rhetorical style, it clearly expresses what many consider to be his sentiments. So why didn’t Shakespeare compose something like it for *Macbeth* – but perhaps more mellifluous and inventive? Because Shakespeare wasn’t a Sunday school teacher; Christian moral instruction was the furthest thing from his mind. Nevertheless, critics choose to ignore or dismiss significant chunks of *Macbeth* in order to justify their contention that the play is primarily concerned with issues of Christian morality.

Despite its sloppy scholarship, Paul’s *The Royal Play of Macbeth* has had a substantial influence on modern interpretations of the play. The book shows a passionate disregard for Shakespeare’s text. It insists that the play is focused on moral issues and is anti-superstitious. Paul bends and crunches the poetry to pinpoint the exact date and time (and the exact shade of every mood that touched Shakespeare) when he wrote the work.

Though the idea that *Macbeth* may have been written in 1606 was suggested as far back as the 18th century by Malone, Paul attempts to settle the matter once and for all. From the moment of the release of Paul’s book, establishment Shakespearean critics like J. Dover Wilson believed that although Paul was not an academic, his

Sky Gilbert is a writer, director, teacher, and drag queen extraordinaire. He is the co-founder and was artistic director of Toronto’s Buddies in Bad Times Theatre for seventeen years. He has had more than forty plays produced, and has written seven critically acclaimed novels and three award winning poetry collections. He has received three Dora Mavor Moore Awards (Toronto’s ‘Tonys’). There is a street in Toronto named after him: ‘Sky Gilbert Lane.’ Dr. Gilbert is a Professor at The School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph. His collection of anti-essays *Small Things* will be published in 2018 by Guernica Press.

book had merit: “It is the work of an amateur, though an amateur in the better sense of the word” (286) and the book, despite “building conjecture upon conjecture . . . contains much information and many suggestions of real value” (287). Jane H. Jack referred to Paul in 1955 in order to back up her Christian, moral interpretation: “Paul has pointed out in *Macbeth*’s bitterness as he watches Banquo’s descendants, there is an oblique implied compliment to James I . . . a powerful reminder to the audience of Biblical descriptions of [the] evil of listening to false prophets and the unfulfilled horror of the wrath of God” (193). Modern critics such as Gary Wills accept Paul’s dating of the play while choosing to quibble over the exact day of composition. Wills takes issue with Paul’s thesis that *Macbeth* was written for King James’ visit with the Danish King because – “few of these [i.e. Paul’s] ingenious references have convinced later scholars” (153). Many leading 20th century scholars seem to accept Paul’s dating, if not his methods: Richard Whalen tells us that Frank Kermode “concludes that the evidence is strong for 1606” (211) and Stephen Greenblatt says “the play is usual dated 1606” (211). However, Kevin Gilvary states “all attempts to assign the plays of Shakespeare to a precise date are conjectural.”

But Paul is important even if we cannot hold him fully responsible for the conviction held by some critics – that *Macbeth* was written during the reign of King James I. His approach shares three important characteristics with usual academic approaches to the bard. First, there is the general assumption that Shakespeare’s values were traditional Christian moral ones, and that to read Shakespeare’s work as heretical or nihilistic – that is, to suggest that the worldview in his plays does not revolve around one Christian God, and that the endings of the tragedies do not allow for redemption – is simply wrong. Second, there is a tendency to try to burrow into Shakespeare’s brain and muse about his intentions i.e.: what was he thinking when he wrote that? And finally, and most significantly, traditional Shakespeare scholarship seeks to find out the ultimate, true meaning of Shakespeare’s poetry. I will tease these three, rarely-discussed, hidden agendas out of Paul’s theories, hoping to shed light on the misinterpretations of Shakespeare’s work that pervade contemporary scholarship.

As early as 1765 Samuel Johnson wrote uncomfortably about the witches in *Macbeth*: “A poet who should now make the whole action of his tragedy spend upon enchantment and produce the chief events by the assistance of supernatural agents, would be censured as transgressing the bounds of probability, be banished from the theatre to the nursery, and condemned to write fairy tales instead of tragedies.” Johnson attempts to quell his own uneasiness with the great poet’s use of enchantment by suggesting that Shakespeare incorporated magic spells “his audience thought awful and affecting.” Henry Paul confirms this idea, setting up a contrast between a knowing, intelligent, and aristocratic early modern audience who would have been privy to Shakespeare’s skepticism concerning witches, and the less-informed poor, who would not. He says “to the groundlings what the sisters do or say seems real.

To thoughtful men, including the king, the play presses home Banquo's question, whether it is imaginary" (64).

Paul's intention is to erase forever any inclination we might have to think that Shakespeare believed in magic, or in any way sympathized with the witches. He emphasizes again and again that the weird sisters – who he says are not weird at all, as they have no connection with fate, and should be called "wayward sisters" – are "simply and solely hatefully malicious hugely old hags used by their devils to do evil deeds" (183). He suggests that the presence of the witches is detrimental to the play: "to permit a large number of boys dressed as women witches to dance around the stage was poor business in a play with such high purpose" (412).

And what is that high purpose that so supersedes the superstition that Paul regards as negligible? The theme of the play, according to Paul, is highly moral; Shakespeare is warning us against the dangers of letting our imagination run wild. Macbeth "well knows that he has put his actions under the control of his imagination. He well knows that he ought not to do this" (67). The witches do not bewitch Macbeth – this would be to give them too much power. Instead Macbeth, "always prone to substitute the imaginary for the real, transmutes the mumblings of the third witch into hopes which are in his own mind" (63). So Macbeth's tragic flaw is his ambition – and he is spurred on by the witches, who are not actual living supernatural beings as much as the poetic incarnation of a personal evil.

King James' *Daemonology* was published in 1597, before he became king of England. It explores the practices that devils employed on mankind, as well as explaining the canonical reasons for executing witches and is considered to be a Christian, anti-sorcery document. Paul assures us that although James' book is clearly superstitious – claiming a belief in witches of course would be necessary in a book that explains why they should be burned. According to Paul, James abandoned his belief in witches soon after he wrote it – conveniently, just in time for his terribly modern views to influence Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*! Paul does not offer any incontrovertible proof of this change of attitude. And it's important to note that – as Paul himself admits – the laws against witches were not removed until 1736 because it took "over a hundred years to uproot the deeply held superstitions of a nation" (102). Kimberly Bercovice tells us that King James' *Daemonology* was written in opposition to Reginald Scot's skeptical treatise on witches – *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584). She asserts that James never abandoned his persecution of witches, but rather changed somewhat his notions of who should be prosecuted. "Although James had initiated the change in statute at the very onset of his reign in England, he had demonstrated restraint when it came to the witchcraft persecutions, and only witchcraft-based treason seemed to illicit a strong reaction from him" (135). At any rate, Paul makes the erroneous assumption that skepticism about witches – which King James may have come to share with Reginald Scot, after writing *Daemonology* to challenge him

– meant, during the 16th century, rejecting superstition altogether. But to be skeptical of witches was not the same as rejecting superstition. Even Scot, who was a revolutionary witch skeptic “did not deny the existence of Satan or devils/demons” (Bercovice 132).

Even in the unlikely event that a king who was skeptical of witches inhabited Shakespeare’s mind’s-eye, what proof do we have that Macbeth himself doesn’t believe in magic? Paul cites the moment when Macbeth speaks of the witches as proof of the character’s skepticism: “infected be the air whereon they ride / And dam’d all those that trust them” (4.1). But the fact that Macbeth thinks himself damned for trusting witches does not mean that he doesn’t believe in them. In fact the quotation only confirms that evidence of Macbeth’s superstition: he believes that witches ride on air.

Paul’s obsession with James’ *Daemonology* may serve his need to date the play during James’ reign, since otherwise there would be no reason to see the King’s book as a primary source for the attitude to witches in *Macbeth*. It’s important to remember that Europe’s journey from paganism to Christianity occurred just before the Early Modern period and the journey was not the clear trajectory we often assume. Europe wasn’t pagan one day and Christian the next. Magic and superstition existed without contradiction, side by side with Christianity, for hundreds of years.

A case in point is Joan of Arc’s infamous voices. Though traditionally identified as Christian saints, those voices are now recognized by feminist historians to have been pagan spirits. In her book *The Interrogation of Joan of Arc*, Karen Sullivan writes about the belief in the “Woman’s Tree” or “Fairy Tree” which dominated the life Joan of Arc’s small town of Domremy in France in 1426.

The villagers too identified the tree near where they live with the fairy ladies. Most of them stated simply, as Joan did, that “the tree is called the Fairies’ Tree” or “the tree is called the Ladies Tree” Like Joan, the villagers treated the fairy ladies as a third category of supernatural beings, neither angelic or demonic, neither inside nor outside Christianity, neither to be venerated, as one venerated God and his saints nor to be abhorred as one abhorred the devil, but to be accepted as one accepted the tree and the spring themselves, as part of the landscape. (15)

It is significant that the fairy tree was also a ladies tree, implying a matriarchal paganism. Part of the transition from pagan to Christian involved what was for some a difficult abandonment of matriarchal paganism for patriarchal Christianity. Joan of Arc was tried for heresy, witchcraft, and dressing like a man. Richard Whalen says “attributes of the witches indicate the author of *Macbeth* was also knowledgeable about witchcraft on the continent and in Scotland” (28). I suggest that Shakespeare’s witches – who weave spells and have beards like men, and, as Richard Whalen notices,

significantly employ “bawdy comedy” (28) inhabit a world which – although perhaps not as purely pagan as Joan of Arc’s home town – is certainly similar to Domremy.

The witches in *Macbeth* are undeniably associated with the devil and yet Macbeth listens to them and believes their prophecies. Is this purely a result of his evil nature – his overweening ambition? A glance at Thomas Nashe’s *Terrors of the Night* might help to clarify this question. Nashe moved in the literary circles associated with Edward de Vere and John Lily. Nash is known as pamphleteer (but was also a playwright) whose work was deeply enmeshed in the Martin Marprelate controversy. His pamphlet *Terrors of the Night* was published in 1594. It bears the subtitle “A Discourse of Apparitions,” and it discusses the origins of the dreams we have when we sleep, suggesting that nightmares are related to devils and their manipulations of our thoughts and desires. It also offers a metaphysical worldview in which spirits, witches, and devils are taken for granted much the same way as they are in *Macbeth*. These magical creatures are certainly real, but paradoxically, very much related to guilt caused by human action. Paul suggests that Shakespeare was skeptical of witches – that they are not to be taken seriously as actual beings, but only as metaphors for Macbeth’s own evil. In Nashe, spirits and demons can be simultaneously both real and manifestations of guilt. The witches of course, are dramatically effective, whether Shakespeare believes in them or not; the concern here is that we put Early Modern witches in historical context. If we do, we can see the play was not necessarily written in response to James’ *Daemonology*, but in response to the general ideas about magic that pervaded the age.

Nashe mentions the “Robin Goodfellows of our latter age...[who] pinched maids in their sleep that did not do the sweeping” (4). Puck is also Robin Goodfellow, one of Shakespeare’s several magical sprites; the fairies in the climax of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* pinch the guilty Falstaff as punishment for his crimes. Nashe also speaks of spirits of the air that have a decidedly matriarchal allegiance: “as for the spirits of the air, which have no other visible bodies and form...women and children they most converse with...[and they] make it fair or foul when they list” (11). This calls to the metaphors in *Macbeth*. Many of Nashe’s other assertions sound equally Shakespearean, with his proclamation of bottomless lakes and people turned into statues: “admirable, above the rest, are the incomprehensible wonders of the bottomless Lake Vether, over which no crow flies but is frozen to death, nor any man passeth but he is senselessly benumbed like a statue of marble” (20). He tells us with equal assurance that “in India the women often conceive by devils in their sleep” (19).

That Nashe states what now appear to be fantastical notions blithely as facts speaks volumes about the mixture of Christian morality and superstition that dominated the Early Modern period. For Nashe – and for Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* – the devil is, paradoxically, a very real being who appears in our dreams as a result of the bad feelings that plague us due to evil acts: “even as, when a condemned man is put into

a dark dungeon, secluded from all comfort of light or company, he doth nothing but despairfully call to mind his graceless former life....the devil keepeth his audit in our sin-guilty consciences” (1).

Henry Paul’s insistence that King James – and therefore Macbeth and Shakespeare – were not superstitious, simply does not make sense, in terms of the ambiguous attitude to superstition that pervaded the time. If one examines the witches in the light of Nashe’s *Terrors of the Night*, or Joan of Arc’s experiences at Domremy, it is clear that they could be both real and not simultaneously. Nashe’s *Terrors of the Night* shares much more with the cosmology of *Macbeth* than King James’ *Daemonology*. And the dramaturgical power of *Macbeth*, I would posit, is seriously diminished if one imagines King James and Shakespeare watching the play and reminding themselves that witches are just imaginary moralistic symbols, while observing the groundlings wallowing in their foolish fancies.

Paul is certainly not the only literary critic who has misread *Macbeth* and invented historical detail in order to place Shakespeare’s work in a Christian tradition, but in doing so, he is certainly part of a long scholarly tradition. His insistence that Shakespeare worked skepticism about witches into the play to please King James is merely one example of a very unscholarly tendency. In addition, he quite regularly insists on burrowing into Shakespeare’s consciousness to imagine what he might have been thinking.

In *The Royal Play of Macbeth* Paul says, apparently indisputably, that “no other play of Shakespeare’s, except *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, affords such exact indications as to the date of composition” (402). He claims that “the first three acts . . . were written before the end of March 1606, and as the dramatist sat at his desk and wrote, he was conscious of the face of the king looking straight at him, so that his words formed themselves to fit this expected audience” (401).

Paul justifies the comparative shortness of *Macbeth* through the king’s short attention span: “the king . . . would not sit through a long play, a fact which explains the comparative brevity of *Macbeth*” (3). There is no proof offered for the assumption that King James could not sit through a long play, and of course even if this was true, why must we assume that Shakespeare’s specifically wrote this play to suit the King’s tastes? Such unfounded assumptions dot his book. For instance, Paul prefers some scenes in *Macbeth* to others, and presumes Shakespeare did too: “the scene of the murder of Lady MacDuff, a disagreeable scene at best, was evidently written without fervour” (37).

But by peering imaginatively into Shakespeare’s brain, Paul shares much with modern Shakespeare hagiographers Stephen Greenblatt and Stanley Wells. William Leahy comments on modern writers who manufacture fantasy about Shakespeare’s inner and outer life: “In this process we see the ‘nothing’ of Shakespeare’s recorded writing

life filled with the ‘everything’ of the respective biographer’s narcissistic urges” (33).

Paul thus shares two unfortunate tendencies with modern scholars: the habit of assuming a traditional Christian cosmology is the foundation for Shakespeare’s work, and the urge to wax poetic about Shakespeare’s inner life. But Paul also shares a much more profound and significant mistake with his peers – he demands that poetical exegesis uncover a fixed meaning in Shakespeare’s text. In Paul’s case the expectation is that the meaning of *Macbeth* can provide a commentary on seventeenth century historical events.

Paul’s arguments for placing the play during James’ reign rely on the notion that *Macbeth* contains references to the Gunpowder Plot, which was conceived as early as 1604, and was uncovered – before achieving fruition – in 1605. The *Dictionary of National Biography* is clear that as the Gunpowder Plot has been variously interpreted to fit the political expediencies of any given period, it is often mis-characterized as having been Jesuit-inspired. The plan – actually hatched by five Catholic English gentleman (Robert Gatesby, Thomas Winter, Guy Fawkes, Thomas Percy and John Wright) – was to blow up Parliament and the king and subsequently assassinate the king’s heirs. The plot was foiled when a Catholic friend of one of the plotters betrayed their secret to gain favour with King James. The assassination attempt grew out of frustration with James for renegeing on his early promise to end persecution of Catholics. But Catholic opposition to James (who allowed Catholics to worship in private) was anything but unilateral, and actual Jesuit participation was merely tangential: “Henry Garnet and Oswald Tesimond, were to some extent informed of what was planned. However, many of these secondary conspirators remained ignorant of all the inner ring’s secrets. Consequently, when at length they fell into the government’s hands, they had a limited amount to tell.”

Is the alleged Jesuit involvement with the Gunpowder plot – that has obsessed so many, including Henry Paul – the cause of the many mentions of equivocation in *Macbeth*? The practice of equivocation was associated particularly with Jesuit Catholicism and hotly contested by Protestants; it consisted of evading punishment by lying to one’s accusers while simultaneously confessing the truth to God. Equivocation was famously used by St. Francis of Assisi who – when a murderer came looking for someone who he had just seen – lied to the murderer while crossing his fingers inside his sleeve. In this way, he saved an innocent life. For though St. Francis lied to another human being by crossing his fingers in his robe, he told the truth to God. And under the rubric of equivocation, God – it goes without saying – is a much more important witness than any mere person.

The link between equivocation and the Gunpowder plot lies in the “treatise of equivocation” which was found on one of the alleged Jesuit plotters Henry Garnet. What exactly is this treatise? Frank L. Huntley tells us:

The treatise of Equivocation . . . exists among the Laudian manuscripts in the Bodleian Library . . . Robert Southwell, executed in 1595, quoted parts of it at his trial, [and] the Bodleian copy is dedicated to his martyred spirit. It was probably put together during the last ten years of Elizabeth's reign from such continental sources as Navarrus, Suarez, and Sanchez, and at the time of its discovery was being prepared for the secret press by Father Garnet, whose hand is seen in the corrections throughout.

Equivocation is mentioned six times in *Macbeth* – five times in the Porter's comic monologue in Act 2 Scene 3, and once by Macbeth in relation to the pronouncements of the witches near the end of the play. The porter's use of the word seems highly significant, in fact portentous. The porter is drunk and slow to answer the door; his speech as he approaches the door serves no dramatic purpose, and is relatively long. Also, since the porter spends so much of the speech talking of equivocation for no obvious reason, one can't help inferring that Shakespeare was trying to send a special message with an incongruous emphasis on this particular concept.

Equivocation is mentioned three times at the beginning of the scene:

“Knock, knock! Who's there, in the other devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven: O, come in, equivocator.” (2.3.7-12)

The porter then mentions equivocation as part of an explication of the effects of alcohol at the end of the scene:

It provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance: therefore, much drink may be said to be an equivocator with lechery: it makes him, and it mars him; it sets him on, and it takes him off; it persuades him, and disheartens him; makes him stand to, and not stand to; in conclusion, equivocates him in a sleep, and, giving him the lie, leaves him. (2.3.28-35)

Paul goes to great lengths to make it clear that Shakespeare's emphasis on the concept of equivocation is a reference to Henry Garnet and the Gunpowder Plot. He says that the oath “without equivocation or reservation” was introduced after Garnet's trial, and that during the reign of Queen Elizabeth the word *equivocation* had “no sinister implications whatsoever” (23) having been used by Shakespeare himself previously in *Hamlet* with “nothing sinister involved” (23). Paul admits that there was another Jesuit priest who also famously used equivocation, and was tried and executed in 1595: Robert Southwell. However Paul does not believe Southwell was Shakespeare's inspiration for the use of the term *equivocator* in *Macbeth*. Paul claims that Southwell – unlike Garnet – had not done anything “treasonous” (244). But

Southwell, like Garnet, was a Catholic Jesuit priest. As Frank Huntley points out: “to almost every Englishman in the age of Elizabeth and James, a Jesuit was an agent not of God but of the devil. Equivocation was his means to treason and the end was the murdering of Protestant princes” (393).

Richard Whalen states: “Since the Jesuit doctrine of equivocation had been well known before the 1600s, it is not valid evidence for a 1606 date of composition” (209). Paul’s dismissal of Southwell as an earlier inspiration for Shakespeare’s use of the word equivocation is obviously a manipulation of the facts in service to his argument. For scholars have noted that far from ignoring Southwell, Shakespeare makes reference to Southwell’s most famous poem “The Burning Babe” in *Macbeth*. Interestingly, Southwell was the kind of poet Shakespeare was not; a sentimental popular writer who wrote Christian message poetry. “The Burning Babe” concerns a vision of a burning baby on Christmas day, who burns so that men’s evil souls can be saved. In *Witches and Jesuits* Gary Wills mentions the similarities between Southwell’s poem and *Macbeth*, and Sylvia Morris on her *Shakespeare Blog* quotes from Southwell’s poem:

A pretty babe all burning bright did in the air appear;
Who, though scorched with excessive heat, such floods of tears did shed,
As though his floods should quench his flames, which with his tears were fed.

She notes that a passage from *Macbeth* seems to make direct reference to this passage from Southwell. In the play, Macbeth is tortured about the possibility that he might murder Duncan, and thus pleads to his own good nature that such a murder would make a baby cry:

And Pity, like a naked new-born babe
Striding the blast, or heaven’s Cherubins, hors’d
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind.

(1.7.21-25)

But this is not the only reference to Southwell’s poem in *Macbeth*. When Macbeth’s henchmen kill Macduff’s son, they say “What you egg? You fry of treachery?” (4.2.94-95). The word *fry* is also in Southwell’s poem, which is literally (and horrifyingly) a poem about a baby who is being fried alive: “Alas!” quoth he, “but newly born, in fiery heats I fry, /Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel my fire but I!” *Macbeth* is replete with dead children, and children who speak from beyond the grave, like Southwell’s baby.

It might seem odd that Shakespeare would almost lightly – in a punning manner in fact – refer to the death of a child featured so prominently in Southwell’s poem. But this reference makes perfect sense if one considers that both Southwell and Shakespeare use such a melodramatic and heart-wrenching event in radically different ways. The death of Macduff’s son is significant and shocking in *Macbeth*, and it is a feature of the play that has horrified critics and audiences alike (including Henry Paul, who – as previously mentioned – calls it “disagreeable”). Southwell, in contrast to Shakespeare, uses the death of a child to press a moralistic point. His poem is considered a special favourite Christmas poem by many Catholics even to this day because of its direct appeal to the heart. This is sharply different from Shakespeare, who presents the brutal murder of children with a chilling coldness and lack of moral judgement, in a universe that seems – at the moment of the child’s murder at least – to be particularly godless and amoral. Though we can’t help but recoil in horror, Shakespeare does not manipulate us with that horror; he simply presents the brutal violence as a repugnant fact of life. Could Shakespeare – by his references to Southwell – have been making fun of Southwell’s verse; emphasizing the difference between Southwell’s brand of moralistic religious poetry and his own?

This may seem like conjecture. But perhaps not, in the context of Shakespeare’s strong ties to overdecorated, ambiguous, paradoxical style. Paul’s attempt to relate the notion of equivocation to the Gunpowder plot is not only historically erroneous; it reveals a deep misunderstanding of Shakespeare’s attitude to language that is typical of mainstream Shakespeare scholarship. Specifically, Paul asserts that Shakespeare is writing – in a sort of poetic code – about specific historical issues and incidents. Opposition to this idea is not to suggest that Shakespeare didn’t have opinions about issues during his lifetime, or even that those opinions are not evident in his plays. It also does not mean that Shakespeare didn’t allude to certain topical controversies or persons in his work. But I would suggest – not that Shakespeare’s plays have no meaning, nor that the meaning of Shakespeare’s poetry shouldn’t be debated – but that the words we find in Shakespeare do not have singularly indisputable meanings that are primarily related to contemporary events.

Paul’s attempt to discover explicit references to specific historical incidents and issues in the play erroneously demands a certain literalness from Shakespeare’s style. Of course, Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* has been suggested to be a caricature Christopher Hatton. Does acknowledging this mean that the character was written only to satirize Hatton, and to deny that the character of Malvolio is making reference to any other contemporary of Queen Elizabeth, or to insist that the primary purpose of that character is satire of a specific person? Certainly not. A reference to Hatton is simply part and parcel of the allusiveness, resonance, and ambiguity of Shakespearean poetry. It is quite different from Paul’s punctilious attitude to Shakespeare and meaning. He states, quite early and quite unequivocally: “because Shakespeare’s words still mean what they meant when he wrote them with his pen the first questions

that arise in trying to determine the meaning of the play of *Macbeth* are: When, why and how was it written?” (2). On the contrary, not only have the meanings of many words changed over time, but Shakespeare used language ambiguously. It is a primary feature of his style.

The publication in 1579 of Lyly’s novel *Euphues or the Anatomy of Wit* resulted in an obsession at Elizabeth’s court for a specific manner of style-centric prose. Lyly’s style was borrowed from the writings of the ‘patristic’ fathers (i.e. medieval Catholic philosophical sermons and tracts). As I have written in the journal *Brief Chronicles*, euphuism was the base camp for one side in the early modern English style wars:

Lyly and Shakespeare are of course not the only early modern English poets who employ vocal ornament, antithesis, similes, or the judicious weighing of ideas to create their effects. But I would suggest that Spenser and Sidney (for instance) share a different focus. This is supported by the fact that Sidney and de Vere almost fought a duel over the issue of style versus content. Sidney along with the anti-Ramists, Protestants, and dialecticians alike were all intent on clearing the verbal and syntactical jungle that constituted the dense and complex style that was so much in vogue. They wanted to lay bare the moral message beneath the words, so that the ideas might be heard understood as clearly and simply as possible. (179)

Paul’s attempt to translate Lady Macbeth’s advice to Macbeth as a reference to the Gunpowder plot is an example of misinterpreting Shakespeare’s work by expecting it to deliver a clear meaning, rather than accepting that often what he writes is subsumed in the euphuist style. Paul suggests that Lady Macbeth’s advice – “look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it” (1.5.76-78.) – is an obvious reference to the Gunpowder Plot. Apparently, during James’ reign, a medal was struck to honour the King’s unmasking of the Gunpowder Plot which featured the image of a snake amongst flowers. However the image of a snake among the flowers can be found throughout Shakespeare, and is typical of Shakespeare’s style; the salient characteristic of the euphuistic style is paradox. Nashe, who would have known John Lyly, utilizes a euphuistic trope (just as Shakespeare does) when he speaks of things simultaneously ‘foul and fair.’ Similarly, the paradoxical notion of evil lurking in the shadow of beauty – specifically personified by the image of a snake and flowers – appears in *Pericles*: “and both like serpents are / who though they feed on sweetest flowers yet they on poison breed” (19), and in *Romeo and Juliet* “O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!” (172), as well as *2 Henry VI* – “Or as the snake, rolled in a flowering bank / With shining checkered slough, doth sting a child” (92). Thus there is no reason to associate this image particularly with the Gunpowder Plot medallion that was struck for King James.

Paul goes so far as to attribute the lush, complex, exorbitant extremity of Macbeth’s

speaking style to the Gunpowder Plot. He quotes Macbeth at the climax of the play when he wishes “the estate of the world were now undone” (5.5) commenting “This language now seems extravagant, but in the winter of 1605-1606 such phrases were in people’s mouths and in the play only served to put Macbeth in the class with the powder plotters” (229). Paul also explains that the lines “Cruel are the times, . . . when we hold rumour / From what we fear, yet know not what we fear” (4.2.22-24) are also related to the fearful atmosphere that surrounded the Gunpowder Plot: “he was merely using phrases which had been in his and everyone else’s mouth only a short time before” (Paul 232). In both cases situations in the narrative justify the lines, and reference to the Gunpowder Plot is not necessary to explain their use. In both these cases Shakespeare’s language is extravagant simply because it almost always is.

It’s important to remember that Shakespeare’s style cannot be ‘translated’ in order to discover one, single, clear and penultimate meaning. Most of Shakespeare’s plays are actually either about the difficulties of language, or make reference to that difficulty. As texts, they notoriously resist straightforward exegesis. Touchstone says it all, in his lecture about poetry to the gullible Audrey in *As You Like It*:

AUDREY. I do not know what “poetical” is. Is it honest in deed
and word? Is it a true thing?

TOUCHSTONE. No, truly, for the truest poetry is the most feigning, and
lovers are given to poetry, and what they swear
in poetry may be said as lovers they do feign.
(3.3. 13-18)

To say that the truest poetry is the most feigning is to say: the truest poetry is the poetry that lies.

In his doctoral thesis *The Classical Trivium*, Marshal McLuhan speaks of the medieval subject of ‘grammar’ – which is very different from the sentence parsing that is thought to be grammar today. Early Modern grammar analyzed poetry in order to understand the world’s deepest secrets. Poetry was a way to understand life before the Enlightenment, before scientific analysis became the routine epistemological tool. As David Blank says “the role of etymology by Varro’s account to Plato, that of a privileged part of knowledge to reality, was predicated on the weakness of the senses and their inability to access the truth” (52). And McLuhan tells us that the medieval patristic writer Salutati said: “Since we have no concept of God we can have no words in which to speak to him or of him. We must, therefore fashion a language based on his works. Only the most excellent mode will do, and this is poetry. Thus poetry may be outwardly false but essentially true. Holy Writ is of this kind” (158).

Note the qualification ‘outwardly false but essentially true.’ It is no accident that this phrase, like Touchstone’s reference to true poetry feigning, calls to mind the medieval notion of equivocation. Salutati believed in a kind of holy truth, one that

only God knows, a truth that – when human begins attempt to communicate it – is shrouded, even hidden, in falsehood. This seems to imply that poetry is a secret one shares with God. Paul’s reading of *Macbeth* as a literal translation of contemporary incidents portrays an ignorance of the medieval concept of poetry that constituted an early modern education, a concept that not only defines Shakespeare’s style, but is intimately connected to the themes of *Macbeth*. For an important theme of the play is that language is simultaneously both a lie and the truth.

Macbeth is about the dangerous power of words to mystify us, to create new realities, and to perform magic. In *Macbeth* imagination is also under critical scrutiny – not necessarily because it is at the service of Macbeth’s ambition but because language and her partner, imagination, are by their very nature dangerous. The play is filled with utterances that are thoughtful, critical, and ultimately analytical about the act of speaking, the meaning of words, and nature of the imagination and art. The climax of the play is specifically about words and their meaning.

From the moment that Macbeth begins to consider the possibility of murdering Duncan, his hold on reality is also loosened. His imagining becomes reality, and he says “That function is smothered in surmise / And nothing is but what is not” (1.3). In the famous ‘dagger’ monologue, he imagines that he sees a dagger before him – a dagger that only exists in his imagination. When he first visits the witches he cannot believe his eyes because the witches disappear in what appears to be a magic bubble so that “what seems corporal melted” (1.3.84). Significantly, the witches speak in a kind of demented, somewhat incomprehensible, and yet strangely mundane poetry. What are they saying, and are they speaking the truth? Macbeth calls the witches “imperfect speakers” (1.3.73) and in the same scene Banquo asks “can the devil speak true?” (1.3.113). He observes: “The instruments of darkness tell us truths / Win us with honest trifles, to betray’s / In deepest consequence” (1.3.136-138). This becomes a major issue as Macbeth becomes more and more dependent on the witches’ prophecies.

Lady Macbeth, like the witches, is an imperfect speaker and her fantastical speaking is overheard by those who spy on her when she is sleepwalking. Shakespeare here echoes Nashe, who equates dreaming and art in *Terrors of the Night*. When Nashe realizes that his pamphlet has gone on rather too long, he apologizes, but not too much: “I care not much if I dream yet a little more, and to say the troth, all this whole tractate is but a dream, for my wits are not half awaked in it” (21).

The dreams of the sleepwalking Lady Macbeth, are more than real to her, and yet are watched by the doctor and gentlewoman as a kind of warped fantasy performance. The doctor describes her “walking and other actual performances” (5.1.3). Her speech is suspect, for the Gentlewoman says that she has “spoke what she should not” because she, as the doctor says, “receives at once the benefit of sleep and do[es] the effects of watching” (5.1.10-12).

Before Macbeth hears the witches' predictions he asks them what they are doing at the cauldron, and they reply "A deed without a name" (4.1.50). This is significant. For Neoplatonists and patristic writers most things were thought to have inevitable names inscribed by their essence. Indeed the names of things were divine and immediately understood by Adam and Eve in paradise. Language was once perfect, but after the fall it became imperfect and capable of deceiving us. It's as if language was still magical, but the magic, as it was no longer divine, was now capable of both good and evil. Malcolm refers to the perverse nature of the world after the fall where things are not what they seem: "Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell. Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace, Yet grace must still look so" (4.3.27-30).

This is one of many references in *Macbeth* (and one of many in Shakespeare) that speaks to the danger of an evil soul misplaced in a serene and/or beautiful countenance. The fear was always the paradox of a pleasing outside hiding evil inside – i.e. the serpent hiding in the flowers. That this dissembling could be related to language is clear. Lennox raises the issue of the relationship between language and appearance when Ross appears odd when reporting on the atrocities of war early on in the play: "So should he look that speaks things / strange" (1.2.52-53). People's demeanour should match their speech – just as their demeanour should match their souls – but Shakespeare's use of the word 'should' suggests that this is unfortunately not always true. Similarly, Duncan comments on whether or not the Thane of Cawdor's demeanour upon his execution had any meaning "There's no art / to find the mind's construction in the face." (1.4.13-14). And finally Macbeth is very aware of how a face can dissemble and betray the heart when he speaks of the death of Malcolm: "False face must hide what the false heart doth / know" (1.7.95-96). The double meaning constitutes an equivocation. There is an outer face and an inner truth and the two don't always match, and this is the danger. If people do not tell the truth, like Macbeth when he deliberately lies to hide his crimes, there is danger to both the soul of the speaker and the understanding of the listener.

For Shakespeare this is not always a matter of intention, of deliberately hiding something. Language is fundamentally equivocal, which makes it difficult to understand the world if one depends on words to clarify it. Paul dismisses Hamlet's use of the word *equivocation*, claiming there's nothing 'sinister' in it. But Hamlet's use of the word is significantly sinister. When speaking with the Gravedigger – a character who is simply called 'clown' in some versions of *Hamlet* – he gets trapped by the Gravedigger's sense of humour. Hamlet wishes to find out whether or not Ophelia is dead, and the Gravedigger refuses to give a straightforward answer. He insists that he is not burying a woman because – as the person he is burying is already dead – she is no longer a woman. Hamlet then comments "How absolute the knave is! We must / speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us" (5.1.129-130). Though the scene is a comic one, the stakes are high, as the death of Ophelia is a crushing blow to

Hamlet. So in this important moment language is not to be trusted and equivocation is dangerous.

The ultimate equivocators in *Macbeth* are the witches. They are ‘imperfect speakers’ in the sense that what they say is both true and false at the same time. When Macbeth – hypnotized and confused by their prophecies – realizes that what they say cannot be trusted, he refers to them as equivocators:

I pull in resolution and begin
To doubt th’ equivocation of the fiend
That lies like truth. ‘Fear not, till Birnam wood
Do come to Dunsinane’; and now a wood
Comes toward Dunsinane.

(5.5.48-52)

Macbeth is trapped by language, and that trap threatens to make life meaningless, for not only do words equivocate, but the stories that words tell have lost their meaning and life has become “a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing” (5.5.30-31). In this nightmare, language has no meaning, and neither do stories. Shakespeare’s attitude to equivocation is unequivocal in this instance of Macbeth’s existential despair. There is no hope, because words don’t represent anything – language has fallen as far as it can from a divine essence – and in the hands of witches and poets, it cannot be trusted.

Does this mean – as various interpretations of *Macbeth* would have us believe – that the moral of the play is that Macbeth’s evil ambition has made words equivocal? The problem is that Macbeth is not the only Shakespearean character – good or evil – to struggle with language, meaning, dissembling, or equivocation. And the problem is that if we look deep in our own souls, we may find there is always the possibility that an essential skepticism may surface – a skepticism that is fundamental and metaphysical – that in a moment of uncertainty, confusion or crisis, we might find ourselves like Lear, Hamlet, and Macbeth, questioning our most cherished concepts, beliefs, stories, realities, and moralities.

If we accept that *Macbeth* is a play obsessed with the very nature of language, then the play’s problem scene (Act 4, Scene 3) finally makes sense. This scene has confounded critics, causing them to suggest the play is unplayable or at the very least, deeply flawed. Both Henry Paul and Gary Wills struggle to understand it. In this scene, Malcolm speaks with Macduff about his unsuitability for kingship by melodramatically revealing his vices. He then promptly reveals he has just lied, and he has few if any vices at all. Why does Shakespeare waste our time with this waffling? Paul’s answer to what seem to be dramaturgical inadequacies, is this:

After the flight of Macduff it only remained to bring the play of *Macbeth*

to an end by exhibiting the reduction of the great Dunsinane and the overthrow of the tyrant. This scarcely afforded enough material to fill the last two acts of the play. Therefore, to maintain suspense, the dramatist, following his source in Holinshed, interposed an unexpected obstacle to the revolt of the thanes...Malcolm tells Macduff that he is unfit for kingship because of imaginary vices and therefore unwilling to lead a revolt. The recitation by him of these supposed vices ends in lines the true significance of which has been entirely lost. (359)

Similarly, the focus of Gary Wills' book *Witches and Jesuits* is to discover what it is that has made *Macbeth* such a difficult play to love and produce. Early on, he singles out Act 4, Scene 3 as fundamentally problematic because the scene "substitutes the pallid moral struggle of Malcolm and Macduff for the crackling interplay of Macbeth and his lady" (5).

In both Holinshed and Shakespeare, Malcolm seems to be testing MacDuff by pretending to be a traitor like Macbeth. The problem is that the interaction seems inconsequential, yet it takes up enormous space in the play (not unlike the Porter's digressions on equivocation). Paul and Wills come up with wildly different solutions to the question – why Act 4 Scene 3? In his usual manner, Paul enlightens us to the true meaning of Malcolm's vices. Malcolm says that if he were king, he would: "Pour the sweet Milk of Concord into hell, / uproar the universal peace, confound / All unity on earth." (4.3.97-99). Paul suggests this was inserted in order to perversely echo King James motto, which was 'concord, peace and unity.' The fact that 'concord, peace and unity' was a phrase used by many English monarchs, including Queen Elizabeth, clearly escapes him. Wills offers another explanation: "the scene of Malcolm's mental fencing with Macduff should be staged with a view to some of those [i.e. the play's] other discussions of trust and deceit" (112). I would go even further and suggest that Malcolm's false confession, and indeed most of Act 4 Scene 3, emphasizes the sinister and magical power of words, and are a kind of equivocation – because words have an intrinsic ambiguity.

Donald Lyons' review of *Witches and Jesuits* rips apart Wills' theory:

Malcolm's testing of Macduff is in Shakespeare's source, the chronicler Holinshed, where Malcolm, the good-king-to-be, falsely accuses himself of lust, avarice, and dissimulation/equivocation. But – alas for Wills – Shakespeare changes the last self-accusation to general wickedness – that is, he de-jesuitizes, de-topicalizes the gravamen! Why should Shakespeare, supposedly writing a "Gunpowder" play, thus unpowder himself?

Lyons makes an interesting point. In the original Holinshed source Malcolm frames deceitfulness as his third and final egregious fault, whereas in *Macbeth* the final fault is

changed from deceitfulness to a kind of general treason (when Malcolm mentions – so marked by Paul – that he will ‘Pour the sweet Milk of Concord into hell’). However Macbeth does mention deceitfulness – buried in his general lists of faults: “But I have none. /The king-becoming graces, /As justice, verity, temp’rance, stableness,” (4.3.107-108). Much more importantly, this entire test climaxes with Malcolm apologizing for having lied; which confirms what the scene is actually about. Malcolm admits that he “would not betray/ The devil to his fellow, and delight /No less in truth than life/ My first false speaking/ Was this upon myself” (4.3.147-150). The scene is terribly important thematically. It foreshadows Macbeth’s often quoted monologue in Act 5 – ‘a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.’ Malcolm’s false admission seems to be just such a tale, because it transforms itself from melodramatic truth to crushing lie in a manner of minutes.

Most of the rest of Act 4 Scene 3 is taken up with a similar false admission. Ross arrives with the knowledge that Macduff’s wife and child have been murdered. As in the previous encounter between Malcolm and Macduff, the revelation involves a lie. When Macduff first inquires about his wife and children, Ross replies that they are well. But almost as soon as he has lied, Ross reveals: Your castle is surprised, your wife and babes / Savagely slaughtered” (4.3.240-241). For MacDuff, language has created a certain sense of what is true, and then – tragically and mysteriously – smashed that reality into a million pieces. The words spoken to Macduff at the end of the scene are so adept at manipulating Macduff’s reality that they elicit Macduff’s agonizing cry “All my pretty ones / Did you say all? Oh hell-kite! All? / What, all my pretty chickens and their dam / At one fell swoop?”(4.3.255-258). The end of the scene is profoundly moving and dramatic. Act 4 Scene 3 emphasizes that we needn’t be as evil as Macbeth to experience the manipulations of verbal equivocation, and to develop a frightening skepticism towards words and stories. We need be only as innocent as Macduff, who is fooled first by a King’s false vow and then by a messenger’s inability to reveal horrifying news.

Henry Paul and those who insist there is a poetic code in *Macbeth* that can be analyzed for its exact meaning in relationship to historical events are not only misinterpreting the play, but are wasting their time with a methodological approach that is alien to Shakespeare’s aesthetic. The porter’s extensive improvisation on the subject of equivocation may have less to do with Jesuit traitors, than it does with an early modern philosopher who has been ignored by Shakespeare scholars, but whose work was fundamental in the creation of the treatise on equivocation: Navarrus.

Navarrus (Martin de Azpilcueta,1491-1586) – was a 16th century religious theorist. Frank Huntley tells us that Navarrus was read in Shakespeare’s lifetime by educated Europeans. He quotes from Etienne Pasquier’s 1602 book *Jesuit Catechism*: “the great Canonist Navarre, the chiefest of all the Doctors in matters of the Canon-Law, speaking of this simple vow [i.e. equivocation] gives it the name of Great and

Maruailous” (396). We have no proof that Shakespeare read Navarrus. However, if we understand the focus of *Macbeth* to be an expression of the fundamental mutability of language then it is no accident that Shakespeare mentions equivocation in *Macbeth*. For Navarrus stretched his theory of equivocation beyond the spiritual and ethical issue of speaking one truth to God while communicating another truth to a living person. Navarrus hinted, in his writing on equivocation, at modern language theory. Stefania Tutino, in a new book about the philosopher, says Navarrus suggested: “human language is not a tightly regulated venue where meaning is communicated between people, but a complex set of different types of communication, not a measure of moral uncertainty but a measure of hermeneutical uncertainty” (24). In other words, Navarrus went beyond the moral implications of equivocation to propose that language is itself fundamentally equivocal, meaning perpetually uncertain, and communication difficult and ambiguous. This skepticism about the relationship between signifier (word) and signified (object) is what characterizes modern day post-structuralist linguistic theory.

That Shakespeare was obsessed with the ambiguous nature of human language, that he found language both fair and foul, good and evil, attractive and unattractive – but always obsessively addictive – is proved by the many musings on language in his work. I will not list them here, but instead mention a play that particularly displays Shakespeare’s fondness for a florid style, a play that is concerned with questions of language and epistemology, and often referred to as being influenced by euphuism: *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

Martin de Azpilcueta was nicknamed ‘Navarrus’ because Navarre was his place of birth (in northern Spain, bordering what is now Basque). Is it simply a coincidence that *Love’s Labour’s Lost* takes place in Navarre? And that Ferdinand, the King of Navarre is also a philosopher sometimes referred to as simply ‘Navarre,’ just as Martin de Azpilcueta is, in the Pasquier quotation above? But the array of coincidental associations between Navarrus and *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (and indeed other Shakespeare works) does not end there. King Ferdinand or, Navarre, in *Love’s Labours Lost* sets up a school of philosophy for young gentleman, in which they will be asked to give up love. Navarrus also had a school of philosophy in Navarre, called the Salamanca School. What this school is best remembered for today, are the musings Navarrus and his colleagues entertained on economics. Goncalo Fonseca, writing on the website of The Institute of New Economic Thinking, tells us that the Salamanca School invented capitalist economic theory:

Their analysis led them to trace a scarcity theory of value and employed supply-and-demand with dexterity. They rejected Duns Scotus’s ‘cost of production’ conception of the just price, arguing that there was no objective way of determining price. Before Bodin, but after Copernicus, the Salamanca School independently uncovered the essential properties of the Quantity Theory of

Money, using it to explain the inflation of the 1500s arising from the influx of precious metals from Spanish America. They also provided a resounding defense of usury. The accomplishments of the Salamanca theorists have led scholars such as Friedrich von Hayek to note that, contrary to Max Weber's thesis, it is the religion of the Jesuits and not the Calvinists, that set the grounds for capitalism.

Shakespeare frequently uses financial matters as a metaphor for love; this metaphor is overwhelmingly present in *Love's Labour's Lost*, as well as *The Sonnets*. And of course not only is usury the subject matter of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, but some critics have suggested that *The Merchant of Venice* was written in response to early modern theories of mercantile capitalism.

If all this seems like conjecture, let us turn to the theme of *Love's Labour's Lost*. The play is centered on the epistemological question; how best can one come to know the world? Navarre has decreed that all the men in his kingdom must abjure the company of women. Resembling those who 'equivocate' in Act 4 Scene 3 of *Macbeth*, the three lords who come to visit have barely arrived before they take the vow (referred to as an oath in the play), and then immediately break it, spending the rest of the play referring to themselves as *perjurers*. And like the traitors in *Macbeth*, and all Jesuits in England, the three lords in *Love's Labour's Lost* are also committing treason – only in this case it is by virtue of falling in love. They spend the rest of the play wooing their favourites, and waxing poetic about the ladies who have caught their fancy.

The most sensitive, witty and poetic of the lords, Berowne, struggles with a fundamental question – what is the best way to learn in this academy? He ultimately decides that love is actually a form of perception more efficacious than his own senses: "Love's feeling is more soft and sensible / than are the tender horns of cockled snails" (4.3.336-337). Having adopted love and poetry as a mode of perception, it is in Act 5 that his love poetry is criticized by his love object, Rosaline. So he vows (yet again another vow which is broken as it is made) to modify his ornate manner of speaking. He says "O never will I trust to speeches penned, / Nor to the motion of a school-boy's tongue" (5.2.403-404) seeming to reject the whole of Elizabethan grammar and rhetoric. Unfortunately he ends his speech – a speech against ornate speech – with an ornate flourish:

BEROWNE. My love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw.

ROSALINE. Sans 'sans,' I pray you

BEROWNE. Yet I have a trick

Of the old rage. Bear with me;

I am sick; I leave it by degrees. (5.2.416-419)

Shakespeare, not unlike Berowne, cannot leave *lying* behind, because to do so would be to abandon the beauty of words. No matter what Berowne says, he – like Shakespeare – is riddled with a disease that makes embellishment, metaphor, paradox, and ornate language irresistible, even though both Berowne and Shakespeare are fearful of poetry’s ability to dissemble – to the point of labeling it perjury.

Michael Delahoyde suggests that the school of Navarre in the play – “may be . . . ridiculing a group headed by Raleigh and including Marlowe, Chapman, and others who, with John Florio, thought ‘it were labour lost to speak of Love’; they were interested in the new science, especially astronomy and Copernicus.” That Shakespeare might ridicule this group (sometimes referred to as *The School of Night*) would certainly make sense since he was a dedicated euphuist and grammarian devoted to understanding the world through poetry. Such a school would be very much opposed to a school of ‘dialectics’ (as the discipline we now call science was then called).

Delahoyde also tells us “J. Thomas Looney and Oxfordians since have identified Boyet as a send-up of Philip Sidney,” which makes sense as Sidney was Edward de Vere’s sworn enemy in the early modern style wars. Berowne, addicted to euphuism, says of Boyet:

This fellow pecks up wit as pigeons pease
And utters it again when God doth please
He is wit’s pedler, and retails his wares
At wakes and wassails, meetings, markets, fairs
And we that sell by gross, the Lord doth know
Have not the grace to grace it with such show.

(LLL 5.2.315-320)

Shakespeare was no doubt cynical about the more moralistic, Christian poets Sidney and Southwell, whose work was more accessible and who relied on message more than medium.

What is perhaps most telling about *Love’s Labour’s Lost* – in the context of its incessant, at times numbing wordplay – is that Shakespeare was both enraptured of and disturbed by the ambiguities of language. When Berowne hears Dumaine’s sonnet to his beloved – “I would forget her; but a fever she / Reigns in my blood and will remember’d be” (4.3.99-100) he responds: “A fever in your blood! why, then incision / Would let her out in saucers: sweet misprision” (4.3.101-102). *Misprision* is derived from the old French word meaning ‘to misunderstand’ but was used in English law to describe an act which involved hiding one’s awareness of an unlawful act. *Misprision* was, significantly and paradoxically, thought (like equivocation) to have both positive and negative implications. Berowne’s use of the phrase “sweet misprision” to describe a sonnet thus encapsulates Shakespeare’s ambivalent opinion on the ambivalence of language.

Shakespeare, in *Macbeth*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and indeed, in all his plays explicitly and implicitly worked through his love/hate relationship with language. The discussion of language by Viola and The Clown in *Twelfth Night* is often considered obscure or beside the point. It may very well, instead, actually be the point:

CLOWN. You have said, sir. To see this age! A sentence is
but a cheveril glove to a good wit: how quickly the
wrong side may be turned outward!

VIOLA. Nay, that's certain; they that dally nicely with
words may quickly make them wanton.

CLOWN. I would, therefore, my sister had had no name, sir.

VIOLA. Why, man?

CLOWN. Why, sir, her name's a word; and to dally with that
word might make my sister wanton. But indeed words
are very rascals since bonds disgraced them.

VIOLA. Thy reason, man?

CLOWN. Troth, sir, I can yield you none without words; and
words are grown so false, I am loath to prove
reason with them.

(3.1.11-26.)

Language is not rational. It can betray us with its ambiguity. But Shakespeare's lingual skepticism is never hopeless, because he is ever the poet and cannot abandon words. Present day scholars – dedicated to interpreting plays like *Macbeth* – must take a warning from *Love's Labour's Lost*. It's important to be skeptical of literal analysis of Shakespeare's poetry. Delahoyde quotes Goddard: “What a warning to scholars and commentators *Love's Labour's Lost* is! If the truth that it teaches is applicable to its author's own works (including this one), their secret will never be revealed to mere erudition or learning on the one hand nor mere romantic glorification on the other.”

An analysis of *Macbeth* that ignores Shakespeare's obsession with language is ignoring Shakespeare's perhaps greatest and most revolutionary theory of all: that language is an ambiguous and dangerous – yet mysteriously revealing – lie.

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A Sufficient Warrant

Censorship, Punishment, and Shakespeare in Early Modern England

by Bonner Miller Cutting

Many laws were on the books in Tudor England to control the spoken and written word. These laws empowered the Elizabethan and later, the Jacobean authorities to censor writing that was critical of government officials and their policies. In her book *Censorship and Interpretation*, the eminent Annabel Patterson opened the door to academic discussion of the relationship of politics and art in early modern England, exploring the strategic approaches used by writers to circumvent the restrictions on freedom of expression (44-75). In *Art Made Tongue-tied by Authority*, Janet Clare provides more details on the harsh enforcement measures used in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to punish writers who went too far with politically sensitive commentary in plays, books, or pamphlets. However, the subject of censorship as it relates directly to the Shakespeare canon receives only peripheral attention from academics, a disinclination that is understandable in light of the questions that it raises in the Shakespeare authorship discussion.

That the man from Stratford-upon-Avon went unnoticed by the Elizabethan government is a stark reality. Nowhere in the multitudinous biographies of this individual's life is there anything to indicate that the authorities of state were aware of his existence as a writer. So far as the record shows, he was never interviewed by the Privy Council or any legal enforcement entity. If any scholars or members of the London literati met him, corresponded with him, or even visited him during his affluent retirement in Stratford-upon-Avon, there is no mention of it (Price 302-305). Nor is there anything to connect him in a personal way with a patron or an important government official, as Charlotte Stopes, the industrious Shakespearean researcher, noted regretfully in the preface of her 1922 biography of the Earl of Southampton (v).

Even if Shakespeare's works had no political overtones whatsoever, it is odd that the man from Stratford went unseen by the watchful eye of the government if, indeed, he wrote those magisterial works. After reviewing the punishments meted out to other writers in early modern England whose words were deemed seditious, this paper will discuss the politically dangerous material in the works of Shakespeare. If the author behind these works was a habitual political miscreant, then how did he escape the punitive measures visited regularly on less reprehensible, less prolific, and considerably

less talented, Elizabethan writers?

This leads to a more profound question: how could anyone have written these works and remained untouched by the brutal hand of government authority?

Censorship in Early Modern England

In the last decades of the 16th century, the Revels Office and the Stationers Company controlled what the public could see and hear through the power of licensing. Exhibitions of the spoken word, i.e., theatrical performances, required the approval of the Master of the Revels. Books, pamphlets and other publications were licensed by the Stationers Company. Officials of the Revels Office and the Stationers Company were on the lookout for two kinds of subversive material: satire directed toward an important individual and subject matter critical of governmental policy. Both the written and spoken word could be used to promote dangerous political commentary; of the two, the written word was regarded as a more enduring weapon of propaganda. The authorities recalled parts of the second edition of Raphael Holinshed's 1587 *Chronicles*, as the historian had included a "reporte of matters of later yeeres that concern the State, and are not therefore meete to be published in such sorte as they are delivered" (Clare 38-39).

Books about historical subjects were scrutinized for contemporary political satire disguised in historical settings. An example was made of Sir John Hayward, a scholarly historian whose book, *The Life and Reign of King Henrie IIII*, met with a harsh reception when it was published in February 1599. Henry IV's usurpation of the throne of England was a touchy subject in the closing years of Elizabeth's reign, and the authorities were quick to spot a treasonable subtext in Hayward's book. Unwisely, Hayward dedicated the work to the Earl of Essex (Patterson 47-48).¹ Essex was thought to be positioning himself as the successor to the Tudor queen and the dedication further strengthened the analogy of the earl with the usurper Bolingbroke (Hazard 191). Although Hayward's book preceded the Essex Rebellion by two years, the offending inference brought him imprisonment in the Tower. At his trial, Attorney

Bonner Miller Cutting is a frequent presenter at Shakespeare authorship conferences and has researched many subjects including *Lady Anne Clifford's Triptych*, the *Van Dyke* portrait of *Susan Vere* at *Wilton House*, and *censorship and punishment in early modern England*. She has published articles on the will of *William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon* and her transcript of the *Stratford will* was published in the *Shakespeare Authorship Coalition* book *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial*. Cutting holds a BFA degree from *Tulane University* in *New Orleans* and a *Masters of Music* in *piano performance* from *McNeese State University* in *Lake Charles, Louisiana*. She published an article on "*Wardship and Edward de Vere*" in *The Oxfordian* 18.

General Edward Coke didn't mince words in characterizing it as "a storie 200 yere olde . . . intending the application of it to this tyme" (Hammer 6). The furor over Hayward's book reveals how aggressively Elizabethan officials responded to writing that was thought to mask current events in a historical context. Moreover, in the aftermath, the Archbishop of Canterbury stipulated that all histories be approved by the Privy Council, a startling measure which gave the elite in the Queen's government direct authority over the writers of the era in matters pertaining to England's history (Clare 83).

Though treasonous intent could be embedded in the written word, the theater was considered a more immediate danger, as seditious dialogue could rouse an audience. A play that incited riot or, worse still, open rebellion could pose a direct threat to the peace of the realm. The risk increased as the population of London surged during Elizabeth's reign. As early as 1573, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, tightened the government's grip on "playmakers and plaiers" with a document designed to increase the authority of the Revels Office. Another document prepared for Lord Burghley in 1581 implemented even closer state surveillance of the theaters and reinforced the penalty of imprisonment for those who violated government restrictions.² By the early 1580s, the Queen's Privy Council was regularly issuing orders to Justices of the Peace, the Lord Mayor of London, and other authorities to permit only those plays which yielded "honest recreation and no example of evil" (Clare 30-31).

These increasingly severe measures were underpinned by legislation passed by Parliament in 1581. An "Act against seditious words and rumours," recorded as 23 ELIZ CAP II, became known as the "Statute of Silence" (Patterson 25-26). The statute came in the wake of the punishment of John Stubbes, who wrote a pamphlet, *The Gaping Gulf*, in which he disapproved of Lord Burghley's policy supporting the Queen's proposed marriage to the French Duc d'Anjou. Stubbes was charged with disseminating seditious writings and found guilty. As punishment, his right hand was cut off with a butcher's knife and the wound seared with a hot iron. His publisher suffered the same fate. Stubbes was imprisoned for eighteen months; the publisher died of his wounds (*DNB*, 19: 118-119). If the "unhanding" of Stubbes was meant as an object lesson to stifle public criticism of government policy, it succeeded. The subsequent Statute of Silence clarified just what kinds of writing would constitute a libelous crime and specified even harsher penalties for disobedience.

The Playwrights

Christopher Marlowe was a successful playwright whose work brought him unwelcome attention. In May of 1593, he was summoned to London by the Privy Council. Charges had been brought against him by one Richard Baines (Nicholl, *Reckoning* 46, 352). In correspondence with Lord Burghley, Baines wrote that Marlowe "persuades men to Atheism . . . scorning both God and his ministers" (Riggs, *Marlowe* 329-336).

In spite of the fact that Baines was an insidious informer in the Elizabethan secret service, these charges were serious enough to be punishable by death.

In building the case against Marlowe, on May 6, 1593, government officials arrested his roommate Thomas Kyd (Riggs, *Marlowe* 319-320).³ Kyd's lodgings were searched and his papers confiscated by order of the Royal Commissioners.⁴ He was incarcerated in Bridewell Prison, interrogated on May 11, and, in his own words, withstood "pains and undeserved tortures (Miles 27)."⁵ Bridewell was known for a method of torture called "the scavenger's daughter." This mechanism consisted of an iron ring, tightened by turning a screw to bring the head, feet and hands together until they formed a circle. With this incentive, Kyd wrote two letters to Thomas Puckering, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, in which he confirmed that Marlowe had committed religious heresies.⁶

These letters are still extant, but scholars, quite sensibly, discount their credibility since Kyd composed them under the duress of "being crushed alive at Bridewell" (Riggs, *Marlowe* 320-322). It is thought, not unreasonably, that this treatment hastened his death a year later. Historian Rosalind Miles summarizes this unfortunate situation: "Ignorance, innocence even, was no defense for a suspected playwright against the might of a suspicious state (27)."

Although Marlowe's associates accused him of heretical religious views, his works, are ambivalent toward religion, suggesting that it was the sheer popularity of his plays that brought him to the attention of the Royal Commissioners and the Privy Council. His plays: *Tamburlaine*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *The Massacre at Paris* had played to packed houses (Riggs, *Marlowe* 319). By the spring of 1593, *Doctor Faustus* may have been in the works (Clare 50), and the material dealing with the unorthodox Catholic philosopher Giordano Bruno could have been a factor contributing to Marlowe's downfall (Riggs, *Marlowe* 248-249). Bruno became known in England when he lectured at Oxford University in the 1580s. He later spent some time in France, where Sir Francis Walsingham used him as an "intelligencer" (a spy) within the French embassy (Nicholl, *Reckoning* 202-210). The details are beyond the scope of this paper, but it is clear that the Bruno material in Marlowe's play had, according to Clare's *Art Made Tongue-Tied by Authority*, "disquieting implications for the Elizabethan government (49)." That something was indeed disquieting about the Bruno scene can be inferred from the delay of twenty-three years before the scene was published in the 1616 edition of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.⁷

Although it remains unclear exactly what alerted the authorities to Marlowe's writing, once activated, they moved swiftly. On May 18, 1593, the Privy Council issued a warrant for his apprehension. Henry Maunder was sent "to repair to the house of Mr. Thomas Walsingham in Kent" to bring Marlowe to London. Marlowe was questioned by the Council on May 20 and released on bail with the command "to give his daily attendance on their Lordships" – which meant that he had to report every

day to Greenwich Palace where the Council resided. Marlowe was on a short leash (Riggs, *Marlowe* 333; Nicholl, *Reckoning* 46-47). It is instructive to note that it took only two days for the Privy Councilors to locate Marlowe and reel him in for questioning. By May 30 – only ten days later – he was dead.

Thomas Nashe was another writer making a name for himself in the 1590s, by which time he had established a reputation for catching “the intellectual pulse” of the urbane London intelligentsia (*ODNB* 5: 40, 240). He was arrested and imprisoned in 1593 for his apocalyptic religious lament *Christs Tears Over Jerusalem*, and was released through the good offices of his new-found patron, Sir George Carey, to whose wife the work was prudently dedicated (*ODNB* 5: 241). In the summer of 1597, Nashe collaborated with Ben Jonson on a play, *The Isle of Dogs*. It was performed at the Swan Theater. Records of the Privy Council and other literary sources reveal the fierce response it elicited from the authorities (Clare 72). It is reported that Queen Elizabeth was greatly angered, and the matter was handled by the highest officials in her court (Miles 31-32).⁸ In an order of July 28, 1597, the Privy Council closed down all the London playhouses. Jonson and several actors were imprisoned immediately (Miles 32). Most tellingly, the investigation was turned over to none other than the Queen’s notorious torturer, Richard Topcliffe (Clare 72-76). Topcliffe was further empowered by the Council to “peruse such papers as were found in Nashe’s lodging” and to discover how many copies of the play had been distributed and to whom (Nicholl, *Nashe* 244). As no copies of *The Isle of Dogs* survive, it is reasonable to assume that Topcliffe did his job thoroughly (Hibbard 235).

Known as a “monster of iniquity,” Topcliffe tortured confessions from the Jesuit missionaries in England during the last decades of Elizabeth’s reign (*DNB* 19: 979-980). He had a rack and other demonic machines of his own invention in his home, and was given the authority to bring prisoners there for questioning. He reported directly to the Queen (Nicholl, *Reckoning* 110-112).

Henslowe wrote in his Diary that he “paid this 23 of August 1597 to Harey Porter, to care to T Nashe now at this in the Fleet, for writing the Isle of Dogs ten shillings, to be paid again to me when he can.” Twentieth-century historians have come to question the authenticity of this entry (Freeman 206, 415),⁹ though a woodcut published in 1597 shows Nashe in leg irons. It is accepted today that somehow Nashe made a getaway to the country (*DNB* 14: 107-109),¹⁰ perhaps having recovered from the ministrations of Topcliffe. It is unknown when, where, and how Nashe died (Miles 65; Nicholl, *Nashe* 269). The earliest reference to Nashe as deceased was in 1601.

Nevertheless, according to the official story, Nashe supposedly wrote *Lenten Stuffe* the next spring when he was on the lam, and it was entered in the Stationers Register in early 1599 (Hibbard 236-237).¹¹ Again, the hammer came down swiftly. Soon after, the Archbishop of Canterbury ordered that all of Nashe’s writings be collected

and destroyed (Arber 677-678). Nashe had suffered quite a fall from the days when his play, *Summers Last Will and Testament*, was performed at the Archbishop's summer lodgings at Croydon (Hibbard 88-89).¹²

Nashe was not the only writer whose work was consigned to the flames. Included in the Archbishop's instruction "to be burnt" were works of John Marston, Thomas Middleton, Gabriel Harvey, Sir John Davis, and several writers who were less well known (Arber 677).

In 1599, John Marston was new on the London scene, having made his debut the year before with a satirical book, *Pigmalion*. This, and his subsequent *Scourge of Villainy* were at the top of the list of books set for destruction by the Archbishop's ban. With his total literary output condemned, Marston might have taken the hint that he did not have much of a future in the London literary world. But in case he needed further prompting, two years later he was satirized by Ben Jonson (along with Thomas Dekker) in Jonson's play *The Poetaster*. Jonson was in trouble as well for *Poetaster* (Patterson 49). Brought up on charges before Lord Chief Justice Popham, Jonson "lawyered up" – a novel approach for that day and age. His attorney, Richard Martin, defended him successfully, and Martin's advocacy is credited with saving the play, although it was highly censored upon its publication the following year (Riggs, *Jonson: Life* 80, 87; Clare 107-111).

The bone of contention between Marston and Jonson is unclear, but several years later, their enmity forgotten, they collaborated (along with George Chapman) on another dangerous undertaking. That play, *Eastward Ho*, was performed in 1605 and reportedly mocked the new King and his courtiers. Jonson and Chapman were imprisoned (Clare 119-172).¹³ According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Marston was incarcerated as well, though recent historians are uncertain on this point (*DNB* 12: 1142; Miles 96).

The offense provoked a serious response. It appears from Jonson's letters that the playwrights were to have their ears and noses cut (Clare 141,169). Pleading for clemency, Jonson wrote frantically to highly placed individuals including the Earls of Salisbury, Suffolk, Pembroke, Montgomery, the Countess of Bedford, his patron Esme Stuart Lord D'Aubigny, and the King himself (Salgado 180).¹⁴ Even though Jonson was still at a fairly early point in his career, he had established a remarkable network of acquaintances he could call on directly. Apparently this lobbying effort secured his release with his ears and nose intact.

Reliable information about Marston and his literary career is difficult to come by. Much of his work was published anonymously, and some with only his initials I. M. In *Scourge of Villainy*, he adopted an odd pseudonym, "W. Kinsayder," and he dedicated *Scourge* to "Oblivioni Sacrum." Translated as "everlasting oblivion," this motto must have been meaningful to him as it appeared on his funeral monument decades

later (*DNB* 12: 1141-1142).

In 1608, three years after the *Eastward Ho* debacle, Marston was imprisoned with George Chapman. Marston continued to operate in the shadows and his later offense is unclear, but after his release from prison, he was put out to pasture. He took holy orders and was given the living of Christchurch in Hampshire, a post he held until shortly before his death in 1633. Still, he may not have disappeared entirely from the literary scene, as he is suspected of writing anonymous satires from time to time. It is thought he was responsible for criticism of the Duke of Buckingham shortly before the Duke's assassination in 1628 (*DNB* 12: 1143).

The Earl of Essex continued to be a sore subject long after the Earl and his eponymous rebellion had come and gone in 1601. In 1605, Samuel Daniel brought the wrath of the Privy Council down on his head when he published a milquetoast play *Philotas* (*DNB* 5: 477-478).¹⁵ The Council was disturbed by what they thought were sympathetic allusions to the now quite late Earl of Essex (Clare 148, 169-170).¹⁶ Daniel has been described as “a workmanlike man of letters” who “edged his way from one noble family to another in precarious feats of survival” (Parry 209). By this time, he had worked his way up to a cushy court job as the director of the Children of the Queen's Revels. But the allegations against him could end his upward mobility, and when he turned to his patron, the Earl of Devonshire, for a word in his defense, the Earl sought to distance himself from Daniel. This incident reveals how hypersensitive the government elite could be to the slightest hint of sedition. It is odd, too, that a small misstep nearly ruined the career of the politically savvy Samuel Daniel. Janet Clare brushes off the situation with the mild assessment that “its scholarly use of classical material failed to deflect interest in its topicality as political drama” (148). More to the point, the damage done by the Earl of Essex had a strangely long shelf life.

Ben Jonson was one of the best-known playwrights of the English Renaissance. Characterized as the dictator of the London literati, his turbulent career spanned almost four decades. He was imprisoned four times (though two were in connection with murder and do not concern us here (*DNB* 10: 1070-1071; Riggs *Jonson: Life* 32-35, 80, 105-106, 122-126). Three of his encounters with the law have been previously discussed: his imprisonment over the *Isle of Dogs*, his appearance before the Chief Justice Popham over *The Poetaster*, and his incarceration with Chapman and (and possibly Marston) as a result of *Eastward Ho*. Though other troubles were in his future, one more incident is especially noteworthy. This time he was called to report to the Privy Council on a charge of treason. The penalty for treason was death, so it is safe to say Jonson found himself, once more, in a rather serious situation.

Sometime in 1603, *Sejanus* was performed at the Globe by the King's Men. This play was suspected of depicting parallels between the careers of the historical Sejanus and the recently executed Earl of Essex; the Privy Council suspected that ancient

history was being used to disguise contemporaneous satire (Patterson 50; Clare 134).¹⁷ Jonson responded to the charges by marshaling the support of his influential friends, and turned to his patron Esme Stuart, Lord D'Aubigny (Riggs, *Jonson: Life* 369). Although the details are not known, it appears that D'Aubigny used his status as a favorite with King James to get Jonson off the hook from the treason charge (Clare 133). When the play was published two years later, Jonson smartly added what has been called an "ideological gloss," i.e., elaborate annotations to give the play more historical context and lessen its contemporary relevance (Patterson 49-50).¹⁸ Remarkably, the disingenuous Jonson asserts his innocence of historical parallelism, even as he puts forth his "less-than-innocent critique of contemporary English authorities" (Donaldson 187-189, 437). But the literary gambit worked, and Jonson's ostensible exposition on the heinousness of tyranny, for some reason, satisfied the authorities. Jonson makes it clear, however, that the printed quarto is "not the same as that which was acted on the public Stage."

The *Sejanus* affair has an additional significance: this is the second time that Jonson's path supposedly, directly, crosses Shakespeare's (Riggs, *Jonson: Life* 105). Orthodox scholars often note that Shakespeare acted in two of Jonson's plays, *Every Man in His Humor* and *Sejanus*, performed in 1598 and 1603 respectively. Jonson biographer Ian Donaldson goes so far as to suggest that "[w]ith Shakespeare possibly playing the part of the emperor Tiberius, this [*Sejanus*] would have been the hottest ticket in town" (186).¹⁹ It is seldom noted that these two references to Shakespeare as an actor are found in Jonson's *Works*, published in 1616. Doing the math, this is a delay of eighteen years for *Everyman* and thirteen years for *Sejanus*. Coming so long after the fact, Jonson's reference to Shakespeare suggests that the clever Jonson has done some bootstrapping. That inference is supported by a legal test known as *res gestae*. *Res gestae* means that for evidence to be reliable, it must be "so spontaneous and contemporaneous with the circumstances as to exclude the idea of deliberation or fabrication" (Miller 376). In other words, reliable evidence cannot appear to be contrived.

In his biography of Ben Jonson, David Riggs discusses how Jonson used his 1616 folio as an opportunity to reinvent himself:

Jonson was not content merely to revise his early quartos: by dating the folio texts from the time of their original performances, he also fostered the illusion that he had not revised them... Jonson's pretense of total accuracy is exceedingly disingenuous. (225)

Riggs gives examples of statements that are misleading, and notes that Jonson "also expunged various clues about his own changing circumstances" (225). Riggs' suggestions lead to something beyond mere embellishment. While Jonson was reinventing himself, might he have taken the opportunity to invent a paper trail for someone else?

The lack of real-time references to Shakespeare as an actor in *Sejanus* are all the more

bizarre in the historical context when, as noted, the play kicked up some trouble when it was originally performed in 1603. Bearing in mind that Jonson was called before the Privy Council on charges of treason, does it not seem a bit odd that no one thought to have a word or two with Shakespeare? (Chambers, *Stage 4*: 168).²⁰ In his book *Contested Will*, James Shapiro labors to tell the readers that Shakespeare was a phenomenal observer (275). If Jonson's belated reference in 1616 can be trusted, then Shakespeare was right there on the scene in 1603. If so, here was the perfect witness to report to the Privy Council on Jonson's theatrical intent. After all, by 1603 (if the Stratford man was truly the author of the Shakespeare works), he was a well-established playwright with a long list of masterpieces under his belt. Both his narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594), had been republished several times, indicating broad public awareness of Shakespeare's poetry. Is it not strange that the Privy Council let this golden opportunity for a firsthand account of *Sejanus* from an individual so articulate (not to mention one with such great powers of observation) slip through their fingers?

The Shakespeare Canon and Censorship

Falstaff – Oldcastle

In a controversy affecting Shakespeare directly, it seems the dissipated character Sir John Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*, and *Henry V* was initially named Sir John Oldcastle (*Riverside* 930, 972). A commentator later wrote that the Cobham family was offended by the “buffone” in *Henry V* using the name “Oldcastle” (Clare 97). The historical Sir John Oldcastle held the title of Lord Cobham, and the Brooke family, who had the Cobham title during Elizabeth's reign, apparently regarded Shakespeare's use of this name for a crass, debauched character as a denigration of their family dignity. In the words of Janet Clare, “we can only surmise whether he [Shakespeare] set out deliberately to travesty the House of Cobham” (98). It gets worse. What escapes Clare's notice is that Lord Cobham's daughter, Elizabeth Brooke, was the wife of Robert Cecil; therefore, the House of Cecil might have taken notice of the slight as well (Handover 67-69). That any writer of the era could get off scot free with a travesty of these two families – and could keep the offending name going through three plays before it was imperfectly removed from the published versions – should raise questions about the author's identity.

Polonius – Lord Burghley

First broached in 1869 by George Russell French, it became accepted in the twentieth century that the character Polonius in *Hamlet* is modeled on William Cecil, Lord Burghley. Orthodox Shakespearean biographers shriek with dismay, but the identification has been recognized by established historians including Lawrence Stone, Joel

Hurstfield, and Alan Gordon Smith. In an innocuous comment, a historian refers to Lord Burghley as “the canny Polonius,” an indication that the theatrical representation is well accepted (James 387).

Pushing back as best he can on behalf of Stratfordians, James Shapiro has grasped that the stakes are high, purporting that those who concur with the Polonius-Burghley comparison “betray a shallow grasp of Elizabethan dramatic censorship” (177).²¹ How ironic a position for an academic to take, especially in light of the stature of the historians who accept the identification. But more to the point, the identification is ironclad. The character was named Corambis in the first quarto, an unflattering take on Lord Burghley’s motto, *Cor unum, via una* (One heart, one way). Polonius’s precepts to his son Laertes resonate with Burghley’s “Precepts to a Son,” published after the Stratford man’s death.²² Knowledge of the unpublished “Precepts” and other parallels between the character Polonius and Lord Burghley indicate that the author of *Hamlet* had inside information about the Cecil family, as well as a lot of nerve.

Robert Cecil – Little Crookback

And what of the canny Cecil’s hunchback son, Sir Robert Cecil? The younger Cecil’s gift for strong-armed tactics was first apparent in 1592 in his recovery of pilfered goods from the Spanish ship the *Madre de Dios*. As he reported to the Queen, “I must be offensive to the multitude and to others that may be revengeful...” Unsurprisingly, the younger Cecil soon earned the moniker “*Robertus diabolus*.” Biographer P. M. Handover accepts that “to attain his ends he has ignored the moral distinction between good and evil.” Cecil himself commented that “By my rough dealing I have left an impression” (1, 85-88).

The outpouring of pent-up revulsion that followed Robert Cecil’s death in 1612 reveals the extent to which he was hated (Dickinson 76; Handover 145).²³ According to G. P. V. Akrigg in *Jacobean Pageant*, “Men who had been afraid of him and his spies while he lived now spoke freely” (109). Cecil’s distinguished cousin Francis Bacon published an essay, titled “On Deformity,” that was widely thought to be modeled on him. Of this essay, the busy correspondent John Chamberlain wrote that “the world takes notice that he [Bacon] paints out his little cousin [Cecil] to the life” (du Maurier 61). Among the more unkind epitaphs is an anonymous verse comparing Cecil to Richard III: “Here lies little Crookback/ Who justly was reckon’d/ Richard III and Judas the second” (Akrigg 110).²⁴ It would be far too bold for historian Akrigg to associate the hunchbacked Cecil with the despised Plantagenet king in the popular play, yet this libel demonstrably shows that someone did indeed connect the dots.

Tellingly, the occupant of the mansion home in Stratford-upon-Avon was never asked by the authorities to explain if his character Richard III was a thinly veiled

dramatic representation of the eminent Tudor official with whom he shared conspicuous physical attributes (Clare 42).

Richard II and the Essex Rebellion

Which leads us to the most puzzling failure of Elizabethan censorship: Shakespeare's *Richard II*. It is known that this play was publically performed the day before the Essex Rebellion.²⁵ It is also known that this play had already acquired a clear association with the Earl of Essex. In a 1597 correspondence dealing with Essex's military campaign to the Azores four years earlier, Walter Raleigh wrote that "the conceit of *Richard II* hath made the Earl of Essex wonderful merry" (Handover 155, 162). Two years later, John Hayward's dedication of *The Life and Reign of King Henrie III* to Essex reinforced the comparison between the Earl and Bolingbroke (Lacey 218, 300; Donaldson 187-188). One wonders how Essex kept his head on his shoulders as long as he did. But whatever his eccentricities, when his literary interests are taken into consideration, it does seem odd that Essex never extended an invitation to the author of the play he so admired to join with his clientele of scholars, statesmen and soldiers who gathered around him for many years at Essex House (Dickinson 100-102).²⁶

Moreover, on the fateful weekend of February 7, 1601, the performance of *Richard II* at the Globe Theater was intended to embolden the followers of Essex and Southampton and rouse the populace in support of their uprising – exactly what the Queen and her royal administration feared the most from the public theater. Historians are uncertain whether this was the first time the deposition scene was played on the public stage; the three quartos published prior to the rebellion do not contain it (*Riverside* 837-838).²⁷ Yet it seems that this scene had to have been a focal point in the performance, as the play is referred to in the legal aftermath as "the killing of Richard II" (Chambers, 2: 322-327).²⁸

Essex and his leading adherents were quickly apprehended, tried and convicted, but the actors themselves were handled gently. Ten days elapsed before one actor from the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Augustine Phillips, was tapped for questioning by the Privy Council, and he was not even placed under arrest. In his deposition, he stated that *Richard II* was an old play and nobody would come to see it (Chambers, 2: 323). The actors, he said, were paid an additional forty shillings for their efforts, ostensibly to compensate them for the loss at the box office (Handover 192-194, 222, 229). For whatever reason, the actors were readily forgiven and, strangely enough, the company was performing for Elizabeth's court just days later on February 24, the day before the Earl of Essex's execution.

As noted, the theaters were kept under government surveillance for the very reason that they could be cauldrons for public disturbance, leading to riot and rebellion. It

has also been noted that historical subjects were considered especially dangerous. The Essex Rebellion was the most serious threat to Elizabeth's reign since the Spanish Armada in 1588 and the most dangerous civil uprising in thirty years. Worse still, discussion of the royal succession was expressly forbidden. Yet *Richard II* deals with not one, but three, explosive subjects: the deposition of a reigning monarch, the succession of the next, and the Royal prerogative (Gohn).

Shakespeare and Richard II

It is instructive to review how many Shakespearean elements coalesce in this performance of *Richard II*:

- Shakespeare's play is used for sedition and inciting rebellion (Dean 55).
- It is performed by Shakespeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men.
- The performance takes place in Shakespeare's theater, the Globe.
- Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton, is a principal leader in the uprising (Handover 224).²⁹

In his introduction to the *Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans writes of the eminence of Shakespeare in his company, a position undisputed by the orthodox (28). However, if that is true, it is all the more odd that the authorities chose to question Augustine Phillips rather than Shakespeare, the individual whose associations with the play, the company, the venue and the leader of the rebellion should have been readily apparent, again assuming that the traditional attribution of authorship is true.

It seems that only the author of Shakespeare could insult important families, write about the deposition of a monarch, and have his work performed as part of a treasonous enterprise, and still remain unseen (Akrigg, *Southampton* 248-253).³⁰ Shakespeare was free of governmental oversight when transgressions that were far less serious brought consequences to other writers of the time, ending their writing careers if not their lives. But as far as the record shows, Shakespeare was never asked to explain himself. He inhabited a very special place in the Elizabethan world. He was exempt from retribution – and untouchable.

The Privy Seal Warrant

A document extant in the public record may shed some light on the paradox of an individual who composed highly seditious works but remained invisible to the authorities. On June 26, 1586, Queen Elizabeth executed a Privy Seal Warrant in which she instructed her Exchequer to pay a thousand pounds a year to Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford. A Privy Seal Warrant was the Queen's order to her Exchequer to pay the bills of her royal administration (Adams 114-123). Such

warrants were usually issued for a single payment for a specific expense or service rendered. However, this particular Privy Seal Warrant was a kind less often utilized; its language makes it a Privy Seal Warrant Dormant. The word *dormant* means that the payment is a standing order for a sum to be paid for an indefinite length of time until the Queen commands its cessation – something she never did in this case (Ward 257-260, 357-358).³¹ This payment continued for the remaining seventeen years of Elizabeth's life and was reinstated by King James on his accession to the throne in 1603. By the time of Oxford's death in 1604, the grant had continued for eighteen years, amounting to a total between \$9 million and \$18 million (US) in today's money.

The longevity of the annuity is all the more puzzling as it lasted throughout the years when the royal treasury was seriously strapped for cash. Historians of the Tudor era recognize that Elizabeth I was impoverished from the beginning of her reign, and her finances steadily worsened (Lacey 57-58).³² After years of sparring with Spain on the high seas and in the Low Countries, the war with Spain effectively began in 1585. King James brought the wars to an end in 1604 with the formal signing of a treaty between England and Spain (Akrigg, *Pageant* 60-63).

In his *Economic History of England*, Frederick Dietz uses contemporaneous sources to summarize the costs of the wars, giving a total of over £5,000,000 expended on “economically unproductive military operations” (155). Over £3,000,000 was spent in the decade 1590 to 1600 with the crown frequently calling on Parliament for subsidies to finance the costly mess (Black 228-230). The conquest of Ireland cost nearly £2,000,000 in the last decade of the Queen's life (Dietz 155). In his chapter “The War Goes Sour, 1586-1587,” Paul Hammer details the “sorry shape” of the war effort in the Low Countries (132-137). It is significant that 1586 is the year when Oxford's annuity began. According to Hammer, the financial shambles of the war in the Low Countries had become clear even by the early months of 1586, and the Queen's army was left destitute over the winter of 1586 (124-133). The people in her realm were not any better off than the soldiers, and it was said in the Commons that the poor “were compelled to sell their pots and pans to meet the already heavy taxation” (Black 228-231).³³

In his study of the Elizabethan Exchequer, Dietz notes that the sale of crown estates was a last resort, but lands were sold in 1589 because “conditions were so bad that Burghley himself seemed to despair” (71). Dietz continues that, after Burghley's death in 1598, “the Irish rebellion was sucking the treasury dry and new ministers abandoned Burghley's caution and sold land in quantities unequalled since Edward VI's time...” The Queen's last Parliament of 1601 was acrimonious. Yet in spite of the expenses of the foreign wars, the bad harvests of the 1590s, and the poverty of the Exchequer, the payments to the seventeenth Earl of Oxford continued.³⁴

It would seem that a large outlay of cash during these troubled years – especially

a thousand pounds annually to the Queen's "well beloved Cousin, the earl of Oxford" – should merit close scrutiny (Ward 257-260). Remarkably, historical scrutiny is precisely what this document has not had. The only historian to report on it prior to Bernard Ward's discovery of it in 1928 was Edmund Bohun in his 1693 biography of Elizabeth I (Ogburn 689).³⁵ The purpose of the remainder of this paper will be to remedy this oversight.

The Document

Elizabeth, etc., to the Treasurer and Chamberlains of our Exchequer, Greeting. We will and command you of Our treasure being and remaining from time to time within the receipt of Our Exchequer, to deliver and pay, or cause to be delivered and paid, unto Our right trusty and well beloved Cousin the earl of Oxford, or to his assigns sufficiently authorized by him, the sum of One Thousand Pounds good and lawful money of England. The same to be yearly delivered and paid unto Our said Cousin at four terms of the year by even portions [beginning at the Feast of the Annunciation last past]: and so to be continued unto him **during Our pleasure, or until such time as he shall be by Us otherwise provided for to be in some manner relieved;** at what time Our pleasure is that this payment of One Thousand Pounds yearly to Our said Cousin in manner above specified **shall cease.** And for the same or any part thereof, **Our further will and commandment is that neither the said Earl nor his assigns nor his or their executors nor any of them shall by way of account, imprest, or any other way whatsoever be charged towards Us, Our heirs or successors.** And these Our letters shall be your sufficient warrant and discharge in that behalf. Given under Our Privy Seal at Our Manor of Greenwich, the six and twentieth day of June in the eight and twentieth year of Our reign. (bold emphasis added).

First, this grant is given entirely at Her Majesty's discretion, i.e., at "her pleasure," and it will cease at her pleasure. This is why it is a warrant *dormant*. Next, the phrase "by Us otherwise provided for" has attracted a great deal of attention, and the explanation is offered that the Queen assumed financial responsibility for Oxford in order to maintain him in his nobility. Most curious of all is the non-accountability clause that "neither the said Earl...shall by way of account...be charged towards us." But before these statements are examined, the following facts should be kept in mind:

1. Oxford did nothing for which he might have *earned* financial remuneration. He held no important state office, no embassy, and no military posts (Ward 256).³⁶
2. A thousand pounds was more than one per cent of the Queen's annual domestic budget. Simon Adams estimates that the cost of running the various household

departments (some supplied directly through the Exchequer and some through other means) came to roughly £90,000 annually by the end of her reign (119).

3. Queen Elizabeth I has been known through the centuries for many fine qualities, but charity has never been one of them (Hazard 118, 227). In fact, Lawrence Stone describes the Queen as a master at giving that which cost her nothing (191, 194-197, 201-204, 222). According to Stone, “Money [was] the one thing that Elizabeth could not bring herself to give away” (197).
4. The money was paid to Oxford in quarterly installments of £250. Oxford’s detractors argue that the Queen was doling out the money, but a more likely explanation lies in the large amount of the annuity. It took time for the funds to accrue during the year, especially in a depleted Exchequer.
5. The Royal Exchequer was a hard cash concern with payment in gold or silver coin or bullion. Delivery of the money was not a simple matter. It had to be counted out, packed in saddlebags or carts, and accompanied by armed guards to its destination (Stone, unabridged 508-512).

To explain away this annuity, academics have recently picked up on Edmund Bohun’s 17th century comment that the Queen wished to maintain the Earl of Oxford in the splendor of a courtier (Nelson 300-303, 379-380).³⁷ It obliges one to believe that Queen Elizabeth gave the earl this financial underpinning simply to keep up appearances, something hardly credible in the context of her parsimony and impoverished treasury. In his book *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, Stone reports that it took an income of approximately £5,000 annually to support an earl in an earldom (unabridged 547-586). If the purpose was to keep the Earl of Oxford in a manner commensurate with his rank, a thousand pounds a year – though an enormous sum – was only 20% of what it would take to do the job (Green 60-78).

The more serious flaw in the argument, however, is that this is not how the Queen did business. Had she wanted to do something nice for him, she could have given him a preferment (Stone, abridged 191, 199-207). Queen Elizabeth regularly gave profitable offices, land grants and monopolies to reward her favorite courtiers, turning her court “into the unique market-place for the distribution of an enormous range of offices, favours and titles” (207).³⁸ Oxford played that game as best he could, throwing his hat into the ring to petition for a license for the imports of oils, fruits and wools, the gauging of beer, the governorship of Jersey and the presidency of Wales. He repeatedly requested the return of his ancestral properties in Waltham Forest and the tin monopoly in Cornwall (Nelson 337-338, 344, 355-358, 380). The Queen denied them all. Any one of these preferments could have restored his fortunes and provided far more effectively for his livelihood, if that had been her intent. Any one of them would have been far less burdensome on her limited resources.³⁹

Better yet, the Queen had a veritable silver bullet in her fiscal arsenal that could ameliorate his financial woes. In fact, it did. In 1592, she allowed Oxford to marry Elizabeth Trentham, a wealthy maid of honor in her court. It was an accepted practice for English peers to marry wealthy heiresses in order to restore depleted finances. According to Stone, “Around the turn of the century the growing financial embarrassment of the peerage drove them into a far more single-minded pursuit of wealthy marriages than had previously been their custom” (abridged 282).⁴⁰ After Oxford’s remarriage, he was in comfortable circumstances for the rest of his life and his annuity given by the Queen was renewed by King James. Inexplicably, the thousand pounds continued to be paid in quarterly installments out of the royal Exchequer until Oxford’s death in 1604 – a strong indicator that it was payment to the man, not his house.⁴¹

The Historical Question

There is no getting around it: this annuity is a conundrum. So what about the recipient? Following the lead of Sir Sidney Lee in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, historians are nearly unanimous in their condemnation of the seventeenth Earl of Oxford. Lawrence Stone describes him as “feckless” (unabridged 514), a term defined in the OED as “incompetent, useless, hopeless, spineless, feeble, weak, futile, ineffective, and worthless.” In *The Cecils of Hatfield House*, family historian David Cecil applies the pejoratives “unreliable, uncontrolled, ill-tempered and wildly extravagant” (84). To this litany, Tresham Lever adds that he was “eccentric, quarrelsome and absurd” (92). If anything, the severity of the historical characterization of Oxford should bring the thousand-pound annuity into sharp focus. What could possibly have motivated the not-at-all feckless Queen to give cold hard cash to this feckless wastrel of a courtier? If the historical assessments were true, then this grant from the parsimonious Elizabeth, with its peculiar non-accountability clause, is an anomaly that defies rational explanation.⁴²

The Answer

In an article published in the *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* in 1992, U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens suggested that the Queen was underwriting Oxford’s theatrical activities (1383-1384). Many agree with his idea that she “may have decided to patronize a gifted dramatist, who agreed to remain anonymous while he loyally rewrote much of the early history of Great Britain.” Indeed, the Privy Seal Warrant starts to make sense when it is examined in the context of Oxford’s life and the biographical facts that point to Oxford as the author of the Shakespeare canon.

In *Shakespeare By Another Name*, Mark Anderson quotes the literary scholar Seymour M. Pitcher who suggested that these funds were intended “for the first organized propaganda.”

Oxford was to produce plays which would educate the English people – most of whom could not read – in their country’s history, in appreciation of its greatness, and of their own stake in its welfare. In point of fact and time, a spate of chronicle plays did follow the authorization of the stipend (211).

Anderson summarizes that “under this scenario, the end products of the Queen’s £1,000 annuity were Shake-speare’s *King John*, *Richard II*, the first and second parts of *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, the three parts of *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, and *Henry VIII*” (211).

But something beyond simple financial underwriting may be tacitly implied within the warrant’s provision clause: “and so to be continued unto him during Our pleasure, or until such time as he shall be by Us otherwise provided for to be in some manner relieved.” It does appear that the Queen is accepting financial responsibility for Oxford. This is a puzzling feature. If there had been a romantic involvement between them, as some Oxfordians have suggested, then why did she not give him a lucrative sinecure? Moreover, Queen Elizabeth was a monarch. There was no legal obligation or superior moral authority that could compel her to support him financially, whatever had occurred in the past.

What the Queen may have had in mind might be akin to the modern concept of financial responsibility known as indemnification. In today’s legal practice, one person or entity indemnifies another by taking fiscal responsibility for the actions of that person or entity, securing them against future loss, damage or liability.

Next let’s take a closer look at the non-accountability clause: *Our further will and commandment is that neither the said Earl nor his assigns nor his or their executors nor any of them shall by way of account, imprest, or any other way whatsoever be charged towards Us, Our heirs or successors.* The non-accountability clause broadly implies that Oxford is not to be held to account for what he is doing with the money. By extension, does this not also imply that he need not account for what he is doing? It would seem that with this warrant, the Queen is protecting him from scrutiny. It would seem that she is giving him something along the lines of what today we would call immunity. Oxford can do as he sees fit with the money as long as Queen Elizabeth herself is satisfied with whatever it is that he is doing. No questions asked.

The legal concepts of indemnification and immunity, as we know them today, were only in their infancy in early modern England. But what was operational at this time was the feudal concept in which a great lord granted maintenance and protection to his followers in return for their service. It is well-accepted that the Elizabethan mentality was steeped in feudalistic traditions. Historians acknowledge the resurgence of feudalism in the reign of Henry VII and furthered in his descendants (Hurstfield 3-17). The formula playing out here is a simple one: maintenance (funds) and protection (immunity from government retaliation) in return for service (the plays and poetry known to posterity as the Shakespeare canon). It is plain, unadulterated

feudalism (Hazard 125).

Justice Stevens and others believe that Shakespeare's history plays established the legitimacy of the Tudor dynasty, quite a fine service to provide to the insecure Tudor woman who nervously ruled a vulnerable country in a dangerous time with three on-going wars. The plays glorified her reign, all the while providing the royal court with the highest quality entertainment, something Queen Elizabeth coveted.

Yet there may be even more to discover within this short document. Let us read the non-accountability sentence again: *the said Earl ... nor any of them shall by way of account, imprest, or any other way whatsoever be charged towards Us, Our heirs or successors.* The pronoun "Us" surely does not refer to the Queen herself, but to her royal administration. Also, the word "Us," rather than "Him," is odd. The clause might make more sense if it read like this: "nor any of them shall by way of account, imprest, or any other way whatsoever be charged towards **Him, his** heirs or successors." Taken literally, the Queen is saying that the recipient cannot charge the royal Exchequer, i.e. "Us," with accounting. This is nonsensical. Normally, the recipient of funds accounts for how the money allocated to him is spent, not the entity providing the funds.

It was noted by Oxford's 20th century biographer Bernard Ward that the Queen's laconic instructions in this warrant are similar to the non-accountability clause in her warrant of funds to Sir Francis Walsingham (260). Research recently conducted in the National Archives reveals that non-accountability clauses appear in all of the nineteen warrants issued by the Queen to Walsingham from 1582-1588.⁴³ But the odd verbiage "charged toward Us" is nowhere to be found. Of special interest is the warrant to Walsingham dated July 2, 1586 that comes only a week after Oxford's warrant of June 26, 1586. The language of the non-accountability clause is as follows: "The said sum to be thus delivered unto him *without any imprest or other charge to be set upon him for the same* and neither he, his heirs, executors or administrators to be any way accountable therefore." In this, as in the other warrants to Walsingham, the Queen uses the sensible third person singular pronoun "him", and it is "his heirs" that are included in the non-accountability instruction – not "Our heirs" as stated in Oxford's warrant.

In the appendix to Ward's biography is a list of Privy Seal Warrants dormant, and among these is a sum of £800 issued to Robert Cecil on September 27, 1596 (355-358). This document serves as another comparable for the Oxford warrant as a similar amount of money is to be "delivered and paid" in quarterly installments.⁴⁴ That it is for secret service is evident in the language: "for our private and inward services which by our special trust we have made known to him only." Again, the non-accountability clause follows the language in the Walsingham warrants: the funds are to be delivered to Cecil "*without imprest account or other charge to be set on him for the same.*"⁴⁵

Further evidence of the stability of this non-accountability language can be found in the study of the Exchequer warrants from the reign of King James. Published in 1836, historian Frederick Devon transcribed over a thousand warrants dating from 1603 to 1626. Of these, about a hundred contain non-accountability clauses. In every one of them, the third person (to whom the money is given) is the party to be held unaccountable, not the royal Exchequer. An example is found in the October 30, 1612 warrant to the merchant Paul Fourre which states that the funds are given “*without account, imprest, or other charge to be set on him for the same*” (151).

Since the Privy Seal Warrant is an order to the Exchequer, a closer look at this office might shed light on what these unique words – “charged towards Us” – might mean, and to whom this instruction may be addressed. At this point, it would be helpful to have a better understanding of the departmental structure of the Elizabethan Exchequer, and how receipts and disbursements were managed. But a better understanding is not to be had. Unfortunately, no historian or archivist has made a transcription of the accounts of Queen Elizabeth’s Exchequer along the lines of Devon’s previously mentioned *Issues of the Exchequer* for the reign of King James.⁴⁶ The best resource is a short essay by Frederick Dietz, a professor of history at the University of Illinois (65-105).

In his essay published in 1923, Dietz explains that the Elizabethan Exchequer was made up of two departments: the Lower Exchequer of Receipt and the Upper Exchequer of Audit (105). The money was received and dispersed in the Lower Exchequer and audited in the Upper Exchequer. The four tellers in the Lower House communicated with the three audit courts and the Exchequer barons in various ways, including a primitive system of tallies. This communication was linked together by accountants who carried a slip or bill to the Court of Receipt to be handed to the treasurer’s clerk for writing the tallies. Another clerk entered the information into the Pells while two clerks, each representing a Chamberlain, wrote the Controllment of the Pells. The Cofferer of the Household was audited by the Upper Exchequer, but the Office of the Imprest, with its own two auditors, was a separate department. However, Lord Burghley, as the crown-in-council, kept “exclusive control and oversight over the prests” and “there was no provision for regular submission of such accounts to the auditors” (108). Along the way was an array of lesser under-clerks, ushers and messengers (109-111). With so many offices and positions, it is not surprising that, according to Dietz, “Elizabethan exchequer officials were never quite as accurate as a modern adding machine” and “there are nearly always discrepancies between the totals as they give them at the close of their accounts, and the actual additions of the individual items making up the accounts” (77). Although Dietz’s overview is helpful, the internal operations of the Queen’s Exchequer remain poorly understood.⁴⁷

Through all this complexity and the passing of many centuries, we cannot discern

with certainty to whom the instruction “charged toward Us” is intended. What is proposed here is that this unusual phrase carries unusual significance. It suggests that the Queen is covering several bases with this instruction. Ostensibly, the recipient is not to be held accountable for the money. Biographer Ward suggests that “the Earl is not to be called on by the Exchequer to render any account as to its expenditure” (260). That may well be the long and short of it. But taking it one step further, it appears that this may be a command to the Upper Exchequer auditors or the Auditors of the Imprest to suspend business-as-usual in handling this annuity. It supports the proposal that information about the annuity is a state secret, *to be guarded at every step along the way*. If this is the case, then with one single pronoun, the Queen has circumscribed, if not dismantled, the normal channels of communication within the departments of her own administration, putting another layer of secrecy around the person to whom this money is given.

Lord Burghley would have known about the Privy Seal Warrant with its non-accountability clause. He was the Lord Treasurer of England; he knew in minute detail what went in and out of the royal coffers (Loades 142). An example of Burghley’s command of the Treasury can be found in an award of £50 by Queen Elizabeth to the poet Edmund Spenser. It is unknown if this grant, made in February of 1591, was only a single payment or if it continued in subsequent years. However, it is reported in Manningham’s Diary and later by Fuller that Lord Burghley objected to the Queen’s “largesse.” It was also suggested that this grant carried with it the formal dignity of poet-laureate. Whether or not this is the case, it is noteworthy that money from the Queen’s treasury could be construed as an endorsement of the recipient’s work (*DNB* 18: 799).

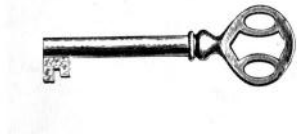
In Elizabethan society, symbolic, unspoken communication infused every aspect of court life, and the court was led by a moody, miserly Queen who never gave out a shilling when a smile would do, and never a smile if a curt nod would suffice (Lacey 57-58).⁴⁸ For those in the know, saddlebags full of gold coin delivered four times a year to the doorstep of the 17th Earl of Oxford must have been a happenstance beyond their comprehension (Hazard 109-140, 118). It would be understandable that the royal officials involved in the payment process would keep a wise silence (Handover 156). Thus, this Privy Seal Warrant Dormant, with its feudal implications of royal protection, gave the recipient a degree of autonomy that was unheard of at the time, a veritable freedom of the press. No questions were ever asked of this singular odd man to whom this singular odd act of regal generosity was directed.

Conclusion

It has been shown that the Shakespeare canon contained much material that was treasonable by the standards of the era. It surpasses understanding that the Stratford man could write works that were clearly seditious and not be invited to drop by

the Privy Council for a chat. Another anomaly is the large sum of money paid over many years by Queen Elizabeth to the 17th Earl of Oxford with no accountability required, quite possibly not even within her own Exchequer. These anomalous circumstances make sense when it is understood that Oxford is the author of the body of works known today as the Shakespeare canon.

In writing *Hamlet*, the 17th Earl of Oxford might have been reflecting on the unique patronage that allowed him to circumvent the political hazards that often ensnared his literary cohorts. He had the effrontery to model Polonius on his duplicitous father-in-law, Lord Burghley; Queen Gertrude is Queen Elizabeth; Oxford is Hamlet himself. And what does Polonius say to Queen Gertrude immediately before he hides behind the arras? It is an important line in an important scene of an important play: “Your Grace hath screen’d and stood between much heat and him.”⁴⁹



Notes

1. Hayward's biography was published at a time when the Earl of Essex was challenging the Queen's authority, and the dedication to the Earl sent a provocative signal to the readers that there was a contemporary subtext in his history book.
2. Clare, 32-33. The document is printed in Albert Feuillerat's *Documents Relating to the Office of the Revels in the Time of Queen Elizabeth* (Louvain, 1908), 51-52.
3. Riggs notes the attentiveness of Queen Elizabeth to the libels posted at the Dutch churchyard on May 5, 1593. Though there is nothing to indicate that Marlowe was involved with these libels, references were made to several of his plays. The Queen expressed her "vexation" with this matter to the Royal Commissioners on May 11, 1593, and seven days later, Marlowe reported to the Privy Council.
4. The Royal Commission (also known as the High Commission) was a multifaceted apparatus used directly by the Queen and her Privy Council. It could be used to enforce royal statutes as well as a means to investigate and respond to matters that might endanger the Queen's safety. It could also operate as a court in which ecclesiastical disputes were resolved. For additional information, see Arthur J. Klein, *Intolerance in the Reign of Elizabeth the Queen* (1917; rpt. NY: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1968), 71-75.
5. Miles cites Fredson Thayer Bowers's article published in *Studies in Philology*, xxxiv (1937) for Kyd's account of the torture.
6. Documents of the charges against Kyd are preserved among Thomas Baker's manuscripts (MS Harl. 7042, f. 401). *DNB*, xi, 351-352; Riggs, *World*, 329.
7. Clare, Patterson, Nicholl and Riggs do not speculate if the Bruno scene was included in this 1594 production. It is possible that it was for two reasons. First, it contained a powerful anti-Catholic message which should have been popular with audiences at the time; and second, Bruno's connection to the Pembroke faction (as verified by Bruno's dedication of his 1584 *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* to Sir Philip Sidney) indicates that he had powerful patronage. Patterson, p. 109.
8. Those present to consider the matter included the Lord Treasurer, the Lord Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Comptroller of the Household, and Sir Robert Cecil, who at this time was the Queen's Principal Secretary.
9. It has been suggested that the entry in Henslowe's Diary concerning Nashe's incarceration in the Fleet prison is a John Payne Collier forgery. But the Freemans

do not make the reasons for this clear in their two-volume study of Collier's forgeries.

10. According to the *DNB*, Nashe was "banished" from London after his release from Fleet Prison. The engraving of Nashe in irons in the Fleet Prison appeared in Gabriel Harvey's 1597 pamphlet *Trimming*, and was republished in Harvey's *Works* edited by Grosart, iii. 43.
11. See Hibbard for a discussion of *Lenten Stuff* with the "red herring" in the title and a text disclosing to the reader that there is "one red herring after another." The notice of false scents indicates that there is misdirection in *Lenten Stuff*.
12. Hibbard concurs with E.K. Chambers and R.B. McKerrow that the play was performed at the Archbishop's summer residence of Croydon.
13. In her chapter on "Drama and the new regime," Clare notes that "literary censorship often arose from the King's personal disapproval of particular books...." The astute contemporaneous commentator Sir Robert Wilbraham noted that "The Queene [was] slow to resolucion, and seldom to be retracted: his majestie quick in concluding indecorous and libelous in their satire; but when the critique touched on issues which he cherished, such as the projected union between England and Scotland, he was irascible and quick to act" (121). Robert Ashston, *James I By His Contemporaries* (London: 1969), 6,7.
14. Of particular interest is the letter written by Jonson to Robert Cecil. From this letter it appears that writing a satirical play was a serious offence.
15. According to the *DNB*, the "play excited groundless suspicions at court." Daniel's sympathetic treatment of the historical Philotas—who suffered for a treasonable conspiracy against Alexander the Great—suggests a parallel with the Earl of Essex, raising the suspicion at the time that Daniel might be making an effort to rehabilitate the fallen Earl.
16. Additional details of the problems generated by Philotas can be found in Lawrence Michel's edition of the play, and in Stirling Brents's article "Philotas and the Essex case" in *Modern Language Quarterly* 3 (1942).
17. Jonson's source was the Roman historian Tacitus. Tacitus was a favorite of Essex and his circle, pointing to a connection between the murderous Sejanus and the Essex conspiracy. It even seemed to suggest that the recently deceased Queen Elizabeth was a Tiberius, something that should not have terribly distressed her successor King James. Nevertheless, Jonson was hitting a nerve; treason was not a trivial matter.
18. Patterson furnishes a concise overview of Jonson's "sociopolitical difficulties,"

and notes that Jonson “incorporated them into a political and social theory of literature” which he develops further in his later epigrams.

19. It is disheartening to see a scholar of Donaldson’s stature join the undiscerning who accept the belated 1616 list. Moreover, there is not a scrap of evidence to suggest any part that “Shakespeare” might have played in any play.
20. According to E.K. Chambers in *The Elizabethan Stage*, the Kings Men performed at court December 26-30, 1603. Though there is no record of what was performed, Chambers reasonably concludes that one of the plays was *Sejanus*. If it is true that “Shakespeare” was indeed among the cast, it is strange that King James gave him no recognition. (Riggs, *Life* 105, 367).
21. Shapiro amplifies his position with the argument that the Master of the Revels would have lost vital parts of his anatomy had he allowed a play to be published that caricatured the Queen’s leading statesman. It is true: Lord Burghley would hardly have stood for it, nor would his son and political successor. In an account of Burghley, his biographer remarks “Throughout his life he was, for a veteran politician, exceptionally sensitive to personal attacks.” Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965), 96.
22. Mark Alexander provides a comprehensive study of the parallels between the character Polonius and William Cecil, Lord Burghley. (www.sourcetext.com/sourcebook/essays/polonius/corambis.html)
23. Court circles did not necessarily wait until Cecil’s death in 1612. In her recent explication of Essex and his clientele, Dickinson notes pejorative allusions to Robert Cecil’s spinal curvature in correspondence between Francis Davison and his father. In these letters, written in 1596, Cecil is called a “pygmy” and “St. Gobbo,” the latter a reference to the statue of the hunchback St. Gobbo in the Rialto in Venice.
24. The epitaph (whose author smartly chose to remain anonymous) is archived in the Folger Library, MS. 452.1.
25. In his 2008 article Paul Hammer responds to a proposal by Blair Worden that the play performed the day before the Essex Rebellion was an adaptation of John Hayward’s book. Hammer cites facts and makes arguments that support the longstanding assessment that the performance was the Shakespearean *Richard II*.
26. Orthodox historian Janet Dickinson’s work is supported by Martin Green in his book *Wriothesley’s Roses: In Shakespeare’s Sonnets, Poems and Plays* (Clevedon Books, 1993), pp. 129-136, 156-160, 323, 325, 350-351. Green has amassed a wealth of information about the literary men who were directly associated with the Earl of Essex. Green examines the possible connections through which “Shakespeare”

may have had access to Essex House, and attempts to connect “Shakespeare” to the Essex clientele. In spite of Green’s herculean effort, there is still no tangible evidence of “Shakespeare’s” supposed presence in the Essex House Group.

27. In his introductory notes, Herschel Baker covers the well-trodden ground of the *Richard II* Q1 (1597) and Q2, Q3 (1598). The deposition scene was added in Q4 of 1608, but, according to Baker, “strongly suggests a memorially contaminated text.”
28. In Sir Gelly Meyricke’s deposition taken on February 17, 1601 (two days before Essex trial), he states that “the play was *King Harry the in*, and of *the kyllyng of Kyng Richard the second* played by the L. Chamberlen’s players.” Augustine Phillips’s testimony was taken the next day, and he called it “the play of the deposing and kyllyng of Kyng Rychard the second.”
29. In a shocking, candid letter written on February 10, 1601, Robert Cecil states that “by the time my letters shall come unto you, both he [Essex] and the Earl of Southampton, with some other of the principals, shall have lost their heads” (Camden Society, 66).
30. In his chapter on “Shakespeare and the Essex Rebellion,” Akrigg admits that “Southampton’s surviving letters make no mention of Shakespeare and contain no allusion to any Shakespearean play or character.”
31. In Appendix C, Ward includes a “Table of Annuities” with an overview of the annuities, grants, and pensions paid by Exchequer warrants dormant from 1580 through the end of Elizabeth’s reign.
32. Lacey describes queen Elizabeth as “hopelessly, helplessly poor,” and writes colorfully that “she had to scrape together a living and put on an appropriately regal display from a ragbag of odd incomes worth – thanks to a century of inflation – half as much as when she ascended the throne.”
33. Supporting information is found in Conyers Read’s biography of William Cecil, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965), 473.
34. Private communication with researcher.
35. “The Earl of Oxford was one of the most ancient houses amongst the nobility but by the excessive bounty and splendor of the former Earl was reduced to a very low and mean condition, so that the family was no longer able to maintain its dignity and grandeur: And the Queen allowed that house one thousand pound the year out of her Exchequer that one of the most illustrious houses in her kingdom might not suffer want.” Edmund Bohun, *The Character of Queen Elizabeth* (London: R. Chiswell, 1693).

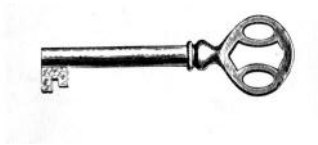
36. Ward notes that Oxford had not “been called on to undertake any of those duties that so often impoverished Elizabethan courtiers. He had never held appointments such as Lord Deputy of Ireland, Custodian of the Queen of Scots, or Ambassador at Paris – appointments that had been so disastrous financially to Sir Henry Sidney, Lord Shrewsbury, and Francis Walsingham.” Although Oxford had several short stints in the military, his experience is limited to a few temporary assignments and does not justify his annuity.
37. Nelson continues the spin by referencing an account written by Thomas Wilson in which he states that “the Queen . . . gives him maintenance for his nobility sake.” A quick check in the *DNB* reveals that Thomas Wilson was a stout Cecil man. He was appointed by Robert Cecil to the office of the Keeper of the Records. His home adjoined Cecil’s at Durham Place, and he supervised the construction of Cecil’s Hatfield House. Obviously, Wilson was hardly an objective observer of current events. For the Wilson document, see State Papers, Dom. Elizabeth, vol. cclxxx.
38. In his *History of England* published in 1914, Edward P. Cheney writes that “Elizabeth’s grants rarely took the form of ready money or direct gifts. An appointment to office, a promotion to a more lucrative office, the reversion of an office, an antiquated sinecure, a grant of confiscated lands, a monopoly of the licensing of some article for import . . . Such made up the treasury from which the Queen rewarded her courtiers and to which they looked with constant eagerness.” p. 50.
39. In *Shakespeare Revealed in Oxford’s Letters*, William Plumer Fowler published a letter written by Oxford on May 18, 1591 (pp. 411-413). In writing to his former father-in-law, Oxford puts a remarkable proposal on the table. He makes an offer to the Queen to buy out his “pension” and sets the price at £5,000. Bear in mind that the Queen owed him nothing and could discontinue the “pension” at will; thus, it is strange that he thinks he has something to bargain with. This twist to the story of the annuity amplifies the durability and sustainability of the money. It is all the more inexplicable in the context of how badly Elizabeth treated her courtiers. As Mary Hazard relates: “One’s fortunes were never permanently secure and they were unstable even on a daily basis, responsive to the moods of the queen.” p. 240.
40. Earlier in the sixteenth century, the preservation of class distinctions took precedence over the quest for financial benefit. However, Stone demonstrates that though “wealth was not the most important consideration” in choosing a spouse, “its supremacy was increasing” during the reign of Elizabeth. Stone details the dire financial conditions of many noble families, and it becomes clear that Oxford’s financial woes were not unique to him. His second marriage to an heiress was a socially acceptable remedy.

41. In his search for an alternative explanation for the thousand-pound annuity, Alan Nelson prints a letter from Oxford's surviving spouse in which she sates that "the pension of a thousand pounds was not given by the late Queen for his life, and then to determine, but to continue, until she might raise his decay, by some better provision." pp. 427-428.
42. The Queen's constant financial woes can be gauged by the important officials who pleaded for their salaries. As early as 1572, Henry Carey, the 1st Lord Hunsdon, "prayed Lord Burghley to procure his recall from Berwick on the ground that his salary was unpaid and his private resources could not endure the constant calls which his office made on them." Things had not improved in twelve years, for in 1584, Hunsdon again appealed to Lord Burghley for his salary in arrears, and "that his soldiers and servants were in want of food and clothing." (*DNB*, III, 977-978). In similar destitution after returning from service in The Netherlands, Thomas Digges wrote to Lord Burghley in May of 1590 that "I am forced to beseech your favour that I may have my pay so long forborn..." (*DNB*, V, 977). In a contemporaneous observation made by Sir Robert Naunton, "We have not many precedents of her liberality, or of any large donative to particular men.... Her rewards consisted chiefly in grants of leases of offices, places of judicature." (Hurstfield, 348, citing *Naunton's Fragmenta Regalia*, ed E. Arber, 18).
43. Documents from research conducted in the National Archives in January 2017.
44. Document from research conducted in the National Archives in March, 2016 and transcribed by Nina Green, for which the author is most grateful.
45. The non-accountability clauses in all of these warrants to Walsingham and the Cecil warrant dormant imply something secretive; usually incorporating the words "for Our special services." However, Ward finds no indication in the court records that Oxford was involved in secret service work, stating that "This quite rules out the possibility that the £1,000 a year was secret service money." It seems that later commentators have conflated the instruction for secrecy implied in the non-accountability clause with secret service duties (i.e., duties relating to the "intelligence" collecting of Walsingham, the Cecils and Essex).
46. It has been confirmed through private communication with a researcher in England that no one has transcribed and published the Exchequer books with the receipts and expenditures from Elizabeth's reign. Individual documents can be purchased through the National Archives, but the books were kept in secretary hand and require transcription by a paleographer. Thus a substantial cost and effort is involved to access each document.
47. Dietz provides the totals of the Elizabethan Exchequer Receipts (87-89) and

Expenditures (96-104) for each year of the Queen's reign, but individual entries are not included.

48. Lacey notes that some of the Queen's servants "were paid part in money and the rest with grace."

49. *Hamlet*, (3.4.3-4).



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Methinks the Man

Peter Brook and the Authorship Question

by Don Rubin

Shakespeare's reputation as a producible dramatist – that is, not just a playwright for literary study – has been carried for centuries by his key stage interpreters: directors and actors. They have long been the primary workers who have kept him alive. We aficionados, scholars, academics, and enthusiastic theatregoers just keep him in print. Not a bad thing but secondary no doubt for dramatists, less immediately crucial to the overall reputation than the fact that artists are still doing the damned plays.

So if theatre artists really are the ultimate keepers of the quintessential flame, why have we not turned to them more in our quest to bring light to a benighted public on the long vexing question of who Shakespeare really was? In preparing for new productions and the roles they will play, directors and actors are truly the ultimate students and teachers studying with extraordinary perspicacity such things as period and place, social manners and psychology, biography and history. This is a fact.

While doing research on this paper I asked a number of actors and directors like Hank Whittemore about how knowledge of the life of Oxford might deepen the understanding of the plays of Shakespeare. He said when staging *Twelfth Night*, it would doubtless be helpful for the actors playing Olivia and Feste to know they are representing the Queen of England and her highest-ranking Earl, the latter being the court jester, the truth-teller. It could also help in that play to know that Malvolio is Hatton but, when in the mock “prison,” he becomes Edmund Campion with a very bold jab at the English government for its treatment of him. It's a comedy, but in the beginning it was a court satire.

“It has occurred to me,” added Hank, “that Laurence Olivier would have done well to know that Hamlet was an Oxford self-portrait. He would have found more vitality. Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* was an extraordinary mirror of Oxford, whether deliberate or not. The banter in the final scene has that light, quick touch of wit, the back-and-forth that must have delighted Elizabeth at the royal court. Staging then can be simultaneously universal and specific, personal and definitely political. This is born out of a need to speak up without getting into trouble, a need to speak the truth to

power.

“When Hamlet tells Gertrude that he would rather sit with his fiancé Ophelia, he says, ‘No, good mother, here is metal more attractive.’ The Court audience would have realized he was playing on the ‘precious metal’ that, in 1583 or so, was to have given Elizabeth the source of eternal youth – and that it had not worked. Even the Queen might have laughed. This was the world where these plays were born, and knowing it could certainly make a difference in production.”

Ron Destro, an Oxfordian who runs a group in New York City called the Oxford Shakespeare Theater Company, works both in the US and in England. When I asked him in an email about the possible value of knowing more about the biography of the author, he said that when he staged *Richard III* on Bosworth Field – a production in which he played the Earl of Oxford – there was a deeper connection with the character, knowing that these events were based upon real incidents.

“In *The Winter’s Tale*,” said Ron, “when Paulina brings the baby out in the basket in front of Polixines, knowing that this scenario was proposed by Peregrine Bertie’s mother adds a dimension that otherwise wouldn’t be there.”

“And all those father-daughter and husband-wife relationships depicted in the plays have a much deeper meaning when viewed through an Oxfordian lens,” he continued. “We once performed *Hamlet* on the banks of the Avon, just three miles from Oxford’s grandmother’s estate, at Billesley Manor, just a mile from where a young girl, Katherine Hamlet, in 1579, drowned in an Ophelia-like way, of what is said to have been a broken heart. So I brought my actors to that location where we picked flowers to use in the Ophelia scenes. It was a much richer acting experience performing near where this all happened. We dedicated our performance to that girl using flowers taken from that same riverside.”

“I think knowing as much about the writer and why he wrote the play, is always (if even indirectly) helpful to the actor. It is certainly useful for the director (and the audience, especially, to help them “get” all the humor!). One gets a fuller meaning that one would otherwise miss – like seeing *The Crucible* but knowing nothing about 1950s blacklists.”

To test this a bit further, I decided to look into the life and work of one of my own

Don Rubin is the General Editor of the six-volume World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre (Routledge) and is the former Chair of the Department of Theatre at Toronto’s York University. The co-founder of York’s MA and PhD programs in Theatre Studies, Prof. Rubin taught a senior-level course there on the authorship question for four years. He has been a long-serving member of the SOF Board of Directors and has published widely on authorship subjects. This paper was first presented at the 2014 SOF Conference in Ashland, Oregon. It has been expanded and edited for publication.

theatrical heroes – the British director Peter Brook. Author of one of the great manifestos of twentieth century theatre, *The Empty Space* was published in 1968; it was a book that demanded a rethinking of the very nature of theatre production, a book which excoriated what Brook called “the deadly theatre,” the literary theatre, the too respectful and timid theatre as being a theatre very different indeed than what Brook called the “rough theatre” of the Elizabethans. Brook hated the prettified nineteenth century theatre which turned so much living Shakespearean production into overdressed poetry recitals.

His *Empty Space* was a book of challenge as well as of theory which inspired theatre people world-wide to explore both more widely by looking into other cultures, and more deeply by looking into alternative ways of seeing. Put another way, for most of the twentieth century and even into the twenty-first, Peter Brook was the *sine qua non* of truth in theatre, truth which reached deep into dramatic text to find new ways of seeing every play he produced, trying to find in them what the French visionary Antonin Artaud once called the fragile fluctuating centre of a work of art, a centre that Artaud believed that forms could never reach.

Who better to look at than Brook – the man who brought Artaud’s ideas to the Royal Shakespeare Company, the man who ran that distinguished company for several years – and the man whose stagings of more than a dozen of the Bard’s plays revitalized Shakespeare production itself in the twentieth century? His work explored the deepest levels of seeming, being, and becoming – the deepest levels of actor interpretations of these classics.

Perhaps Brook’s most famous Shakespeare production was his *Midsummer Night’s Dream* done in the 1970s, a production set, not in some gauzy nineteenth century forest, but in a mystical, magical gymnasium, in a circus-like world filled with trapezes and actors simply being actors. It was not only dazzling but it actually shook the cobwebs off the text and made Shakespeare, as Polish critic Jan Kott once put it, truly “our contemporary.”

One would expect then that Brook himself would be among the first to raise his hand in agreement with us on the truth of who Shakespeare the Man actually was. How disappointing it has been to look into Brook’s writings on that subject and find that he has pretty much hewed to the official party line.

And yet, I have found a tiny reason to hope.

Peter Brook, born in 1925, is now over 90, an age which most of us are either already dead or giving up the good fight. But when he was 89, he published a new book in which he finally began to seriously kick at authorship ideas. Before anyone gets excited here, let me say right off that he ain’t no Oxfordian and he ain’t even a doubter. That’s for sure. But in his book – *The Quality of Mercy: Reflections on*

Shakespeare (2013) – he brings up the authorship issue time and again.

I also examined his 1998 volume, *Evoking (and Forgetting) Shakespeare* – also recently reissued, by coincidence – and I found that despite not being a doubter he couldn't keep away from the subject as far back as 1996. Unfortunately, his conclusion in both was that our question ultimately makes no difference to him in terms of production of the plays.

Clearly, the Shakespeare Authorship Question and the new worlds that I believe it can open for theatre artists, has still not been able to dent the consciousness of even forward-looking directors such as Peter Brook, the grand provocateur of Late Modern theatre. On the other hand, given his constant sniffing and snuffling around the issue for some twenty years or more, it occurs to me that perhaps he really just wants to be challenged a little more. Indeed, he has always liked being challenged. Perhaps his ongoing protests about the authorship are just his way to provoke us into giving him more as a director. For me, all his protestations suggest that he wants us to make it real for theatre people before he goes any further.

That is, methinks he is protesting just a little bit too much in these two books against us and that he really does want to wrestle a bit. So wrestle I shall.

I want to see what Peter Brook actually says in these books about the authorship question in the hopes of learning how we as authorship people might respectfully push back, how we might even dent the consciousness of such an esteemed director. What a public relations bonanza it would be for us to start to turn directors like Brook toward our camp making Oxford – I mean Shakespeare – our contemporary in a whole series of new ways.

Certainly Brook understands that actors are deeply involved in performance research. In *The Quality of Mercy*, he writes that “A word is like a glove – an inanimate object to be admired in a shop window or even in a museum. But life is given by the hand that fills it – every shade from banal to expressive.” And those hands are the actors. He is saying that we need to get to the hands that make Shakespeare come alive.

So how do we do that? We go back to Brook's two books on the subject.

The first book, *Evoking (and Forgetting Shakespeare)* is, at just 40 pages, an edited transcription of two talks Brook gave in Europe, one in 1996 in Berlin to a German-speaking audience and another two years later to a French-speaking audience in Paris.

It is essentially an introduction to the 2013 book, *The Quality of Mercy: Reflections on Shakespeare*. This book (at 116 pages) is Brook's ruminations on specific aspects of the thirteen Shakespeare plays that he has directed (some more than once) ranging

from *King John* and *Love's Labour's Lost* to *Lear* and *Hamlet*.

Both books, precious stuff for actors and directors, are certainly accessible to anyone interested in the general subject of Shakespeare in production. And both make it clear that he has been reading up on the authorship question for a lot of years. Unfortunately, it seems to be Stanley Wells' version of the issue that he seems to have been reading, using terms like "Shakespeare haters give that game away early."

But if Brook is so curious about the authorship to actually read all this, what is it that stops him from climbing aboard our train? First, I think it is a general distrust of scholars. I'll deal with that one later. Second, I think he is deeply attached to the community of Stratford-upon-Avon. Nothing we can do about that. He has worked there a lot and he has great nostalgia for the place. Lastly, he prefers the magic of the unknown to the concrete reality of the known.

To deal with the latter first, for Brook, the whole of Shakespeare's oeuvre is ultimately about the struggle of humankind with "not knowing," the struggle of order with chaos, of understanding with anarchy. He likes the tension. As he puts it in these recent books, Shakespeare's plays show that "the chaos of fire is not in contradiction with the understanding of the flame." So let's look there for an opening into Brook and the authorship question.

In *Evoking Shakespeare*, Brook starts by asking why "a page of Shakespeare written hundreds of years ago" is still important today, more important certainly than say a page from a daily newspaper. He then suggests the answer will not be found in speculating on the authorship issue, in trying to find out whether or not "Shakespeare was more interested in going to bed with a boy than with a woman" since such research doesn't "in any way open up to us the true mystery of the phenomenon of Shakespeare," adding, too casually, that even when one puts "other names in the place of 'Shakespeare' – Bacon, Marlowe, Oxford....you [simply] change the name, that's all. The mystery remains...." Clearly Brook is aware of the history of the authorship question. One doesn't drop names like Bacon, Marlowe and Oxford out of the blue.

He goes on to speak of a visit he made to Russia where someone made a tongue-in-cheek comment that Shakespeare had to have come from Uzbekistan "because the [word] 'Sheik' is an Arab term and a 'peer' is a wise man, so Shakespeare must have been a code name for "a Crypto-Moslem living in a Protestant country where Catholics were being prosecuted." Brook asks his audience if having such personal information on this artist really helps us "enter into the Shakespeare enigma?"

Clearly, Brook prefers enigma and myth to facts. He certainly prefers the myth that Shakespeare came from the boonies, was a poor boy who went to the local school but who was "Genetically speaking... a phenomenon." He even suggests rather

oddy, that “the bald head we have seen on so many pictures had an amazing, computer-like capacity for registering and processing a tremendously rich variety of impressions,” meaning that Shakespeare was a poet and that poets are different than the rest of us. “The absolute characteristic of being a poet,” he says, “is the capacity to see connections where normally, connections are not obvious.” (*Evoking Shakespeare*, 10)

Within the plays Shakespeare wrote, says Brook, “there must have been about a thousand characters. That means that in his plays, Shakespeare did something unique in the history of all writing. He managed moment after moment to enter into at least one thousand shifting points of view.” Brook then adds, “it is almost impossible [therefore] to discover a Shakespeare point of view, unless you say that being Shakespeare he contained in himself at least a thousand Shakespeares” (16).

Trying so hard not to engage in authorship issues – while clearly engaging in authorship issues – Brook goes on to look at the dysfunction of the Elizabethan court, the sense of danger around every corner for writers and artists in this spy-filled early modern world. “For Shakespeare,” he says with British understatement, “there was a lack of complete security . . . an order that had nothing to do with political order” (19). And returning to his comparison between a Shakespearean play and a contemporary newspaper, he concludes by stating simply: “The article in yesterday’s newspaper has only one dimension and it fades fast. Each line in Shakespeare is an atom. The energy that can be released is infinite – if we can split it open” (25).

That is, of course, what we as skeptics have been trying to do for decades – to split it all open. Can we make Brook an ally in that struggle?

Brook is actually suggesting that for directors like himself and actors everywhere there is the surface truth in the plays and there is a deeper truth, a truth that directors have always sought to find. This level of research often requires a juxtaposition of past and present, a key part of Brook’s own richness and genius as an iconoclastic artist. Yet in this crucial area, he keeps walking over to our discoveries and then turning away, preferring to leave the poet a mystical figure, the “atom” maker staring vacantly into space.

Brook gives us several examples of his extraordinary text work with actors. He quotes, for example, the last speech from *The Tempest* (which he suggests “may be the last words Shakespeare ever wrote” [32]). He says that the first phrase is very simple for most actors. It introduces a theme that everyone can understand at its most basic level.

My ending is despair
Unless it be relieved by prayer

Taken on its own, he says, “the thought is banal . . . In any little English boarding house you could see this written on the wall on a little card saying, ‘My ending is despair unless it is relieved by prayer.’ If the actor says it like a homely motto, he is ignoring the fact that the phrase ends not ‘by prayer’ but ‘by prayer which’ and ‘which’ is a moment of suspense. He goes on to ask the actor: what follows the ‘which?’ The line is:

Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself

“You can always see in Shakespeare’s writing,” says Brook, “that, as he writes, when his hand comes back to the beginning of a new line there is always a special force . . . like an upbeat in music that’s leading to – what? – suspense. And the word that follows is ‘mercy.’ Now,” asks Brook, “can we understand a prayer that not only ‘penetrates’ but also can ‘assault’ mercy? . . . There is something tremendously powerful not only in the words but in the image, the image of something abstract and vast called mercy being assaulted like a citadel.”

Brook the director here is brilliantly trying to open up for the actor that “we are in front of something, which we cannot ever finally understand Shakespeare acting turns around the question of when you have the right to be absolutely sure and when, on the contrary, your only true position is one of open questioning . . . I don’t believe that there is a theological authority today.” This is Brook speaking, as if to an actor – “who can tell us with absolute certainty what it means to say: ‘a prayer which pierces so that it assaults mercy.’ I think,” says Brook, “that this is deliberately written by a poet not to encapsulate an understanding but to open a burning mystery. And you see that it carries on by saying that if that incomprehensible act happens, it leads to freedom.”

and frees all faults
As you from crimes would pardon’d be

– very strong word ‘crimes’ –

Let your indulgence set me free.

Brook ends by telling his actor – and us – that we can draw out of this analysis a chain “and the chain is: despair-prayer-assault-mercy-crime-pardon-indulgence-free.” He adds: “If an actor or if a director take this to be a happy ending you can say they haven’t bothered to listen to the words . . . None of the words . . . stands in isolation. The passage leads inexorably to the last word of all, and the questions it evokes are truly for today, wherever they are spoken.”

Turning then to *Hamlet* as another example of eternal mystery, the eternal not

knowingness of Shakespeare's words, he quotes

You would play on me. You would seem to know
My stops. You would pluck out the heart of my mystery . . .

Brook wonders here what one can say "to a young actor about to tackle one of these great roles. Forget Shakespeare. Forget that there ever was such a man. Forget that these plays had an author . . . Just assume . . . that the character you are preparing to play really existed . . . This leads to realizing that only once in history did such a person as Hamlet exist, live, breathe, talk. . . Thanks to this belief, we begin to long passionately to know such an unusual person. Does it then help us," asks Brook, "to think at the same time of Shakespeare the author? To analyze his intentions, the influences on him of his time . . .? To examine his verse techniques, his methods, his philosophy? However fascinating this may be, does it help? Or does it help more simply, more directly to approach the play in the way that Irish actors work on Irish plays? . . . As Synge suggested, the author is, as it were, lying on the floor in the attic, listening to real speech, unique real speech, coming up to him through a crack in the ceiling below . . . The actor's task is not to think of words as part of a text, but of words as part of a person whom we believe actually minted them in the heat of the moment." (*Evoking*, 43)

Brook turns to *King Lear* as a third example, the moment when Lear says to Cordelia

And take upon 's the mystery of things
As if we were God's spies.

"What sort of man," asks Brook, "could – off the cuff, when being led away to prison after a cruel and violent battle – improvise such words? We feel a need to know what extraordinary experiences had made up his life, what moments of deep searching, what special sensitivity could have given this apparently tyrannical king such a dense and fervent inner activity?"

How desperately, my friends, does Peter Brook want to know more about our Shakespeare? Yet he seems determined to keep his cries bootless, by retreating from enquiries into the life by saying (with just a touch of sadness) that there is only text. "Our way into the character must be through recognizing that the words he uses show us who he is" (45).

Brook's final words here are really quite revealing. "Shakespeare," he says, "never intended anyone to study Shakespeare." And then he adds: "It is no accident that he made himself so anonymous."

Suddenly Brook is back to the author. And who is he? A man who wishes to remain anonymous. But why? Again Brook approaches and then backs away.

With the investigative instinct of a Thomas Looney, the poet-director Brook tells us right off all about his Shakespeare: someone who “touches on every facet of human existence. In each and all of his plays the low – the filth, the stench, the misery of common existence – interweaves with the fine, the pure, the high.”

We begin to see a portrait through Brook’s words. But again he retreats. “How could one brain encompass so vast a range?” Brooks asks. “For a long time this question was enough to rule out a man of the people. Only someone of high birth and superior education could fit in the scale. The grammar-school lad from the country, even if gifted, could never leap over so many levels of experience. This might make sense if his were not a brain in a million.”

Next Brook drags out the dreaded ‘G-word.’ “All talk about Shakespeare must start from the recognition that this is a case of genius . . . Genius can arise in the humblest of backgrounds.”

He goes on to argue – Stanley Wells fingerprints are again everywhere – that “the level of education in Elizabethan times was remarkably high.” He even quotes “a statute of the school in Stratford” which says ‘All sorts of children [are] to be taught, be their parents never so poor and the boys never so inapt.’

Brook also finds time to praise James Shapiro for “bringing to life the taste and the throb of the time.” Brook even buys into the “let us imagine” motif. “We can imagine,” he says, “the young man from the country on his first days in London, walking the noisy, bustling streets, sitting in the taverns, and peering into the brothels, his eyes and ears wide open, receiving impressions of travellers’ tales, of rumours of palace intrigue, of religious quarrels, of elegant repartees and of violent obscenities. . . . It is not surprising that on the outside he was seen as a quiet man.”

We know where Brook gets all this – the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust – but why on earth does he buy into it? What are we doing wrong? Brook even goes so far as to say that the man from Stratford must have learned so much while in the theatre. “Theatre is a community, and it is only within the life he lived day after day that all true investigation can start.”

Brook suggests again that if the country bumpkin Will wasn’t the real writer but was only standing in for someone like Oxford, he could not possibly have participated in the give and take that is, and always has been, the rehearsal process. “Imagine a fake Shakespeare put on the spot. He has to rewrite and add a new scene. He ponders a while, works out how long it would take for a man on horseback to ride perhaps to Oxford or to York, wait for the secret writer to give him his papers and then to return.”

Could this, asks Brook, have gone on year after year? “No one smelt a rat amongst all those spiteful and jealous rivals? I’m sorry, academics – if you’d been part of any

rehearsal process you would think differently Even today . . . the cast would notice and gossip about the fact that every time you ask for something, the author slips into the wings with his mobile phone.”

But perhaps this anachronism reveals the real problem. Brook is enormously suspicious of academics and for some reason he thinks that it is traditional academics who are pushing the authorship issue. As we know, it is not traditional academics who are doing so but the iconoclasts, the true lovers of knowledge, the true amateurs in this area who are the ones standing up for facts and research. The traditional academics are the ones telling Galileo to toss away his science and accept church dogma.

Or is Brook really suggesting that the authorship issue has been about nothing more than envy over the size of Shakespeare’s pen. “Shakespeare’s time,” says Brook, “was seething with dramatists good and bad, generous and spiteful. Most of them died poor. Shakespeare was one of the very few to retire with enough money to buy land. There was every reason for envy” (12).

But no, says Brook. That couldn’t have been it. If envy had been the issue, why are “there . . . no existing documents to denounce this fake actor-manager pretending to write and publish these very successful works under his own name?” His sort-of orthodox conclusion: “We must never lose touch with the communal nature of theatre. Theatre people often refer to themselves as a family. In a family all the secrets and lies are known to everyone.”

He then notes that there are some seventy “pretenders to the Shakespeare throne. There is even one woman, a Spanish/Jewish lady who is said to be the Dark Lady of the Sonnets. And there’s a rumour that Queen Elizabeth wrote the plays in collaboration with an illegitimate son in an incestuous relationship!” He adds that there seems to have been no authorship question until “Delia Bacon woke up and decided that it must have been her great-great-great-grand uncle who’d written the plays. And so the Imposter Industry started rolling.”

Oh my friends, I have come here today to praise Peter Brook, not to bury him. But he doesn’t make it easy.

He is clearly on his soap box crying out to all who will listen that arguing about the authorship is actually a good career move for scholars. It has, he says erroneously, given “tenure to professors, advances to those who want to challenge the latest publication, and [has been] a boon to publishers with their attendant trades of printing, copy-editing, binding, distributing and bookselling. And of course critics now have a vested interest – like bankers – in keeping the ball rolling.” And then the unkindest cut of all: “If one of the first anti-Shakespeareans carried the God-given name of Thomas Looney, we can allow ourselves a smile.”

Oh my dear Peter. How could you sink so low? He even adds that if any claimant were to be proven the real author, the consequences would be disastrous. “At once the birthplace would move ... and Stratford would crumble. And its three theatres and restaurants. And the Shakespeare Hotel and all the others. And the tourist buses and the gift shops . . .”

“In [say, St. Albans], the Town Council celebrates, money is already rolling in. A fresh generation of actors, directors and architects discuss the new Festival theatre. Flags, banners, T-shirts and pins are ordered. The Bacon Industry is under way and the scholar who has at last blown the whistle is knighted. Only the Marlowe Society is plunged into gloom.”

Too bad for Stratford, Mr. Brook. If it has been living on a lie for centuries, perhaps it is time to say that the emperor is not wearing any clothes. Are we really interested in truth, Mr. Brook, or are we suddenly on the board of the Birthplace Trust?

Near the end of *The Quality of Mercy*, Brook asks again about the mystery man: “Why didn’t Shakespeare teach his daughter to read or write? Why did he not leave behind him any manuscripts?” He then concludes – as Stanley Wells says all the time – there are certainly gaps in what we know about Shakespeare, adding – lest we think it is better with any of the others – “there are as many or more gaps in each one of the other pretenders” (*SOF Newsletter*, vol 51, n 3, p 1. 2015).

Prof. Wells has his words locked deep into Peter Brook’s curiosity on this one. Brook says “There will always be new claimants and new mysteries. In the end, simple common sense must prevail.”

By this point he is rolling off the rails as he says things like “Shakespeare was a very modest man” without offering any proof. “He does not use characters to speak his thoughts, his ideas” Well, if we don’t know his identity how do we know no character is speaking for him? “Shakespeare was unique. He never judged – he gave us an endless multitude of points of view with their own fullness of life . . . It is only in the privacy of the Sonnets that he speaks personally and even recognizes the eternal value of the words that emerge from his pen. He was and is for all time completely self-effacing.”

Peter Brook’s errors of interpretation here are surely not worthy of so great a mind, a mind here apparently over-thrown in the presence of Stanley Wells. Most of Brook’s assumptions are simply untrue. His information is out of date. His research has not taken him into the authorship world of the 21st century. Brook, like so many, is trapped intellectually in 19th century research and 19th century belief systems. This great theatrical mind of the 20th century, I am deeply saddened to say, is simply out of date in this area of interest.

In staging so many brilliant productions of the Bard, Brook says that he has often

felt “a mysterious figure on one side, silently watching the revels....[a] Shakespeare [who understood] that lightness needs the shadow of darkness to make it real.... summer giving way to winter.” Brook clearly does not feel comfortable with the light of 21st century doubters being shone on these dark corners. That may be romantic as a vision but Peter Brook is supposed to be suspicious of such forms.

But surely his actors can get inspiration and understanding from that biography of the Bard written by Mark Anderson, *Shakespeare By Another Name*, and from filmic representations of the life done by the Wilson Sisters and by Cheryl Eagan-Donovan. Just a slight push to the left, Mr. Brook, and new insights are there for the taking by you and your actors and insights into the plays and the lives behind many of the characters.

Ask Mark Rylance what authorship insights have given to him as one of our most brilliant Shakespeare interpreters. Ask Michael York what insights could be gained. Ask Vanessa Redgrave what could be gained when connections are made to a real life.

Directors and actors do read biographies and they do research on the characters they create and play. Do they have anything to gain by connecting moments in the plays of say Ibsen or Strindberg to insights gained by looking into the many well-documented biographies of those great authors? Does an actor lose something to understand that Strindberg’s powerful creation of Miss Julie was connected to a real woman named Siri Von Essen or that Hedda Gabler and Nora Helmer were based on real people as well?

Let me conclude by again quoting Brook who says in discussing *King Lear* (62) that the words ... “never, never, never never...” are actually suggesting not an end but rather “an opening to eternity.” I suggest to Peter Brook, with the deepest respect, that he must stop saying “never, never, never, never” to the bringers of light – that is, to Oxfordians, he must actually look at our work as another real connection to eternity and that he might well think about turning his Never into Ever, and Ever into E.Vere.

We have probably seen Brook – as theatrical elder statesman – go as far as he will go in his own research. But there is certainly room to bring other younger directors and actors along. These are the people we need to get to look at our research. We need to inspire them with the new truths we are finding. Once convinced that both we as individuals, and the realities of our research are honest, a whole new future world of possibilities will truly lie before them and the theatre they will create.

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Othello

and the Green-Eyed Monster of Jealousy

by Richard M. Waugaman

This article studies jealousy in Shakespeare's *Othello*, showing that knowledge of the true author's life experiences with the extremes of pathological jealousy will deepen our understanding and appreciation of this unsettling play. This essay builds on the previous Oxfordian study of *Othello* by A. Bronson Feldman, the first psychoanalyst to take up Freud's call that we re-examine Shakespeare's works with a revised understanding of who wrote them. Freud cited *Othello* in his 1922 explanation that "projected jealousy" defends against guilt about one's actual or fantasized infidelity by attributing unfaithfulness to one's partner. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare anticipates Freud's formulation when Gertrude says, "So full of artless jealousy is guilt" (4.5.21).

Freud wrote to Arnold Zweig in 1937 that he was "almost irritated" that Zweig still believed Shakespeare of Stratford simply relied on his imagination to write the great plays. Freud explained, "I do not know what still attracts you to the man from Stratford. He seems to have nothing at all to justify his claim [to authorship of the canon], whereas Oxford has almost everything. It is quite inconceivable to me that Shakespeare should have got everything secondhand – Hamlet's neurosis, Lear's madness...Othello's jealousy, etc." (Freud, Zweig Letters, 140; see also Waugaman, 2017).

When Shakespeare scholars acknowledge Freud's Oxfordian opinions at all, they attack his motives, overlooking Freud's expectation that Shakespeare's life experiences would bear a significant relationship to his plays and poetry. Psychic determinism, one of Freud's core concepts, observes that all mental activity is meaningful, and is connected with past life experiences. Psychoanalysts who still support the traditional authorship theory seem to have a blind spot for the biographical dimension of Shakespeare's works.

Feldman published two articles on *Othello*, in 1952 and 1954. Only in the 1954 article did he raise the authorship question, by giving many details of Oxford's life, linking some of them – such as Oxford's belief that his wife was unfaithful to him and his

Othello-like military ambitions as a young man – with the play. The present article is an extension of my previous chapter on betrayal in Shakespeare (Waugaman, 2013), since jealousy is based on a fear of being betrayed. As I noted in that earlier essay, “there was no lack of betrayal in the life of Edward de Vere.” As we ponder the pivotal betrayals of his early development:

- his father’s death when he was 12
- his older sister going to court afterwards to have him declared illegitimate
- being assigned as the ward of William Cecil, whom he may have suspected of having his father murdered
- having much of his wealth confiscated before he turned 21
- at 21, being forced to marry his guardian’s daughter

it is easy to infer that he was left with multiple narcissistic wounds, and the sort of narcissistic rage that is ever on the lookout for future hurts, real or imaginary, in order to rationalize wishes to take revenge. Highly pathological forms of jealousy lead to a false perception of betrayal when there has been none. Jealousy is intensified by projection onto another person of one’s own disloyal impulses and acts.

The works of Shakespeare offer us extraordinary insights into human psychology, including jealousy. From his profound self-awareness and from his penetrating observations of other people, Edward de Vere understood and explicated the psychodynamics of the “green-eyed monster” of pathological jealousy.

We cannot fully understand a theme like jealousy in Shakespeare’s works without understanding the life of the true author. However, a historical blunder in attributing the pseudonymous works of Shakespeare to William Shakspere, the merchant of Stratford, has fueled a far-reaching misunderstanding of the role of all authors’ life experiences in their literary works. For centuries, Shakespeare scholars have ignored an embarrassing lack of fit between their alleged man and his works.¹ This error leads to an equally pernicious misunderstanding of how literary universality is achieved. If Shakespeare did not base his works on personal experience, it is then falsely concluded that a great writer aims for universal appeal through a generalizing strategy. Instead, a great writer uses the more effective means of capturing the individuality of their experiences so eloquently that those emotions are communicated

Richard M. Waugaman *is Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and 2012-2016 Faculty Expert on Shakespeare for Media Contacts at Georgetown University. His 175 publications include some 75 works on Shake-speare. His two ebooks are Newly Discovered Works by “William Shake-Speare,” a.k.a. Edward de Vere and It’s Time to Re-Vere the Works of “William Shake-Speare”: A Psychoanalyst Reads the Works of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. He is indebted to Roger Stritmatter’s research on de Vere’s Geneva Bible for interesting him in Oxfordian research.*

to the reader or listener. This taps into their respective personal experiences powerfully enough that the literary work has profound emotional resonance and appeal. We cannot fully understand the pivotal operation of unconscious communication between author and reader – or playwright and audience – if we fail to appreciate this crucial role of the writer’s life experiences.

Rather bizarrely, the traditional approach to Shakespeare is to dissociate the author and his life from his literary works. The resulting emphasis on Shakespeare’s inborn genius stems from the lack of connection between what we know about Shakespeare of Stratford and the plays and poems that many still attribute to him. Freud was the world’s first prominent intellectual to be persuaded that the real author was probably the highly educated genius Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford (1550-1604).

Mainstream explorations of the personality of Shakespeare are naturally limited by their erroneous assumption about his identity. Edward Wagenknecht, for example, says that “unless I am completely wrong in my reading of his character, Shakespeare could not have deliberately killed any human being under any circumstances” (13). As Freud observed, one attraction of the Stratford businessman Shakespeare is that we know so little about him that we can imagine he was as perfect a human being as are his literary works. But the author who wrote the canon killed a servant when he was seventeen. De Vere’s motives are unknown. His guardian, the future Lord Burghley, secured de Vere’s acquittal (saving him from a death sentence) with the preposterous conclusion that the servant committed suicide on de Vere’s fencing foil, and on the grounds that de Vere acted in self-defense (“se defendo,” self-deprecatingly mocked in *Hamlet* when the gravedigger says Ophelia’s death from possible suicide must have been “se offendendo”). Thus, de Vere knew the depths of the mind of a killer from his remarkable self-knowledge.

James Schiffer (in a book edited by Kolin) is surprised that so few critics have linked *Othello* with some of the sonnets (e.g., Sonnets 35, 105, 138, 144):

Central to each work is the experience of triangulation, jealousy, and radical uncertainty . . . The protagonists’ experience of jealousy in both works is greatly exacerbated . . . by uncertainty. . . . The *Sonnets* poet is divided in complex ways, not only between two loves, but also between rival versions of the young friend and dark lady, as well as of himself. In relation to the young friend, the poet vacillates between hyperbolic praise . . . and recrimination of the friend’s ‘sensual fault[s]’ (326-327).

Schiffer speculates that *Othello* was written around the same time as some of the sonnets. Other Shakespeare scholars may hesitate to acknowledge the connections Schiffer highlights because of their unwillingness to link these literary works with their author’s life experiences. Lyric poetry such as sonnets is usually highly personal and autobiographical.

It is my strong belief that *Shakespeare's Sonnets* are autobiographical (Waugaman 2010), so I would submit that we see the poet's intense jealousy of both the Fair Youth (the Earl of Southampton) and the Dark Lady (her identity is unknown) in their notorious love triangle. Sonnet 93 begins, "So shall I live, supposing thou art true / Like a deceived husband..." We may also see de Vere's jealousy of the Fair Youth's relationship with the rival poet (the leading candidate is Christopher Marlowe),² who may have incited murderous literary and erotic feelings of competition in de Vere.

One of the most glaring and public instances of de Vere's jealousy was his refusal to live with his wife Anne (1556-1583) for at least five years after he returned from his fourteen-month visit to the Continent when he was in his mid-twenties. Despite the entreaties of Queen Elizabeth and her principal secretary Lord Burghley – who was also de Vere's former guardian and now his father-in-law – that he reconcile with Anne, de Vere accused his wife of having been impregnated by another man.³ She gave birth to their daughter Elizabeth in July 1575. De Vere left for his lengthy trip to the Continent five months earlier, so he may well have been the father.⁴ Venice offered legalized prostitution when de Vere lived there, and it is doubtful that de Vere resisted opportunities for sexual adventures, thus increasing the possibility that he hypocritically projected his own sexual infidelity onto his wife.

Everyone at Queen Elizabeth's court knew of de Vere's jealousy of Anne. The way he later depicted states of pathological jealousy in his plays (e.g., Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*; Claudius in *Much Ado About Nothing*; Posthumus in *Cymbeline*) hints that de Vere later regretted his accusations against Anne, and performed self-deprecatory acts of literary penance through showing innocent women wronged by outrageously jealous men, who resembled de Vere in that way.

The year that de Vere spent living in Italy (1575-76) offers crucial insights into the connections between the works of Shakespeare and the life of their author.⁵ For example, *Othello* has its title character rush to Cyprus to defend it from an impending Turkish attack. There was actually a Turkish attack on Venetian-controlled Cyprus in 1570, five years before de Vere's stay in Venice.⁶ Further, in 1571, Venetian forces played a key role against the Ottoman Turks in the naval battle of Lepanto. Many poets commemorated that Venetian victory (including the Spanish poet Fernando de Herrera in 1572, and even King James VI of Scotland in 1591), and it may be part of *Othello's* implicit back-story. Feldman believes de Vere hoped to gain military experience during his stay in Venice if the Turks attacked Venice itself while he was living there. Shakespeare introduced into the English language several words from "Veneto," the dialect of Venice. For example, his use of "gondolier" in *Othello* seems to be its first use in English. It is difficult to imagine how Shakespeare of Stratford learned this dialect – or the detailed geographic knowledge of Italy reflected in Shakespeare's plays – without ever leaving England.

One priceless benefit of realizing that de Vere probably wrote Shakespeare is that it

allows us to expand the corpus of his other writings. A classic study of rhetoric, the anonymous *Arte of English Poesie* of 1589 – which in my view was probably written by de Vere – contrasts the high reputation of poets in former days with the contempt that the Elizabethan aristocracy showed toward poets (Ch.6, Waugaman 2014). After this observation, comes a passage highly relevant to understanding maladaptive emotions such as jealousy.

The author of *The Arte of English Poesie* said many of his contemporaries showed “scorn and derision” toward creative writers, calling them “light-headed and fantastical” (109). De Vere believed this contempt confused the creative imagination with “disordered fantasies” (109). But a good imaginative writer, by contrast, is “very formal [sane],⁷ and in his much multiformity uniform, that is, well proportioned, and so [sur]passingly clear, that by it, as by a glass or mirror,⁸ are represented unto the soul all manner of beautiful visions,⁹ whereby the inventive part of the mind is so much helped, as without it no man could devise any new or rare thing” (109). De Vere then compared the creative writer’s imagination to a mirror, noting that a mirror may be accurate, or may be distorted. Some mirrors beautify an object while others deceptively portray attractive objects as “very monstrous and ill-favored” (110). “Even so,” man’s imagination, if unimpaired, can represent “the best, most comely, and beautiful images or appearances of things to the soul and according to their very truth. If otherwise, then doth it [the imagination] breed chimeras and monsters in men’s imaginations, and not only in his imaginations, but also in all his ordinary actions and life which ensues” (110; emphasis added). This comparison eloquently describes the monstrous pathology of a diseased imagination, such as Othello’s pathological jealousy of his wife Desdemona. The author adds that sound judgment should ideally accompany a strong imagination, not only in creative writers, but in politicians and military leaders too.

One way to think about *Othello* is in terms of the projective identification of unbearable feelings of jealousy (Rusbridger). Contrary to Samuel Coleridge’s influential conclusion that Iago suffers from “motiveless malignity,” I would suggest that we take seriously Iago’s opening lines to Rodrigo, complaining that he has been passed over for promotion by Othello. In addition, Iago tells Rodrigo,

I do suspect the lustful Moor
Hath leap’ed into my seat, the thought whereof
Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards,
And nothing can nor shall content my soul
Till I am even with him, wife, for wife:
Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor,
At least, into a jealousy so strong,
That judgment cannot cure. (2.1.290-297)

If we assume this induces narcissistic rage in Iago, then his seeking the death of Othello is fully motivated. Similarly, Brabantio reacts with rage to the narcissistic slight of his daughter Desdemona marrying Othello without Brabantio's permission. Iago's aim of inducing unbearable feelings of jealousy in Othello is also clearly motivated. When audience members find *Othello* difficult to watch, this may imply a further process of projective identification – of the playwright's unbearable feelings into the audience.

Yes, *Othello* is a play about Othello's jealousy. But it is equally about Iago's skill in provoking that jealousy; Iago is sometimes considered the play's central character. Why? Any question we might ask about Shakespeare usually has a complex answer, and we should never presume that we have arrived at the last word. For starters, we might note that Iago's skill in playing on Othello's emotions parallels the playwright's skill in playing on ours. So this play, as do all Shakespeare's plays, holds up a mirror to us, so we might better understand ourselves, and our vulnerabilities. Further, the play helps us understand the workings of projection and of projective identification. Iago, in his envy, wants to project onto others his own vile nature. With Othello, he cannot, because of Othello's noble character. So he turns to projective identification, inducing in Othello the very jealousy Iago tells us he feels himself. It suggests that one of Iago's possible motives might be his intolerance of the pathological jealousy he feels in himself.

Moments before his death, Othello sounds as if he is writing his own history, judging himself, and performing his own execution. He sounds dissociated from himself, splitting himself in two when he says,

in Alepo once,
Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduc'd the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him – thus. (5.2.353-357)

What has just happened? In splitting his own identity between narrator and condemned criminal, Othello enacts the very split that allowed de Vere to tell this disguised story of his own pathological jealousy of his first wife, Anne. This moment is an excellent illustration of Harold Searles's observation that suicide often amounts to one part of the personality murdering another part. Think of the phrase quoted earlier, in de Vere's 1589 description of a good creative writer, who is "in *his much multiformity* uniform." Among other things, this may allude to de Vere's awareness of his own multiple self states, which contributed to his extraordinary skill in creating fully realized fictional characters. Further, if Othello stabs himself as he speaks the final word, "thus," it constitutes a breath-taking intersection of word and action in Shakespeare, when the past tense of "smote" becomes present indeed, suddenly

making us aware that Othello is using his narration of a past event to compare his current suicide with his earlier killing of an enemy. Othello's identification with the "Turk" in this story is further enriched when we learn that Queen Elizabeth's nickname for de Vere was "Turk."

The subtitle of *Othello* is *The Moor of Venice*. In this play, Iago manipulatively warns Othello, "O, beware, my lord, of jealousy;/ It is the green-eyed monster" (3.3.188-189). Portia, in *The Merchant of Venice*, observes, "How all the other passions fleet to air,/ As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embraced despair,/ And shuddering fear, and *green-eyed jealousy!*" (3.2.110-112). Thus, the only two instances of the phrase "green-eyed" are in the two Shakespeare plays that have Venice in their titles, and in the pivotal third act in each play.

Shakespeare was first writer to describe jealousy as "green-eyed" and such is his influence that the allusion is still a current usage. In de Vere's day, a green complexion was thought to reflect envy or fear. De Vere may also have been influenced by the Veneto phrase "esser verde" ("to be green") meaning "to be irate," in calling jealousy a green-eyed monster. Why would de Vere associate Venice with jealousy? Because he was living in Venice when he became consumed with pathological jealousy of his wife Anne, convinced she was pregnant by another man (possibly her father).¹⁰ Here is where biographical information about de Vere is invaluable for exploring such questions about Shakespeare's works. De Vere's literary work served as a sort of self-analysis for him. He was able to bring all his characters to life in unprecedented ways because he could find in himself the traits they embody, including those offensive traits that made him so controversial during his lifetime. Among these was jealousy of pathological – and possibly even murderous – proportions.¹¹

The first recorded performance of *Othello* was November 1, 1604, a few months after de Vere's death. It was one of several Shakespeare plays performed at court to celebrate the marriage of de Vere's youngest daughter Susan to Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery – one of the brothers to whom Shakespeare's *First Folio* of thirty-six plays was dedicated. For reasons unknown, *Othello* was not published until 1622, just a year before the *First Folio* appeared. The literary source of the play is a 1565 Italian story by Giovanni Cinthio, not yet translated into English, that was in the library of de Vere's guardian and father-in-law, Lord Burghley.

Charles Arundell alleged in 1584 that the Earl of Leicester often set "the great lords of England" against their wives and he singled out de Vere as one such lord. Burghley wrote in his diary that de Vere "was enticed by certain lewd persons to be a stranger to his wife" (Anderson, 115). He also wrote that de Vere's cruel treatment of his wife after he returned from Italy seemed "grounded upon untrue reports of others" (120). Who were these people? Rowland Yorke, one of de Vere's trusted servants, had a brother who was Leicester's servant, and may have played an Iago-like role in telling de Vere lies about his wife's ostensible infidelity. When he served in

England's military, Lieutenant Yorke more than once betrayed his country to its enemy, Spain. "Iago" as a name does not appear in Cinthio's source story for *Othello*. But Iago is the Spanish word for James, Spain's patron saint.

Shakespeare scholars have been slow to discover Shakespeare's veiled commentary on events at the Elizabethan Court. They know that Elizabethan playwrights were often arrested, tortured, and otherwise punished for arousing the ire of powerful court officials and appearing to offer critiques of contemporary politics. For example, nineteenth century Shakespeareans knew Polonius in *Hamlet* is a spoof on Lord Burghley. But current Shakespeare scholars such as Jonathan Bate say it is not possible, because there is no way Shakspeare of Stratford could have gotten away with it. Precisely.

Shakespeare scholars are thus depriving us of one of the most fascinating levels of the multilayered meanings of Shakespeare's works. This view of Shakespeare's writing as lacking any political dimension was perhaps stated most bluntly by Northrop Frye, when he wrote,

[One] thing seems clear in Shakespeare: there is never anything outside his plays that he wants to "say" or talk about in the plays [I]n his day nobody cared what Shakespeare's views were about anything, and he wouldn't have been allowed to discuss public affairs publicly . . . his plays merely present aspects of social life that would have been intelligible to his audience. . . . Even then he would deal only with those aspects that fitted the play he was writing" (Frye, 2).

However, the plays of de Vere cannot be fully understood without considering the fact that the most important member of his audience was Queen Elizabeth. He wrote with her in mind. When he was in his early twenties, a court insider wrote to his father that de Vere was one of the queen's favorites. Much of his classic work on rhetoric and courtly behavior mentioned earlier, the 1589 *Arte of English Poesie*, is addressed in the second person to the Queen. And consider for a moment some of the central facts of the Queen's background that de Vere pondered as he wrote. Her father had her mother executed. Henry VIII's union with Anne Boleyn was the most prominent dysfunctional marriage of the land. Due to religious and political struggles over the succession, there were widely-known efforts to have Elizabeth declared illegitimate, and therefore ineligible to succeed her father on the throne. This would likely have had a special resonance for de Vere, whose older half-sister Katherine went to court to have him declared illegitimate when their father died, in 1562, when de Vere was twelve. Alleged or actual illegitimacy is referred to in nearly every Shakespeare play, and is a prominent theme in several of them. Yet these plays depict male bastards, not illegitimate women, probably in deference to the Queen's sensibilities about the accusations against her. Janet Adelman in 1992, drew attention to King

Lear's demented suspicion that his daughters are illegitimate.

Many of our blind spots for overlooked contemporary allusions in the plays reflect our failure to ponder what the Queen's reactions to Shakespeare's plays would have been. It is falsely claimed that *Henry VIII* was written after the Queen's death. Yet it includes an eloquent re-enactment of her christening, with Cranmer saying of her, "This royal infant.../ Though in her cradle, yet now promises/ Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings,/ Which time shall bring to ripeness" (5.4. 17-20). It is likely de Vere wrote that scene partly to flatter his still living Queen.

When de Vere writes about jealousy, he is not only alluding to his notorious streak of pathological jealousy, but also to salient events in Queen Elizabeth's life. For example, Brabantio, the father of Othello's wife Desdemona, claims that Othello must have won Desdemona's love through witchcraft – "She is abused, stol'n from me, and corrupted/ By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;/ For nature so preposterously to err.../ Sans witchcraft could not" (1, 3, 60-64). De Vere would have known that such an accusation would remind the Queen of the fatal downfall of her mother, Anne Boleyn, after Elizabeth's father Henry VIII similarly accused Anne of winning his heart through witchcraft.¹² Anne had given birth to a still-born and possibly deformed son. Witchcraft was commonly thought to cause such tragedies. King Henry needed to scapegoat Anne to preempt the alternative explanation that the stillbirth reflected divine disfavor of Henry for divorcing his first wife Katherine. Thus, thinking of that piece of her family history, Queen Elizabeth probably took comfort in Othello's eloquent reply that Desdemona fell in love with him not because he used any witchcraft, but because she heard him tell the story of his heroic life, after her father asked to hear it: "She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd,/ And I loved her that she did pity them./ This is the only witchcraft I have used" (1, 3, 167-169).

Further, Queen Elizabeth showed possible signs of jealousy when de Vere impregnated one of her ladies in waiting, the fifteen-year-old Anne Vavasour, in 1581. The day after Vavasour gave birth to Edward Vere, she was imprisoned in the Tower of London. De Vere was caught trying to flee England, and thrown into the Tower too, for two and a half months. There is suggestive evidence that some of the poems signed "Anomos"¹³ were written by de Vere in the Tower. One of these anonymous poems – "To His Muse" – alludes to one of the motives for de Vere's anonymous authorship: "The honor great which Poets wont to have [are accustomed to have], / With worthy deeds is buried deep in grave, / Each man will hide his name, / Thereby to hide his shame." De Vere repeatedly used his poems and plays to try to influence the Queen. De Vere's 1593 long poem *Venus and Adonis* may hint at an earlier affair between him and Queen Elizabeth, further suggesting that he provoked her jealousy with his other affairs. After de Vere married Anne Cecil in 1571, Cecil's mother apparently objected to de Vere's intimacy with the Queen, but the Queen sent word

that she should mind her own business.

The astonishingly universal appeal of Shakespeare allowed de Vere to write plays that spoke on one level to the Queen and to Court insiders, while speaking to everyone else on other levels. For example, commentators have puzzled over Katherine's seeming submissiveness toward her husband by the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Among other meanings, this echoes an event in the life of Henry VIII's last wife, Katherine Parr. She brought all of Henry's children into the royal household, and became a warm stepmother to Elizabeth. So Elizabeth would have been familiar with a conspiracy to remove the evangelical Katherine by religious conservatives. A royal physician warned Katherine that she would be tested for her loyalty to the king. When she was duly questioned, she completely abandoned her past pattern of debating with him on controversial matters, and told him that Eve was created to submit to Adam, and so did she submit to Henry. She said she had debated religion with him in the past only to distract him from his physical ailments and pain.

It is said that in war, the first casualty is the truth. Similarly, in highly polarized academic debates, complexity and ambiguity often give way to circular, all-or-none thinking, with those who express contrary opinions treated as the enemy.¹⁴ Now, nearly a century after Freud called on us to connect Shakespeare's works with his life, we might emulate Freud's repeated courage in defying groupthink¹⁵ as he explored controversial ideas. Freud highlighted the importance he placed on this character trait when he wrote to Ernest Jones in 1926 about "the great experiment of my life, namely to stand up for a conviction..." (quoted in Gay, *The Godless Jew*, 148). We can study Shakespeare's works to expand our understanding of human psychology, including Shakespeare's analysis of pathological jealousy in *Othello*. If we are willing to explore Freud's controversial belief that Edward de Vere wrote Shakespeare's works, we will be richly rewarded by an even deeper understanding of these priceless literary treasures and the connections between life and great literature.

Notes

1. Naturally, they then seize on mistaken connections, such as the alleged connection between the name of Shakspeare's son Hamnet, and Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. Further, they mistakenly claim that Shakespeare "was not all that learned" (Stanley Wells, in the 2012 film *Last Will. & Testament*); that words of the 16th-century dialect of the Stratford region appear in Shakespeare's works; that Shakespeare made errors about Italy that prove he never visited that country; that he also made errors in the use of legal terminology that prove he did not attend law school; etc.
2. Cf. Sonnets 86-90.
3. An anonymous 1578 poem featuring a betrayed female speaker seems to be de Vere's effort to show that he could in fact understand his wife's point of view. This poem is a fascinating prototype of some of Shakespeare's most memorable female characters. See chapter 3 in Waugaman, 2014.
4. On the other hand, a March 1575 letter from the Queen's physician, Richard Masters, alleges that Anne sought an abortion from him a week after de Vere departed for the Continent. We can only speculate as to her reasons.
5. One of the best references on Shakespeare's intimate knowledge of Italy is Roe (2011). Anderson writes of the profound impact de Vere's year in Italy had on his subsequent writing. He adds, "For such an autobiographical artist as the Earl of Oxford, extreme agony and disturbance in life ultimately provided profound inspiration" (p. 118).
6. Samuel Johnson, George Steevens, Isaac Reed, eds., *The Plays of William Shakespeare* in twenty-one volumes. London: J. Nichols & Sons. 1813.
7. Whigham and Rebhorn gloss "formal" as meaning "sane," inadvertently supporting my attribution of the *Arte* to de Vere, since the OED's sole example of this meaning of "formal" (4.c) is in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*.
8. Freud's admonition that the psychoanalyst mirror back the patient's transference was probably influenced by Hamlet's famous advice to the actors that "the purpose of playing [acting] ...is, to hold, as t'were, the mirror up to nature" [III. ii.21-23; emphasis added].
9. Cf. *The Tempest*, after Prospero has conjured up a masque to entertain Miranda and Fernando, Fernando says, "This is a most majestic vision, and/ Harmonious-

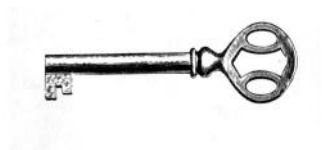
ly charming.”

10. See Charlton Ogburn Jr., *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (1984), p. 575.
11. It is likely that Christopher Marlowe was the “rival poet” of the Sonnets, and it is even possible that de Vere had him killed. De Vere attempted to fight a duel with Sir Philip Sidney (Queen Elizabeth stopped the duel); he later boasted he could have Sidney killed and not be caught.
12. Dale Hoak, Lecture Nineteen in Teaching Company course on “The Age of Henry VIII.” King Henry “put it about that by means of sorcery and charms, Anne [Boleyn] had seduced him and forced him into their marriage” (Course Guidebook, 100) Chantilly, VA (2003).
13. This pen name seems similar to “anonymous,” but in Greek it means lawless, impious, unconventional, or unmusical. These poems are reprinted in Davison’s anthology *A Poetical Rhapsody*. To my knowledge, Eric Miller was the first to attribute the *Anomos* poems to de Vere.
14. For example, the Shakespeare scholar Stanley Wells has said he is 100% certain that Shakspeare of Stratford wrote the works of Shakespeare. He added that he is unwilling to read any contrary evidence until it is 100% proven that Edward de Vere wrote Shakespeare. Wells seems oddly proud of how closed-minded he is.
15. In his classic study of groupthink, Irving Janis – using a term coined in 1952 by William H. Whyte – observed that defenders of a contested theory often fail to consider alternative theories, overrate their expertise, and gain group cohesiveness through deep hostility toward those who critique their theory or offer conflicting evidence.

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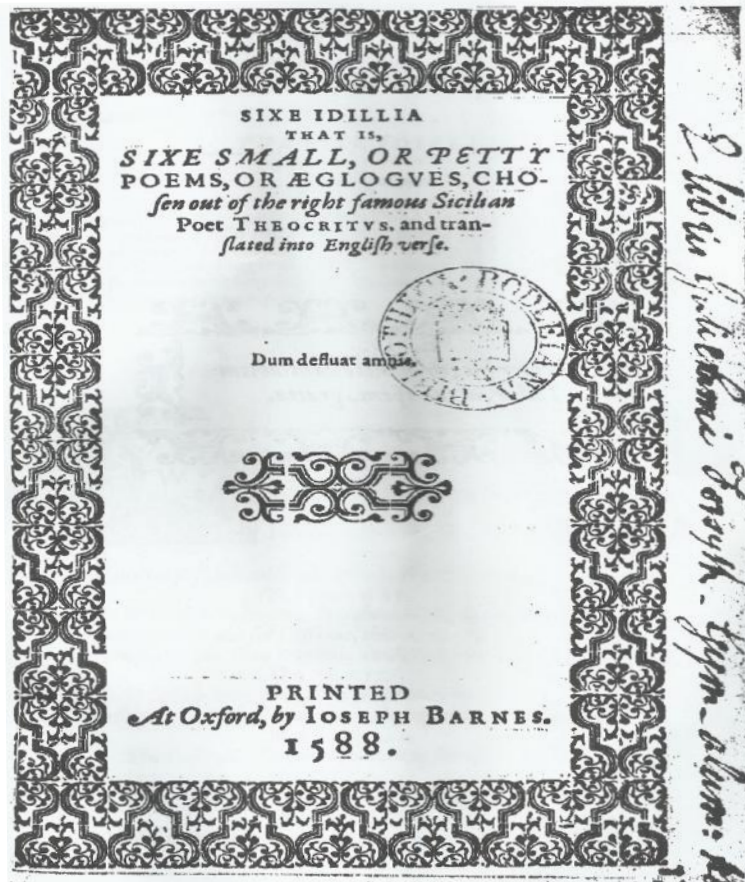


The Mystery of Willy

Oxford, Spenser, and Theocritus' Sixe Idillia

by Richard Malim

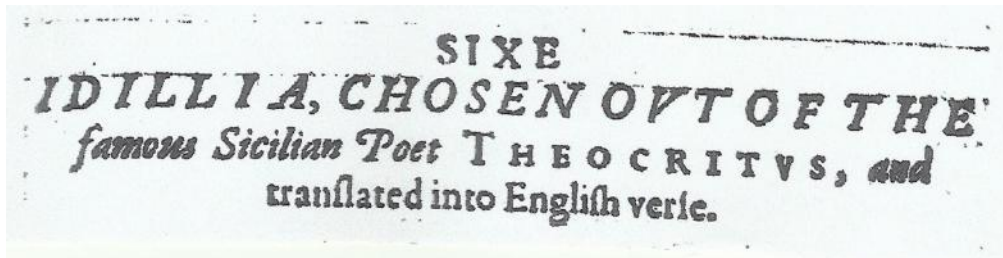
In 1588 there appeared a little printed book whose title page reads “*Sixe Idillia that is, Sixe Small, or Petty Poems, or Aeglogues, Chosen out of the right famous Sicilian Poet Theocritus, and translated into English Verse / Dum defluat amnis* [tr: as long as the river may flow down to the sea] / Printed at Oxford by Joseph Barnes 1588.”



Title Page, Sixe Idillia

Theocritus (fl. 270 BCE) was an immensely influential pastoral poet writing in Ionic Greek. The translator selects six of the poems or *Idillia* namely nos. **8, 11, 16, 18, 21** and **31**. The sole surviving copy is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and, while the date of publication is clear, the date of the actual translation and the translator's identity are not revealed. The typesetting and printing generally do not seem to have received any critical comment but they appear to be of very high quality. There is something of a mystery as to why the book was printed in Oxford but it may possibly account for the sole surviving copy being in the Bodleian.

On the face of it, one cannot find much to assist in establishing who the translator might be. There are however pieces of intrinsic evidence in favour of Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, in the actual printing. On the title page the word verse is printed with the usual long 's' used well into the nineteenth century: on the second page (below) this letter is mangled in the original so the word looks more like verie (to sound perhaps more like Vere) than verSe. There is also a small space and an unnecessary capital O for 'Oxen' ["Oxford"] in *Idillia 16*. There are, in addition, six uses of the word verie discussed below which seem hardly born out from the original Greek.



Second Page, Sixe Idillia

In the first half of the sixteenth century and for long after that, the educated classes were imbued with a contemporary version of humanism. These humanists

Richard Malim is a retired English provincial lawyer who became involved with the *Oxfordian* claim over 25 years ago. In 2003, he became – and still is – the secretary of The De Vere Society. Malim was instrumental in the genesis of Great Oxford, an acclaimed collection of 31 articles put together to commemorate, in 2004, the quatercentenary of Oxford's death. Spotting a gap in the *Oxfordian* case and studies, Malim then wrote an all-round reference book, *The Earl of Oxford and the Making of Shakespeare - The Literary Life of Edward de Vere in Context* which places de Vere in the context of the development of English literature. He published an article titled "De Vere, Twelfth Night, and Dubrovnik" in *The Oxfordian* 18.

were responsible for recovering, editing, and explaining a great many ancient texts in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. But they also introduced a respect bordering on fanaticism for certain critical principles – for example, that ‘great poetry’ had to be written in hexameters and that drama had to obey the four unities allegedly laid down by Aristotle – formulated and developed by such critics as the Italian Castelvetro (d.1571). In this way the humanists of the time hoped to preserve Latin as the living Esperanto of Europe by putting the Latin clock back to the age of Cicero.

They succeeded in killing off post-classical Latin but froze Ciceronian Latin in a time warp, and with it Castelvetro’s distorted reflection of Aristotle’s observations on Greek tragedy onto which were foisted the arbitrary rules of the unities (Lewis 19-30). This attitude attracted a great deal of criticism especially as it finally ended the Elizabethan Classical period of ‘romantic’ humanist writers, of whom Shakespeare is the foremost exemplar. Eventually, the Elizabethan Classical manner of writing was ended for good, by the early nineteenth century romantics.

With that simplification, perhaps an oversimplification, in mind, we can do no better than set out C.S. Lewis’s critique of *Sixe Idillia*.

The unknown author. . . is a sensitive and original metrist who deliberately uses the alexandrine without a medial break. For example, he writes “with lovely Netehearde Daphnis on the hills, they say” and rids the fourteener of its even more tyrannous ‘cesure,’ for example: “Upon a rocke, and looking on the Sea, he sung these rimes; O Galatea faire, why dost thou shun thy lover true?” Both modifications really create new metres, whose possibilities have not yet even yet [as of 1953, the date of Lewis’ book] been fully exploited.

[Idillia] 31, in three metrical feet per line is intended to be like [John Skelton’s] *Philip Sparrow*. Elsewhere this version sounds far more like Greek poetry than anything that was to be written in English before the nineteenth century:

O Jupiter, and thou Minerva fierce in fight,
And thou Proserpina, who with thy mother, hast renoune
By Lysimelia streames, in Ephyra that worthy towne,
Out of our Iland drive our enimies, our bitter fate

(*Sixe Idillia*, 16. 82 et seq.)

All that I have said about humanism in this book in my previous paragraph would have to be retracted if there had been many such humanists.

(Lewis 520 – 521)

To an extent, Lewis’ view of the poetical abilities of the translator of *Sixe Idillia*, if they could be pinned on Oxford, are backed by S.W. May.¹ While May labels the sixteen poems he accepts as Oxford’s as “the output of a competent, fairly experimental

poet working in the established modes of mid-century lyric verse,” his actual analysis is rather different.

He does use eleven different metrical forms in these sixteen poems, including one English sonnet, the graceful trimeters [lines of three feet] of no. 14, and the unexpected tetrameters at the end of each stanza of no. 9. Structurally the poems are unified and brought to well-defined conclusions . . . More complex is the weaving of a double refrain into the conventional fabric of no. 6, while the surprising and unconventional endings of nos. 7 and 9 show Oxford playing upon the received tradition in imaginative ways. [His work is] varied in conception and manner well beyond the relentless plodding of [his contemporaries] Breton, Turberville and Churchyard.

(May 13-14)

This sounds closer to the view of Theocritus’ translator than May might admit and we must remember that the translation of the *Sixte Idillia* appeared after those juvenile poems accepted by May and represents the product of a mature poet.

Now it is possible that *Sixte Idillia* was a shot in the war between the strict humanists, having Gabriel Harvey, Dyer, Sidney, and Greville as their leaders and supported at least at first by Spenser – and their opponents, whom one might call the romantics, whose standard-bearer was Oxford himself and who was ultimately backed by the poets and playwrights who began to appear over the following decades. An earlier shot in the war was the plea by Harvey addressed (or written to be addressed – there is some doubt as to whether it was actually delivered) to the Queen during her progress in 1578 at Cambridge University. Here are some extracts translated from Harvey’s Latin containing great praise, but at the same time an attack on Oxford’s preference for metres suiting English rather than, say, the metre of Latin heroic couplets, joined with a request to stop writing in a manner unappealing to Harvey:

Thy splendid fame demands even more than in the case of others the services of a poet demanding lofty eloquence. Thy merit doth not creep along the ground.

O great-hearted one, strong in thy mind and thy fiery will, thou wilt conquer thyself, thou wilt conquer others . . . Mars will obey thee.

For a long time past [i.e., pre-1578] Phoebus Apollo has cultivated thy mind in the arts. English poetical measures have been sung by thee long enough. Let that courtly Epistle [i.e. to the reader of *The Courtier* by Castiglione] more polished even than the writings of Castiglione himself – witness how greatly thou dost excel in letters. I have seen many Latin verses of thine, yea even more English verses are extant; thou hast drunk deep draughts not only of the Muses of France and Italy, thou hast learned the manners of many men,

and the arts of foreign countries. It was not for nothing that Sturmius [the leading German scholar in 1575 in Strasbourg] was visited by thee; neither in France, Italy, nor Germany are any such cultivated and polished men.

Now Harvey comes to his point. England is in grave danger:

O thou hero worthy of renown, throw away the insignificant pen, throw away bloodless books, and writings that serve no useful purpose; now the sword must be brought into play.

The message is also to “get out of our strict literary humanist way especially as you could have more military important roles.”

In thy breast is noble blood, courage animates thy brow, Mars lives in thy tongue, Minerva strengthens thy right hand, Bellona reigns in thy body, within thee burns the fires of Mars. Thine eyes flash fire, *thy countenance shakes spears*; who would not swear that Achilles is come to life again . . .”²

(Harvey, cited by Ward, 156-158)

The original Latin used in the last sentence is ‘vultus tela vibrat’; the accuracy of the translation can be disputed, but the nuance of the phrase cannot. The use of the word ‘vultus’ for ‘countenance’ is interesting. The Elizabethans’ addiction to puns leads me to suspect that there is a pun by Harvey on the Latin word ‘vultis’ / ‘you will’ i.e. ‘You, Will,’ and so we have buried in the Latin, ‘Will, Shakes, Spear(s)’, one of the first references to the use by Oxford of the pseudonym.

Because I show *Sixte Idillia* was written much earlier than its printed publication date 1588, I see it as a counter-blast (if not directly so) to Harvey’s view. The translator confirms that he can write Greek verse into English metres without needing Latin, as the title page puts it, “Chosen out of the right famous Sicilian Poet Theocritus, and translated into English verse.” Later, Oxford makes a criticism of Watson’s *Hekatompathia* (1582) which I consider below.

While Harvey was the chief literary enemy, the clique led by the first Earl of Leicester – Robert Dudley – was probably the chief target. (Dudley had robbed Oxford blind while he was under age and was still plundering his estates.) Leicester’s nephew Sir Philip Sidney had literary talent and pretensions, which laid him open to mockery for general ineffectualness in such plays as *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as Slender, in *Twelfth Night* as Aguecheek – (did Sidney suffer from teenage acne?) – and in *As You Like It* as the courtier Le Beau. All these must have appeared before Sidney died a national hero in 1586. *Hamlet* was written too late. The Sidney character had to be written out and his best speech given to Polonius:

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral,

pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ, and the liberty, they are the only men.

(*Hamlet*, 2.2.397-404)

The literati of the Court circle would readily recognize this as a send up of Sidney's prolix literary criticism, with its attempts at classification of 'Poesy.'

These be subdivided into sundry more special denominations, the most suitable be the Heroic, Lyric, Tragic, Comic, Satiric, Iambic, Elegiac, Pastoral, and certain others.

(*Defence of Poesy*, "Proposition" p. 27)

Now in his parts, kinds, or species (as you list to term them), it is to be noted that some poesies have coupled together two or three kinds, as the tragical and comical, whereupon is risen the tragicomical. Some in the like manner have mingled prose and verse, as Sannazzaro and Boethius. Some have mingled matters heroical and pastoral."

(*Defence of Poesy*, "Examination" p. 43)

The orthodox Stratfordian critic comes from a position of total denial that the writer of Shakespeare had any knowledge of Greek, or of Greek literature, save through translations. Oxford, the true writer, was sufficiently competent in Greek to attend the Greek Orthodox Services in Venice (in 1575-76) at the Church assigned to the Greek Orthodox Community at San Giorgio dei Greci, where he might follow the fiendishly difficult pronunciation (to an Englishman) of the Greek in use. Because the learning is so lightly worn, the clues can be difficult. In *Titus Andronicus* we have:

The self-same gods that armed the Queen of Troy
With opportunity of sharp revenge
Upon the Thracian tyrant in his tent.

(*Titus*, 1, 2, 136-8)

This refers to the revenge of Hecuba in blinding Polymestor for killing her youngest son. The story is in Ovid, but the words 'in his tent' are not in the Latin of Ovid: they are in the Greek of Euripides' *Hecuba*. In Sophocles' *Ajax* we have:

The Greeks upon advice did bury Ajax
That slew himself; and wise Laertes' son [i.e. Ulysses]
Did graciously plead for his funeral.

(*Ajax*, 1.1.376-378)

In *Ajax*, Ulysses was the chivalrous foe; in *Metamorphoses*, Ulysses was the villain.

In *3 Henry VI*, we find a simile for Warwick's scouts:

That as Ulysses and stout Diomed
 With sleight and manhood stole to Rhesus' tents
 And brought from thence the fatal Thracian steeds . . .

3 *Henry 6*, (4, 2, 19-21)

The story comes from Homer's *Iliad* and also Euripides' *Rhesus*. To collect elements of the story from Latin, Shakespeare would have had to consult widely – unlikely when there is at least one comprehensive source in Greek.

Erasmus' Latin translation of Lucian's *Misanthrope* is cited in John Jowett's edition of *Timon* (2004) as a source for *Timon of Athens*, but the play is devoid of any Latin feel. Likewise the words *academe*, *dialogue*, *Promethean*, *metamorphise*, *Olympian*, *pander*, *ode*, and *mimic* are imported direct from the Greek. Greek names or words are used to name the characters: Laertes, Dromio (from Greek root for *run*), Desdemona (*unlucky woman*), and Ophelia (*benefit*).

The efforts of numerous critics to deny the knowledge of Greek required by the writer – and available to Oxford – are tortuous in the extreme. A writer not fluent in Greek might hit upon a few connections by accident, or by borrowing from other writers, but not the volume of sources required for the works of Shakespeare. Andrew Werth³ can point to an endless list of connections, from which I take:

- *The Greek Anthology* is a source for Sonnets 153 and 154.
- Homer is a source for *Troilus and Cressida*; *Midsummer Night's Dream*; *As You Like It*; *The Comedy of Errors*.
- Aeschylus is a source for *Macbeth*. Note the typically Greek way Duncan's murder is announced.
- Sophocles: *Hamlet*; *Othello*; *Macbeth*.

We may add that the reporting of the naval battle in *Edward III* sounds like a typical Greek report by a messenger.

One of the arguments for Oxford's competence in Greek is his capture of the nuance and irony in Greek tragedy. "[The] conception [of character in *Hamlet*] is Greek, and Shakespeare got nearer to the spirit of Greek tragedy than did Jonson and the schoolmasters" (Thomson 250). Since Jacques Amyot translated Plutarch's Greek into French – perhaps the version purchased by Oxford in 1568 referred to above – and Thomas North translated Amyot's version into English, critics have convinced themselves that the writer "got nearer to the spirit of Greek tragedy" through the two idiosyncratic prisms through which Plutarch's *Lives* had to pass to appear in English.

Two other critics, who do not entertain for one moment that the author could be other than William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, state that his patent intima-

cy with the classics is “a miracle we cannot explain” (Martindale 12, also Nuttall 57). To this state of confusion I hope to add the *Sixse Idillia* of Theocritus.

Idillion 8

The first of the idillia selected by the translator is number 8 *Bucoliastae* (“the singers of a neatherd’s [i.e., a cowherd’s] song”). The form of this part bears a superficial resemblance to the eighth Eclogue titled “August” of *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), an early work of Edmund Spenser, the author of *The Faerie Queen* (1590). In Spenser’s circle of writers and admirers – who included Sidney, Dyer, Greville, and Harvey – was E.K. These initials would seem to cover the critic and poet Gabriel Harvey, who sought to be Spenser’s mentor and to have him adhere more closely to those strict humanist ideas mentioned above – fortunately without too much success.

Harvey was the dedicatee of *The Shepheardes Calender* and probably wrote the critical apparatus, the ‘Epistle’, the ‘Generall Argument’, the headnotes with the specific ‘Arguments’, and the ‘Glosses’ and ‘Emblems’ with which the printed work is decorated using the initials E.K. On the other hand, some Oxfordians feel these denote a cover for Oxford himself, and indeed there is circumstantial evidence putting Oxford in the right place to be E.K. (Hyde). However, an examination of these writings shows them to be antipathetic to Oxford’s own literary views as we know them. In the ‘Epistle’ E.K. praises Spenser’s attempts to reintroduce obsolete words. The obsolete words are the cause whereby

... our Mother tong, which truly of it self is both ful enough for prose and stately [my emphasis] for verse, hath long time ben counted most bare and barrein of both. Which default, which some endevoired to salve and recure, they patched up the holes with peces and rags of other languages, borrowing here of the French, there of the Italian, every where of the Latins; not weighing how if those tongues accorde with themselves, but much worse with ours; so they have made our English tongue a gallimaufrey, or a hodge-podge of al other speches.

The Shepheardes Calender “Epistle”

This is a view utterly in accord with Harvey’s and diametrically opposed to Oxford’s.

In the Epistle there is a reference to “the Noble and worthy Gentleman, the right worship full Ma[ster] Phi[lip] Sidney, a special favourer and maintainer of all kind of learning.” This is hardly a description which would come from Oxford, as he refers to Sidney in September 1579, five months after the date of the Epistle, as a “puppy” in the course of their tennis court quarrel. Harvey and Sidney were the literary godfathers of the strict humanist literary group: their relationship can be seen from their exchanges in Eclogue 10 of the *Shepheardes Calender* discussed towards the end of this

essay. In the absence of any other like-minded godfather type, Harvey looks to be E.K., especially when the writer of the “Epistle” calls him

. . . mine own good maister Harvey, to whom I have in respect of your worthinesse generally, and otherwise upon some particular and special considerations [not specified – intended to reassure the reader that Harvey and E.K. were not the same person], vowed this my labour, and the maidenhead of this our common frends Poetrie

The August Eclogue (No. 8) is a counter-blast to the ‘romantic’ writing of Oxford and his supporters, because it shows Oxford/Willy not just as a poor loser but as hardly a competitor in the competition between himself and Perigot. The case for Spenser dubbing Oxford as ‘Willy’ is not yet generally accepted and is more fully explored in the Broader Conclusions section, with which this essay concludes.

Spenser’s commentator in his Argument introducing the August Eclogue begins:

In this Aeclogue is set forth a delectable controversie made in imitation of that in Theocritus . . . They choose for umpere of their strife, Cuddie, a neatherd’s boye; who having ended their cause, reciteth also himselfe a proper song, wherof Colin, he sayth, was Author.

Colin is Colin Clout, Spenser himself. Cuddie the judge is probably Sidney, the leader of the salon of humanist-inclined literati. Perigot the winner and the loser is Willy/Oxford.

There seems no logical reason (let alone evidence) to suppose that Spenser intended to use the sobriquet ‘Willy’ to refer to different people in 1579 and 1591. The change of tone arises because with the writing of *The Faerie Queene* (and its eventual first publication in 1590) Spenser shook off the influence of Harvey, and Sidney’s death in 1586 removed his influence as well. For large parts of the 1580s Spenser was in Ireland, by location, physically removed somewhat from direct ‘humanist’ influence.

The resemblance between Idillion 8 and Eclogue 8 is superficial, but comparative study provides interesting evidence. At no stage in the Eclogue is Willy given a fair chance and in fact is shown as a (justifiably) poor loser:

Herdgrome [Cuddie,the judge], I fear me, thou have a squint eye
Areede [explain] uprightly who has the victorie.

And perhaps sarcastically:

Never dempt [judged] more right of beautye, I weene
The shepheard of Ida that judged beauties Queene.

In Idillion 8 by contrast, the loser Menelcas, is not like Willy, merely a supplier of counterpoint to Perigot in the Eclogue, but he is given a very fair chance in his contest with the winner Daphnis. Theocritus' judge is an unnamed goatherd, who unlike Cuddie in Spenser's Eclogue 8 who declaims lines he says are Colin's, asks Daphnis to teach him, and Menelcas finishes his part in the poem:

Menelcas greevd, the thing his mind did much dismaie
And sad as a Bride he was, upon the marriage day.

A sad loser but with no cause to be a bad one too. The following Shakespearean words are noted:

“Pawne”

A stake: a security for a bet. (common use). As a noun, *pawn(e)* comes up in *TGV*, *WT*, *KJ*, *R2*, *Wives*, *Lear*, *2H4*. As a verb *pawne* is even more common.

“Smart”

A keen pain. Used metaphorically in *Rape of Lucrece*, line 1238. Used as a noun in *H8*, *Troilus*, and *Cym*. Similar adjectival and verb connotations connoting pain are also found.

While in Eclogue 8 the judge breaks into song, in Idillion 8 he has nothing more to give out after his judgment.

Idillion 9

Cyclops (Idillion 9), the second chosen by the translator, has little to assist my argument. The Cyclops bewails his unrequited love and blames his one-eyed appearance and other facial defects but as the translator's headnote argument says, “there is no medicine [in the poem “medsun”] so souveraigne against love, as is Poetry.” *Souveraigne* is a word meaning ‘supremely medicinal and efficacious’ used metaphorically by Shakespeare twice in *Venus and Adonis* (lines 28 and 916) and in *Sonnet 153* (line 8). *Souveraigne* is also used four times in the plays: in *Tempest* (5.1.145), *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1.2.216), *1 Henry IV* (1.3.57), and in *Coriolanus* (2.1.127). Spenser's January Eclogue is also about unrequited love but is scarcely comparable. Interesting words include:

- “Middest” for *midst*, appears in the Argument at the head of the poem. An archaic use, but found in *2 Henry VI* at (4.7.212)
- “Crowtoe”: appears in Idillion 18. The wild hyacinth or buttercup – not found in the rest of Shakespeare.
- “Strouting bags”: in Idillion 18. Swollen cows' udders – likewise not found.

- “Rattells” used to describe the tops of poppies, but not found used except for rattles (n.) elsewhere

Perhaps the Cyclops’ lines on the pain of his unrequited love in the poem:

For which, this remedie he found, that sitting often times
Upon a rocke and looking on the Sea, he sung these rimes.

struck a chord with Oxford when he wrote an untitled poem (c.1581) which begins:

Sittinge alone upon my thought in melancholye moode,
In sighte of sea, and at my backe an aunceyent horye woode.⁴

Idillion 16

For Idillion 16, *Charites* (possibly, the Graces) or *Hiero* (tyrant of Syracuse 270-215 BCE), the translator provides an Argument which begins:

The stile of this Poeme is *more loftie than anie of the rest*, & Theocritus wrote it to *Hiero King of Siracuse* in Sicily. Wherein he *reproveth the nigardise* of Princes and great men, *towards* the learned, and namelie *Poets*, in whose power it is, to make men famous to *al posterity* . . .

With it we can compare Spenser’s Eclogue for October in *The Shepheardes Calender* which contains an interesting borrowing of thought from Oxford, where Cuddie laments that his poems have been feeding “youths fancie”, but:

They han the pleasure, I a sclender prize;
I beate the bush, the byrds to them doe flye.

Which follows Oxford’s “labouring man” poem published in 1572 seven years earlier:

But hee that beates the bushe the byrde not gets
But who sittes still, and holdeth fast the nets.

The Argument in the headnote to this Eclogue’s first paragraph begins:

This Aeglogue is made in imitation of Theocritus in his 16th idillion, wherein he *reproved the Tyranne Hiero of Siracuse for his nigardise towards Poetes, in whome is the power to make men immortal for theyr good dedes, or shameful for their naughtie lyfe*. . . . *The style hereof*, as also that in Theocritus, *is more loftye then the rest*, and applied to the heights of Poetical witte.

And later in the commentator’s Glosse, which follows each Eclogue:

He [Spenser] sheweth the cause why Poetes were wont to be had in such honor of noble men, that is, by them their worthiness and valor shold through their famous Poesies be commended to *al posterities* . . .

Puttenham, the reputed author of *The Arte of English Poesy* (1589) borrows the same phrasing:

Such personages . . . were Bacchus, Ceres, Hercules, Theseus, and many other, who thereby came to be accounted gods and half-gods and goddesses (heroes) and had their commendations given by hymn accordingly, or by such other poems as their memory was made thereby *made famous to the posterity* forever after . . .” (I, ch. 16)

The remarks in the Glosse seem to bear only a slight relationship to Spenser’s actual poem in contrast to the Idillion translator’s Argument which is an exact *précis* of the Idillion which follows the translator’s headnote Argument. It follows that a translator living with the work which as a poet he labours to turn into poetry will write an Argument directly rather than consult and copy excerpts from the Glosse irrelevant to a poem of a less competent poet (then).⁵ This means that the printer’s date for the printing of the *Sixe Idillia* bears no relation to the actual date the composition was made. If it be correct, this means the *Sixe Idillia* might well have been translated earlier than 1579. We may also consider these rare words in this Idillion:

- “nigardise” : found both in the Argument to this (16th) Idillion and the Spenser Eclogue Glosse (above), but not elsewhere in Shakespeare. “Nigard” however is found in Sonnet 4.
- “chafe” n.: meaning *fret* or *passion* - once used by Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra* (1.3.85)
- “grutch” v. int.: synonym of *grudge*: used only as a present participle in Shakespeare, but in *1 Henry 6* we have: “perish they that grudge one thought against your majesty” (3.1.180)
- “Keep restance”: *reside* – found in contemporary works but not in Shakespeare.

Idillion 18

Perhaps Idillion 18, *Hellens Epithalamion*, named for her wedding to Menelaus – one of history’s less successful nuptials – does not take the matter further, save that some might agree that the following might have autobiographical resonance or some ring of social experience and appeal to the translator accordingly:

[Twelve noble Spartan virgins sing:]
 Fair Bridegrome, do you sleep? Hath slumber al your lims possesst?
 What, are you drousie? Or hath wine your bodie so opprest
 That you are gone to bed? For if you needs would take your rest,
 You should have taen a season meete. Mean time, till it be daie
 Suffer the bride with us, and with her mother deere to plaie....
 For Menelaus, shee at evening, and at morning tide
 From daie to daie, and yeare to yeare shall be thy loving Bride.
 O happie Bridegrome, sure some honest man did sneze to thee
 When thou to Sparta came, to meete with such a one as shee.”
 (lines 9-17)

Shakespeare does not use the word ‘sneze’ in any of its forms or connotations: Sneezing was at the time in Sicily an omen of good luck (Lang 43n). ‘Dight upon their haire in Crowetoe garlands’ means “arranged upon...,” but was already archaic and is not found in the canon.

Idillion 21

Idillion 21, *Netehearde*, is another slight poem, but perhaps the sentiment appealed to the translator, which he summarized in the Argument:

A Neteheard is brought in chafing, that Eunîca a maid of the cittie disdained to kisse him. Wherby it is thought that Theocritus seemeth to checke them, that thinketh this kinde of writing no Poetry, to be too base & rustical. And therefore this Poeme is termed Netehearde.

Perhaps he is using this idea as a shot in his fight with the Sidney-Greville-Harvey humanist group.

- “chafing”: a use from the verb, i.e. complaining
- “I have no will / After the countrie guise to smouch, of Cittie lips I skill” – “I don’t desire to sully but to avail myself of city lips.” ‘Smooch’ and ‘skill’ as a verb in this sense both archaic and not found in the canon
- “slouch”: n. meaning an ungainly person – not found
- “...shee spatterd on her bosome twice or thrice” possibly “she stained her bosom by sputtering saliva in contempt”- neither ‘spattered’ or ‘sputtered’ are found in the canon
- “her mouth she wride” – from ‘wry’ – used in *Cymbeline* (5.1.5) just once.

Idillion 31

Idillion 31, *Adonis*, is the last one chosen for translation. Its headline argument begins: “The conceit of this Idillion is verie delicat” (delicate). Note the use of this *Verie* marker word and its only use in an Argument as opposed the body of the verse.

Here ‘delicat(e)’ – a quite common word – has the nuance ‘ingenious’ as in “a delicate stratagem” (*King Lear* 4.5.180). The poem purports to be a continuation of the Venus and Adonis story, which no doubt appealed to the author of *Venus and Adonis*, whereby Venus sends out a party to capture the boar. The boar pleads for mercy and Venus has pity: “ruth” – used in *Sonnet* 132, *Richard II* (3.4. 107), *Troilus and Cressida* (5.3. 50), and in *Coriolanus* (1.1. 195). This is the boar’s plea at the end of the idillion:

Venus, to thee I swear,
 By thee and husband thine,
 And by these bands of mine,
 And by these hunters all,
 Thy husband faire and tall,
 I minded not to kill,
 But as an image still,
 I beheld him for love.
 His thigh, that naked was,
 Thinking to kiss alas,
 And that hath hurt me thus...

He blames the “needless” (*unnecessary* – a common Shakespeare word) teeth in his snout for the slaying, and is pardoned. *Image* is an uncommon use for a common word in Shakespeare, here meaning as a conception – in imagination. It is found so used in *The Tempest*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Measure For Measure*, *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Twelfth Night* (three times), in *Troilus and Cressida*, and in *Macbeth*.

In addition to the curious use of *verie* instead of *verse* with the long *S* – discussed in my third paragraph at the beginning of this essay – there are six other uses of *verie*, one of which is the headline argument to Idillion 31 (above). The other five are in the text below. **A** is the *Sixte Idillia* version, **B** is Lang’s prose translation. These five uses do not appear in the original Greek.

Idillion 8 [The gift of a she-goat]

- A** “Which to the *verie* brim, the paile doth ever fill”
B “that ever fills the milking pail above the brim”

Idillion 9

(i) [a medicine to combat love-sickness]

A “yes *verie* hard to finde”**B** “but hard to procure”

(ii) [Cyclops’ one-eyed ugliness]

A “But well I knowe, fair Nimphe, the *verie* cause why you thus flie.”**B** “I know, thou gracious maiden, why it is that thou dost shun me.”**Idillion 16**

(i)

A “To all posteritie, the *verie* horses are renoun’d.”**B** “honour too was won by the swift steeds”

(ii)

A “So that of warr, the *verie* name maie not be heard againe.”**B** “may none anymore so much as name the cry of onset [blare of the trumpet, the command to charge].”

My schoolboy Greek enables me to confirm that there are no superlatives nor any other original word which needs to be translated as “verie” in the original Greek.

There is another possible parallel. Spenser dedicated *The Shepheardes Calender* to Harvey, and I have suggested that Harvey is E.K. the commentator who produces the introductory Arguments and the postscript Glosses (see section on the first translated idillion, above).

In 1582 Thomas Watson (1557-92) produced his *Hekatompathia* – ‘The Passionate Century of Love’: verses dedicated in the following fulsome terms to Oxford, who is the probable author of the annotations to it – in the same way that Harvey was, or may have been, the author of the critical apparatus surrounding *The Shepheardes Calender*.

To the Right Honorable my very good Lord Edward de Vere, Earle of Oxenford, Viscount Bulbecke, Lord of Escales, and Badlesmere, and Lord High Chamberlaine of England, all happinesse.

Alexander the Great, passing on a time the workeshop of Apelles, curiouslie surveyed some of his doings: whose long stay in viewing them, brought all the people into so good a liking of the painters workemanship, that immediatelie after, they bought up all his pictures, what price soever he set them at.

And the like good happe (Right Honorable) befel unto mee latelie, concerning these my Loves Passions, which then chaunced to Apelles, for his Portraites. For since the world hath understood (I know not how) that your Honor had willinglie vouchsafed the acceptance of this worke, and at convenient leisures favourable perused it, being as yet in written hand, many have oftentimes and earnestly called upon mee, to put it to the presse, that for their mony they might but see, what your Lordship had some liking had already perused. And therewithal some of them said (either to yield your Honor his due prayse, for soundness of judgment; or to please me, of whom long since they had conceived well) that Alexander would like of no lines, but such as were drawn by the cunning hand, and the curious pensill of Apelles

In the introductory body to *Hekatompathia* Watson included a Latin poem addressed to his book of poems which contains the lines (in translation):

. . . Also if you cross Sidney's desk, or Dyer's, two fields that lie open for the Muses, say that . . . you have been shown to Vere, a man who deserves great things for his virtue and true nobility. Both of these gentlemen will then remove the frown from their brows, read you kindly, both will ignore your blemishes. Then as a servant you will accompany Vere to the golden roofed house of Apollo.

The phrase "remove the frown from their brows" means to cease to be obstructive.

One copy survives with annotations which are "most interesting part of the book" (Lewis 383) because the annotator rolls off quotations from Homer, Xenophon, Horace, Martial, Pliny, Virgil, Ovid, Tibullus, Theocritus, Petrarch, and Ronsard, along with obscure Italian poets Fiorenzuola, Strozza and Parabosco, without apparently breaking into a sweat. By this method of commentary, the annotator follows E.K. (or Harvey?) in *The Shepheardes Calender*, and Oxford is the only likely candidate as the annotator of *Hekatompathia*.

Thomas Watson's poem LIII (53) has this headnote:

Argument: The first two parts of this sonnet, are in imitation of certain Greek verse of Theocritus (Id. 19); which verses as they are translated by many good poets later dayes, so most aptlie and plainly by C. Vreinus Velius in his Epigrammes [the Latin of Velius is then quoted at length]

As Mark Anderson (183) puts it: "if the author of Watson's glosses is not de Vere, an additional Elizabethan literary genius still awaits the light of discovery."

So, in addition to the fulsome dedication to Oxford and the Latin additional poem, Oxford is the dedicatee who also can be identified as the supplier of the explanation

and critical apparatus contained in the headnote annotations to Watson's poems, and also as the translator and commentator of the *Sixe Idillia*.

Broader Conclusions

Oxfordians contend that Edward de Vere (1550-1604) used the pseudonym Willy (Will or William) *Shakespeare* (or *Shake-speare*) as a cover for his literary and other artistic endeavours at various stages of his career. The characters Black *Will* and George *Shakebag* in *Arden of Faversham* (1592) – which may be a re-write of the court comedy *Murderous Michael* (1577) – may be other examples. The Latin pun in Harvey's address to the Queen at Cambridge in 1578, discussed above, could be another. Likewise *Will Monox* – “my Oxford” – referred to by Nashe in his *Strange News* (1592), along with Spenser's references to *Willy*, seem to refer to de Vere. The contention is strengthened by the evidence suggesting that Spenser always used Willy as his name for the Earl of Oxford. I suggest the name was originally chosen as courtly bar-room humour perhaps in recognition of his success with the ladies of the Court.

While establishing Oxford as the translator of the *Sixe Idillia* is a worthwhile goal for scholars, it opens up, with additional armour, the contention that Oxford appears as Willy in both Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* and in *Tears of the Muses* (1591). So far I have tried to establish Oxford as Willy in *Shepheardes Calender* (1579) and the translator and commentator of *Sixe Idillia*, and to argue *Sixe Idillia* is the later work. The contrary suggestions are that Spenser, having used Willy as the cover name for a leading poet in 1579, would naturally wish to reuse that name as a cover for some other poet in *Tears of the Muses* in 1591, or that he would take Willy, used as the cover for a different poet in 1579, and stick the name on Oxford in 1591.

Tears of the Muses contains no reference to Sidney who was killed five years earlier, and is clearly intended as a critique of the state of the arts in 1591 as Spenser found them on his return to London. Other attempts at identifying Willy with other poetic luminaries in either or both works seem less persuasive, logical, or even complete.

A look at the names Spenser did use should clarify the position further:

Colin Clout: There can be little doubt that Spenser meant to identify himself with this name. He appears in Eclogues 1, 6, 11 and 12, and is mentioned in Eclogue 4, where a poem to the Queen is ascribed to him, and in Eclogue 8, which Cuddie concludes by performing Colin's song. Willy declares:

Fayth of my soule, thou [Cuddie] shalt ycrouned be
 In Colins stede, if thou this song arede [declare]
 For never thing on earth so pleaseth me
 As him to hear or matter of his deede.

I think Willy is probably being shown to know there was no possibility of Cuddie replacing Colin with a 'better' song. Spenser makes Oxford declare that Cuddie's recital of it would please him (Oxford) most. In effect Oxford is still in third place behind the other two, to the satisfaction of the Sidney-Harvey literary faction.

Willy: He can only be Oxford. The most obvious indication is that Spenser would be unlikely to use the same name for two different poets, first in 1579 for *The Shepheardes Calender* and then in 1591 when he has his *Complaints* published containing *Tears of the Muses*, regretting the current state of the arts and indicating that Willy is absenting himself – first to the lamentation of Thalia the muse of comedy:

But me have banished, with all the rest
That whilome wont to wait upon my traine,
Fine Counterfesaunce, and unhurtfull Sport,
Delight and Laughter, deckt in seemly sort.

All these, and all that els the Comick Stage
With seasoned wit and goodly pleasance graced,
By which mans life in his likest image
Was limned forth, are wholly now defaced;
And those sweet wits, which wont the like to frame
Are now despizd, and made a laughing game.

And he, the man whom Nature self hath made
To mock her self, and Truth to imitate,
With kindly counter under mimic shade,
Our pleasant Willy, ah! is dead of late
With whom all joy and jolly merriment
Is also deaded, and in dolor drent.

In stead thereof scoffing Scurrilitie
And scornful Follie with contempt is crept,
Rolling in rymes of shameless ribaudrie
Without record or due decorum kept;
Each idle wit presumes to make,
And doth the Learneds taske on him to take

But that same gentle Spirit, from whose pen
Large streams of honey and sweet Nectar flow
Scorning the boldness of such baseborn men
Doth rather choose to sit in idle [i.e., non-productive] Cell
Than so himself to mockery to sell.

Secondly we may add from Terpsichore's Lament: "Blind Error, scornfull Follie, and base spight" now rule:

Nor anie one doth care to call us in,
Or once vouchsafeth us to entertaine,
Unless some one perhaps of gentle kin,
For pitties sake compassion our paine,
And yield us some reliefe in this distresse . . .

Thalia's verses confirm that Oxford is out of circulation – "gentle Willy" (noble Shakespeare) is silent, "scorning . . . baseborn men."

"Willy" is identified by both Dryden and Rowe as Shakespeare. C.S. Lewis (p. 308) identified Willy 'more plausibly' with Richard Wills, Willes, or Willy the learned author of *De Re Poetica* 1573, who died around 1579.

As the next but one stanza reveals, "Willy" is very much alive in his "idle cell." At the time of Oxford's non-productivity from 1588 onwards, he was suffering extreme depression which is clear from the surrounding evidence (Malim 164-172). Some have sought to show that the first and third verses depict Sidney as Willy and Oxford as the anonymous *gentle Spirit* disjunctively but the use of the connecting phrases "In stead thereof" and "But that same gentle Spirit" would appear to confirm their unity of reference to Oxford. One may contrast his social status ("gentle", i.e. noble vouched for by Terpsichore) with "such baseborn men."

Cuddie: I believe this is Sidney. In addition to the passage in Eclogue 8 mentioned above, in Eclogue 10 of *The Shepheardes Calender*, Cuddie is examined by Piers, who might again be Harvey. He complains he is not receiving the credit for his verses in terms that mirror a phrase or two from Oxford's poem beginning: "The labouring man . . ." Piers' comment is:

Oh what an honor is it, to restraine
The lust of lawless youth with good advice
Or prick them forth with pleasaunce of thy vaine
Whereto you list [want] their trained willes entice.

In other words, Harvey – if it be he – wants Sidney to lead them in ways of poetry ("trained") acceptable to Harvey – i.e., the writing of English poetry in strict Latin hexameters or heroic couplets, or at least "with pleasaunce of thy vaine" [i.e., with appreciation of your genius].

Harvey endeavours to persuade him of this in Eclogue 10:

Abandon, then, the base and viler clowne;
Lyft up thyselfe out of the lowly dust,

And sing of bloody Mars, or wars and giusts . . .

But Cuddie points out that Virgil (“Tityrus”) did just that (“Arma virumque cano”), and it did not do him much good. And Sidney was right – he had no major preferments until his knighthood in 1581, notwithstanding his much-praised part in an embassy in 1577 to the crowned heads of Europe. Notably when Harvey addressed Oxford at Audley End in 1578 he wanted Oxford to give up writing altogether (“throw away the insignificant pen...”), but here, in contrast, Piers/Harvey wants Cuddie/Sidney to “sing of bloody Mars” etc.

Towards the end of Eclogue 10, Cuddie as Sidney – a man with no record of appreciation for alcohol – gives out an even more relevant passage:

Thou kenst not, Percie, how the ryme should rage?
 Oh, if my temples were distained with wine, [emphasis added]
 And girt in girlonds of wild Yvie twine,
 How could I rear the Muse on stately stage,
 And teach her tread aloft in buskin fine,
 With queint [quenched, i.e. satisfied] Bellona [war goddess] in her equipage,
 But, ah! My corage cooles ere it be warme. [i.e., I’ll be taking no action]

Spenser is showing Sidney agreeing that he is not the man to reform the stage as Harvey would like: that is, into the Aristoteleian fake straightjacket of the four unities. In effect, he admits the stage under Oxford’s lead and his track record as a history and romantic comedy writer as early as 1579 would not be readily reformable, and contents himself with an attack which can only be aimed at Oxford and his dramatic skills.

Two minor points should be noted which might appear, at first sight, to embarrass my thesis:

1. A 1587 *Elegy on the death of Sir Philip Sidney* by “Anomatos” refers to Sidney as ‘Willy.’ In contrast, Spenser, who was resident in distant Ireland since 1580 when he came to write epitaphs for Sidney, called him Astrophel, or Phillisides, names under which the deceased hero might readily be recognised.
2. We need to note the poem entitled *Elegy made long since upon the death of Sir Philip Sidney* by ‘A.W.’ contained in Volume I of the brothers Davison’s *Poetical Rhapsody* (1601).⁶ This work was dedicated to the Earl of Pembroke, Sidney’s brother-in-law, and this may have been an afterthought, because in editions one and four the deceased is referred to as ‘Willy’ and in editions two and three as ‘Sidney’, which may be regarded as suspicious. However, from internal evidence I suspect the deceased Willy being celebrated is Spenser himself who had died more recently in 1598, because not only is Willy dead but Spenser’s creations Colin Clout and Cuddie are dead or silenced as well, as readily appears from these extracts:

Sing no more the songs of Colin Clout
Lament the source of all annoy
Willy is dead. [i.e., "Sidney is dead" /eds. two and three]

Ah Colin I lament thy case
For thee remains no hope of grace."

. . .
Come now, ye shepherds daughters . . .
Your Willy's life was Cuddie's joy
Your Willy's death has killed the boy.

Our Willy dead, Our Colin killed with care;
Who shall not loath live, and long to die
And will not grief our little Cuddie spare.

The references to Cuddie clearly indicate that the references in *The Shepherds Calender* may not have been in A. W.'s mind. A. W. wrote (also in *Poetical Rhapsody*) *Eclogue entitled Cuddie* and in it he referred to Cuddie as "A little herdgroom."

I am satisfied that I have made out the case that the attribution of 'Willy' has to be to Oxford by Spenser in 1579 and 1591, and that the other references to 'Willy' are not germane.

Notes

1. May pp. 13-14. May also wrote, “While we cannot know to what extent his [Oxford’s] example spurred on those who followed, his precedent did at least confer genuine respectability upon the later efforts of such poets as Sidney, Greville and Raleigh.” The passages I quote from the Arguments and Glosses to *The Shepherdes Calender* above give some evidence that his example was not only precedent in time, but also precisely such a spur.
2. Ward’s own translation.
3. Werth also supplies many of the quotations. A note from his paper in *The Oxfordian* 5 adds “*The Greek Anthology* has a long and fairly complex history. . . .The *Anthology* was popular in Europe from the beginning of the sixteenth century and was published in partial Latin editions in Venice, Florence, Paris, London, Frankfurt, and other major cities. For a detailed study of the history and literature of this fascinating work, see Alan Cameron’s *The Greek Anthology: From Meleager to Planudes*.” (p. 27).
4. I suggest that this reference nails down any further doubt about the poem’s authorship; May (p. 38) sets out the full text but says it is “possibly by Oxford.”
5. Lewis’s basic case is that if Spenser had not written *The Faerie Queene* he would not have received much acclaim as a poet.
6. Quotations from Davison from Brydges 1814 and Bell 1890. I have been referred to Eric Miller’s essay on his website (<http://ericmillerworks.com>) in which he seeks to show with considerable success that AW was in fact Oxford at least in regard to the authorship of a number of the poems in *Poetical Rhapsody*. It is a moot question as to whether this identification can be extended to this poem as well. If it is not Oxford’s, then my interpretation stands, but if it is by Oxford, a still more interesting (but still logical) scenario can be imagined – the poem is Oxford’s memorial to Spenser and bewails the departure of his creations, Colin Clout, Willy and Cuddie. From Oxford’s point of view, there are two secondary advantages; first, he can distance himself from ‘Willy’ if he wants to and secondly, he has a subtle dig at Sidney’s reputation by portraying Sidney as a little boy, or a “little herdgroom”. Perhaps that is why the poem had in the second edition to be stuck on to Sidney after all.

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Shakespeare: A Missing Author

by J. Thomas Looney

with an Introduction by James A. Warren

Shakespeare: A Missing Author, was the last of the eighteen articles and letters that John Thomas Looney wrote for publication in support of Edward de Vere's authorship of Shakespeare's works. It was published in two parts, in February and April 1941, in consecutive issues of the *Shakespeare Fellowship Newsletter*, a publication of the American branch of the Shakespeare Fellowship.¹ It was, therefore, the only one of those eighteen articles or letters to be published originally in the United States, and the only one to appear in an Oxfordian publication; the previous seventeen had all been published in England in the mainstream media.

At the time Looney wrote the article, England was caught in the grip of World War II. The Blitz – the German effort to subdue England through heavy bombing raids concentrated on industrial targets and civilian centers through the British Isles – was at its peak. When the war began in 1939, Looney, age 69, “left the dangerous vicinity of Newcastle, and went to live with his married daughter, Mrs. Bodell, at Swadincote, in Staffordshire, near Burton-on-Trent.”² It was there he wrote his final article three years before his death. His only known later writing was one letter to Charles Wisner Barrell, the editor of the publication in which “Shakespeare: A Missing Author” appeared, which makes this not only his last article, but almost his final written thoughts on the subject of Edward de Vere's authorship of Shakespeare's works.

That being the case, it is startling to realize that nowhere in this 7,300-word article does the name Edward de Vere appear. Instead, Looney's objective is to prove that William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon could not have written the poems and plays attributed to him. He pursues two lines of investigation. The first shows the absence of any personal or emotional connections between the purported author from Stratford and the literary works. Looney goes right to the heart of the matter early in the article: “Plays and the personality of their authors are . . . complementary: their lives and characters form the natural key to the literature: the literature throws light into the obscure corners of the lives.” Then comes the most important point: “The importance of the personality of a writer is . . . in direct proportion to the recognized importance of his work.” In other words, the greater the work, the stronger the connection we should expect to find between it and the life and mind of its author. But such connections are just what Looney shows us are most missing

if the man from Stratford was the author.

Looney then points out that no one rising from humble beginnings to a prominent place in a hierarchical society could have done so without leaving a considerable trail of accomplishments and connections along the way. London was a pretty small place in those days; its population of 100,000 in the 1580s was still only 300,000 at the end of Elizabeth's reign. The higher levels of the nobility – the population that really mattered – was far smaller. Richard Malim has documented just how small the nobility was. By his count, it consisted of one old Marquess, 18 earls, two viscounts, and 37 barons, of whom three were women and one was a child.³

In such a small social world, Shakspeare's rise would have been noted and commented on. He would have been gossiped about in the manner portrayed by Shakespeare near the end of *King Lear*. In Act 5, Scene 3, Lear tells Cordelia that during their long days in prison they will “hear poor rogues / Talk of court news; . . . / Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out . . .”

Looney returns several times to the point of the impossibility of Shakspeare, if he was the author, having remained invisible.

If, moreover, one with such commonplace beginnings as are shown by the early Stratford records, had, merely by his acting and playwriting, won for himself access to the foremost company of actors. . . and used the position so rapidly gained to place himself immediately into intimate relationship with the people round the throne . . . he could not easily have been hidden. However rapid the ascent it could only have been accomplished by stages and through the active interest of suitable intermediaries.

[This] supposed achievement, under any circumstances, is highly improbable; without record of stages and means, it may be confidently regarded as impossible. . . . Not a single document has shown any aristocrat at all interested in the person of William Shakspeare. None wrote to him, received a letter from him, or so much as mentioned him in private correspondence. It is blank negation everywhere.

This is, Looney concludes, “extraordinary from every point of view.”

One point in Looney's article needs clarification. The “elaborate developments of

James A. Warren was a Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Department of State for more than 20 years, serving in public diplomacy positions at U.S. embassies in eight countries, mostly in Asia. He is the editor of *An Index to Oxfordian Publications* and the author of *Summer Storm*, a novel about the complications that arise when a university literature professor is bitten by the Oxfordian bug and begins to promote Edward de Vere's authorship among his colleagues. James is a Trustee of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship.

Stratford-on-Avon” that he refers to in the third paragraph are the efforts to create in Stratford a Potemkin village to fool tourists out of their pounds and dollars and yen. Those developments are, Looney says, “a sufficient answer to the contention that the person of the writer matters nothing.” The person of the writer matters a great deal to most people, which is why so many are willing to travel long distances at great expense to see where, they think, the great dramatist lived, and why they are so susceptible to being deceived.

The effort to mislead visitors by presenting them with buildings, lands, and gardens purported to have belonged to William Shakspeare or his family also defeats itself in a second way. The ordinariness of those external props exposes the disconnect between them and “works so rich in thought and knowledge, and so varied in passion” that they “could only [have] come from an intense and many-sided genius.” The props in Stratford would be important if they helped visitors understand how the dramatist came to write his works. Instead they do the opposite. As Looney shows, their very ordinariness exposes the hollowness of the claim of a connection between them and the mind that created the great works.

[Note: The following reprint has been edited for consistency and to correct a few errors in the source documents.]

Notes to Introduction

- 1 *The Shakespeare Fellowship Newsletter* (American) was published by the American branch of The Shakespeare Fellowship and edited by Charles Wisner Barrell. Looney’s article appeared in Vol. 2/2, pp. 13-17 and Vol. 2/3, pp. 26-30. A long condensed passage drawn from the first half of the article was reprinted in *The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Spring 1977 (Vol. 13/1, pp. 1-6), edited by Gordon C. Cyr. That passage was reprinted again in *Building the Case*, Vol. 6, pp. 112-118, of the ten anthologies of Oxfordian materials collected by Paul Altrocchi (volumes 1-5 were co-edited with Hank Whittemore). A different excerpt was reprinted in *The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* in Summer 1988 (Vol. 24/4, pp. 1-7). Much of the second half of the article was reprinted in *Building the Case*, Vol. 2, pp. 144-55.
- 2 Percy Allen, “Obituary: J. Thomas Looney,” *Shakespeare Fellowship Newsletter* (English), May 1944, pp. 2-4.
3. Richard Malim, “Southwell and Oxford,” *De Vere Society Newsletter*, January 2017. p. 20.

Shakespeare: A Missing Author

by J. Thomas Looney

Although mankind certainly has to face in these days graver and more pressing problems than that of the authorship of the Shakespeare plays, this question has a claim, if only a secondary one amongst the serious interests of life, and deals with matters that are destined to endure when the special problems of to-day¹ will have passed out of mind. Centuries hence, when the entire world will have changed, socially, politically and religiously, the works will be read with wonder, and the personality behind them will command the admiration and even the affections of readers.

Truly great dramatic literature can only come from the pens of writers who are accustomed to look closely into their own souls and make free use of their secret experiences; it may be doubted whether a single line of living literature ever came from pure imagination or mere dramatic pose.

Plays and the personality of their author are therefore complementary: their lives and characters form the natural key to the literature. The literature throws light into the obscure corners of the lives. The importance of the personality of a writer is therefore in direct proportion to the recognized importance of his work.

As, then, the Shakespeare plays hold first place in the world's dramatic literature, an acquaintance with the personality behind them – a prime factor in its right understanding – must be a matter of some concern to those who regard these great creations of the human spirit seriously. Works so rich in thought and knowledge, and so varied in passion, could only come from an intense and many-sided genius; all the elaborate developments of Stratford-on-Avon are a sufficient answer to the contention that the person of the writer matters nothing.

In further justification for inviting attention to this problem, we would urge the duty which the present generation owes to the great men of the past. What has certainly sustained many of these in their labours, through frequent obloquy and neglect, has been their confidence that posterity would eventually do them justice. If, then, the Shakespeare plays were not written by the man who has hitherto borne the honour, some other Englishman, one of the greatest of the sons of humanity, still awaits his rightful place in history. To make good such a defect is no unworthy aim, and no higher justification need be urged for grappling boldly with a problem that has vexed the literary world for nearly a century.

The consciousness that there was a distinctive personal element running through the dramas, one quite out of harmony with the records and traditions of William Shakspeare of Stratford, was one of the principal results of the discriminating admiration with which, in the nineteenth century, the works came to be studied. With penetrating sagacity Emerson remarked "I cannot marry (him) to his verse." To wrestle with baffling problems has, however, always been the lot of the Shakespeareans: in itself clear evidence that there was something wrong somewhere.

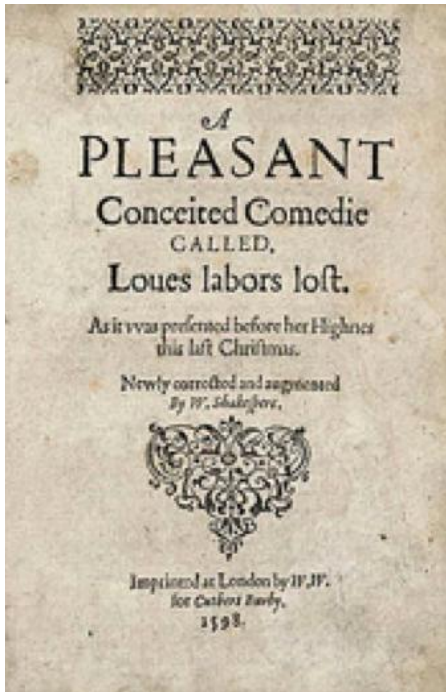
However decisive such a sense of discord may be to the person who feels it instinctively, it does not supply the kind of material that can be easily pressed into service as evidence in an argument. On the other hand, experience has proved that scholars, equally equipped, can wrangle endlessly respecting the classical knowledge shown in the plays, whilst lawyers and pseudo-lawyers argue inconclusively respecting their legal contents. Something more palpable and measurable is needed to settle the issues raised by these psychological, classical and legal difficulties – and it is to evidence of this concrete practical nature, such as can be weighed without special scholastic preparation, that I shall try to confine myself.

At the outset I shall state definitely, in the form of a proposition, what it is the special object of this essay to prove, namely: that the William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, who died in that town in 1616, cannot have written the poems and plays attributed to him, but was used as a cover for some great poet-dramatist who did not wish his own name to appear on the published works – and that, therefore, the author of the plays is missing.

It is generally known that there are many converging lines of evidence pointing in this direction. To rest a case, however, on the cumulative effect of separate and varied lines of proof demands a weighing of complex probabilities, and becomes, to some extent, a matter for the experts. We shall, therefore, not attempt such a task of general survey and coordination, but shall confine ourselves within very restricted limits, and shall find, I believe, a case as cogent as it is simple.

We shall, moreover, discard altogether that vast mass of Shakespeare lore which passes as authenticated fact, but which is in reality mere inference based upon the assumption that William Shakspeare of Stratford wrote the plays. We shall narrow the argument down to the bedrock of facts, taking as a general basis the aristocratic connections of the original publications.

The name Shakespeare made its first appearance in English literature as that, not of a dramatist, but of a poet, when *Venus and Adonis* was published in the year 1593. The title page gave no author's name – in itself a significant beginning – but the dedication to Henry Wriothesley, the 3rd Earl of Southampton, was signed: "William Shakespeare." The terms of this prefatory letter prove the poet to have been already on an intimate footing with the nobleman and both the dedication and the



text of the poem reveal a natural mastery of the cultured speech peculiar to the highest social circles. This, of course, clearly establishes the writer's free association with the aristocracy some years prior to 1593.

Not until 1598 did the name Shakespeare become known as that of a dramatist, when it was attached to an edition of *Love's Labor's Lost*. Here, again, aristocratic connections are stressed. The work was published "as it was presented before her Highness . . ." and the drama itself is exclusively one of court life, full of interior portraiture and having as its basis the distinctive manners, etiquette and intercourse of people in familiar touch with royalty.

After this came a succession of plays with the same general stamp.

2 Henry IV: "As it hath been sundrie times acted by the right honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his servants." (That is, the Queen's special company of players.)

The Merchant of Venice: "As it hath been divers times acted by the Lord Chamberlaine his servants."

Hamlet: "As it hath been divers times acted by his Highnesse servants" (King James' players).

King Lear: "As it was played before the Kings Maiestie."

And so [it is] with other published plays from 1598 to 1609.

The year 1609 saw the publication of the Shakespeare *Sonnets* and, whatever perplexing problems respecting this work may have divided scholars, upon one point all are agreed – namely, that many of the poems are addressed to a young nobleman, with whom the poet is here seen on terms of close intimacy and strong personal affection.

In the same year an unauthorized edition of *Troilus and Cressida* appeared, with a bold assertion that the "grand possessors" of the manuscript had been defied in the publication of the work. Who these "grand possessors" may have been we cannot tell. The terms, however, clearly point to aristocrats.

In 1623 the authentic publication of the Shakespeare plays culminated and closed

with the issue of the famous *First Folio*. This work is dedicated to the two brothers William and Philip Herbert, the Earls respectively of Pembroke and Montgomery, who are there stated to have followed “the author living with much favour.” In the introductory poem contributed by Ben Jonson special emphasis is laid upon the personal interest both of Queen Elizabeth and King James I.

From first to last, links of a perfectly unique kind connect these plays and the person of their author with royalty and the aristocracy and so surely are such intimacies implied, that it is usual to speak of them as established facts. Sir Sidney Lee, for example, refers quite confidently to the “personal interest, which he had excited among the satellites of royalty,” and adds: “Queen Elizabeth quickly showed him special favour.” For no less than thirty years (1593-1623) the published works therefore declare him to have been acquainted with or honourably remembered by the greatest people in the land and, if we take into account the necessary antecedents of the 1593 debut, the period of aristocratic connection must be considerably extended beyond the thirty years.

We must now see how these facts bear up on the person hitherto credited with the authorship.

When *Venus and Adonis* was published, William Shakspeare of Stratford was a young man of twenty-nine. To have worked himself by that age into such a society, and to have acquired the literary and social culture shown by the poem and its dedication – much of which could not have been learned from books – to have produced so lengthy and elaborately finished a poem and carried through its publication, he must have had his feet firmly planted on the social ladder in his early twenties, at the latest. Since he lived to the age of fifty-two, and the chief business of his life would be to produce this literature and meet the social obligation which it would entail, we may say that the whole of that effective part of a man’s lifetime which fixes permanently his place amongst his fellows would be passed in the open light of royal and aristocratic favor.

If, moreover, one with such commonplace beginnings as are shown by the early Stratford records, had, merely by his acting and playwriting, won for himself access to the foremost company of actors, without a trace of youthful apprenticeship or experience in an inferior troupe, and used the position so rapidly gained to place himself immediately into intimate relationship with the people round the throne, he must have possessed not only extraordinary intellectual powers but wonderful initiative, enterprise, ambition, personal address, and social tact. His aims must have been settled early, and his efforts to realize them direct and resolute. This was not the kind of man to allow himself to be pushed into the background and, following a public vocation, he could not easily have been hidden. However rapid the ascent it could only have been accomplished by stages and through the active interest of suitable intermediaries.

The question before us then, is whether these published pretensions and necessary implications of his connection with the literature can be subjected to an effective test.

A hundred years ago it is probable that no conclusive test was possible. Nineteenth century historical research² has, however, completely changed the outlook in respect to this, as to so many other hoary misconceptions. Painstaking workers, officials and unofficial students, have toiled in regions of dust and mould, to pierce mists of imaginative traditions, and to come face-to-face with the realities of the past in its contemporary documents and formal records. The contents of long neglected archives, in obsolete writing undecipherable to the ordinary reader, have been microscopically examined, summarized, indexed, and placed within reach of the more general student and this material has furnished tests that have given the *coup de grace* to more than one cherished illusion.

Naturally the public archives chiefly disclose public events, with an emphasis upon the doings of the governing classes, national and local. Private collections, being mainly the property of old families, throw light also upon their *private* affairs and interests.

The Shakespeare question, on the side from which we are now viewing it, is therefore one which is especially open to the test of historical research, and no workers have been more thorough in their investigations, or more unsparing to themselves, than those who, during many years, have hunted for particulars relating to William Shakspeare of Stratford. Additional details may yet come to light, but sufficient has already been made out to pronounce quite definitely upon the general result of all this research work.

The first fact which stands out boldly is the complete absence of even the slightest relevant link between William Shakspeare's sordid beginnings at Stratford, traceable right up to the time when he was a married man with three children, and the exalted social and cultural intimacies of his early twenties implied in the publication of the first Shakespeare poems. In those days even scholars from the universities could, as writers, only penetrate the outer fringe of that uppermost circle by means of aristocratic patronage, graciously bestowed, and paid for by public literary compliments. Shakespeare reaches its centre without academic send-off and by a single stride, without leaving traces of an upward struggle or of assistance from any aristocrat or other likely helper. The supposed achievement, under any circumstances, is highly improbable; without record of stages and means, it may be confidently regarded as impossible.

What is true of his reaching these heights is even more emphatically true of his keeping them. The records for all the years which lie between *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and the latest date ever suggested for his final retirement to Stratford (1612)

– the most eventful years in the history of the English drama – have been ruthlessly searched in one supreme quest: to find out more about William Shakspeare. With what result?

We now know that he sold some malt to one Philip Rogers, lent his customer two shillings, and afterwards prosecuted him for repayment. When he died he left only his “second best bed,” merely as an afterthought interlined in his will to the woman whom he married under unsavory compulsion – and, through years of affluence, he neglected to pay a shepherd a debt of £2 incurred by his wife in days of poverty – the creditor having so lost hope of ever seeing his money again that, with grim humour, he bequeathed it to the poor, while nothing remains to show whether it reached the intended beneficiaries.

These, and other irrelevancies relating to houses, lands, tithes, and false claims respecting his coat-of-arms, have, with infinite pains, been dug up, to teach the humblest of us how unfortunate it may prove to excite the curiosity of posterity. But in no single instance during the many years of his supposed fame do we find in his private records traces of a personal friendship with an aristocrat.

This is extraordinary from every point of view, for even in the capacity as a mask for another man, marks of such contacts might be looked for, since the person engaged for one purpose might very well have been employed on other business. This is not an unlikely explanation of the fact that after the time of his final retirement to Stratford the Earl of Rutland’s secretary coupled the name of “Shakespeare” with that of Burbage in respect to a quite irrelevant cash payment. Even this reference has been disputed by its discoverer;³ but not even a trifle like this has, directly or indirectly, connected him with an aristocrat during all the years of his reputed immersion in literature and high class friendships. If ever he lived in touch with such people the meetings must have been jealously guarded and their traces carefully covered.

During these years he was evidently kept generally out of sight, in as yet undiscovered quarters. Brief glimpses of semi-clandestine lodgment is all that we can catch of him in London; for there, even the tax gatherers, who wanted him, went wrong by a matter of years as to where he could be found – the very years during which, on orthodox assumptions, he was living in a blaze of royal favor. On the other hand, Thomas Greene, a lawyer, resided in his Stratford house, and along with Shakspeare’s brother Gilbert, seems to have attended to any important business there – so that no one, either in Stratford or elsewhere, ever received a note from his hand, and no business of his in town has left a specimen of his signature. Even his Stratford domiciliation, so much more traceable than anything found in London, is not without its strangely elusive phases.

As might have been foreseen, the lesson of the special researches directed towards him personally has been amply borne out by more recent enquiries directed from the

other side – that is, into the lives and correspondence of the aristocrats themselves, particularly those who, by name, were implicated in Shakespeare publications. Up to the present none of these labours has yielded the slightest fruit. Not a single document has shown any aristocrat at all interested in the person of William Shakspeare. None wrote to him, received a letter from him, or so much as mentioned him in private correspondence. It is blank negation everywhere.

The distinctive way in which “Shakespeare” has selected the Third Earl of Southampton for immortality, in connection with his great poems – and also, it is believed, in the *Sonnets* – has naturally focused attention upon that nobleman, and what is probably an exhaustive investigation has been made into his life and correspondence. In Mrs. Stopes’ biography of him the materials collected fill two very substantial volumes; but, at the close of a long task, conscientiously carried out, the biographer has to admit failure so far as her main object was concerned. She has not discovered those traces of Shakspeare that she hoped to find: which she undoubtedly would have found had Shakspeare been the writer of all the “Shakespeare” poetry dedicated and addressed to Southampton.

A similar unrelieved failure has attended such enquiries as have been made into the affairs of the brother Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, whose interest was proclaimed in the *First Folio*. Indications of a warm practical interest in other men of letters, like Ben Jonson, exist, but not a trace of lifetime contact with Shakspeare has been found.

It cannot, of course, be claimed that all possible sources of information have now been exhausted, but the presumption against anything turning up to show us William Shakspeare in the presence of an aristocrat amounts to a practical certainty. A prolonged intimacy is, however, quite out of the question. One delusion that modern research has positively shattered for all time is that he enjoyed frequent and easy access to the nobility and the undisguised favour of royalty, whilst living, as a popular journalist has claimed, “as well known in London as the Globe Theatre.” Such a life and such publicity are however the necessary implications of the literature.

We have therefore an irreconcilable conflict between the authorship pretensions and the findings of modern research: a proof that this man was the personal centre of a cunning scheme for deceiving people respecting the source of these great works. We speak of deception, of course, without implication of censure, for one way of concealing authorship seems as legitimate as another. The method in this case has proved more effective than an avowed anonymity would have been – and, if the writer had decided definitely upon his own self-effacement, it is certainly preferable that the works should have been preserved in this way than lost to mankind forever. As, however, Shakspeare was not the author, he must have been used as a cover for someone else and until that man is discovered and acknowledged, the works are anonymous and the writer of them is still missing.

* * * * *

In fixing the Shakespeare plays onto one who was not the author, steps would naturally be taken to give such semblance of genuineness as was possible to the deception, and to furnish the pretender with appropriate credentials: something that might seem to account for his producing work so distinctive in character. The danger of false credentials, however, always lies in the impossibility of making them complete. Gaps are inevitable, and when these become exposed, conviction of fraud is overwhelming.

The credentials presented in the case of Shaksper of Stratford were: (1) a leading place in the principal company of actors, called, in Elizabeth's reign, the Lord Chamberlain's players, and, in the succession of James, the King's company, and (2) the personal testimony of Ben Jonson, the most commanding figure in drama during the late Shakespearean period.

(1)

At the time of the change of dynasty [1603] advantage was taken of the rearrangement to insert the name "Shakespeare" at the head of two copies, slightly varied in the order of names, of a list of nine players submitted for official approval, one for their licenses, the other for a coronation gift of cloth – the licenses were not, however, to become immediately operative. This, although the first *bona fide* appearance of the name in such a connection, occurs at about the time when, according to Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke, and other recognized authorities, Shakspere was on the point of retiring to Stratford.⁴

Twelve years later, Ben Jonson, in publishing a folio edition of his own plays, again placed the name prominently in two lists of members of the same company who had performed in these plays many years before. These two lists were published in the actual year of Shakspere's death, 1616.

Finally, in 1623, in the "Shakespeare" *First Folio* the name takes precedence over the other "principall actors in all these Playes."

In all these cases the name is given in the foremost positions, in specially drawn up lists of the company – never standing alone. The published lists are in two identical situations: the Jonson and Shakespeare folios respectively. They were not published until many years after the performances, and they refer to actors of bygone days, some of whom were already dead. This manner of dramatic commemoration is moreover altogether exceptional: probably unparalleled in published plays, suggesting that the sole object was to place on record the name Shakespeare as a leading actor. Here the name stands associated with famous names like Burbage and Kemp, in keeping with the extraordinary fact that nothing Shakespearean, either in the matter

of printed plays or of play-acting, was ever put forward contemporarily associated with any other but the royal players, a glory enjoyed by no other man.

If, therefore, these references are to William Shakspeare of Stratford, a very deliberate attempt was made to pass him down to posterity as one of the most eminent players of the age.

Again the question of an effective test arises. As actors were not then the class of people about whom biographies were written, the likelihood that, centuries later, tests would or could be applied to the claim, would hardly occur to anyone. Modern research into formal play-acting records and scattered references in literature, diaries and letters, has, however, revealed rich mines of information, the piecing together of which has given interesting scope to ingenuity and imagination. Consequently, figures like Burbage and Kemp – the two names with which Shakespeare's is constantly associated – have emerged as living personalities in dramatic history.

On the other hand, it is safe to say that Shakspeare, as a known actor on the Elizabethan stage, has no existence whatever. Some kind of obscure connection with the theater business was probably arranged for him, his personality being kept severely out of evidence, but Shakspeare as a popular figure on the boards, has been relegated beyond recall to the domain of pure fiction.

The municipal archives of no less than seventy towns and cities have been carefully inspected, and although much interesting information respecting the company and its members has been brought to light, never once has the name of Shakespeare been discovered.

The Lord Chamberlain's books, which would certainly have preserved some exact information respecting the company's court performances, have, mysteriously but significantly, been destroyed for just those years that cover the Shakespeare period – the most vital in its history.

The Treasurer of the Chamber's accounts, which record money payments made to the actors, are silent respecting him for the whole of the time during which plays purporting to come from his pen were being published.

Most striking of all, however, is the single occasion upon which his name appears in the earlier accounts. Three years before "Shakespeare" appears in print as a dramatist⁵ (15 March 1595) – about the time therefore when that name was becoming known as that of an exceptionally clever poet – he is recorded to have received, along with the actors Burbage and Kemp, payment for performances by the company, "before her majestie in Christmas tyme last past" (Christmas 1594).

In so prominent and auspicious a way he enters upon the Elizabethan stage, taking at once a position such as his two talented co-payees had required years to reach. This

entry has, however, other unusual and suspicious features:

- (a) It is inserted⁶ in a strange break in the accounts of no less than eight years; all other particulars being lost, presumably destroyed.
- (b) It was not made at the date recorded (March 1595) nor by the official then in charge, but at some time after his death, which took place in the following October, and by his widow, the Dowager Countess of Southampton, the mother of the young man to whom the Shakespeare poems had been dedicated.
- (c) It introduces a new series of items, which show that *when the company required payment for specified performances* the normal business course of having one regular payee was followed. During the entire Shakespeare period their responsible agent was John Heminges, who occasionally associated with himself, probably as a kind of surety, a second actor, but never one of these three; this is the only occasion upon which the unlikely course was adopted of having three payees named, whilst none of them afterwards appeared in this identical connection.

From every conceivable point of view this particular entry is exceptional and irregular. As evidence in support of William Shakspeare's play-acting claims it possesses about the maximum of disqualifications, and in a lawsuit would be ruled out immediately. The antedating of testimony, a perilous expedient at any time, is quite fatal when written up by an interested party after the decease of the responsible agent. In this case, however, it does serve to drive home the fact that, while William Shakspeare was most certainly not an eminent Elizabethan actor, a great deal of ingenuity and foresight was exercised to palm him off as one upon future generations. In charity we may suppose that an abortive attempt may at one time have been made to turn him out a real actor. But why the great fiction of his success?

Jonson had tried this vocation, but when he became a leading playwright he did not include his own name in lists of actors and certainly Shakespeare's literary reputation had nothing to gain from these exaggerated claims. Beneath it all evidently lay some deeper purpose: to furnish doubtless a basis for the larger but more vulnerable play-writing pretensions. By a natural recoil, however, the quashing of the unreal credentials, betraying deliberate imposture, involves the whole case in a collapse, complete and irreparable.

(2)

It remains, then, to consider the other credential, the witness of Ben Jonson.

To understand Jonson's part in the business, the leading facts of his career must first be grasped. His permanent connection with the Lord Chamberlain's company was established by the performance of his play, *Every Man in His Humour*, in the year 1598 – the identical year of the first issue of plays attributed to “Shakespeare,”

performed by the same actors – and his association with the company remained unbroken at the time of Shakspere’s death in 1616.

During the greater part of these eighteen years, that is, until Shakspere’s final withdrawal to Stratford, so uncertainly dated, the two men would be, on orthodox assumptions, in frequent cooperation; for Shakspere is never, in the plays or records, attached to any other troupe. On the other hand, if anything in the nature of an authorship imposture was being arranged, Jonson would have to be taken into confidence and his cooperation or connivance secured. There were, therefore, only two alternative lines upon which Jonson could have been working: either honest dramatic cooperation with Shakspere, or cooperation with others in a scheme for concealing the true author of the Shakespeare plays – and the question of which of these he was actually doing must be decided on the evidence of the facts.

Two features of Jonson’s personality must first be borne in mind. The first is the strongly aggressive and egoistic temperament shown throughout life. Not only did this keep him constantly in the public eye but forced into view those who had dealings with him whether as friends or foes. To know Jonson was therefore to be known in Jonson’s world. The second was his special fondness and aptitude for writing complimentary verses to the people about him, and obituary notices of them when they died. As one biographer remarks: “There are no epitaphs like Jonson’s.”⁷

The biography of Jonson during these eventful eighteen years is, consequently, a very real and living thing. We follow his movements, we see the people with whom he associated, we share his griefs, we listen to his quarrels, and the one to whom we are most indebted for information is Jonson himself. As another biographer puts it: we are “not driven with the Shakespeareans to conjectural reconstruction from the shards of records and anecdote. Even his personality stands forth fresh and convincing beside the blurred portrait of . . . Shakespeare . . .”

We venture to say that we have here presented one of the most glaring paradoxes in literary history. Jonson himself “stands forth fresh and convincing” on a living background of literary personalities called forth by his own forceful presence; on the other hand, the one with whom he is presumed to have been on intimate terms and in most prolonged and active intercourse never appears by his side or even in the surrounding crowd. Though liberal in the use of his pen and voluble in speech, no single recorded word of Jonson’s so much as recognized the existence of his great colleague whilst they were presumably working together; and at no time did letters pass between them.

Most extraordinary of all is Ben’s concurrence in the universal silence with which the entire literary public passed over Shakspere’s death in 1616. It was in this year that Jonson brought out that folio edition of his own plays in which the name Shakespeare is inserted in the actors’ lists. Yet, not a word of Jonson’s suggested that the

great actor-playwright and poet had just passed away: no epitaph, elegy, or complimentary verse came from the most profuse expert of the times in such matters. The whole world was allowed to remain ignorant of Shakspeare's death, and a full seven years passed before the silence was broken by the first literary tributes. These were in the Shakespeare *Folio* of 1623.

Between the publication of the Jonson and Shakespeare folios, however, another event, with a vital bearing upon these matters, took place.

In 1619 Jonson stayed for some time with the Scottish poet and scholar, William Drummond of Hawthornden. During the visit he talked much of himself and of leading personalities in literary and public life. By a strange chance his host was moved to keep a full account of the great man's talk, and thus the substance of it has been preserved, probably for all time. Most importantly of all, Ben gave a lengthy and detailed account of his own career, laying bare with extraordinary freedom even the darker patches of his private life, and introducing personal reminiscences of men like Francis Bacon, Inigo Jones, Sir Walter Raleigh, [John] Marston and [William] Camden.⁸ Never once, however, in giving these autobiographical confidences did he so much as refer to Shakespeare the dramatist or Shakspeare of Stratford: making no allusion therefore to the death three years before.

"Shakespeare" literature had already been before the world for twenty-six years (1593-1619) and with a man of Drummond's literary tastes some discussion of it was inevitable, particularly as the rest of their talk turned mainly upon books and authors. Even here Jonson seems to have been curt if not deliberately evasive. "Shakespeare wanted art" was his first observation and Shakespeare (in *The Winter's Tale*) has a shipwreck in Bohemia "where there is no sea nearby 100 miles." These two summary and not too friendly criticisms of the work were all that was elicited in a confidential chat. Of other writers Jonson narrated incidents and current gossip, and furnished a picture, coloured vividly by self-importance, of the literary life of his day.

The outstanding fact in these conversations, however, is that he told a circumstantial story of his own career without introducing any kind of reference to Shakespeare, living or dead.

We now come to the point at which Jonson enters as chief witness for William Shakspeare. During all the years that the latter had resided at Stratford, and the seven years that had elapsed since his death, he had never been associated there with playwriting. Judged by its variant spellings, his name seems to have been pronounced locally: Shaxper or Shagsper, while the name William Shakespeare was itself not so uncommon then as it now is. The first indications of a Stratford connection were given publicly in the *First Folio* of 1623, and the slight references there made were not calculated to arouse much local interest. That had to wait for another half century.

Our immediate concern, however, is with Jonson as chief usher to the *Folio*. We shall not discuss the possible *doubles ententes* with which, in this capacity, he may have chosen his words, but shall accept what he says at full face value as a tribute intended for the reputed author. His exact words are: “To the memory of my beloved the Author.”

Certainly no more unqualified profession of affectionate regard can be found in all that poetry of friendship wherein his best work lies, yet the verses which follow his address are noticeably artificial and quite lacking in true personal ring. Indeed, he forgets to even simulate the regret and glow of emotion announced at the start. All the inspiration which personal attachments gave to his pen at other times, and does so much to redeem his writings from commonplace, deserts him at this critical moment. Albeit, we accept his first avowal as it stands, and add to it a later statement that he “loved the man and do honor his memory” – a simple paraphrase of the earlier phrase. Sincere or otherwise, the obvious intention was to proclaim an ardent friendship by way of personal testimony to the announced author.

The words quoted, with all that they imply of bygone comradeship, must first be contrasted with the very striking fact that, four years before this, he related to Drummond at considerable length, the story of his own literary career without so much as mentioning Shakespeare (or Shakspeare). Read, moreover, as genuine tributes to Shakspeare of Stratford, it is certain that, both men being such eminent writers, the retirement to Stratford would involve no real breach, and Jonson could not remain for any length of time in ignorance of his “beloved’s” death.

Is it in any way possible, then, to reconcile so warm and lasting a friendship with the previous twenty-five years’ silence (1598-1623) of so self-assertive a talker and writer as Jonson – with the obituary neglect of so remarkable a poet of epitaph and personal epigram – or with the complete absence of letters from so ready and graceful an epistolist?

Faced with the two alternatives of whether Jonson actually cooperated for many years with Shakspeare in the activities of the royal companies of actors, or, at a later time, cooperated with others in carrying out a scheme of concealed authorship, there can be no doubt, on a review of the facts, as to where the choice must lie. Quite obviously it was all a made-up business and Jonson did what was expected of him.

Behind him, as is well known, there were always powerful social influences that he was compelled to respect. His dramatic compositions, as he admits, had brought him little profit. He had been supported for years by Lord Albany. He had received generous gifts from the Earl of Pembroke and his recent appointment as poet-laureate had brought him welcome material relief. Unflinchingly truculent with literary antagonists, he was ever complacent if not servile towards those who were socially eminent or politically powerful. The capacity for setting his sails to prevailing winds

was a valuable asset to a man forced to live by his wits, and made him as fit a tool as could have been found for those entrusted with completing the scheme of Shakespeare publication begun thirty years before by the poet himself.

We need not concern ourselves with Jonson's later references to "Shakespeare." The questions of how much of these applied merely to the writings, how much was intended for Shakspeare, and how much for some unknown writer, may fittingly be left to literary disputants. But the more that is made of them, as references to Shakspeare of Stratford, the more do they bring into relief the earlier Jonsonian silences, and confirm our conclusions.

The only hypothesis, it seems, that will fit all the facts is that, in deference to the behests of people whose wishes were to him commands, he lent his name to a great literary fiction, and had to adjust all his subsequent utterances to the secret. The 1623 *Folio* gave to the Shakespeare literature such importance that Jonson, as the great doyen and dictator of letters, could not preserve silence without exciting suspicion, and importunate inquiries from a new generation of playwrights and litterateurs must often have proved embarrassing.

With our present knowledge, we are able to detect the flaws in the scheme, but its success during more than two centuries shows that Jonson did not play his part amiss. He might, no doubt, have done better had the undertaking matured earlier or if he had suspected that Drummond was making a record of his talk, and could have foreseen that this would be called in as evidence three centuries later. Such, however, are the fatal gaps that invariably turn up in concocted evidence and complete the ruin of failing causes.

All the departments and aspects of truth must of necessity harmonize, and it is therefore not surprising to find that, closely examined, the play-acting credentials and the testimony of Ben Jonson are marked by the same self-contradictory features shown by the aristocratic implications. Into any other of the numerous departments of the case against Shakspeare we cannot now go – much as we should have liked specially to show how the *Sonnets*⁹ contain direct confirmation of our central contention. The point is that, viewed under any aspect, the same disturbing inconsistencies are revealed; the only solution of which is that William Shakspeare of Stratford did not write the Shakespeare plays.

The story, then, which emerges from the facts considered, is that there lived in the reign of Queen Elizabeth a highly cultured dramatist in close and prolonged intercourse with the nobility round the throne, who wrote primarily for the entertainment of the court, and had considerable influence with those who controlled its amusements. Having decided upon giving some of this work to the world in permanent literary form, he resolved at the same time, and, for reasons of his own, to suppress his own name. To hide his identity more effectually he arranged to have his work

eventually attributed to another man, William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon, whose name lent itself to a punning corruption as “Shakespeare” – which, sometimes with the hyphen, and sometimes without, he used as his *nom-de-plume*.

In furtherance of the plan there was given to this Stratford person a less incongruous social position and some appropriate but fictitious credentials. Until, however, the worst dangers of publicity were past, the man himself was kept away from the kind of people who might have detected the imposition: everything that might have indicated who or where he was, being carefully avoided until seven years after his death.

Whatever others may have known or suspected of the true state of affairs, loyalty or indifference secured their silence. By the time that public attention was turned towards Stratford all first-hand knowledge had been lost of the elusive gentleman with a coat-of-arms who had been domiciled at New Place, but whose lawyer, the Town Clerk, had lived in his house and conducted his business.¹⁰

Thus the authorship of the plays – a doubtful honor in those days to people in certain walks of life – was fastened upon a man who had not written them, but to whom the attribution was, even then, a distinct gain. With the passing of time came a fuller recognition of their value, winning for the greatest of these dramas a place in the world’s esteem such as the poet himself could never have anticipated, and attaching to the authorship a distinction of which a person of any rank would certainly be proud. Meantime, for three centuries, the writer himself remained hidden, and a quite insignificant man received the world’s adulation.

Such is the first chapter of a story, as strange as fiction, which will one day doubtless find a permanent place amongst the more prosaic annals of literature. Immediately, however, a sense of the full significance of one unparalleled fact is needed – that we possess a set of invaluable dramas, a literature in itself, quite divorced from its producer: plays without their author.

Somewhere, therefore, in that faraway time, which modern research is bringing back to life, there lived and labored strenuously, if somewhat secretly, in the purview of Queen Elizabeth’s court, one of the greatest dramatic geniuses known amongst men, divorced for centuries afterwards from his writings: an author without his plays.

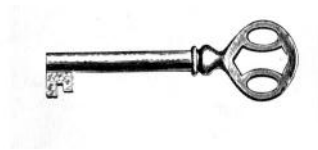
The research workers in those fields can therefore set themselves no more honorable task than to draw him from his obscurity and reunite him with his creations in the mind and affections of mankind.

Notes

1. The Second World War. [JW].
2. We so describe the modern historical research movement, not because it either began or ended in the Nineteenth Century, but because its systematic development was the work of that period.
3. Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, "Burbage and Shakespeare's Stage," *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Apr., 1914), pp. 123-125.
4. Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke stated their belief that Shakspeare left London in 1604 in their book *The Works of William Shakespeare* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1866), reprinted in 1869 by Bickers and Son in London. Looney had cited the Clarkes' belief in "*Shakespeare*" *Identified* (p. 424): "Not only does the time of the death of De Vere mark an arrest in the publication of 'Shakespeare's' works, it also marks, according to orthodox authorities, some kind of a crisis in the affairs of William Shakespeare. Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke, in the *Life of Shakspeare* published along with their edition of the plays, date his retirement to Stratford in the year 1604 precisely. After pointing out that in 1605 he is described as 'William Shakspeare, Gentleman, of Stratford-on-Avon,' they continued: 'Several things conduced to make him resolve upon ceasing to be an actor, and 1604 has generally been considered the date when he did so.'" Looney also noted that "Several other writers, less well known, repeat this date; and works of reference, written for the most part some years ago, place his retirement in the same year: 'There is no doubt he never meant to return to London, except for business visits after 1604' (*National Encyclopedia*)." [JW]
5. The first appearance of the name "Shakespeare" in a published play was the quarto publication of *Love's Labour's Lost* quarto of the Fall of 1598. [JW]
6. Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, *Burbage and Shakespeare's Stage*, London: Alexander Moring, Ltd., 1913.
7. "There are no such epitaphs as Ben Jonson's" is from "Introduction," p. 24, to *The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*, edited by Felix E. Schelling. London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Inc., 1910.
8. See Ben Jonson's *Conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden*, edited with introduction and notes by R. F. Patterson, London: Blackie and Son, Ltd. 1923 (pp. 22-34). [JW]
9. Some striking forecasts of more recent studies, marked by keen sympathetic

insight, are given in the last [of] Judge Jesse Johnson's "Testimony of the Sonnets" (N. Y. 1899). [Jesse Johnson, *Testimony of the Sonnets as to the Authorship of the Shakespearean Plays and Poems*, New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899. [JW]

10. Thomas Greene was Town Clerk in Stratford-upon-Avon from 1603 to 1617. References to him can be found in many biographies of William Shakspere. See, for instance, *A Life of William Shakespeare* by Sir Sidney Lee, London: Macmillan Company, 1916, p. 474. Readers should be wary of assuming too close an intimacy between Greene and Shakspere merely because he resided in New Place at one time, just as they should be wary of assuming that Shakspere was a man of great wealth merely because he owned "the largest house in Stratford." New House could easily have been a boarding house – a business – not merely a personal residence. [JW]



Who Was James Joyce's Shakespeare?

by Gary Goldstein

As Vincent Cheng and other scholars have noted, James Joyce had a lifelong admiration for William Shakespeare, to whom Joyce compared himself through-out his life (Cheng 1). Indeed, this fascination led Joyce to incorporate into *Finnegans Wake* a thousand allusions to the person and works of his English rival as well as to the claimants of Shakespeare's crown.

I offer these prefatory remarks because Joyce left provocative evidence in *Ulysses* and *Wake* that, thoroughly examined, enables one to hear the echoes and see the shadows of the man who may be Joyce's Shakespeare.

The Testimony of Joyce's Ulysses

In Chapter 7 is a wonderful example of the wit that foreshadows the many Shakespearean allusions in Chapter 9.

Clamn dever, Lenehan said to Mr. O'Madden Burke. (U 137)

The original meaning of "damned clever" turns into an ingenious pun on Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford – "de Ver" – through the rhetorical devise of metathesis, which transposes sounds or letters in a word or phrase.

Two chapters later, at the start of the Shakespeare chapter in *Ulysses*, Joyce dismisses Francis Bacon with dispatch. "Good Bacon: gone musty" (U 195). He then has a librarian spur on the conversation by declaring: "I hope Mr. Dedalus will work out his theory for the enlightenment of the public" (U 196). Joyce proceeds to do this by listing the Shakespeare authorship speculations of George Bernard Shaw and Frank Harris (U 196), Walt Whitman (U 201) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (U 205). He then writes:

Gentle Will is being roughly handled, gentle Mr. Best said gently. Which will? gagged sweetly Buck Mulligan. (U 206)

Joyce has his characters continue questioning the traditional authorship of the Shakespeare plays.

When Rutlandbaconsouthamptonshakespeare or another poet of the same name in the comedy of errors wrote Hamlet . . . (U 208)

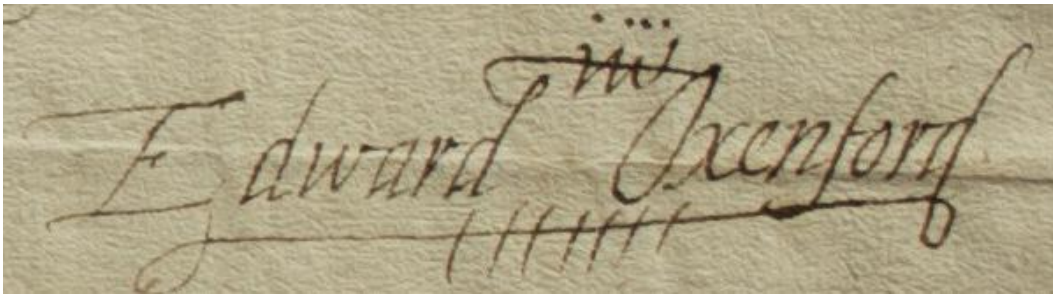
Joyce later has a character talk briefly about the theory that the Earl of Rutland had written the works of Shakespeare (U 214). Obviously exasperated with all the talk about Shakespeare's identity, someone exclaims:

I believe, O Lord, help my unbelief. (U 214)

Despite this ironic appeal to God or a nobleman, Joyce still hadn't closed the discussion on who wrote Shakespeare, for he issues a final comment on the matter at the end of the chapter.

Manner of Oxenford. (U 217)

The reference is to the 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), for Oxford had signed his poetry, both in manuscript and published form, as E.O., E. of Ox., and Earle of Oxenford. He also signed all his extant letters as Edward Oxenford (see below).



What makes Stephen Dedalus's comment unique is the manner in which Joyce positions the statement. Until this point, Joyce doesn't mention Oxford; when he does, he tums it into the conclusive comment on the authorship of Shakespeare's works. As if to emphasize this, Joyce highlights the final but unexpressed thought of Stephen Dedalus about Shakespeare by making it a three-word paragraph.

After Dedalus is led to silently draw a conclusion on the authorship question based on the preceding conversation, he chooses not to share it with his friends, although Joyce shares this conclusion with the readers of his novel.

Gary Goldstein *founded and served as editor of The Elizabethan Review, a semi-annual history journal on the English Renaissance, and later, served as co-editor of Brief Chronicles, an annual scholarly journal. He also co-produced the three-hour television program, Uncovering Shakespeare (GTE VisNet, 1992), moderated by William F. Buckley, Jr. This article is reprinted from Goldstein's collection of essays, Reflections on the True Shakespeare, published by Verlag Langwitz in 2016.*

Here I watched the birds for augury. Aengus of the birds. They go, they come. Last night I flew. Easily flew. Men wondered. Street of harlots after. A cream-fruit melon he held to me. In. You will see. The wandering Jew, Buck Mulligan whispered with clown's awe. Did you see his eye? He looked upon you to lust after you. I fear thee, ancient mariner. O, Kinch, thou art in peril. Get thee a breech pad.

Manner of Oxenford. [emphasis added]

Day. Wheelbarrow seen over arch of bridge.

A dark back went before them. Step of a pard, down, out by the gateway, under portcullis barbs.

They followed. (U 217-8)

Joyce also highlights the paragraph's inference – that Shakespeare wrote in the Earl of Oxford's *manner*, or *manor* – by making it the only statement on Shakespeare in Ulysses not rebutted by another character, even in humor. Equally important, Joyce inserts the statement within the chapter on Shakespeare, a chapter written entirely in doubt about Shakespeare's identity. Earlier, Joyce has a character voice his concerns about that identity.

Certainly, John Eglinton mused, of all great men he is the most enigmatic. We know nothing but that he lived and suffered. Not even so much. Others abide our question. A shadow hangs over the rest. (U 194)

The tenor of the preceding paragraph, especially its last sentence, echoes Hamlet's dying words as well as a contemporary comment about the Earl of Oxford's life, connecting the English Bard with the chief claimant to his title.

At the conclusion of *Hamlet*, Prince Hamlet prophesies that the new monarch will be Fortinbras, yet doesn't finish saying what the preceding events have prompted, thereby leaving behind a mystery. Thus, his dying words, " – the rest is silence" (5.2.360). In commenting on this line in *Ulysses*, Joyce uses the word "shadow" probably because it represents the physical and outer equivalent of the ear's silence.

Indeed, Eglinton's remark – "A shadow hangs over the rest." – directly echoes Dr. A.B. Grosart's published view of the seventeenth Earl of Oxford: "An unlifted shadow lies across his memory."

Grosart's edition of the Earl of Oxford's poetry, the first such collection, was published in 1872 in the *Miscellanies of the Fuller Worthies' Library*, Volume 4. J. Thomas Looney included Grosart's assessment of Oxford in his book, "*Shakespeare*" *Identified in Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*, published in England in 1920 (155). Since *Ulysses* was later printed in 1922, it's likely that Joyce had read Looney's book and was conversant with the theory that the Earl of Oxford had written the Shakespeare plays and poems under a pseudonym.

Two well-known contemporaries of Joyce, novelist John Galsworthy and Sigmund Freud, both agreed with Looney's hypothesis. Freud wrote: "The man of Stratford... seems to have nothing at all to justify his claim, whereas Oxford has almost everything" (Ogburn 146). Galsworthy handed out copies of Looney's book to friends, writing it up as "the best detective story I have ever read" (Ogburn 146). Such actions by Galsworthy, a contemporary and a literary peer of Joyce's, may have aroused the latter's curiosity to examine evidence in support of the hypothesis.

Such a proposition is borne out by the references to Oxford and Looney that Joyce incorporated into *Finnegans Wake*, a book published seventeen years after *Ulysses*.

Dreaming of Oxford in *Finnegans Wake*

Adaline Glasheen and other Joyce scholars have discovered that Joyce punned upon the names of Vere and Oxford in *Wake* at least half-a-dozen times, often combining allusions to Oxford and Shakespeare in his puns. The first allusion to Oxford also alludes to his father-in-law, William Cecil, Queen Elizabeth's principal advisor for forty years, first as Principal Secretary of State (1558-1572), then as Lord Great Treasurer (1572-1598).

. . . cutting a great dash in a brandnew two guinea dress suit and a burled hogsford . . . (FW 182.26)

The pun refers to Sir William Cecil who, by virtue of marrying his daughter Anne to the 17th Earl of Oxford, was created Lord Burghley by the Queen only months before the wedding in 1571.

Within the context of Joyce's sentence, one's impression of the phrase "burled hogsford" is of a furled or closed-up umbrella. In fact, that visual pun corresponds to what transpired after Oxford became a ward of Cecil's when he was orphaned at the age of twelve. As Master of the Court of Wards, Cecil managed much of Oxford's lands while Oxford was his ward for nine years, until his twenty-first birthday. Cecil then compelled Oxford to marry his daughter, Anne, when Oxford attained his majority at age twenty-one. Burghley later purchased these estates after Oxford sold them to finance his social and political obligations at Court. Burghley even ordered Oxford to pay an exorbitant marriage fee at the age of forty, after his daughter Anne had died, leaving Oxford destitute. Indeed, the family of Cecil would eclipse that of the Vere's politically, socially and financially during the lifetimes of both men, due largely to the efforts of Queen Elizabeth's all-powerful Treasurer and Secretary of State.

This reading is confirmed by examining the other puns about Burghley in *Wake*, several of which refer specifically to him as a "bully."

Bullyclubber burgherly shut the rush in general . . . (FW 335.13)
 Bully hurley yet hardly hurley . . . (FW 511.24)

In other references to Oxford in *Wake*, Joyce abandons the Burghley connection and proceeds to praise Oxford's musical talents.

And he can cantabb as chipper as any oxon ever I mood with, a tiptoe singer!
 (FW 467.31)

De Vere had signed his poetry and letters in a variety of ways: E.O., E. Ox., and Edward Oxenford. Moreover, de Vere often was referred to in state documents as the Earl of Oxon. *Ever* is an obvious pun upon Edward de Vere, as it represents a phonetic trace of his name: E. Ver.

Joyce also alludes to the musical reputation of Oxford, to whom Elizabethan composer John Farmer dedicated two books of compositions. Farmer, a native of Ireland, was at times an employee of Oxford's, as well as Organist and Master of the Children's Choir of Dublin's Christ Church Cathedral. Farmer's second book was dedicated to Oxford in 1599 as follows:

Without flattery be it spoken, those that know your Lordship know that, using this science as a recreation, your Lordship have overgone most of them that make it a profession.

To the greatest composer of the Elizabethan era, William Byrd, Oxford conveyed the manor of Batayles for 31 years in 1574. Byrd, in turn, would compose "The Earl of Oxford's March" and set several poems by Oxford to music. Additional evidence of Oxford's musical interests is reflected in other musical compositions named in his honor, such as the "Earl of Oxford's Galliard."

The phrase "a tiptoe singer" may also refer to Grosart's comment on Oxford's poetry that Looney included in his book. "They [Oxford's poems] are not without touches of the true Singer . . ." (Looney 155). As this quote comes on the same page in Looney's book that contains Grosart's other comment about "an unlifted shadow" lying across Oxford's memory, it points to Joyce having read Looney's book.

Perhaps the most clear-cut and positive reference that Joyce makes to Oxford in *Wake*, and the entire Joycean canon, is the line:

. . . my dodear devere revered mainhirr was confined to guardroom...
 (FW 492.16)

The phrase represents a series of admiring puns on Oxford's name. In addition to "dear" and "revere" is the phrase "mainhirr," a multilingual pun on the Dutch and German expressions for "my dear sir" – *mijn beer* and *mein herr* – similar in

pronunciation and meaning but not spelling. The phrase also provides another pun on “dodear.” Moreover, playing on the German and Dutch with “main” offers up a final pun – my main gentleman – that broadens Joyce’s praise of de Vere even further.

The phrase “confined to guardroom” also is historically accurate, for de Vere was confined to the Tower of London in 1581 for several months after Queen Elizabeth uncovered his liaison with Anne Vavasor, one of her ladies in waiting, who had just born de Vere an illegitimate son, Sir Edward Vere (Ogburn 646).

Is Oxford being revered by James Joyce or by a character in *Wake*? Either way, it lauds him in a way that no other Shakespeare claimant was ever praised in Joyce’s works, including Bacon, Rutland, Southampton, and William Shakspere of Stratford.

Joyce also included in *Wake* two puns that refer to J. Thomas Looney, probably commenting on Looney’s situation after publication of his book, “*Shakespeare*” *Identified*, which came under sustained public attack, along with its author. Note the line, “Loonacied! Marterdyed!” (FW 492.5), which precedes the previous explicit allusion to Oxford by just 11 lines. Equally resonant is the line, “Loonely in me loneness” (FW 627.34).

As Joyce placed this statement on the next-to-last page of *Wake*, perhaps Joyce was comparing Looney’s experience with his own artistic situation vis-a-vis contemporary critics, in whom Joyce and his creative works aroused an intense and antagonistic response.

The preceding literary correspondences in *Ulysses* and *Wake* show that Joyce had extensive knowledge about Oxford which he chose to include in his two novels. It also shows that Joyce believed Shakespeare wrote in the Earl of Oxford’s manner. Moreover, Joyce made his reverence for Oxford explicit in a willfully obscure book, *Finnegans Wake*. Equally important, Joyce connects Oxford to Shakespeare in allusions in *Wake*. Finally, as both books were published seventeen years apart, the positive references to Oxford, spanning an entire generation of time, represent much more than an awareness of the debate of who wrote Shakespeare.

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In Conversation with Hank Whittemore

100 Reasons Shakespeare was the Earl of Oxford

interviewed by Chris Pannell

Today we are speaking with Hank Whittemore, noted author and well-known advocate of the Shakespeare Authorship Question. Whittemore's latest book is *100 Reasons Shakespeare was the Earl of Oxford* (published in 2016 by Forever Press). This title is available as a print-on-demand book from a variety of booksellers on the Amazon website and on Abebooks.com. We caught up with him on the Internet, where many interviews are conducted.

Editor Welcome to *The Oxfordian*, Hank.

HW Thanks for hosting me in these pages. It's a pleasure to speak about matters that I think all your readers are interested in.

Q1

Because of the scope of your book – *100 Reasons* covers the 54 years of Edward de Vere's life and periods of time before his birth and after his death – can you describe some of the organizational challenges to producing this book, and as well, organizing any book on the Shakespeare Authorship Question?

HW

At first there was no organization whatsoever, because it began as a series of blog posts continuing over the course of three and a half years. I had made an offhand remark that there must be a hundred reasons for concluding Oxford was the true author, so it didn't take long to realize I should try to back that up. As the blog posts went along, I tried not to think too far ahead. I went with whatever came to mind, so there was no overall structure. Even after reaching the 100-reason mark, I wasn't so sure about re-working it all into a book.

Once I started thinking about it, Alex McNeil (Editor of the *SOF Newsletter*) advised me to find some coherent structure for the posts. I put topics like “Lyly” and “Horsemanship” and “Italy” on separate index cards and began moving them around. Some immediately fell into categories – “special knowledge,” for example, indicating Oxford’s experience in the law, medicine, seamanship, gardening and so on, which would account for the knowledge displayed in the Shakespeare works. What really made a book seem possible was when I brought together some topics for an opening chapter about his life in relation to theater. After all, Shakespeare has always been viewed primarily in relation to acting and playwriting.

A structure evolved into sixteen chapters that began to seem chronological. It’s a bit of a paradox. On one hand, you can jump around all through the book; on the other hand, reading it from start to finish can give you the feel of a biography.

Organizing any book on the authorship question is difficult. Oxfordians have the dilemma of how to deal with the Stratfordian view, which seems to be based on a kind of religious belief. If all your readers believe the world was created literally in six days, do you have to address that issue before getting into the evidence for evolution? If so, to what extent? How much of your book should be devoted to taking apart that false assumption?

Charlton Ogburn Jr. believed that fully the first half of one’s book should take down the Stratfordian view, which is what he did in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. It was aptly subtitled *The Myth and the Reality*, indicating the two separate sections. That approach is effective, but I have little interest in it. I would have no joy tearing down the myth; my interest lies in discovering whatever is real and in trying to put together the shreds of evidence to create a picture that is larger, and deeper, than any single piece of the puzzle.

Because, you know, that larger and deeper view is the untold story. Our mission is to not only find the individual pieces, but, importantly, to put them all together so we can stand back and follow the story of the most amazing author the world has known. Seeing him whole is, to me, the big challenge. As we head to the second century of the Oxfordian movement, we still have a long way to go. Hell, in our little group even we can’t agree on the basic reason for the erasure of Oxford’s identity as “Shakespeare” from the historical record.

Hank Whittemore is a writer, a former professional actor, journalist, TV writer, and the author of fourteen books, including two books on the Sonnets (*The Monument and Shakespeare’s Son*). Whittemore performs a one-man show, *Shakespeare’s Treason*, co-written with director Ted Story, after which he often holds discussions with audience members. He writes often on authorship issues and maintains a blog at <https://hankwhittemore.com>. Additional questions for this interview were suggested by Wally Hurst and Don Rubin.

Q2

One of the strengths of *100 Reasons* is the variety of sources you introduce to the reader. Can you tell us a little bit about how you handle source material? For example, Reason 59 *Medical Knowledge* indicates the amazing number of contacts de Vere had with medical scientists of his day, and their books. Were you able to track down, for example, any copy or reprint of a book by George Baker titled *The New Jewell of Health*? The fact that this book, published in 1576, was dedicated to Oxford's first wife Anne Cecil and that Baker was de Vere's personal physician was a great point to make in the context of the authorship question.

HW

Countless Oxfordian researchers have developed these facts, which are often scattered in so many places that we lose track of them. I've spent thirty years looking at them. Just in that area of medical knowledge, for example, we owe much to the labors of Dr. Frank Davis and Earl Showerman – just for starters. I myself have never held a physical copy of Baker's book, but surely others have. In most cases I am simply a reporter, gathering the evidence and trying to present it in an interesting and enlightening way.

Q3

One of my favourite aspects of your book is the number of times you can cite other researchers of Shakespeare who have nothing to do with the authorship question, but who are providing observations and evidence that support an Oxfordian reading. The sections on Seamanship (60), Astronomy (61), and Music (62) are particularly well-prepared. Were there any difficulties for you in assembling this material?

HW

When writing and publishing these as blog posts, I concentrated on each one separately and took all the time I needed. (If I had aimed to create an entire book from the start, it would have been overwhelming and I'd have given up!) It was fun gathering up all the evidence for a single blog post and then figuring out how to present that material. Each time out was a new challenge. Posting each "reason" was like going to bat in a baseball game; after finally getting a hit, I'd head back to the bench for a rest. Then, soon enough, it was time to go back up to the plate again.

Q4

Because it has the feel of a comprehensive study of de Vere and the works of

Shakespeare, your book will inevitably be compared to *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* by Charlton Ogburn and *Shakespeare by Another Name* by Mark Anderson. Can you comment at all on the approach you've taken in your book, in comparison to those by Ogburn and Anderson?

HW

Those two books are great contributions to the movement. Ogburn and Anderson both drew upon the research and writings of many others from "*Shakespeare*" *Identified* (by J. Thomas Looney) in 1920 onward. My book draws upon the same kinds of sources, as well as upon those two books. Both follow the chronological events in the life of Edward de Vere, pausing along the way to bring in aspects of the plays, poems and sonnets that seem to reflect his life.

My book is not intended to be a biography; it's based on those individual "reasons" to conclude that Oxford was the author. Within each reason, I've narrowed and intensified the focus – for example, two are devoted solely to the published dedications that Oxford received – their diversity and their depth of gratitude to him. The difference in this book is that all the dedications to Oxford are brought together in one section.

Q5

Do you believe that Oxfordians can make the case with the general public about de Vere and Shakespeare, that the latter was a pseudonym or allonym for the former, without finding additional strong evidence for Oxford's authorship, such as additional letters or a canonical play in 'manuscript' form? Or, do Oxfordians have enough evidence to make the case, but simply haven't done a good job of organizing it?

HW

This is a great question. My immediate response is that – although we have no proof – we certainly *do* have evidence, but, in fact, we have failed to agree on the story it tells – not only the who, where and what, but also the why and how. I am basically a reporter and, as well, a storyteller; and to tell any story, I need a protagonist with motives and objectives. Given that de Vere is our protagonist, we need to know not only what he was up to but, also, why and how.

When Looney identified the man behind Shakespeare as the premier earl of Elizabeth's reign, he was simultaneously identifying the story as political. Oxford was part of the government, extremely close to the center of power, and up to a time, even *within* the center. This basic aspect has never been possible for the Stratfordian view, but with Oxford as the author we can begin to understand why he wrote the

plays of royal history and was so concerned about the good and bad qualities of a ruler. I think we have basically failed to convey this political context, which, once it's perceived, can make us realize that the Shakespeare Authorship Question is not the main story, but, rather, merely one result of that story. It's the proverbial tip of the iceberg.

Beyond that are other failures, in my view. For example, we haven't been able to convey that until the *First Folio* in 1623 the name *Shakespeare* was exclusively that of the poet-dramatist and did not refer to the Stratford man. The name "Shakspere" was distinct and different from "Shakespeare." Whatever the Stratford man was doing in London, and however he may have become involved in the matter in his lifetime, there is no evidence that anyone ever regarded him as a poet or playwright until after the *First Folio* came out. I think we have failed to be clear about this.

Another bedrock of the story is that the printed name *Shakespeare* appeared in 1593 when the true author already had more than forty-three years of life behind him. By then he had lived through most (but not all) of his important experiences; he had been reading and learning and writing since early childhood. Here again, his adoption of this pen name is the tip of the iceberg.

Q6

Do you feel the general public is indifferent to the SAQ? Is there anything Oxfordians can do about this (beyond what various Oxfordian groups are doing already)?

HW

There's no question the public is indifferent. It's extremely difficult to bring about some major shift of perspective, to cause a so-called paradigm shift. People need personal reasons to care; they need strong motivation to learn more about the topic.

I think we have focused on the wrong section of the university or the library. We have tried to appeal to the English and Drama departments, rather than the History department. Historians have no problem with accepting that writers in repressive societies, operating under strict censorship, have always resorted to allegory and other means of communicating indirectly. This is a fundamental aspect of the Oxfordian story – that the real Shakespeare was using his pen as an underground political weapon. As he himself wrote in Sonnet 66, he had been "tongue-tied by authority" or by his own government. That's an exciting premise that even speaks to the politics of today, when "speaking truth to power" is so often left to the writers of comedy and satire, or to serious novelists and playwrights, all communicating indirectly.

The key for us, I believe, is to show the world that there is a great untold story

here – a story that will amaze and inspire. The trouble, however, is that members of the established Oxfordian groups can't agree about what that story is. People in these groups are doing tremendous work, and they should be applauded for it, but it appears that the real excitement will have to come from newcomers – students and independent scholars and other outsiders.

When I started getting into this subject in 1987, I was unaware of any organization dedicated to researching the Oxfordian case. A few years later I discovered the Shakespeare Oxford Society and went to my first conference in 1991; but within the first five minutes I discovered there were competing ideas and factions. Even so, in retrospect that was a much more exciting time, when we didn't try so hard to be respectable. Well, maybe we didn't know as much as we do now; but we also had yet to become so damned overly cautious. We are fighting a battle for truth, which leaves very little room for respectability. We are, after all, traitors. Of course, when we win (as the saying goes), none will dare to call it treason.

My basic answer is to stop worrying about respectability. You can't overthrow a beloved article of faith and worship by being respectable. We can't tear down false idols without causing a bit of trouble. I'm not saying we need to make asses of ourselves, just that we should beware of the attractive lure of being accepted.

It's important to emphasize that the phenomenon of Shakespeare did not just come from one singular genius. I am not speaking about any "group" theory of authorship for the Shakespeare plays, but, rather, about the fact that there were many playwrights at work during Elizabeth's reign. In my book there are two chapters relevant to this. One is entitled, "The University Wits," about those who were allegedly predecessors of Shakespeare working under Oxford's patronage and guidance – John Lyly, Anthony Munday, Thomas Watson and at least a few dozen more, such as Peele, Greene, Nash, Marlowe. That chapter leads to "Writers in Wartime." During the 1580s, when England and Spain officially declared war, the English government needed writers to fire up a unified patriotic spirit, which accounts for the history plays these writers turned out by the dozens. Some of these works were by Oxford, who rewrote them into the Shakespearean stage histories in the 1590s.

This, to me, is a crucial aspect of the authorship issue. I once asked our Stratfordian adversary James Shapiro, at a public forum, why his colleagues have always seemed to lack any interest in the contemporary history of what led up to Shakespeare. Why can't they at least acknowledge that Edward de Vere was the patron of virtually every contemporary writer upon whom "Shakespeare" was indebted? His non-answer was that we "know little or nothing about Shakespeare's lost years" prior to the 1590s, which, of course, was not at all what I was asking him about.

We know a lot about the history of the 1580s – the Queen's Men acting company, for example, with two troupes going around the country in preparation for the Span-

ish Armada that finally arrived in 1588. And it was Oxford who led the great renaissance of English literature and drama during that period, leading up to his adoption of the Shakespeare pen name. He led and worked with many others in a great frenzy of creative work, which begins to explain what otherwise seems impossible to explain.

Try to imagine that we never had any notion about “Shakespeare’s” identity. In that case, if we went looking for clues in the form of historical evidence, would we have made our way to Stratford upon Avon? I don’t think so. Even if we did happen to go there, what would we have found? Nothing. All the evidence that has managed to survive, and there’s plenty of it, would have led researchers and scholars directly or indirectly to Edward de Vere. Soon enough there would have been no mystery, no authorship question, to be solved.

Meanwhile, such an icon or legend tends to be far more powerful, or persuasive, than factual evidence.

Q7

The play *Hamlet* and the character of Hamlet are critical pieces of the Oxfordian thesis and your Reasons Five through Fourteen deal with the relationship between Oxford’s life and Hamlet’s mind and his adventures (such as being captured by pirates). Was there more you could have said? Are you planning a book on that, or could you recommend the best Oxfordian book on the question of *Hamlet*?

HW

I’m not sure there’s any single book bringing together all the ways that *Hamlet* appears to be Oxford’s most autobiographical play, but one should be written. I acted in a college production and fell in love with the character of the prince. Had that not happened, I might not have cared so deeply about the authorship question. But once I saw the many ways that play reflects Oxford’s life and relationships, I was hooked. [Note: At the end of this interview is a list of Whittmore’s favourite books on the SAQ and the seventeenth Earl of Oxford.]

Q8

As an actor yourself, do you think that Oxford had a strong personal interest in acting or was he more of a writer first, a director second, and an actor third (in terms of his priorities)? Are you aware of any passages in Ben Jonson’s plays that address the Elizabethan philosophy or method of acting, in the same way that Hamlet’s speech to the players does? Does Jonson comment at all on the responsibilities of actors?

HW

I know of nothing in the Elizabethan age that's comparable to Hamlet's advice to the players; and I do think we can hear Oxford himself addressing them. He speaks as their patron but also as their playwright and director and, too, as a fellow actor. He was steeped in the theater from childhood; his ideas about the art of the player must have evolved, until he could envision the kind of natural or truthful acting that would develop over the centuries up to our time.

Anyway, you're right – he was writer, director, actor in that order. Do we know of any working actor of that era who simultaneously wrote plays? Were there any professional players who were always rehearsing or performing while also turning out plays for the stage? Burbage and Kempe never wrote plays, or none that I know of. When would they have had the time to write them? That aspect of the Stratfordian myth is impossible – the idea that the author of the Shakespearean works was also a busy professional player.

In any case, there is evidence that Oxford did act on the court stage. And he was definitely a showman. In 1572, he arranged and directed a mock military battle between two “armies” at Warwick Castle, for the benefit of the Queen and her court. In 1581, he starred in his own one-man production of *The Knight of the Tree of the Sunne*, introduced by his boy page – again, for Elizabeth.

Q9

Why does the Shakespeare-author use so many topical/geographical allusions in his Italian plays, things that nobody who hadn't been there would have known, or possibly even cared about?

HW

My initial answer is that including such allusions must have helped him believe in whatever he was writing. Including those allusions may have helped him to write more truthfully. But beyond that, he was bringing these details back to the royal court and England itself. In terms of the future history to be written, these details should have ensured that “Shakespeare” would be identified as the “Italianized Englishman” (Euphues) that he really was. So far, even with Richard Roe's *Shakespeare's Guide to Italy* (2011), that effort has yet to pay off.

Q10

You speak often in public about de Vere and the Shakespeare works. How do you deal with objections from the audience? Do you have any suggestions about how

Oxfordians can respectfully address those who remain unconvinced by the idea that there is an authorship question and that de Vere is the most likely candidate to be the true author?

HW

The only way to deal with objections is to be as patient and honest as possible. If we don't know the answer, we should be willing to say so.

Just taking down the Stratfordian myth, for all it's worth, cannot change hearts and minds. The key is in the true story – the one that the author himself tried to tell us in *Hamlet* and the *Sonnets*, the latter being Oxford's own version of the prince's soliloquies. If you think you know that story, right or wrong, tell it to those folks who have come to have their world shaken up or even turned inside-out. That's what most of them really want or they wouldn't have come to hear you.

Q11

I particularly enjoyed the more obscure reasons you selected for your book. For example, Reason 96 deals with George Chapman and – as you say – Chapman the younger man, knew de Vere, who was about ten years older, and Chapman was convinced that Hamlet was de Vere's self-portrait. You say Chapman made every attempt to tell the world he knew the answer to the authorship question. What in your opinion are the lesser-known reasons for de Vere's authorship?

HW

There are many. One involves the whole matter of chronology – what Looney called “the long foreground” that preceded the 1590s, followed by the pivotal year of 1604, when *Hamlet* Q2 was published soon after Oxford died. Right then the great issuance of Shakespearean plays came to a halt. Aside from a few stray printings of heretofore unpublished plays, fully eighteen remained unknown to readers until the Folio of 1623. This overview of the chronology should be put up on the wall like some big visual chart.

Q12

Reason 91, which you have titled *Dramatic Literature*, emphasizes the insights of the first Oxfordian, John Thomas Looney, who not only made the breakthrough of identifying de Vere, but also speaks of the extensive revisions that had been on-going in these works, throughout de Vere's writing career. Looney also, quite presciently, predicted the need for *a difficult revolution in mental attitude* among we moderns who

seek to really understand Shakespeare. You draw our attention to a dozen plays that were printed between 1597 and 1604 when Oxford died, and how we should view that flurry of publications.

HW

Looney was right in viewing those plays as Oxford's attempt to transform earlier work into masterpieces of dramatic literature. How can anyone seriously think the Stratfordian could have turned out a dozen immortal plays within the first decade of his arrival in London? It's an important "reason" for de Vere's authorship that seldom gets communicated to "the yet unknowing world," as Horatio puts it.

Q13

In Reason 94, which you call *The Pivotal Year of 1604*, you report that the name "Shake-speare" only began to appear on play quartos after Burghley's death in 1598, and that seven Shakespeare plays were performed on the occasion of the marriage of Susan de Vere, Oxford's youngest daughter, who is the woman many see as the custodian of her father's literary output (his manuscripts) until the publication of the *First Folio* in 1623. These circumstances in de Vere's later years are quite compelling evidence in the question of how Shakespeare produced so many works in such little time.

HW

Yes, just imagine how short a time that is – from the latter part of 1598 to a few months after June 24, 1604, when Oxford departed – less than six years! But the reality is that those same plays had been written and rewritten at various times over the previous three decades. The final authorized quarto in that period was *Hamlet Q2*, upon which Oxford seems to have kept working until he died. It appears the play was meant not for the stage but, rather, to be read. I think the running time would be five hours, more than twice the couple of hours for most or even all Elizabethan plays. In act five of *Hamlet Q2* there are echoes of the Sonnets to be published five years later, in 1609; so my feeling is that those two works continued to occupy Oxford to the end.

Q14

Your book's bibliography indicates the large number of researchers who have been at work on the problem of Oxford's claim to the authorship and the literary voice of Shakespeare. As an aid to readers, can you identify the critical books, those which helped you most, or which in your opinion, are the best at presenting the evidence

for Oxford?

HW

For me, it's tough to pick favourites, but I've put together a short list of books I've referred to often, in order of their publication.

"Shakespeare" Identified by John Thomas Looney. New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1920

The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford by B.M. Ward. London: J. Murray, 1928

Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare Plays by Eva Turner Clark. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1974, 1931

This Star of England by Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn. New York: Coward-McCann, 1952

"Shakespeare" Identified: Vol. II: Oxfordian Vistas, edited by Ruth Loyd Miller. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975

Hamlet Himself by Bronson Feldman [1914-1982] (iUniverse, 2010)

The Mysterious William Shakespeare by Charlton Ogburn Jr. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1984, 1992

"Shakespeare" Revealed in Oxford's Letters by William Plumer Fowler. Portsmouth, NH: Peter E. Randall, 1986

Oxford's Revenge by Elisabeth Sears and Stephanie Caruana. Spear Shaker Press, 1989

The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible by Roger Stritmatter. Northampton, MA: Oxenford Press, 2001

Shakespeare by Another Name by Mark Anderson. New York: Gotham, 2005.

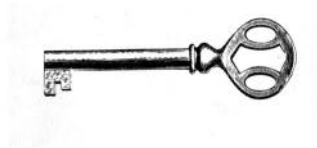
De Vere as Shakespeare by William Farina. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006

Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom by Charles Beauclerk. New York, Grove Press: 2010

I'll just conclude by saying that each of these books also offers helpful insights into the relationship of Oxford and the character of Prince Hamlet.

Editor

Thank-you Hank, for sharing your views with us.



Reviews

All That Is Shakespeare Melts into Air

The New Oxford Shakespeare Authorship Companion reviewed by
Michael Dudley, Gary Goldstein, and Shelly Maycock.

The New Oxford Shakespeare Authorship Companion. Edited by Gary Taylor & Gabriel Egan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. \$168.84 USD.

The Shakespeare deniers are at it again. Here is yet another book filled with so-called “evidence” hidden in the texts – which only the deniers can decode – to support their conspiracy theory that Shakespeare didn’t write Shakespeare. It’s the old hoary argument that a commoner from Stratford-Upon-Avon could not have possibly written the greatest works in the English language.

By himself, at any rate.

Yes, the argument in *The New Oxford Shakespeare Authorship Companion* – a supplementary volume to Oxford University Press’ prestigious new edition of the Shakespeare plays – is that Shakespeare wrote with some eleven collaborators and co-authors. These would include Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Middleton, Thomas Dekker, and Anonymous on seventeen of the dramas; the editors also suggest we need to expand the size of the canon from 37 to 44 plays, only two-thirds of which are entirely by Shakespeare. Yet, as we shall see, the theories and methods used to reach these conclusions are as problematic as the scholarship’s all but single-minded focus on cryptic analysis at the level of single words and even syllables, in service of a group authorship theory. The rhetorical conceit in the opening paragraph above is intended to be more than tongue-in-cheek; instead, it underscores the extent to which the Shakespeare establishment has started to resemble the nineteenth century Baconians it professes to abhor.

The premise behind these latest claims of collaboration is the idea that the author of the canon was a “working dramatist” (or “artisan”) who initially made his mark in the London theatre world as a “fixer up” of other men’s plays, when he wasn’t actively plagiarizing them. In the words of co-editor Gary Taylor of Florida State University, “Shakespeare made an honest living stealing other men’s work” (21). The idea of a newcomer fixing up plays of working dramatists is a strange one, and there is almost no external evidence to corroborate it.

All of which begs the question why OUP would even bother calling this mammoth

four-volume work the New Oxford Shakespeare, when *New Oxford Elizabethan and Jacobean Artisans* might be more apropos. It seems that academics of the traditional stripe are getting weary of their own scholarship. Because there is nothing more to be said about William Shakspeare's biography, and because every Folio play has been scrutinized and analyzed from a limited, Stratfordian perspective down to the level of minutiae, they have turned to collaboration as a promising new field of research.

But their reliance on stylometrics and other types of internal evidence has led them into a thicket of theories and some contradictory and conflicting data and conclusions. Most significantly, the editors have failed to recognize the importance of Shakespeare's often-observed habit of revising his own plays – which is the main reason for the uneven writing in some of them – and that the anonymous plays appear to be his juvenilia.

This is a complete revision of the 1986 Oxford *Complete Works*, also co-edited by Taylor with Stanley Wells. For the New Oxford Shakespeare (hereafter NOS), Taylor's co-editors are John Jowett, Deputy Director of the Shakespeare Institute at the University of Birmingham, Terri Bourus from Indiana University, and Gabriel Egan of De Montfort University in Leicester. What they have accomplished appears, on its face, quite impressive.

The plays and poems are presented in two versions, each of which are directed at different audiences. There is a *Modern Critical Edition* aimed at undergraduates and general readers, in which the text has been freshly edited with modern punctuation and spelling and thorough explanatory notes. Additionally, there is a *Critical Reference Edition* (itself comprising two volumes) retaining original spellings and inconsistencies, as well as highlighting variations between the quarto editions and the Folios.

It is the fourth volume of the NOS – the *Authorship Companion* edited by Taylor and Egan – that has drawn the most attention from reviewers and critics, for it attempts to establish empirical grounds for extensive co-authorship and collaboration. To develop this argument, the *Authorship Companion* is divided into two main sections – a brief *Methods* section followed by nearly 500 pages of *Case Studies* – each of which features essays by the editors and other contributors, all of whom are leading

Michael Dudley is a librarian at the University of Winnipeg, and has previously contributed to both *Brief Chronicles* and *The Oxfordian*.

Gary Goldstein is the author of *Reflections on the True Shakespeare* (2016) and former editor of *The Elizabethan Review* (1993-1999).

Shelly Maycock, a former bookseller, is presently an English Instructor at Virginia Tech University and an early modern scholar, studying the history of the authorship question, who has contributed to *Brief Chronicles*.

international figures in Shakespeare scholarship and the digital humanities. Taylor himself contributed or co-authored no fewer than six essays, while Egan wrote two. The last seventy-two pages comprise *Datasets*, a largely mind-numbing series of lists of phrases and single words matched to each article in the book, indicating their supposed correspondence with the alleged co-authors.

Part One begins with a 24-page introduction by Taylor, (“Artiginality: Authorship after Postmodernism”) that attempts to ground the book in a materialist methodology, arguing that Shakespeare must be understood as emerging from an “assemblage of technologies and social networks associated with routinized commercial theatrical performances and another socio-technological assemblage associated with handpress printing” (8). For Taylor, this technological and paper materialism extends to the “centrality of handwriting” (8) on which he spends an inordinate amount of time, observing that, because there is a “relationship between a particular biological hand and an identifiably unique handwriting” (10), “a theory of the work becomes possible once we distinguish between the activity of speaking and the very specific work of producing handwritten manuscripts” (13). Both of these assertions are, on their face, extremely strange: the pitiful examples of Shakspeare’s extant handwriting are not associated with play manuscripts, nor do we have any other example of him “speaking” apart from his notoriously uninteresting will.

For Taylor, the inquiry into authorship is reducible to a question of whether or not it

is possible to construct a philosophical definition of authorship that avoids the Kantian dream of pure free individuality but also avoids the Foucauldian nightmare of pure subjected institutionality? Is it possible to construct a theory of authorship that more adequately accounts for the material history of ‘author’ as both a verb and a noun, as both an agent and an object? (7)

This comes across as unconscious self-parody. Apparently we are supposed to accept that it is a great literary achievement to avoid the Scylla of believing that we live in the best of all possible worlds where authors are entirely unpredictable, self-creating narcissists, and the Charybdis of thinking they are to be exclusively defined by the bureaucratic state. This is a false dilemma.

While it may seem at first that seeking to have their work “embod[y] the historical reality and theoretical coherence of the worker-function” (13) lends gravitas – to say nothing of a patina of Marxism – to their enterprise, the editors’ materialism actually presents a number of shortcomings – logical, historical, literary and methodological. The first is the sheer inadequacy of materialism as a foundation upon which to theorize about the authorship of Shakespeare, given the utter lack of (a) original manuscripts in the author’s hand (b) other non-literary writing by Shakspeare, or (c) any handwriting apart from six barely legible scrawls of Shakspeare’s full name. In other words, there are few physical materials (including the oft-debunked “Hand D”)

relevant to Shakespeare's authorship worth analyzing, at least not from a Stratfordian perspective. For this reason it seems that the emphasis on materialism as an explanatory construct plays more of a compensatory than a scholarly role in this discourse, a little like the handkerchief in *Othello*, with the effect of distracting from the well-known evidentiary problems of orthodox Shakespeare studies.

The second problem is that the editors' positioning of Shakespeare as an industrious artisan/worker among his peers lacks anything approaching external historical evidence. The third (and surely deliberately-introduced) issue is that an ostensible focus on artefacts and their production removes the analysis from the realm of the literary, allowing these scholars to dispense almost entirely with the content or meaning of the texts in question, which are instead digitally deconstructed and parsed down to the last syllable.

This brings us to the final core objection, and it is a fatal one. Materialism – as defined by Taylor in terms of the “assemblage” of technologies associated with printing and with handwriting – has, in fact, almost no bearing on the subjects or methods actually used. These are, with few exceptions, the most immaterial imaginable, consisting of computer-aided stylometric tests of digital text using the *Literature Online* (LION), *Early English Books Online-Text Creation Partnership* (EEBO–TCP) and *Oxford Scholarly Editions Online* (OSEO) databases.

These digital stylistic methods are introduced, reviewed, and critiqued in the following seven essays. Co-editor Gabriel Egan provides an overview of the history of Shakespeare attribution studies, going all the way back to Alexander Pope's 1725 edition of the *Complete Works* (in which Pope expressed doubt concerning the authorship of *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Titus Andronicus*) up to contemporary investigations in the digital humanities. Conspicuously absent from this history is the widespread and enduring post-Stratfordian conviction that the traditional attribution is entirely mistaken, which Egan casually dismisses as an “unscholarly question” (41).

Subsequent methodological chapters examine word-match and other tests in LION and the EEBO-TCP databases, with a focus on such plays as *Arden of Faversham*, *Titus* and the *Henry VI* plays. MacDonald Jackson (“One Horse Races”) argues for rigorous repetition of analyses for all likely candidates rather than making a case by running the analysis for one favored author (making the exclusion of Oxford all the more inexcusable), while Egan critiques the “Limitations of [Brian] Vickers's Trigram Tests” used to claim Thomas Kyd's co-authorship of *Arden*. Two chapters on the authorship of portions of *Titus* follow: Taylor and Doug Duhaime's examination of the “Fly Scene” and Anna Pruitt's test of an automated text searching package in LION, also challenging Vickers's conclusions. Francis X. Connor considers claims for Shakespeare's poetic apocrypha (e.g., “Shall I Die?”) followed by Jackson's second contribution, an occasionally testy and personal meta-analysis of studies of *Arden*

and *A Lover's Complaint*, including responses to his own article by Darren Freebury-Jones.

These methods are employed, Taylor stresses in his introduction, for ethical reasons, in the name of “giving people credit for the work that they have done” (20). This is more than a tad hypocritical, given the academy’s dogmatic dismissal over the past century of Oxfordians who have argued precisely this point while supplying the corroborative biographical detail that has consistently been lacking in the orthodox tradition. At the same time, it is fascinating to note how close Taylor repeatedly comes to echoing key anti-Stratfordian beliefs: that authorial identity can be mistaken, even through deliberate deception (12), and that Shakespeare’s plays were not written for the public but were instead created for aristocratic and royal audiences, as Shakespeare was a court dramatist (15, 17). That the proposition of Oxford’s authorship should be so unthinkable to Taylor and his colleagues is the height of cognitive dissonance.

The sixteen case studies (plus the book-length essay “The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare’s Works” co-written by Taylor and Rory Loughnane) are arranged in a nominally coherent order such that they often anticipate or refer back to others in an attempt to build a larger argument. The only two contributions for which materialism would have the slightest bearing are Taylor’s essay on manuscript sources for two poems attributed to Shakespeare and David Grant’s chapter on the printing history of *The Spanish Tragedy*. For the most part however, readers are subjected to a dizzying array of Delta, Zeta and Iota tests in the aforementioned databases seeking bigram, trigram and tetragram constructions (i.e., measures of adjacency) as well as – for good measure – nearest shrunken centroids. Needless to say, readers who love Shakespeare for his actual writing may find many of these passages dismayingly and numbingly reductionistic:

We found all of what are called the function-word skip bigrams in the segments, by discarding all words other than the listed function words and joining the first to occur of the listed function words and the second to do so, then the second with the third, and so on. (Thus the sentence “I wonder how the King escaped our hands!” yields three bigrams, *I + how*, *how + the*, and *the + our*.) We then found the 500 function-word skip bigrams which were commonest in the authorial set and rarest in the others, and vice versa, following the usual Zeta procedures for this variant (Burrows and Craig, 207).

While measures of adjacency are a legitimate tool in stylistic analysis, in style and purpose these chapters bear more than a passing resemblance to the second volume of Ignatius Donnelly’s *The Great Cryptogram*, the author and his timeless literary accomplishments all but sinking beneath the weightless burden of data and diagrams.

Even on its own terms, however, the *Authorship Companion* does not bear scrutiny.

The editors cannot explain why the first two acts of *Pericles* had to be co-authored by pamphlet writer George Wilkins in 1608 – while Shakspeare was still alive (570-71). According to the British Library, the First Quarto (1609) “was apparently printed from a surreptitious and corrupt reported text. Many verse passages were set as prose, and many prose passages were set as verse. The title-page names Shakespeare alone as the author” (“Pericles”). Is a “corrupt reported text” an appropriate one from which to identify an author’s linguistic habits? Such relevant but unanswered questions proliferate. The editors further claim that three other plays, *Cardenio*, *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, had to be co-authored by John Fletcher – also while Shakspeare was alive (Chapter 23). As the question has already been rejected as “un-scholarly,” Egan and Taylor cannot bring themselves to consider that for a master playwright in the maturity of his craft to leave four plays unfinished might mean that he was no longer alive. Such alternatives are instead excluded from the consideration of both the authors and the readers of this expensive book.

This probably explains why OUP asserts that Thomas Middleton was required to co-author *Timon of Athens* and to adapt *Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure* (Chapter 17), or that Christopher Marlowe and other dramatists were required to co-author all three parts of *Henry VI* (Chapter 25) or that Shakespeare and “Anonymous” co-authored *Edward III* and *Arden of Feversham* (Chapter 10). In short, Shakespeare didn’t leave plays unfinished because he was incapable of writing by virtue of his death in 1604; instead he actively co-authored plays with a plethora of other writers throughout his career. This is a clever way of reducing Shakespeare’s authorial voice and artistic stature at the same time.

Given the sweeping nature of the proposed changes to the attribution of the canon, we need to ask: does the word usage study on which OUP based their key findings, published in the summer 2016 issue of *Shakespeare Quarterly* (“Attributing the Authorship of the *Henry VI* Plays by Word Adjacency” by Santiago Segarra and Gabriel Egan [et al]) really demonstrate that all these co-authors collaborated with Shakespeare? The problem – which Segarra admits to elsewhere, but perhaps doesn’t fully recognize – exists at the core of their argument. They claim that the author of *Henry VI* could only be Christopher Marlowe or George Peele, but then they say it is not possible to compare the two. According to Segarra, “If you had to pick two [candidates], then you would go for Marlowe and Peele, but in the latter’s case, we don’t have a large enough sample to fully train the classifier” (Lerner and Mott).

OUP’s editorial solution did not convince Darren Freebury-Jones, a research fellow and attribution scholar at Cardiff University, who pointed out that, while statistical analysis, like literary analysis, can aspire to an objective viewpoint, it not only relies upon subjective interpretation but cannot, on its own, account for the “voices” of the plays’ characters, nor the contemporary tendency towards parody and allusion in Elizabethan plays. He writes,

Taylor and colleagues don't appear to have paused to consider whether individual words, denuded of their linguistic context, can be relied upon in analyses of early modern plays – a genre that contains a multitude of characters, each of which speak with individualized voices... Can the mere regularity with which certain words and phrases appear in the text really distinguish between different authors – considering at the time of writing allusion, parody and appropriation were rife? Shakespeare borrowed words and phrases from Marlowe's plays. Marlowe borrowed phrases and images from Shakespeare, and also from... Thomas Kyd, who in turn borrowed phrases from him. Matters are complicated further by the fact that there are many other hands – composers, editors, scribes – involved in the creation of the folios through which the plays have survived the centuries to reach us today.

(Freebury-Jones 2016).

Citing the 1932 work of Muriel St. Clare Byrne, in *Bibliographical Clues in Collaborate Plays*, Freebury-Jones further notes that the number of parallels alone cannot be used to distinguish authors. Scholars must also examine the qualitative aspects of shared phrases – and whether these reveal distinct combinations of both thought and language, indicative of a single mind (*ibid*).

There is also profound disagreement over both methodology and conclusions among scholars working in attribution studies, and this is reflected in the *Companion's* frequent criticisms of the interpretations of other scholars. While Freebury-Jones believes that Thomas Kyd co-wrote *1 Henry VI*, another scholar of collaboration, Paul Vincent finds the hands of Thomas Nashe and Anonymous, while Sir Brian Vickers announced that he had “no hesitation in ascribing parts of Acts 2 and 4, and the whole of Acts 3 and 5 [of the play], to Kyd. In my conjectural reconstruction, the play was originally co-authored by Nashe and Kyd in about 1591” (Vickers 3).

In 1995, Gary Taylor assigned *1 Henry VI* to Shakespeare, Nashe “and two others” and gave Act 1 to Nashe. Thus, we have four different scholars assigning the play to five or six authors, and Act 1 alone to three of them. Who are we supposed to believe? And doesn't a failure to agree on a coherent methodology, coupled with the disparate and sometimes contradictory results of the practitioners invalidate, or at least call into question, the premises of the enquiry – at least to the extent of suggesting the value of scholarly humility about the results of the findings?

The *Authorship Companion* asks us to deny Shakespeare a third of the text in the canon based on computer-based analysis. The problem is that computers must be fed with data that can be incomplete or inaccurate, or data – in this case, phrases, words, and syllables – delimited to produce a range of answers which academics wish to put forward. (As previously mentioned, Edward de Vere's writing is excluded from all analyses.) This is critical, not only because the vocabulary of English was increasing

exponentially during the period in question, but because it was also changing in more fundamental matters, such as pronouns, possessives, punctuation, and verb forms.

For example, take the stylometric test for feminine endings. Poetry in that period first sought to achieve regularity of meter and then moved toward studied irregularity. This trend is found in sixteenth century English poetry in general, in dramatic verse in the second half of the century, and in Shakespeare's works. In the Shakespeare canon, the percentage of feminine endings trended upward, generally speaking, during the author's writing career, from figures as low as 5% or 6% (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *1 Henry IV*) to as high as 33% in some later plays (*The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest*). Thus, it is unlikely that the frequency of feminine endings in any particular play, or portion of a play, will rule out, or rule in, Shakespeare's authorship. This is assuming that their chronology is correct, which it probably is not.

There is much contemporary evidence, which the NOS editors failed to consider. Even though Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* named twenty-two contemporary authors, including William Shakespeare, none of the other twenty-one had any contact, in writing or reported, with Shakespeare (Hayes).

Moreover, all this stylometric gerrymandering of the text flies in the face of the historical evidence, which suggests that "Shakespeare" – whoever he was – wrote at least the vast majority of the contents of the *Folio*. While other writers ensured that their collaborative ventures were acknowledged on title pages, we are asked to believe that Shakespeare's collaborators, with the exception of Fletcher in the very late and definitely posthumous *Two Noble Kinsmen*, were content to have their works appropriated under the bard's name. All three writers of *Eastward Ho* – Ben Jonson, John Marston, and George Chapman – while sometimes mortal enemies, collaborated to ensure that each received an equal part of the honor for their collaborative satire. Ben Jonson revised *Sejanus* rather than name his collaborator or defraud him of the injury of seeing his work published under another's name. Everywhere we look, we see evidence for the important and widely acknowledged role that collaboration played in the Elizabethan theatre. The one place we don't see it is in the record of Shakespearean publications, which are, with only the slightest exception, always presented as the work of one man (leaving aside the commercially motivated false publisher's ascriptions of *Lochrine* and *The London Prodigal*).

No contemporary ever suggested that there was more than one writer for any of Shakespeare's plays before *Two Noble Kinsmen* in 1634, certainly not Jonson, or Heminges and Condell in the 1623 *First Folio*. Indeed, the OUP editors ignore additional contemporary evidence by theater producer Philip Henslowe, who recorded two payments in his diary to Ben Jonson for additions to Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, dated 25 September 1601 and 22 June 1602. The OUP editors instead ascribe authorship of these 1602 additions to Shakespeare and Heywood (260).

Thus, while the general progression in English dramatic forms is undeniable, to accept that the Shakespearean plays follow this pattern in some sort of consistent way is doubly flawed. It is flawed in the first case because it requires our assent to the ludicrous notion that plays such as *Pericles* or *Cymbeline* are actually Jacobean plays, written long after plays with such a profusion of end-stopped verse as *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The second erroneous assumption is to disregard authorial intention as it is expressed and understood in the design of a literary work. It is possible that *Midsummer Night's Dream* has much end-stopped verse not because it is an early, immature work by an artist who could not conceive a different set of linguistic structures, but because the preponderance of end-stopped forms was consistent with his stylistic preferences or subserved his larger thematic purposes. An informed discussion would explore this possibility before assuming that Shakespeare, in lockstep with the evolving tradition, simply wrote more and more feminine endings as he matured. That he generally did so is, of course, not at issue; the weirdly Baconian idea that such terminations can be used like fingerprints to assign accurate relative dates to the plays (in the absence of more reliable forms of evidence) is.

Apparently, Gary Taylor has forgotten what he wrote in 1989 regarding the basis of stylometrics and, with it, collaboration theory: “texts are made; they become – they do not flash instantaneously into perfect and unalterable being. Over a certain period, an author makes a text; during a later period, in response to internal and external stimuli, the author remakes the same text and the revised text results from a kind of posthumous collaboration between a deceased younger self and a living older self” (359).

In the *Companion's* final and longest chapter (Ch. 25), “The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Works,” a book-length document authored by Taylor and Loughnane, that we see the *Authorship Companion* continues to ignore genuine problems. The Stratfordian authorship case favors their smokescreen of showy terminology-coinage and stylometric approaches not designed with formal linguistics or forensic linguistics' statistical evidentiary methods, both of which produce much more reliable conclusions.

As a general rule, the stylometric method relies on the idea that the bulk of a particular play was written at one particular time, not considering the clear evidence of revisions by the author over time. Stylometric results are easily manipulated if the proper statistically valid controls and objective databases of linguistic variations are not compiled and clearly defined. The authors state that they intend “to offer a comprehensive synthesis of the current state of the art in studies of what Shakespeare wrote, when he wrote it, and – where relevant – who else was involved in the writing” (417). But they do not even come close to being either comprehensive or state of the art, and instead come out with the tired cliché that their retailored “Shakespeare is Shakespeare.”

As we have argued, the OUP *Companion* volume attempts to redefine if not undermine the nature and integrity of the authorial voice. In the process, it seems to ignore the early modern rhetorical concepts of *imitatio* and *emulatio*: that authors borrowed from other accomplished writers and classical models in tribute in order to emulate, to honor by improving. What is not ignored in the final synthesis chapter is the problematic, time-honored, cliché claim that the authorial voice has a Stratfordian identity. In this sense, the *Companion* does little that is new, and its repetition continues to muddy the narrative surrounding what scholars mean by *authorship*.

Although the unwary or uncritical reader may never notice it, many of the ‘facts’ summarized in their final chapter on the canon and its authorship have never been proven and have in many cases long been questioned by many reasonable and well-informed students of Shakespeare. What should be a masterful narrative of the culmination of textual, attribution and bibliographic studies for graduate students, starts by misrepresenting both those responsible for, and the processes that resulted in, the *First Folio*’s publication, in order to represent the *Folio* as a product of group craftsmanship, rather than a work of ‘original’ art. Though there remains no proof of his actual ‘Wrighting,’ Shakspeare is deemed principal playwright of the company. (In this, the OUP editors emphasize a false distinction between craftsmanship/art: their made-up word *wrighting* becomes a coinage to emphasize that the plays are wrighted [crafted] rather than written.)

The will’s afterthought beneficiaries, Heminges and Condell – per the standard SBT/Folger narrative – are vaguely held up as the arbiters of the *First Folio* contents while the other paratext contributors and patrons are completely ignored. Failing to heed their colleagues, Patterson and Dunn’s warnings about overlooking “prefatory rhetoric” and its implications for early modern “authorship and authority,” Taylor and Loughnane fail to help modern students comprehend the key authorial puzzles set forth in the *First Folio* paratexts (Dunn xi).

In the first half of the chapter, the “external evidence” section, long-privileged assumptions about the chronology and its start- and end-dates are mostly taken for granted as the essay imagines why some texts were included and others excluded, backing this by citing external testimony to their authorship, but not explaining with any realistic portrayal, the cruxes involved. The costliness of the printing of the *Folio* is alluded to without any suggestion of who might have funded the project. As usual, the narrative poems’ authorship is discussed without any revelations about how the subject matter is in anyway appropriate to the status of whoever penned them. Indeed, it is hard to know who the editors mean when they say “Shakespeare,” as that seems too problematic for them to aspire to, reducing much of the book to a kind of exercise in late-Stratfordian Proustian futility. Thus, the new *Authorship Companion* demonstrates the irrelevance of the author’s particulars to its purpose.

The chapter’s second section, about “Internal Evidence,” is long in drawing

conclusions about the collaboration studies featured in the volume's 23 chapters as they function as evidence for the book's theory of collaborative workmanship. It is outside the scope of this review essay to address all the flaws and misrepresentations employed in the *New Oxford Shakespeare's* complex of collaboration theorizing. However, it would be more practical to call for Oxfordian and post-Stratfordian scholars to independently review these case studies in light of proper state of the art in scientific/linguistic analysis such as those used by professional forensic linguists – those who identify the authors of texts or documents for court cases by analyzing the language patterns individuals use, and who are required to prove, using Frye or Daubert standards and under cross examination, that their conclusions are robustly scientific.

Such evaluations may help to establish more statistically certain proofs of identity or authorship, or to refute attributions that defy chronological or contextual logic, and to reintroduce excluded authorial samples such as the ample data from Edward de Vere or other relevant candidates as evidence (See, e.g., Fowler 1986).

One thing that is new about this volume is that it does reflect the important current trend to make the world safer for the study of other early modern writers. The idea that the authors have published books on neglected period writers, for example, Middleton, whose reputations they understandably would want to enhance, is reiterated in *The New Yorker* review of the edition by Daniel Pollack-Pelzner: "If Shakespeare worshippers have told one story in order to discredit his contemporary rivals, the *New Oxford* is telling a story that aims to give the credit back" (Pollack-Pelzner). This is obviously a concern or consequence of this trend in collaboration studies, to grant and justify collaboration scholars' turfs, niches and earning opportunities. On the other hand, it also seems designed to aid in a continuing dodge over the historically essential question of the author's actual identity and the opportunities for study and scholarship intrinsic to first identifying the correct author, or at least hypothetically considering alternatives to the hackneyed and dishonest SBT narrative.

Just as James Shapiro, Stanley Wells, and other Stratfordians spend so much time discussing the motives of skeptics rather than the substance of our arguments, one has to wonder at the motivations behind this monumental effort. At 741 pages, the *Authorship Companion* represents an astonishing amount of energy directed at delegitimizing and dethroning Shakespeare. While Taylor says it is a matter of ethics and the sincere desire to give credit where credit is due, it seems intended instead to be a deliberate attempt to pre-empt the actual debate over authorship.

Ultimately, the *Authorship Companion* comes across as profoundly anti-Shakespearean, a triumph of instrumentality over substance. As anti-Stratfordian Lewis Lapham observes in the Spring 2017 issue of *Lapham's Quarterly* ("Discovery"):

Technology is the so arranging of the world that it is the thing that thinks

and the man who is reduced to the state of a thing . . . Our technologies produce continuously improved means toward increasingly ill-defined ends. We have acquired a great many new weapons and information systems, but we don't know at what or at whom to point the digital enhancements . . . Data streams can't connect the dots to anything other than themselves. Watson and Siri can access the Library of Congress, but they can't read books. Machines don't do metaphor. They process words as lifeless objects, not as living subjects, so they don't know what the words mean. Not knowing what the words mean, they can't hack into the civilizing heap of human consciousness (of myth and memory and emotion) that is the making of ourselves as human beings (20).

The Authorship Companion “processes words as lifeless objects” and as such fails more than is usual in the field to capture Shakespeare as a human being – or as Gary Taylor refers to him, “a biological organism named William Shakespeare” (8). *The New Oxford Shakespeare* should therefore not be received as just another edition of Shakespeare's plays. Instead, it is both a statement of something approaching apostasy and a desperate attempt to persuade the reader that Shakespeare orthodoxy still has relevance and authority. While the editors and contributors of *The Authorship Companion* are finally conceding that there is an authorship question, their eagerness to diminish, dismiss and dethrone Shakespeare in the name of retaining their grip on the terms of debate over authorship indicates that they seem to be willing to destroy Shakespeare in order to save him.

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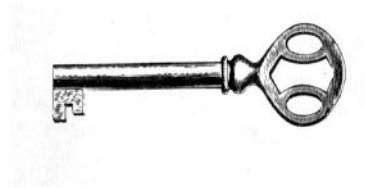
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The Shakespeare Authorship Mystery Explained

Reviewed by David Haskins

The Shakespeare Authorship Mystery Explained. By Geoffrey Eyre. Mardle Publications, 2017.
(\$15.50 US)

You're right from your side and I'm right from mine,
We're both just one too many mornings and a thousand miles behind.
Bob Dylan, "One Too Many Mornings"

Mr. Dylan, whose own name is a pseudonym, might have been talking about the Shakespeare Authorship Question in those lines. I've seen video of a Stratfordian academic dismissing the opposition with a supercilious shrug as being not worthy of his attention. I've seen an Oxfordian driven to tears on camera by the injustice of his candidate's not being recognized for the achievement accorded to Shakespeare. People take this debate seriously indeed.

Into this dispute strides Geoffrey Eyre with his new primer *The Shakespeare Authorship Mystery Explained*. In clear language, free from bombast, he lays down for the beginner an introduction to the relevant historical background, the known facts of William Shakspere of Stratford's life, the probable dating of the plays, the alternative candidates, and a summary of what is not known about the bard. For every argument he presents, he includes its shortcomings.

Structurally, Eyre's book begins with a *Coles Notes* approach to the times, a study guide dividing the Elizabethan age into short passages of information which vary in length from a paragraph to two pages, affording the reader the pleasure of white space to catch his breath between sub-topics. In fact, the whole book is divided into mini-subjects within chapters, each given its own heading, and none longer than necessary to make the reading easy. The book is written in an unpretentious style that clarifies the many details in an otherwise overwhelmingly complex subject.

Eyre begins by exploring the historical context of the plays, starting with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, which shut down the overland trading route and opened up the sea route to the Orient. Relevance? Sea navigation requires mathematics and astronomy, discreet areas of higher learning necessary for the writer of the plays to have acquired. Now the lack of evidence resonates; there are no records of Shakespeare ever having attended King Edward VI Grammar School in Stratford-upon-Avon, or any university. Neither is there evidence that he attended court, travelled outside the country, served in any military campaign, befriended high ranking members of the aristocracy, or did anything to gain the experience and learning some say the playwright would have needed. In this way, Eyre builds his argument, brick by brick.

Other historical factors Eyre discusses are trade with newly discovered America, the preeminence of London, the conflict between Catholic and Protestant factions, and the developing supremacy of the English language. As interesting as these are, they are background, and how they affect authorship is largely unresolved. Again, Eyre brings up what didn't happen to shed light on what might have happened; for example, why were Protestant executions of some sixty women burned to death under Mary Tudor (1553-1558) not used by the writer as plot points? Any answer to this question requires a level of conjecture beyond the bounds of reasoned argument.

Eyre can also indulge his expert knowledge of British history perhaps excessively. Piling on historical fact after fact creates an impressive weight of apparent evidence that may do little more than provide context for the times but say nothing about who wrote the plays. That is, until the Percy family uprising of 1569-1570 in *Henry IV*. Was de Vere there? Did the author of the plays witness battles and war (Eyre notes that de Vere served in the campaign against Spain), or did he lift the knowledge of them from Greek and Latin dramas?

Could Shakespeare even read the obvious sources on which the plays were formed, from Plutarch's *Lives*, to Ovid's *Metamorphosis* to Holinshed's *Chronicles*, to Boccaccio, to dated editions of the Bible? He would have needed Latin, Greek, Italian, and French to read them and a university's or an aristocrat's library to find them.

Evidence trumps supposition, and evidence is notoriously slight. Much has been

David Haskins emigrated from England to Canada in 1953 at a young age. He holds an Honours BA in English from McMaster University and a M. Ed from the University of Toronto. His teaching career spans thirty-five years, mostly in secondary schools with five years as the Department Head of English. His other writings include a creative writing text, theatre reviews for a Toronto arts newspaper and memoir pieces. His last book was *This House is Condemned*, which came out from Wolsak and Wynn (Hamilton, ON) in 2013. He is currently preparing three books: of poems, short stories, and a children's fantasy novel. He is the custodian and occasional driver of a red 1970 MGB.

made of the lack of Shakespeare's attendance records at the grammar school where Latin was likely taught to prepare boys for the civil service or the protestant clergy. However, saying there are no surviving attendance records is not evidence that neither he nor anyone else did not attend. Neither does the fact that his will never mentioned any books mean he did not possess any. (There is not one book mentioned in my will, though my house is insulated with books.) A lack of evidence is not in itself persuasive of one thing or another.

Eyre sows the seeds of doubt to set us up for the big reveal in the penultimate chapter given over to Edward de Vere, the seventeenth earl of Oxford, as the candidate most favoured in the twentieth century. It's a progression that works: establish the historical circumstances that make possible the writing of the plays, cast doubts on William Shakespeare's identity, set up and tear down the straw men alternates one by one, and then give us what emerges as the most likely candidate with only the weakest of objections, concluding with a reminder list of everything we don't know about William Shakespeare just to let us know we should not go back there once we've left.

He does this in a style that is clear, accessible, and erudite. He neither panders to the various cheering sections, nor rails against the entrenched traditionalists or noisy revolutionaries. He writes without sarcasm or invective, and shies away from personally engaging the fanatical voices that are out there. His overview is comprehensive and believable, presented from both supportive and critical points of view. It is also free of footnotes, but fully indexed for quick reference. The book may be appropriately included on reading lists of freshmen Shakespeare courses, but not cited in doctoral theses. Tailored for more of a public market than an academic one, it leaves us with a bibliography of 44 titles by the main proponents of both sides, should the reader wish to pursue the debate further. The book is closely organized into short sections readable in short time limits that yields interesting points to ponder but may tend to lose the trajectory of the larger argument Eyre is building.

There are occasions where Eyre pads his points with the rhetoric of debate. He may introduce a position he supports with a phrase like, "Without deducing too much from too little..." (Isn't that for the reader to judge?), or "Few would disagree..." (Taken literally, this would support Shakspeare of Stratford as the writer, which is opposite to Eyre's intention), or "the only explanation which serves..." (serves whom and to what end?) These lapses are as far as he will go in inferring a hypothetical truth from an absence of direct evidence. They are rare, however, and do not erode the integrity of his argument.

At times, the details fail to connect with the question of authorship. Much is made of the problem of dating the plays. Eyre states that Shakspeare's first visit to London was in the 1590's, and traces acting companies through deaths and ownership mergers (the Warwickshire businessman owned a share in the Globe theatre in 1599), but leaves us to do the math to figure out what this proves. What is not discussed is that

play scripts of the day mostly did not exist in numbers, but were truncated to hold only an actor's lines and cues for quick study.

To give his argument weight, Eyre lists facts which individually may be coincidences but taken collectively seem something to be reckoned with. Questions of identity abound everywhere: in the six surviving signatures with their different handwriting and spellings, in the altered images and busts, one exchanging a trader's sack of wheat for a writer's quill pen, and so on. We have no authentically sourced portrait of Shakespeare. Not one manuscript page from the plays and poems has survived. There is no mention of any literary bequests in his will, nor any literary claim upon it by members of his family. Upon his death, not one of some twenty contemporary playwrights acknowledged his genius in a tribute. There is no recorded mention of his death in either Stratford or London. Nothing of a literary nature has ever been found in Stratford-upon-Avon connecting the man to the work. He could barely write his own name. He is not named in the cast of any play in any theatre. There is no record of payment to him as either actor or writer. And so on. What academic would risk her career arguing for a pseudonym based on these oddities of circumstance?

It is of course possible to attribute to the writer all kinds of talents from genius to specialized expertise in areas as diverse as legal, medical, courtly protocols, weaponry and battle, languages, customs and cultures of other places, familiarity with historical sources, and so on, and still not have posited a word about William Shakspeare of Stratford., but about the person who took his name as a pseudonym. Supporting such a hypothesis are the need for protection from censorship and persecution for treasonous or unflattering portrayals of the monarchy through comparison with parallel histories of earlier times. Subjecting one's identity to such threats would be reckless. A pseudonym whose secret was kept would solve the problem.

Can it be proven that Shakespeare had never been to Italy, did not learn Latin or Greek at grammar school, was never invited to the royal court, and so could not have acquired the knowledge required to write these plays? Or are there other explanations for each of these problematic points?

In the next section, much space is given to the dating of the plays. The relevance of this exercise to the authorship question is not always clear. Could *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* have been written by anyone who had not visited northern Italy? How did Shakespeare acquire the legal terminology used in *The Comedy of Errors*? Did he find work as a law clerk during his so-called "lost years" between Stratford and London? Can a play be dated as early simply because it uses a high proportion of rhyme? And when a play shows similarity with another play, how does one tell which play came first, which play borrowed from the other? *Much Ado About Nothing* and John Lyly's *Endimion*, seem to have been an influence on each other. Similarly, *As You Like It* and Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde*, *Richard II* and Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* all present

this dilemma of mutual influence.

The following chapter on alternate candidates is not much help either. Obviously if a candidate were dead when the play was written, he must be eliminated. A table of plays dated according to Eyre's calculations might clarify this, just as a comparison chart of the eligible candidates along the lines of a consumer chart for comparing like products might eliminate at a glance those with poorer showings in the chosen categories. Eyre might be sympathetic to such illustrative aids since the book is peppered with lists of plays and their geographic locations, of contemporary writers, of plays grouped by genre or publication, and with graphics of the signatures, the portraits, and the paintings.

Now Eyre has us look at the alternate candidates to see if any one of them could amass the knowledge, skill, background in law and medicine, techniques of dramaturgy, sophistication of language, and all the rest, and still remain undisclosed for 400+ years.

Where the book shows its colours is in the chapter on Edward de Vere, separated out from the straw-men and also-rans of the previous chapter. Here Eyre expounds on the many congruent points between the plays and the man, the likelihood that de Vere possessed the knowledge a Shakespeare would need, the travel experience that would background the plays, ten of which were set in Italy, the time and wherewithal to write the canon, and so many coincidental matches that a bullet list might have made a more easily grasped presentation than the unbroken prose he chose for this section.

If the reason to doubt that William Shakspere of Stratford wrote these works is the almost complete lack of evidence that he did, then the reason to support Edward de Vere as the author is exactly the evidence that he had every advantage, experience and opportunity to do so. Just as Eyre piles up in point form the list of "there is no record of..." in his Summary page as his final salvo in establishing that the authorship is not known, so in the chapter on de Vere does he pile up fact after fact until we are, if not persuaded, at least sympathetic to him as the primary candidate.

At twelve years old Edward de Vere inherited the earldom, and office of Lord Great Chamberlain. He was summoned to London by Queen Elizabeth for his protection until he was twenty-one. De Vere spent nine years as a royal ward in proximity of high level contacts that would help him sustain a writing career. William Cecil, his guardian, spoke classical Greek, Latin, and French, and provided daily tuition for de Vere in these. Cecil's library contained many works cited as sources for the plays. De Vere revived his father's acting group. He commissioned an English version of the philosophical *Cardanus Comforte* in 1573 – Hamlet carries it in his "to be or not to be" speech. De Vere was attacked by pirates, as was Hamlet. Polonius could have been modeled on William Cecil. On his way to bankruptcy, de Vere lost 3000

pounds – Antonio borrowed 3000 ducats from Shylock which he could not repay. De Vere had one legitimate son Henry, and one illegitimate son Edward; in *King Lear*, Gloucester has one legitimate son Edgar and one illegitimate son Edmund. Lear has three daughters and parcels out his territories to them, causing his downfall; de Vere has three daughters and had to sell the 500 year old ancestral home of the Vere family to pay for their dowries. Family members, wealthy aristocrats, could have put together the *First Folio* edition after his death. And so on, making the autobiographical references to de Vere as author convincing.

One of the more interesting facts in support of de Vere is that the author of *Venus and Adonis* (1593) must have seen the only replica painting by Titian which portrays Adonis wearing the peaked cap mentioned in the poem. And de Vere could have visited Titian's studio in Venice and seen that very painting. There is no evidence that the Shakspeare of Stratford ever left England. De Vere, however, went to Florence, Genoa, Mantua, Milan, Naples, Padua, Rome, Sienna, Venice, Verona, and Palermo. Thirty plays are set in whole or in part outside England.

Not all interpretations of evidence weigh equally. The French translation of *The Winter's Tale*, a title for a play which is not about winter, is *Le Conte d'hiver*, which to some minds might echo the similar sounding de Vere name.

What we have here is a book about what is not known, what cannot be proven, what might have taken place. Geoffrey Eyre covers the ground, presents the arguments, does justice to the alternates, and makes it all seem possible in the doing. That the subject is so significant, namely, who was the greatest English speaking writer of all time, and that a lack of proof befalls both the Shakespeare name and the de Vere alternate theory, leads this reviewer to one conclusion. Wait and see.

Eyre assumes that the true identity of the man who was William Shakespeare is "irretrievably lost." I think that if the bones of Richard III can be discovered buried under a parking lot in 2012, five hundred years after he was killed, who can say what might yet turn up four hundred years after the plays were written?

Shakespeare the Man

Reviewed by Sky Gilbert

Shakespeare the Man: New Decipherings. Edited by R.W. Desai. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014. 308 pages.

Shakespeare the Man is a collection of twelve essays on various topics that attempt to relate the life of the Stratford man to Shakespeare's plays. Unfortunately, these essays are of very little value. Yet the book has already been accepted by the Stratfordian establishment. The only review of *Shakespeare The Man* available at time of writing was from *Choice Magazine*, an associate publishing division of the Association of College and Research Libraries, which states: "The conjectures and religious evidence are well worth reading. Recommended. Graduate students, researchers, faculty." By blithely placing 'conjecture' and 'religious evidence' together, this review conflates fact and fiction. Desai also does this in his introduction: "the essays in this collection may be regarded as forays of informed speculation, or intuitive recreation" (ix).

Now, Donald Trump may have recently invented 'alternative facts,' but there's still no excuse for an academic publication – recommended to university professors and students alike – that treats 'information' and 'recreation' as synonyms. In point of fact, the ideas in this book are mostly wild, unsubstantiated, irrelevant conjecture. However, an analysis of *Shakespeare the Man* does offer valuable insight on how not to analyze Shakespeare's work. And it provides a useful warning to Oxfordians – or anyone interested in Shakespeare and the authorship question.

Desai in the introductory essay equates the essays in *Shakespeare the Man* with New Historicism:

Accordingly, while this collection of essays does take cognizance of striking linkages between the literature and the art, these are embedded within the matrix of what may be seen as a wider background, thus employing a New Historicism methodology that includes the circumstance that most probably conditioned his writing as well as his personal life. (xx)

Unfortunately Desai does not fully understand New Historicism. In *Renaissance*

Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare, Stephen Greenblatt concisely explains the New Historicism methodology saying that his work on early modern authors began when he attempted

to analyze the choices they made in representing themselves and fashioning their characters . . . But as my work progressed, I perceived that fashioning oneself and being fashioned by cultural institutions – family, religion state – were inexplicably intertwined.” (256)

The process here is clear. Greenblatt begins with the writer and analyzes, let’s say, a play by Marlowe, but later fans out to examine early modern cultural attitudes and institutions, and their effects on the work. The question often asked about New Historicism is: why bother to put the work in historical context at all? Why not concentrate on the text? Well, consider the oft-heard critique of Shakespeare’s work that it is ‘sexist.’ By present-day standards it certainly is. But in the context of his time Shakespeare forged quite a revolutionary pro-female stance. Shakespeare’s Venus (of *Venus and Adonis*) is singular for her time as an aggressive, desiring woman who is nevertheless sympathetic. And *Lucrece* (in Shakespeare’s poem of the same name) is arguably the first literary instance of a discussion of rape from a woman’s point of view. Thus New Historicism, when properly employed, helps us examine plays from the early modern period more clearly, by placing them in context.

However, the essays in *Shakespeare the Man* – instead of employing New Historicism – reverse the technique. They do not begin with the text and then fan out to the culture, instead they begin with the alleged facts of the life of the man from Stratford, and attempt to interpret Shakespeare’s work. Needless to say, this is not an effective scholarly method; it requires that they bend the work out of shape to fit the fact of the Stratford man’s life. I consider myself an Oxfordian, but I would never use the facts of Edward de Vere’s life – as fascinating as their connection to Shakespeare’s work might be – as a method of interpreting the plays. *Shakespeare the Man* harbours a perhaps not-so-hidden agenda, which is to find proof in the plays that the author is a small-time businessman from Stratford – a person who, depressed by the death of his son later in life, abandoned the extravagant trappings and false disguises of theatre, to find something deeper, a Lutheran redemption, because he was firmly Christian.

Sky Gilbert is a writer, director, teacher, and drag queen extraordinaire. He is the co-founder and was the artistic director of Toronto’s Buddies in Bad Times Theatre for seventeen years. He has had more than forty plays produced, and has written seven critically acclaimed novels and three award winning poetry collections. He has received three Dora Mavor Moore Awards (Toronto’s ‘Tonys’). There is a street in Toronto named after him: ‘Sky Gilbert Lane.’ Dr. Gilbert is a Professor at The School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph. His collection of anti-essays *Small Things* will be published in 2018 by Guernica Press.

Of course confirmed facts about the life of the man from Stratford are few. We know he was a pecunious and litigious businessman, that he married an older woman, that he had three children (one of whom, Hamnet, died young), and that his father unsuccessfully pursued a family crest which the man from Stratford was able, finally, to secure. We also know that a man named Shakespeare may have been involved in various acting companies in London, as he was paid as an actor in small parts.

In “But I Have Within that Passeth Show: Shakespeare’s Ambivalence towards His Profession” Desai notes records show that Shakespeare the actor played only small parts (Adam and the Ghost of Hamlet’s father, later in life). The thrust of Desai’s thesis is that after the death of his son Hamnet, the man from Stratford lost interest in the theatre. This is why he suggests that the last tragedies are lacklustre, compared to *Hamlet* – “the tragic figures who come after Hamlet – Othello, Lear Antony, Cleopatra, Lear, Timon, Coriolanus – are, when compared to Hamlet, simple-minded, non-intellectual, non-complex characters” (103). This is simply not true. These tragic characters are incredibly introspective and complex. Desai also says “evidence from the Sonnets of Shakespeare’s distaste for his profession has, of course, been noted in Shakespearean criticism, but as far as I am aware, the presence of such an attitude in Hamlet has never been suggested” (101). For someone who claims to be familiar with New Historicism, this is a perplexing statement. In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* Greenblatt speaks extensively about the early modern distrust of disguise and representation, a distrust that found its way not only into early modern anti-theatricalist writers like Stephen Gosson but into early modern plays as well. Shakespeare’s work, like the work of many of his contemporaries, is replete with suspicion about the dangers of theatre, art and representation. Desai is not the first to notice this, and these views in *Hamlet* certainly don’t represent a change in Shakespeare’s attitudes. Indeed, Shakespeare’s love/hate relationship with beauty, poetry, art, disguise and representation is a consistent theme that pervades all his work.

In “Outbraving Luther: Shakespeare’s Final Evolution through the Tragedies to the Last Plays” John O’Meara also asserts here was a change in Shakespeare’s outlook late in life which meant that Shakespeare “would finally abandon writing comedies (there would be no more comedies after *Twelfth Night*)” (158). This point is more than debatable. Leaving aside the vexed issue of dating the plays, it could easily be argued that the late romances are significantly comic. At any rate, O’Meara attributes what he sees as Shakespeare’s lack of interest in comedy late in life to a profound disillusionment related to his discovery of Martin Luther. Citing (but not detailing) the many references to Martin Luther in *Hamlet*, O’Meara goes on to say of Shakespeare, that “because of the remarkable transformation he does go through, he could not have remained a tragic skeptic” (160). According to Desai, his discovery of Luther caused Shakespeare to fully understand the baseness of human sexuality: “It was easy to see, at the same time, how Luther’s emphasis on our ineradicable

human depravity would absorb a large part of the humanity of that era tragically, and from *Hamlet* onwards, that view, it would seem, came to absorb Shakespeare tragically” (162). O’Meara proceeds further to contend that Shakespeare found an unconventional way to escape this hopelessness, as his later plays show that “by no obvious route at all, does Shakespeare imagine his way beyond this point of utter hopelessness” (167). O’Meara believes Shakespeare’s later plays demonstrate redemption through sacrifice. But whether or not one believes the late tragedies offer redemption or skepticism, it’s difficult to prove that Shakespeare made a progressive inner emotional movement from the former to the latter later in life (due to Luther, or not).

This idea about Shakespeare as a kind of ‘late Lutheran’ is consistent with the commitment in *Shakespeare The Man* to paint a picture of a very Christian bard. Whether ultimately Shakespeare was Catholic or Protestant is left to the reader to decide. The essays in *Shakespeare the Man* go to great lengths to prove Shakespeare’s Christian leanings. Suhajit Sen Gupta in “Look in the Calendar” argues, as does Foker in the final essay, that Shakespeare set his plays in pagan environments not because he himself was pagan, but in order to write in code about the controversial enmity between Catholics and Protestants that so dominated the era. Thus Calpurnia’s visions in *Julius Caesar* – which are treated with some skepticism by other characters in the play – are really about Catholic visionaries in early modern England who were treated with skepticism by Puritans. Gupta’s theory is highly improbable. For if we place the paganism in *Julius Caesar* in the context of the many pagan settings, images, metaphors and ideas that crowd Shakespeare’s work, it seems unlikely that this kind of Christian proselytizing is the only explanation for Calpurnia’s nightmares. Indeed a close examination of Shakespeare’s plays reveals that the author employs fairies and witches and other supernatural beings with alarming consistency – at least from a modern Christian perspective. And never is there a sense that Shakespeare is challenging the presence of these pagan beings because of his Christian beliefs. More significantly, Shakespeare’s work is free of Christian didacticism which pervades the work of his preaching peers, Sidney and Spenser. If anything Shakespeare’s obsession with love and beauty reveals a knowledge of, and perhaps interest in, neoplatonism.

But even the ludicrousness of this analysis is surpassed by several bizarre attempts in *Shakespeare the Man* to articulate a fundamental relationship between the mundane world of business and the aesthetic flowering of a young artist. In the second essay, Joseph Candido paints a picture of Shakespeare as a ‘Willy Loman-esque’ figure. He says “the vibrant world of monetary exchange was one, moreover to which the young William Shakespeare was unusually close” (18). Candido sees the world of finance as melodramatic or nearly tragic. Apparently not only do “trade, commerce and the like manifest themselves in Shakespeare’s plays” but the sad tale of the man from Stratford’s father’s disappointment at not acquiring a family coat of arms

became, for Shakespeare, the inspiration for the bard's great tragedies.

The third essay continues this train of thought. R.S. White is confused by the *Sonnets*. He is particularly perplexed by their lack of straightforward narrative, which he proposes was not likely to have been intentional. White's theory is that Shakespeare – like any enterprising entrepreneur during the deadly plague years, apparently – was driven to write a “successful long prose romance with embedded songs, sonnets, elegies, complaints, and other poems which would hit the fashion and make some money [so] . . . he devised a story linking several fictional characters” (52). Alas, according to White, he was never able to finish this project, which is why the sonnets don't make sense. The ever-mysterious sonnets, that have hypnotized us for four centuries – explained away as a money-making scheme that didn't quite work out? I suppose there have been less rewarding sonnet theories, but it's difficult to think of one.

However there are two essays in this book which make particularly ridiculous assumptions based on extremely scanty evidence and convoluted imaginings. They deserve note because of their implications for Shakespeare scholarship. Shormistha Panja in ““Those lips which loves own hand did make”: Anne Hathaway and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*” offers a psychoanalytical portrait of the Stratford man, suggesting that *Venus and Adonis* – in which an older woman attempts to seduce a young man – was likely inspired by the man from Stratford's marriage to the older Anne Hathaway. And in another essay “Shakespeare's Churches” Lisa Hopkins observes that when the Stratford man was living in London, he stayed with a family named Mountjoy, whose home was near St. Olaf's church on Silver Street. Hopkins reveals that the character of Hamlet may be based on a real person named Anlaf Cuaran – also known as Olaf. He concludes that the character of Hamlet was named after St. Olaf's church – which the man from Stratford must have passed every day.

The level of scholarship in these two essays is particularly low. Their argument is something akin to ‘Of course there is a God. I mean, can you actually prove there isn't?’ Certainly, it is possible that if in fact that man from Stratford was Shakespeare, then Anne Hathaway could have been the inspiration for Venus in *Venus and Adonis*. And it is certainly possible, again that if the man from Stratford was Shakespeare that he might have decided to name Hamlet after a church in London that was familiar to him. Yes, of course all this is possible. But how can it ever be proved? And much more significantly, what is accomplished by this kind of conjecture? At best, it turns us away from the text. Instead of looking at what Shakespeare actually wrote, we end up twisting and bending the work to make it fit his imaginary life. It's possible that Oxfordians have spurred this desperate speculation. After all, it is so terribly easy for Oxfordians to find links between Edward de Vere's life and Shakespeare's work. Might this have sent Stratfordians into a panic, desperate to, at all costs, uncover even a casual link between the life of the man from Stratford and the writings of William Shakespeare?

The final essay (also the longest essay in the book) is “Was Shakespeare a ‘Church Papist’ or a Prayer Book Anglican?” by Charles R. Foker. It contains valuable historical facts concerning material manifestations of the hostility between Catholics, Anglicans, and Puritans in early modern England. Foker resists speculation on Shakespeare’s religious beliefs or his personal life. He spends some time detailing the strategies employed by Catholics to practice their faith in early modern England. He also makes it clear that the conflict between Puritans and Anglicans had much to do with rituals – the performance – of religion. Anglicans were nostalgic for the more theatrical aspects of religion, and Puritans were opposed to a religion that was theatrical. This tension over the question of external beauty versus internal virtue, is one of most persistent themes in Shakespeare’s work.

The fifth essay in *Shakespeare the Man* is Gupta’s “Look in the Calendar: *Julius Caesar* and Shakespeare’s Cultural-political Moment.” Gupta dismisses the post-structuralist theory commonly referred to as death of the author. Gupta suggests that if one deems the author irrelevant then the work will have “no determinate meaning” (86). But stripping the work of meaning is not the purpose of the death of the author theory. Foucault, for instance, speaks of the author function to remind us that by identifying the author we may limit interpretation. This is certainly true for *Shakespeare the Man* – which seriously limits the possibilities for interpretation by focusing only on the aspects of Shakespeare’s work that seem related to the life of the man from Stratford. Barthes (in his ‘death of the author’ theory) would have us open ourselves to a very different experience – where there are many possibilities for understanding, so that readers become (in a sense) authors themselves. This is very relevant to Shakespeare, whose polysemous word usage invites so many different interpretations.

Like the Shakespeare literary establishment, *Shakespeare the Man* ignores so much, at its peril. Indeed, what began as the concerted Stratfordian strategy to ignore Edward de Vere, has now reached its sad apotheosis in a deliberate attempt to ignore Shakespeare’s work itself.

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Shakespeare and Psychoanalytic Theory

Reviewed by Richard M. Waugaman

Shakespeare and Psychoanalytic Theory. by Carolyn E. Brown, London: Bloomsbury, 2015.

One might form the overall impression from this book that psychoanalytic Shakespeareans tend to begin with one or another psychoanalytic theory, then find ways to apply it to Shakespeare's plays. To her credit, Carolyn E. Brown herself recognizes this risk. Such reductionism is a risk with all theory-driven approaches to Shakespeare. Psychoanalysts lessen analogous risks in their clinical work by allowing the patient's material to shape the analyst's interpretations, rather than blindly imposing one theory or another on the clinical data. In the case of Shakespeare, we must be faithful to the text.

We can also turn to Shakespeare's psychological genius to discover new insights into the mind, that may have been overlooked by psychoanalytic theory. Shakespeare has anticipated insights that later came from the psychoanalytic study of couples, families, and groups. As an example, scholars have discovered that the more closely Shakespeare's text is read (especially in the *Sonnets*), the more hidden layers of meaning are unlocked. Freud focused on the child's oedipal conflicts, downplaying the "Laius complex" of the father, whereas Shakespeare forces us to confront an overtly incestuous father in *Pericles*. Shakespeare also demonstrates an awareness with what are now considered our multiple, normative self states.

In explaining the recent turn away from Freud in Shakespeare studies, Brown lists several attacks on his theory in general, and his approach to Shakespeare in particular. Some scholars consider it improper to view literary characters as comparable to real people. This is ironic, considering the widespread agreement that Shakespeare's characters come close to literary perfection, in their verisimilitude. One suspects there may be a "turf" aspect to this criticism of Freud, since psychoanalysts have something to say about real people, and literary theorists may not want us encroaching on their territory.

Brown writes that "Shakespearean psychoanalytic criticism burgeoned in the 1980s. But it experienced a set-back in 1986 when Stephen Greenblatt published an essay¹ that posits the Renaissance view of identity differs from that of psychoanalytic theory" (69). However, Greenblatt begins with the clarification that "I do not propose that we abandon the attempts at psychologically deep readings of Renaissance texts" (Greenblatt, 221). And Brown notes that, following Greenblatt's essay, many studies

“set out to prove that the early modern period and its literature share attitudes consistent with those of psychoanalytic theory” (91).

Brown defends psychoanalysis from Greenblatt’s critique, at length. She cites the value of Freud’s elucidation of characters’ unconscious conflicts and motives. She says that many current Shakespeare scholars, such as Carol Neely, show that psychological approaches to Shakespeare’s works are still valid. After reviewing numerous refutations of Greenblatt’s essay, she concludes that they offer “solid, tangible proof for a close connection between psychoanalysis and...Shakespeare” (106). Brown might have added that Freud was building on the genius of creative writers, especially Shakespeare. Other writers have not always received adequate credit for their penetrating psychological insights. George Eliot, for example, was especially astute about the unconscious mind – she refers to the “unconscious” dozens of times in her novels, often in the psychoanalytic sense of the word as the dynamic unconscious, not merely in its earlier sense of “unaware.” Brown further explains that psychoanalytic readings of Shakespeare find his characters so life-like that it is legitimate to speculate about their earlier lives, based on the text. Some Shakespeare scholars condemn this, as they do efforts to learn more about the author (more on the author later).

According to Brown, Cynthia Marshall refutes Greenblatt in an especially interesting way, “by suggesting the birth of individualism in the Renaissance was not as smooth or complete as he has argued” (103). Marshall “examines some of the literary instances of reversion [from individualism] that ‘shattered’ rather than affirmed selfhood” (104). She believes that Shakespeare raised theatrical sadomasochism to new heights. Moments such as the nearly unbearable on-stage blinding of Gloucester are, Marshall posits, sadistically gratifying when the audience can identify with the perpetrators. Borrowing from Lacan, she maintains that such moments lead the audience’s sense of identity to be “pleasurably shattered” (104). Insofar as she is correct, perhaps this results from the emergence of usually dissociated sadomasochistic self states in the audience.

The final third of the book shifts from the literature review of the earlier chapters, to

Richard M. Waugaman M.D. is Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and 2012-2016 Faculty Expert on Shakespeare for Media Contacts at Georgetown University. He is also Training and Supervising Analyst, Emeritus at the Washington Psychoanalytic Institute. His 175 publications include some 75 works on Shakespeare. His two ebooks are Newly Discovered Works by “William Shake-Speare,” a.k.a. Edward de Vere and It’s Time to Re-Vere the Works of “William Shake-Speare”: A Psychoanalyst Reads the Works of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. He is indebted to Roger Stritmatter’s research on de Vere’s Geneva Bible for interesting him in Oxfordian research. An earlier version of this review was published in the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* (2017), and is reprinted here with that journal’s kind permission.

Brown's original work. She presents her astute commentary on *All's Well that Ends Well*, sensitively applying psychoanalytic thinking to Helena's sexualized relationship with her father, and its displacement onto Bertram. Her close reading of the text parallels close listening in clinical psychoanalysis. She returns to classical psychoanalytic observations, and makes rich use of them in understanding Shakespeare. For example, she cites Freud's observations about the splitting of consciousness and of personal identity after sexual abuse, and she applies these concepts to Helena's contradictory behavior. Brown comes close to our current understanding of dissociative identity disorder – e.g., when she writes that Helena “switches” between her different “side[s]” (127).

In her chapter on *Romeo and Juliet*, Brown seems to create a false dichotomy between hetero- and homosexuality. She calls it “tragic” (163) that scholars have overlooked the homosexual themes in this play, while she herself overlooks the role of bisexuality in it. As a result, she sees heterosexuality in Romeo and Mercutio solely as a “reaction formation” against homoerotic impulses, rather than part of a bisexual mixture of genuinely heterosexual and genuinely homosexual feelings. Whatever validity Brown's thesis may have, she damages her credibility by taking her ideas too far. Literary theory seems vulnerable to such misreadings, based on over-emphasis of only one aspect of a text in order to promote the author's favored theory. Freud's discovery of over-determination can protect us from mistaking a part for the whole.

In her brief epilogue, Brown emphasizes the compatibility of psychoanalysis with many other literary theories. She hopes Shakespeare's female characters will become better understood, as we deepen our understanding of Shakespeare's complex attitudes toward women. Brown ends on an optimistic note, saying she believes “psychoanalytic theory will continue to be at the forefront of Shakespearean studies” (167).

Finally, I come to a surprising feature of this book. Its author, despite her impressive knowledge of Freud's views on Shakespeare's works, seems naively unaware of Freud's pivotal opinion on Shakespeare's identity. For example, she writes that Freud “believes Hamlet reflects Shakespeare's coming to terms with his father's and his son's deaths” (18). This was an opinion that Freud explicitly repudiated, once he accepted the 1920 theory that Shakespeare was the pen name of Edward de Vere. Much of the book becomes more plausible only when it is connected with Freud's conclusion that de Vere was the actual author. For example, Brown credits Otto Rank with connecting Hamlet's Oedipus conflicts with Polonius as a father figure, who blocks Hamlet's interest in Polonius's daughter Ophelia. The prototype for Polonius was none other than de Vere's “father figure” – his guardian William Cecil, after his father died when de Vere was twelve, and de Vere's father-in-law after he married Cecil's daughter Anne. The original name for Polonius was “Corambis,” a mocking allusion to Cecil's motto “Cor unum, via una.”²²

Brown's omission of Freud's deeply held conviction that Edward de Vere wrote the Shakespeare canon is a bit like the Catholic Church writing a survey of the influence of Galileo, while omitting his heliocentric theory – or the British government writing a study of George Washington that fails to mention that he led the Colonial forces against Britain in the Revolutionary War. This omission exemplifies the covertly anti-intellectual implications of the widespread scholarly taboo against acknowledging challenges to the Stratfordian authorship theory.

This groupthink-generated taboo may help explain the attacks on psychobiography that Brown describes in Shakespeare scholarship, even when that scholarship is heavily influenced by psychoanalysis. It is difficult for clinical psychoanalysts to imagine that any human activity can be divorced from the psychology of the protagonists. Yet Shakespeare scholars need to divorce the works of Shakespeare from the life of the Stratford merchant who they insist is their author. Among their many blind spots is their apparent unawareness that a psychobiographical approach exposes the weakness of their authorship theory. When critics such as C.L. Barber try to link the Shakespeare canon with the life of the Stratford merchant, the results are naturally unconvincing. Yet Barber and R.P. Wheeler hit the nail on the head when they noted that Shakespeare himself, like Hamlet, uses “his art for theatrical aggression” (55). But they fail to explain how the Stratford merchant could possibly have gotten away with that, in an era that regularly punished playwrights for offending state power in their plays. Freud introduced the concept of psychic determinism,³ and his conviction that de Vere wrote Shakespeare's works flows naturally from abundant evidence that de Vere's life experiences fit the literary works like Cinderella's foot fits her glass slipper. By contrast, Stratfordians resemble Cinderella's step-sisters when they try to get the works to fit their authorship candidate, so they wisely, if disingenuously, attack the genre of psychobiography itself.

Related to attacks on psychobiography are attacks on psychoanalytic studies that treat Shakespeare's characters as though they are actual people. Of course they are fictions. But they are so life-like that it is indeed fruitful to assume the author imbued them with the psychological conflicts of actual people. Stratfordian Shakespeare scholars may have a shared unconscious wish that the author himself would be more fictive than real; if so, denying his characters are real would be a displacement from this unconscious fantasy. It is as though they are pleading, “Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.” Brown says that it is now literary scholars, not psychoanalysts, who are writing most psychoanalytic Shakespearean studies, and that they are more eclectic in their use of a variety of analytic theories. Allegedly, they are willing to compare Shakespeare's characters with real people, but they “do not speculate about the shadowy childhoods of Shakespeare's characters when the texts make no mention of them” (49). But what psychoanalyst would refrain from speculating about a patient's childhood, even if the patient made “no mention” of it?

Let me return to Greenblatt's 1986 critique of psychoanalytic Shakespearean studies. Greenblatt's influential chapter focuses on mistaken identity – from the story of Martin Guerre, to mistaken identity in Shakespeare's works. Greenblatt is silent about the fact that the traditional authorship theory involves yet another case of mistaken identity. However, he does emphasize that Renaissance notions of identity were closely linked with a person's property – “purse and person are here inextricably linked” (220). As they certainly were, we might add, for noblemen such as Edward de Vere, whose very title of “Earl of Oxford” alluded to his hereditary property. Greenblatt even admits that “precisely this interest [in identity and property] is voiced, tested, and deepened throughout Shakespeare's career . . . I think property may be closer to the wellsprings of the Shakespearean conception of identity than we imagine” (220). If Greenblatt is correct, it is inadvertently yet another powerful argument for de Vere's authorship of the works of Shakespeare, since he spent his adult life in trying to protect his ownership of the 368 estates he inherited on the death of his father when he was twelve, from a predatory wardship system that, with Queen Elizabeth's tacit consent, robbed him of much of his inheritance.⁴ It would thus be natural for de Vere to link identity with property.

I suspect that the turn away from psychoanalytic approaches to Shakespeare was also influenced by Freud's role in promoting skepticism as to the traditional theory of Shakespeare's identity. In 1984, a widely reviewed book by Charlton Ogburn, Jr.⁵ revived interest in Freud's belief that Edward de Vere wrote under the pen name William Shakespeare. Ogburn's book received a surprisingly even-handed review in the *Shakespeare Quarterly*. That review was written by Richmond Crinkley, a former staff member of the Folger Shakespeare Library.⁶ Crinkley did not endorse the Oxfordian authorship theory, yet he was sharply critical of the orthodox refusal to consider that theory on its merits. Crinkley characterized that stance as showing “a contempt for dissenters that was as mean-spirited as it was loudly trumpeted” (515): “I was enormously surprised at what can only be described as the viciousness toward anti-Stratfordian sentiments expressed by so many otherwise rational and courteous scholars. In its extreme forms, the hatred of unorthodoxy was like some bizarre mutant racism” (518). For example, the prominent Shakespeare scholar Gary Taylor, when interviewed by the *Times* of London, defended having compared me with Holocaust deniers. Gail Kern Paster, former Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, often compares authorship skeptics with creation scientists, who deny evolution.

Russ McDonald offers another perspective on Shakespeare criticism in the 1980s. He said the rise of New Historicism led to an unfortunate neglect of the texts themselves – “With the rise of theory in the 1980s, Shakespeare studies began to suffer from the tyranny of [historical] context. . . To look too closely at the literary text was [allegedly] ‘to fetishize’ it, and at least for a decade it was impossible to publish anything that involved close attention to poetry [which is McDonald's own approach].”⁷ Many psychoanalysts remain unaware that Freud was a post-Stratfordian. Not long

before his death in 2016, Jerome Oremland was gracious enough to send me the English translation of an unpublished 1935 letter by Sigmund Freud, containing Freud's only known statement of unequivocal support for the 1920 theory that Shakespeare was the pen name of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. The letter was written to Percy Allen, a supporter of that theory, which may be the reason that Freud felt free to express his opinion so decisively. After stating that *King Lear* can "only be understood psychologically on the assumption that Oxford is the author," Freud wrote, "I believe Edward de Vere to have been the creator of all the other genuine Shakespeare plays."⁸ Perceptively, Freud added this comment about the authorship debate, "Very strict scrutiny is necessary, and one must keep one's critical faculties alive; one must be ready to meet sharp criticism, and to work against one's own inclinations" (emphasis added). Analysts tend to ignore Freud's authorship opinion, and they instead defer to the Shakespeare scholars, who (like Brown) are often silent on this pivotal matter.

In his important 1983 article on *Hamlet*,⁹ Oremland seems unaware that Freud eventually repudiated his earlier theory that Hamlet was influenced by the death of Shakspeare's father. Oremland was generous in sharing Freud's letter. A year before he sent it to me, he reacted to my review of the Oxfordian documentary film *Last Will. & Testament in The American Psychoanalyst*.¹⁰ He wrote to the film column's editor, Bruce Sklarew,¹¹ that Freud did not explain why he changed his mind about Shakespeare's identity. Oremland was apparently unaware of the sizeable literature on this topic. Oremland said, "[Freud's] unexplained switch [in his opinion about who wrote Shakespeare] poses a problem, for in my writing and lecturing on creativity, I often point to the discussion of *Hamlet* . . . in [Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*] as the beginning of the psychoanalytic understanding of the role of mourning in creativity" (email, April 9, 2015). Oremland is commendably candid about what must have been a source of cognitive dissonance for him: Oremland's valuable work on the role of mourning in creativity was influenced by Freud's earlier belief that the death of Shakspeare's father shaped *Hamlet*; but Oremland personally owned the only known letter in which Freud unequivocally states that he no longer believes the merchant of Stratford wrote the Shakespeare canon. Oremland's dilemma is an especially clear example of the conflict many analysts face in encountering Freud's controversial authorship opinion.

Freud's authorship opinion was profoundly influenced by J. Thomas Looney's 1920 book.¹² Ruth Mack Brunswick gave him this book, and Freud read it twice, then recommended it enthusiastically to his friends. Looney developed a list of attributes of the author through a close study of the works, then read biographies of Elizabethan writers, before concluding the best match was with Edward de Vere. Brown cites Joel Fineman's opinion that Shakespeare suffered from "defensive gynophobia" (49). As with the characteristics Looney examined, this matches de Vere much more than it matches the scanty evidence about Stratford's William Shakspeare.

Brown's book suffers from her blind spot about the authorship question – she misses frequent opportunities to make salient connections with de Vere as the real author. For example, many critics highlight Shakespeare's preoccupation with powerful women (e.g., Wheeler, on p. 53). The most powerful woman in Elizabethan England, the queen herself, was an important figure in de Vere's life, starting in his childhood. As a young man, he was one of her favorite courtiers, and his standing as the best courtier poet of the early years of her reign no doubt enhanced his stature in her eyes. She also turned against him repeatedly, as when she allowed other favorites to steal much of his wealth in his adolescence, and when she imprisoned him in the Tower after he impregnated one of her ladies in waiting. Brown says that one scholar, Valerie Traub, views *As You Like It* as merging the heterosexual with the homoerotic. This is precisely what one might expect from a bisexual author such as de Vere.

Another weakness of Brown's book is that it, like Shakespearean scholarship in general, focuses on the plays to the relative neglect of his poetry. His long poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Rape of Lucrece*, outsold his plays in the late 16th century. The former gets two sentences, and the latter is scarcely mentioned at all. The *Sonnets* fare only slightly better. Yet they are the most autobiographical of all Shakespeare's works, so they naturally offer numerous connections with the life of Edward de Vere.

Still, I strongly recommend this book to anyone who wants a concise review of worthwhile contributions that psychoanalysts as well as psychoanalytically informed scholars have made to our understanding of the magnificent literary works of Shakespeare.

Notes

- 1 “Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture.” In Patricia Parker and David Quint (eds., 1986), *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 210-224.
- 2 Whereas Burghley’s motto meant “One heart, one way,” “Corambis” suggests double-hearted, or duplicitous.
- 3 “A central hypothesis of psychoanalysis that holds that nothing in the mind is arbitrary or undetermined; all psychic acts and events have meanings and causes; all are determined by and can be understood in terms of the psychic events that came before them” (Burness E. Moore and Bernard D. Fine, eds, *Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 150).
- 4 See Nina Green (2009). “The Fall of the House of Oxford,” *Brief Chronicles* 1: 41-95.
- 5 Ogburn (1984). *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. McLean, VA: EPM Publications.
- 6 Richmond Crinkley (1985). “New perspectives on the authorship question.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36: 515-522.
- 7 M.P. Jensen (2016). Talking books with Russ McDonald. *Shakespeare Newsletter* 65: 75-81 (quotation on p. 78).
- 8 Richard M. Waugaman (2017), “An Unpublished Letter by Sigmund Freud on the Shakespeare Authorship Question.” *Scandinavian Review of Psychoanalysis*, 39: 148-151.
- 9 Oremland (1983). Death and transformation in Hamlet. *Psychoanal. Inq.* 3: 485-512.
- 10 Waugaman (2015). “The Tempest,” *The American Psychoanalyst*. 49:17, 22-23.
- 11 Oremland asked Sklarew to share his email with me.
- 12 Looney (1920). “*Shakespeare*” *Identified*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1920.

Reconstructing Contexts

Reviewed by Wally Hurst

Reconstructing Contexts: The Aims and Principles of Archaeo-Historicism by Robert D. Hume. Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1999, 193 pages.

Robert D. Hume, a distinguished author, historian, and professor of English Literature at Penn State University has written a book that should prove vitally important to the Shakespeare Authorship Question. As doubters of the man from Stratford, we must face the fact that the mainstream English Department/Shakespearean establishment will hardly ever agree with our conclusions and will even defend the Stratford candidate with such frenzy they will ignore evidence, logic, reason, and civility in doing so. This book, a veritable scholarly battle plan, will help us topple those defenses sooner.

For serious researchers, those who question the authorship of the Shakespeare works, and those who aspire to learn all they can about the basic principles of historical research in a brand new context – it is virtually indispensable. I believe Oxfordians will be able to win the support of scholars outside the closed-minded ranks of the Shakespeare establishment if we approach the question of authorship using the methods described in this book.

Hume begins his explanation with a definition and history of the concept of historicism, old and new, and then proceeds to the objects of archaeo-historicism. In the process of assembling both texts and contexts, the task “comprises both the reconstruction of context and the interpretation of texts within the context thus assembled.”(26) Hume then points to two specific aims of the method.

The first object is truth. What is also important, however, is:

the necessity of documentation and verifiability. If we are reconstructing a context, we must supply the best hard evidence we can find. And we must footnote with sufficient exactitude that a successor can review what we have done, confident that the same evidence is in play. The successor may confirm our conclusion, or dispute on logical or interpretive grounds, or add new

evidence, or challenge the inclusion of old evidence – but the question is very simply whether the evidence supports the conclusion (28).

The evidence sometimes fails to support anything more than an unsure and speculative conclusion. If the scholar is not committed to the discovery “of what is both true and documentable, “then why bother? (29)

“A fact is not much use unless it answers a question” (33). Much like the recent ballyhooed discovery that Shakspere of Stratford was labelled as a “player,” it is important to remember that facts must serve the historical context – and not the other way around. There really is no question that the Stratford man was attached to a company of players – but to stretch that into a revelation that he must also have been a playwright is to engage in dangerous nonsense, according to Professor Hume.

Hume stresses the importance of applying context to the text, but he notes that “context does not determine meaning” (36). Rather, he determines that there are questions to be asked in order to bring text and context together. Some of his questions (below) would, if answered from a historical perspective, be incredibly useful to the Shakespeare Authorship Question.

- Why did the author write what he or she wrote?
- What audience(s) did the author address?
- What are the interpretive implications of the work’s allusions and implied intellectual context?
- What reactions did the work generate around the time of its original publication or performance?
- How would various members of the original audience (as best we can reconstruct it) have understood the work or reacted to it?
- What do we learn from parallels to and differences from related works at about the same time? (37)

At this early point in the book, Professor Hume relates an exchange between his students and himself when they asked him what did Shakespeare’s audience think of *King Lear*? He explains – superficially – that certainly the audience would have found the division of the kingdom dangerous and ill-advised.

Wally Hurst *is the Director of the Norris Theatre at Louisburg College, where he has instructed courses in Drama, Acting, Public Speaking, Political Science and Business Law. Wally is responsible for the programming and utilization of the intimate Norris Theatre, which hosts student productions, classes, and professional and community productions. He holds a Doctorate in Law (J.D.) and he received his MA in Shakespeare Authorship Studies in 2012 from Brunel University in London. Wally lectures internationally on Shakespeare and the authorship question, and specializes in the evaluation of the evidence surrounding the Shakespeare authorship controversy.*

It is important to note that he begins the paragraph by saying that “(e)vidence is often sparse or non-existent.” In the case of *Lear*, perhaps the context of the author having three daughters might have added to the evidence available for a significant and revolutionary marriage of text and context.

One of his most significant points comes when he addresses the rule of validation:

Archeo-Historicism is based on the premise that any conclusion (contextual or interpretive) is subject to factual and logical challenge. (41)

Hume again refers to Shakespeare – and the authorship question, by stating that if we are to say that Shakespeare’s plays were written by someone else (he uses Sir Francis Bacon in this instance), “then we must be prepared to show that the statement is borne out by such evidence as can currently be found” (41).

Like so many authors concerned with history and evidence, Hume snuggles up closely to the Shakespeare Authorship Question – but does not quite get to the issue which really needs his attention. This important passage begs to be addressed to each defender of the Man from Stratford:

Statements about genesis, context, and reception must be backed up by hard documentation, or they are worthless . . . ‘Seek and ye shall find’ is not one of the happier truths of this business: critics and scholars alike will somehow manage to turn up evidence to ‘support their case’ . . . When the ‘guiding principle is a will to believe’, the concept of verification goes out the window. And if the results are not submitted to a serious process of challenge and validation, they are no more than fairy stories to amuse us. (41-42.)

Researchers can certainly rely on such evidence as is obtainable , but it

must be fully and accurately represented. Hypotheses may be floated with no more than tentative proof, but they are always subject to factual and logical challenge, and they will be modified and replaced as additional evidence and further analysis dictate. Truth must always be the aim, but in practice the extent and nature of evidence force us to acknowledge a spectrum from ‘strong truth’ to ‘weak truth’ to unresolvable doubt (43).

Hume also gives us, perhaps, a hint as to what he may think of the authorship question. He states that “(s)erious scholarship and criticism change our understanding of the subject. Or they try to” (47). In the next section, however, he seems to contradict himself – at least in terms of Early Modern scholarship.

If there is no difficulty in understanding something, then there is no need to proffer a solution. If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. I have read many intelli-

gent, erudite, elegantly written books and articles in which I could discover no substantial point: the author did not really appear to be trying to change our understanding of the subject. What was said may well be true, but does it matter? A scholar needs to start by explaining the current state of understanding, and then tell us what is wrong or inadequate about it. What evidence is left out of the account? What is misinterpreted? How can we improve our understanding? (47)

Getting back on track, Professor Hume examines what type of attitude a researcher should bring with regard to prior research and authority. Should we be deferential to tradition? Absolutely not, Hume says. Respect and courtesy are one thing; blind obedience is dangerous and lazy:

If we accept our predecessors' conclusions, what can we change? If we do not ask new questions, then we confine ourselves to crumbs and bickering. I would argue that we need to read prior scholarship in a highly critical and skeptical spirit, granting it provisional acceptance only when it seems to stand up under rigorous challenge. Assuming that something is right because it is famous or standard – or because backtracking and checking up on it would be a great nuisance—is bad methodology. (48)

Moreover, what about the idea strongly held in the orthodoxy that only those who have made a career of Shakespeare – or any other field of study, for that matter – are the only ones who should be allowed to have theories? Hume argues that it is in fact more difficult for these experts to think outside the box.

A thorough grounding in primary and secondary materials cannot be dispensed with, but a corollary result is almost inevitably entrapment in the outlook of one's predecessors. Thus Hume's Paradox: the better trained the historian, the more difficult original thought becomes. Once one has acquired a mindset, changing it becomes very hard indeed. (49)

Because of the demonstrated difficulty of the academy to this “entrapment,” perhaps this is the best argument for involving historians more closely in the authorship debate. Historians will examine the evidence with a “rigorously sceptical attitude toward the facts, questions, logic, and conclusions of even the most respected predecessor.” (49)

Hume mentions Shakespeare over three dozen times and touches on subjects very dear to the hearts of SAQ researchers and scholars. He echoes the distress of so many who see a new Shakespeare biography every year:

How many scholars have dug with fanatic enthusiasm to discover any tiny fragment about Shakespeare? With how much result? What we do not know

about Shakespeare is enough to have generated many books of irresponsible speculation written to fill the vacuum. We can turn to the plays (on the risky supposition that he wrote them all by himself), but what would lead us to imagine that Shakespeare's plays are a faithful mirror of the psyche and opinions of their creator? . . . Scholars are accustomed to concentrate on what they have; good historical practice requires us to be blunt in admitting what we lack (118).

This method is time-consuming and difficult, he acknowledges. There are pitfalls along the way, and one may even have to give up the inquiry, concluding with "a terse summation of circumstances and principles":

- The archaeo-historicist often has to work from very scanty evidence;
- Where the evidence is non-existent or manifestly insufficient, the best thing to do is admit defeat and retreat to other territory;
- Gaps in evidence must be acknowledged, not just worked round;
- The trustworthiness of evidence must always be assessed skeptically; and
- The conclusions drawn from evidence need to be plausible in common sense ways.

Juries are not always right, but there are good reasons for insisting that they be unanimous, or close to unanimous. Archaeo-Historicism is not, God knows, a mathematical discipline, but if you want to draw a conclusion sharply different from one reached by predecessors, you need to ask what justifies the different result. What evidence were they lacking? Where did they go wrong? What prejudice distorted their judgment? How is their analysis faulty? If the difference in conclusions derives from speculation from very limited evidence, then this needs to be explicitly admitted. In all too many instances, the evidence simply does not exist, or you cannot trust what you have got – in which case no good will come of trying to force your way to a conclusion (128-29).

Reconstructing Contexts is not just the theory of archaeo-historicism. Hume uses many examples of his own research and that of others to illustrate the good points and the fallacies of different research methods and practices. He identifies five elements of a scholarly investigation:

1. The investigator
2. The subject to be investigated
3. A method by which the subject will be approached
4. Questions that serve to focus inquiry and analysis
5. Hypotheses developed and tested as answers to the questions (153)

Theory must remain outside the actual investigation itself, and “(n)o legitimate method of inquiry can be allowed to contain the answers to its own questions” (153).

Hume warns specifically that specialization may rightly lead an investigator to predetermine what kinds of subjects he or she will examine – but that it can also lead to opposition to only one “system of explanation.” He rightly points out that “if you commit to a system of explanation you become a fanatic and cease to be an enquirer.” (161). These words, like so many in this book, need to be acknowledged and adhered to by scholars on all sides of the authorship issue.

Reconstructing Contexts is a manual for preferred methods of research in the context of history. It also – in many places – deconstructs many of the principles of the Shakespeare establishment, in spite of the author’s probable adherence to orthodoxy on the issue.

If only the alleged Shakespearean scholars would practice what Professor Hume preaches, we would all be more engaged and energized – not to mention enlightened. This book is a revelation and a guidebook for all serious scholars, especially those involved in the Shakespeare Authorship Question.



