

Why Was Edward de Vere Defamed on Stage—and His Death Unnoticed?

by Katherine Chiljan

Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, died on June 24, 1604. To our knowledge, there was neither public recognition of his death nor notice made in personal letters or diaries. His funeral, if one occurred, went unremarked. Putting aside his greatness as the poet-playwright “William Shakespeare,” his pen name, Oxford was one of the most senior nobles in the land and the Lord Great Chamberlain of England. During his life, numerous authors dedicated 27 books on diverse subjects to Oxford; of these authors, seven were still alive at the time of his death,¹ including John Lyly and Anthony Munday, his former secretaries who were also dramatists. Moreover, despite the various scandals that touched him, Oxford remained an important courtier throughout his life: Queen Elizabeth granted him a £1,000 annuity in 1586 for no stated reason—an extraordinary gesture for the frugal monarch—and King James continued this annuity after he ascended the throne in 1603. Why, then, the silence after Oxford had died?

Could the answer be *because* he was a poet and playwright? Although such activity was considered a *déclassé* or even fantastical hobby for a nobleman, recognition *after death* would have been socially acceptable. For example, the courtier poet Sir Philip Sidney (d. 1586) had no creative works published in his lifetime, but his pastoral novel, *Arcadia*, was published four years after his death, with Sidney’s full name on the title page. Three years after that, Sidney’s sister, the Countess of Pembroke, published her own version of it.

Some of Oxford/Shakespeare's plays were printed while he was alive, but either no author was named or they featured the pen name; these early editions, however, were most likely pirated, as evidenced by the imperfect to bad condition of the texts.² Conversely, his narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, were most certainly authorized, as each work had clean texts and featured a dedication letter signed by the great author, albeit with the pen name.

Nearly 20 years after his death, Oxford was still not credited for his plays: the First Folio (1623), which featured 36 Shakespeare plays, was printed *without* Oxford's real name (only his pen name), and included a portrait of the author that was not a depiction of him. This, and the mention of "Avon" and "Stratford monument" in the preface, served to connect the great author with William Shaksper of Stratford-upon-Avon. The Folio was dedicated to Oxford's son-in-law, Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, and his brother, William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, the apparent sponsors of the publication. It appears that they wished to permanently divorce Oxford's name from his life's work. It may be significant that none of Oxford's grandsons or great-grandsons were named "Edward"—only his illegitimate son by Anne Vavasour.

The lack of memorials about Oxford's death near the time of its occurrence, in print or in manuscript, implies that he was either generally disliked or there was a fear to do so. It appears that both points contributed to this universal silence.

The most pervasive type of fear is political fear; this certainly applied to Shakespeare and can be demonstrated. For seven consecutive years, from 1593 to 1600, Shakespeare's poems and plays were published; this steady stream abruptly stopped in 1601, the year of the Essex Rebellion (February 8). Convicted of treason, the Earl of Essex was beheaded, and his co-conspirator, the 3rd Earl of Southampton, was imprisoned in the Tower of London after being sentenced to death. Shakespeare's association with Southampton was well known: he had dedicated two poems to him, and some believed he was the Fair Youth of Shakespeare's sonnets, which were circulating in manuscript prior to the rebellion. In addition, Essex's supporters had sponsored a

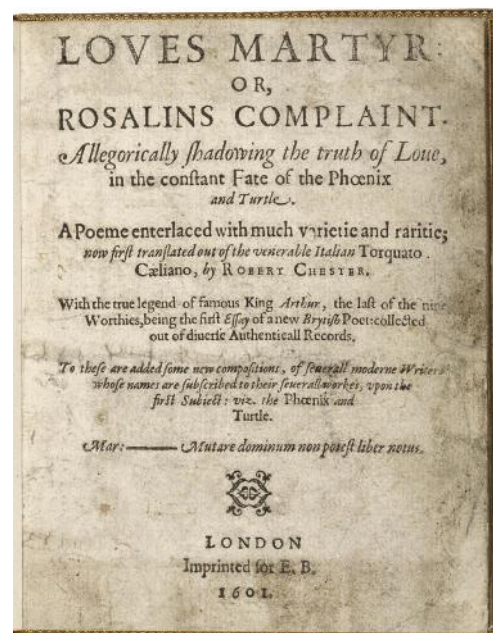
Katherine Chiljan *is an independent scholar. Her book, Shakespeare Suppressed (2011, 2016), earned her an award for distinguished scholarship at Concordia University. She was a contributor to Contested Year (2016), and edited Letters and Poems of Edward, Earl of Oxford (1998). She has written articles in The Oxfordian and the Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter, and served as the latter's editor for two years. In addition, Chiljan has debated the authorship with English professors at the Smithsonian Institution and at the Mechanics' Institute Library in San Francisco.*

performance of Shakespeare's drama *Richard II* on the eve of the rebellion; the play was chosen precisely because it depicted the deposition of a monarch, apparently intended for Queen Elizabeth. It is no wonder publishers avoided printing Shakespeare that year. It is also notable that three books were dedicated to the Earl of Oxford in 1599, but none thereafter.

Another political reason for silence at Oxford/Shakespeare's death was his view of the succession: Oxford's candidate was not King James of Scotland, who eventually succeeded Queen Elizabeth. Only days before the queen's decease, the Earl of Lincoln met a "great nobleman" who resided in Hackney, i.e., Oxford, who discussed the possibility of Lord Hastings as the successor. The great nobleman "also inveighed much against the nation of the Scots," said Lincoln.³ This incident, however, occurred at a private party, so how could the public at large know that Oxford/Shakespeare did not initially support the King of Scotland for the English throne? Answer: his verses in *Love's Martyr* (1601), the one exception to the Shakespeare suppression of 1601.

Love's Martyr (1601)

Written by Robert Chester, *Love's Martyr: or, Rosalins complaint*, was a poetical allegory about Queen Elizabeth and the succession; it was published in 1601. The queen, supposedly childless, was then in her late sixties, yet she adamantly refused to name or even discuss her successor. Chester's story is about the Phoenix—a recognized symbol of Queen Elizabeth employed throughout her reign—and her quest to find a mate and produce offspring. The traditional phoenix legend—a bird of extraordinary beauty that renews itself by self-immolation every 500 years—had nothing to do with such a quest. The symbolism applying to Queen Elizabeth, therefore, was unmistakable and obvious.



In the verse below, Chester reports that the Phoenix was successful; she paired with a turtle dove and "Another princely *Phoenix*" was born.

From the sweet fire of perfumed wood,
Another princely *Phoenix* upright stood:

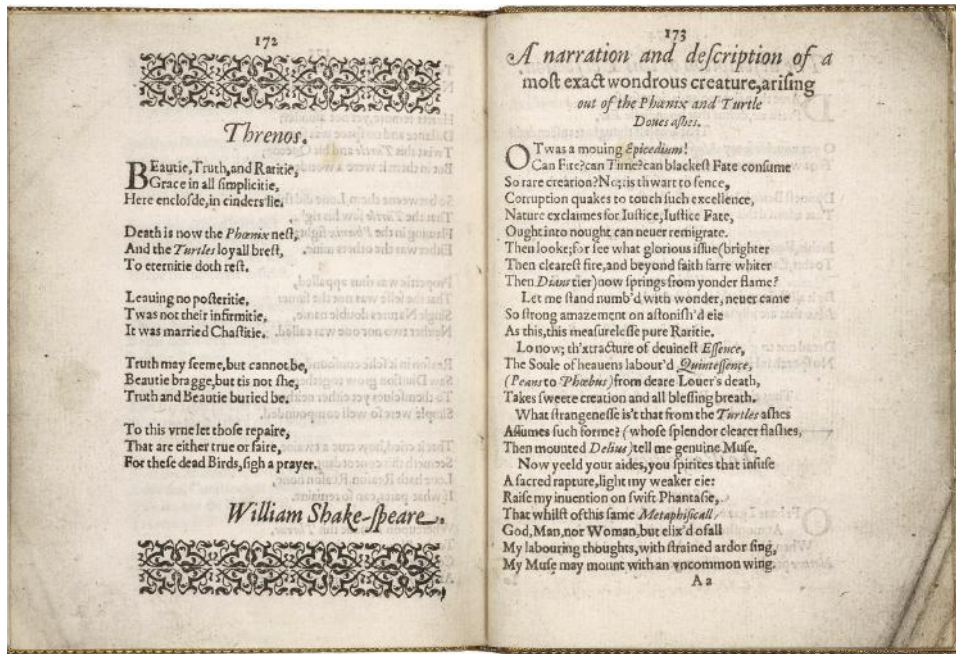
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Whose feathers purified did yield more light,
Than her late burned mother out of sight,
And in her heart rests a perpetual love,
Sprung from the bosom of the *Turtle-Dove*.
Long may the new uprising bird increase...
[sig. S3 verso, or p. 118] (underlines added)

In contemporary symbolism, a prince of the Phoenix would translate as “a son of Queen Elizabeth.” Chester referred to the child as “her,” apparently extending the concept of a female phoenix to the child. Chester also may have wanted to obscure the child’s identity, just as he tried to detach himself from his own work by calling *Love’s Martyr* a translation of “the venerable Italian *Torquato Caeliano*”—an author who never existed.

Whether or not Chester’s belief was actually true—that the queen did have a living child that could succeed her—Chester believed it. Oxford/Shakespeare evidently believed it too, as seen in his poems in *Love’s Martyr*, which appeared in the book’s second section, *Diverse Poetical Essays on the former Subject; viz: the Turtle and Phoenix*.

Oxford/Shakespeare’s first poem described the Phoenix’s funeral, and the love between the turtle dove and the Phoenix, described as “his Queen.” The second poem, titled “Threnos” (lamentation), referred to the Phoenix as “Beauty,” the turtle dove as “Truth,” and a third person as “Rarity.”



Threnos.

Beauty, Truth, and Rarity,
 Grace in all simplicity,
 Here enclos'd, in cinders lie.
 Death is now the *Phoenix* nest,
 And the *Turtle's* loyal breast,
 To eternity doth rest.
 Leaving no posterity....
 'Twas not their infirmity,
 It was married Chastity.
 Truth may seem, but cannot be,
 Beauty brag, but 'tis not she,
 Truth and Beauty buried be...
 [sig. Z4 verso, or p. 172]

“Beauty” and “Beauty’s Rose” were words directly applied to Queen Elizabeth by other authors multiple times;⁴ “Truth” was likely meant to represent Oxford, as his surname, Vere, means “truly” in Latin; and “Rarity” is their supposed child (“Another princely *Phoenix*,” in Chester’s words). “Beauty, Truth, and Rarity” were characterized in line 2 as “Grace in all simplicity.” Grace denotes high nobility and royalty.

Oxford/Shakespeare’s two verses in *Love’s Martyr* were an imagined scenario after Queen Elizabeth’s death should she not accept her child as successor. In his view, “Beauty, Truth, and Rarity” will lie “in cinders,” and Phoenix/Queen Elizabeth will leave “no posterity....” These verses have bewildered commentators for centuries due to their wholesale acceptance of the Tudor propaganda that Elizabeth I was truly a “Virgin Queen.”

With these verses in mind, one can see that Beauty/Queen Elizabeth also appeared in Shakespeare’s sonnets, and in the same context. The first two lines of Sonnet 1 entreat the Fair Youth to have children, “That thereby beauty’s *Rose* might never die”: the Fair Youth is the “Rose” of “beauty”/Queen Elizabeth, her supposed royal child.⁵ In Sonnet 101, “truth and beauty” on the Fair Youth “depends,” and in Sonnet 14, “truth and beauty shall together thrive” should the Fair Youth have children, otherwise his “end” will be “Truth and Beauty’s doom and date.” Oxford/Shakespeare’s appeal to the Fair Youth to marry and sire children, therefore, was an appeal for the survival of the Tudor dynasty. Similarly, Chester in *Love’s Martyr* hoped for the “increase” of the “new uprising bird” (as cited above).

Ben Jonson, George Chapman and John Marston also contributed poems to *Diverse Poetical Essays* on the same theme, that the Phoenix was a woman,

i.e., Queen Elizabeth, that the turtle dove was a man, and that they produced a child. One unsigned verse declared it no “fable”:

The Phoenix Analyz’d.

Now, after all, let no man
Receive it for a Fable,
If a *Bird* so amiable,
Do turn into a Woman.

Or (by our *Turtle’s* Augur)
That Nature’s fairest Creature,
Prove of his *Mistress* Feature,
But a bare *Type* and *Figure*.
[sig. Bb1 verso, or p. 182] (underlines added)

“*Nature’s fairest Creature*”—the Phoenix and turtle dove’s child—evidently alluded to the Fair Youth of Shakespeare’s sonnets, who was male. (Unlike Chester, none of the poets in *Diverse Poetical Essays* applied a masculine or feminine pronoun to the new “princely *Phoenix*” in their verses.) This phrase was obviously taken from Shakespeare’s Sonnet 1, line 1, which addressed the Fair Youth: “From fairest creatures we desire increase....”

All contributors to *Love’s Martyr* thus advertised their position on the succession. Surprisingly, none of them were prosecuted for touching upon this taboo topic—perhaps Oxford’s high rank and closeness with the queen served as protection. *Love’s Martyr*, however, was evidently suppressed⁶ and possibly inspired a parliamentary bill that year “prohibiting the writing and publishing of books about the title to the crown of this realm....” (Hume 65).

King James was definitely not Elizabeth’s child, but he succeeded her after her death in March 1603. Why would anyone want to acknowledge Oxford/Shakespeare’s death the following year, or praise him for his outstanding contribution to literature, knowing that he did not originally support the new monarch, as displayed in *Love’s Martyr*? Oxford/Shakespeare’s circulating sonnets, which lauded the Fair Youth in royal terms, further exposed his mind about the succession. Fifteen months into James’s English reign, praise of Oxford/Shakespeare, therefore, could have been perceived as treasonous.

Soon after Elizabeth’s death, however, Oxford’s name appeared on a printed document, with other highly positioned men, that proclaimed King James of Scotland as her successor.⁷ James showed Oxford favor by extending Elizabeth’s £1000 annuity to him and by allowing him to reclaim custody of lands previously taken by the Crown (Anderson 353), but this was not common knowledge. Evidently the fact that Oxford, whom the literary world knew was Shakespeare, did not *initially* support James, stuck. Adding to this,

Oxford was defamed before and shortly after his death through an important medium of the age, the public theater.

Satiro-mastix: The Untrussing of the Humorous Poet (1601)

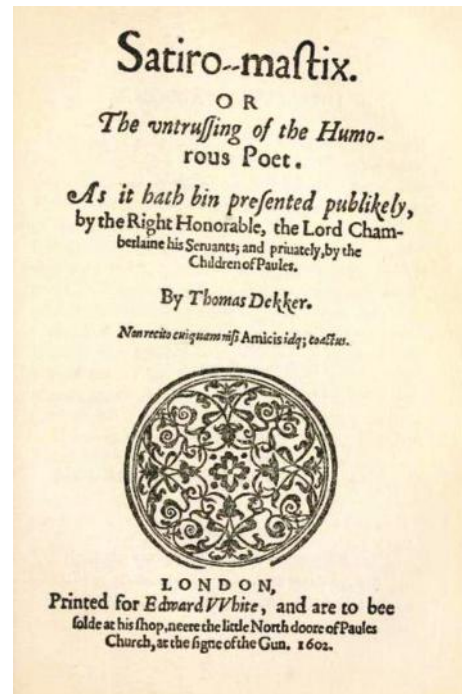
The first of two plays that defamed Oxford/Shakespeare was *Satiro-mastix, The Untrussing of the Humorous Poet*, by Thomas Dekker. It was written and performed in 1601, the same year as *Love's Martyr*. Dekker's comedy was mostly the skewering of Ben Jonson, the "Humorous Poet" of the title;⁸ it was his revenge for Jonson's play *Poetaster or The Arraignment*, in which Dekker and another writer, John Marston, were put on trial through the characters Demetrius and Crispinus. Dekker employed these same names in *Satiro-mastix*, ensuring audience understanding that it was his retort to Jonson's play.

In *Satiro-mastix*, Jonson—via his character, Horace—is condemned for his satirical poetry ("Satiro-mastix" means hostility to satirists). His "coat" of satire is "untrussed" (removed) and a wreath of "stinging nettles" is put on his head "to Crown his stinging wit." This is Horace's "reward" for believing that all poets are "Poet-Apes"—imitators of poets—except for him. (Horace had used this term to describe Crispinus and Demetrius in *Poetaster*).

Immediately after the "Poet-Apes" line, Crispinus turns to King William Rufus, who was presiding over the trial. The king, in the following passage, is called "Learning's true Maecenas" (a famous patron in the time of Augustus Caesar), "Poesy's king," and "sweet-William":

CRISPINUS

That fearful wreath [of nettles], this honor is your [Horace/Jonson's] due,
All Poets shall be Poet-Apes but you;
 Thanks (*Learning's true Maecenas, Poesy's king*)
 [i.e., King William Rufus]
 Thanks for that gracious ear, which you have lent,
 To this most tedious, most rude argument.



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KING WILLIAM RUFUS

Our spirits have well been feasted; he whose pen [i.e., Horace/Jonson's]
Draws both corrupt, and clear blood from all men:
(Careless what vein he pricks) let him not rave,
When his own sides are struck, blows, blows do crave.

CAPTAIN TUCCA

Kings-truce, my noble Herb-a-grace; my Princely sweet-William...
[5.2; sigs. M1 verso-M2, STC 6521] (underlines added)

Unlike the historical King William Rufus,⁹ son of William the Conqueror, the play's King William Rufus was evidently a poet ("Poesy's king"). Suitably, most of the king's lines are in blank verse. The king was also called "Princely sweet-William." Sweet-William may allude to a flower of that name (Penniman 445), but "William" suggests "William Shakespeare," and "sweet" and "honey" were words contemporaries used to praise Shakespeare's works.¹⁰ Shakespeare was also considered a king of poets: in 1595, he had "the most victorious pen," and in 1623, he was called "*Poet's King*."¹¹ *Satiro-mastix* also alludes to Shakespeare's works, by my count, in twenty-three instances. As Horace, Demetrius and Crispinus represented living authors in both *Poetaster* and *Satiro-mastix*, it follows that "Poesy's king," King William Rufus, similarly represented a living author, i.e., William Shakespeare.¹² Interestingly, gossip was recorded by John Manningham about Shakespeare referring to himself as William the Conqueror in early 1602, the year *Satiro-mastix* was printed (Simpson 416).

Rufus means red-haired in Latin, so in English, King William Rufus translates as "King William the Redhead." If King William Rufus was meant to portray William Shakespeare, then in Dekker's mind, Shakespeare was highly ranked, had red hair, was a patron of scholars, and was an excellent poet. This accurately portrays the 17th Earl of Oxford. By naming this character after an English king with French-Norman blood, Dekker was further alluding to Oxford/Shakespeare's early ancestors.

The Defamatory Subplot

Dekker's portrayal of King William Rufus/Oxford, however, was not all laudatory. *Satiro-mastix* opens upon the wedding of Sir Walter Terill with the king in attendance. Taken by the bride's beauty, the king compels the groom to forfeit to him his wedding night. At the banquet, the bride's father observes:

SIR QUINTILIAN

...The King's exceeding merry at the banquet,
He makes the Bride blush with his merry words
That run into her ears; ah, he is a wanton... [3.1. sig E3 verso]

Later, the king calls for a chair so the beautiful bride can sit with him under the canopy of state, “like pleasure’s Queen” (5.2). The king orders music to start in anticipation of the lady’s presence, which “ushers” in him “the spirit of Love.”

KING WILLIAM RUFUS

Sound Music, thou sweet suitor to the air,
 Now woo the air again this is the hour,
 Writ in the Calendar of time, this hour
 Music shall spend, the next and next the Bride;
 Her tongue will read the Music-Lecture:...

Now, the spirit of Love ushers my blood.
 [5.2; sig. K4] (underline added)

Music also inspired the “spirit of love” for Duke Orsino in Shakespeare’s comedy *Twelfth Night* (1.1).

Masked gentlemen in black clothes carry the bride, also masked, in a chair to the king. The king and the wedding guests are horrified when her mask is removed—she is dead. She had taken poison—the “physic against lust” (5.1)—to preserve her chastity through death. Calling the king a “Tyrant,” the groom reveals the king’s salacious intentions to all at the party.

SIR WALTER TERILL

...in brief,
 He [the king] tainted her chaste ears; she yet unknown,
 His breath was treason, though his words were none.
Treason to her and me, he dar’d me then,
 (Under the covert of a flattering smile,
 To bring her where she is, not as she is,
 Alive for lust, not dead for Chastity:
 [5.2, sig. L1] (underlines added)

Humiliated, the king repents, and says to the groom:

KING WILLIAM RUFUS

...mine own guilt,
 Speaks more within me than thy tongue contains;
 Thy sorrow is my shame...
 [5.2, sig. L1 verso]

Suddenly, the bride awakens—it was a sleeping potion, not poison, that had made her appear dead. A young bride who takes a potion to feign death recalls *Romeo and Juliet* (Ogburn 1044). And Shakespeare’s tragedy *Hamlet* apparently influenced this scene, as the bride’s “Masque of Death” (Bednarz, *Shakespeare*, 223) fulfilled Hamlet’s words:

PRINCE HAMLET

...guilty creatures sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaim’d their malefactions. [*Hamlet*, 2.2]

Through the character King William Rufus in *Satiro-mastix*, the Earl of Oxford/Shakespeare was praised as a great poet and patron, but also a “wanton,” and a “tyrant” who acknowledged, and expressed guilt for, his lustful nature. This much was conveyed in only two scenes of the entire play (2.1, 5.2). Adding insult to injury, *Satiro-mastix* was performed on multiple occasions, being “presented publicly” and “privately” by two different acting companies, according to the 1602 title page, and was printed *twice* that year.

Satiro-mastix and *Love’s Martyr*

Dekker’s choice of Sir Walter Terill as the king’s adversary in *Satiro-mastix* was no accident, as the historic Sir Walter Terill shot the arrow that killed the historic King William Rufus. Apparently, Dekker’s aim was character assassination, not only of Ben Jonson, but of Oxford/Shakespeare. Was it only coincidence then that both “victims” were contributors to *Love’s Martyr*?

Another coincidence is that both works featured a Welsh knight: Sir John Salusbury and Sir Vaughn ap Rees. Sir John was the dedicatee of *Diverse Poetical Essays* in *Love’s Martyr*, which included verses by Jonson; Sir Vaughn was a character in *Satiro-mastix* who patronized Horace/Jonson to write verses. Sir Vaughn’s mispronunciation of words and odd speech were mocked in the play, in one instance by the king; he defended himself by saying that his words “have neither felonies nor treasons about them, I hope” (2.1), seemingly hinting at Sir John Salusbury’s association with *Love’s Martyr*. Intriguingly, Sir Walter Terill twice applied the term “treason” to King William Rufus (see above passage) instead of the more appropriate term, adultery.

The print debut of *Love’s Martyr* and the writing of *Satiro-mastix* occurred close to one another. *Love’s Martyr* was released sometime between mid-June and circa October 1601.¹³ Dekker was still writing *Satiro-mastix* as of August 14, 1601, the registration date of *The Whipping of the Satire*, which was mentioned in the play (5.2). *Satiro-mastix* was completed before

November 11, 1601, when it was registered. The Stationers' Company, however, would only allow the play to be printed after receiving "license" by the ecclesiastical authorities—apparently, the text was initially found to be controversial or problematic (Bednarz, *Notes and Queries*, 220-1). *Satiro-mastix* did get printed the following year.

Dekker's apparent mockery of people involved with *Love's Martyr*—i.e., Oxford/Shakespeare, Jonson and Salusbury¹⁴—indicates that *Satiro-mastix* likely postdated it. If so, then Dekker cribbed a line from Jonson's poem, *Epos*, in *Love's Martyr*: "Turtles can chastely die" (line 74); Dekker wrote in *Satiro-mastix* (5.1), "let me chastely die" (Klause 214).

The *Ho* Plays

Dekker defamed the Earl of Oxford in a second play *Westward Ho*, co-authored by John Webster. It was performed in 1604, probably "before Christmas."¹⁵ If so, then the play must have been written before early December, to give time for the actors to prepare, which equates to no more than five months after Oxford's death. Oxford's character is even more identifiable, and was put in a subplot nearly exact to that in *Satiro-mastix*. It was a pointed, shameless and virulent attack on the late earl.

The play's antagonist is an older gray-haired gentleman called "Earl"; he is "a man of honor," a "lord," and a "Courtier"; the courtier, Earl of Oxford, was age 54 at his death. Earl "hath been a Tilter this twenty year"; Oxford was a champion tilter (joust) in the 1570s and early 1580s. It has been noted that "tilter" had sexual connotations during this period (Hoy 2:164), but the word may have had a double—and a triple—meaning as "tilter" also suggested spear shaking, i.e., "Shakespeare."

Earl's love of music is emphasized in the play, and he employed musicians; Oxford was praised as having more musical talent than some professionals,¹⁶ and he patronized a company of musicians (Nelson 248), as well as composers, such as Robert Hales and William Byrd (Chiljan).

Earl carries a longtime passion for a younger married lady, Mistress Justiniano, and sends her expensive presents via the bawd, Mistress Birdlime. Through her, he entices the lady to visit him, and when she does, begs her to throw over her husband and live with him. The enticement is timely, as her husband, the Italian merchant Justiniano, tells her that he is bankrupt (a lie meant to test his wife's fidelity).

The lady that Earl loves has read "the Italian Courtier," a reference to Baldassare Castiglione's popular book, *The Courtier*; Oxford was fond of this book, too, since he contributed a prefatory letter to a Latin translation by Bartholomew Clerke in 1571. By 1603, this book was in its sixth edition.

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Like King William Rufus in *Satiro-mastix*, Earl in *Westward Ho* waxes poetical about music as he anticipates another meeting with the lady he loves, and orders his musicians to start playing:

Go, let music
Charm with her excellent voice an awful silence
Through all this building, that her sphery soul
May (on the wings of Air) in thousand forms
Invisibly fly, yet be enjoy'd. Away.
[4.2, sigs. F2 verso- F3]

In the lines that follow, servants chat about Earl drawing “strange Characters” and conjuring:

SERVANT 1

Does my Lord mean to Conjure that he draws these strange
Characters [?]

SERVANT 2

He does: but we shall see neither the Spirit that rises, nor the Circle it
rises in.

SERVANT 3

’Twould make our hair stand up on end if we should, come fools come,
meddle not with his matters, Lords may do anything. [4.2, sig. F3]

Dramatist Oxford/Shakespeare certainly conjured up or created characters, some “strange” (like Caliban in *The Tempest*), but more likely these lines were meant to imply he dabbled in witchcraft. It is true that John Dee, who reputedly summoned up angels and spirits, claimed acquaintance with Oxford (Ward 50), and Henry Howard, while under interrogation for treason, said that Oxford “could conjure” (Nelson 58). Outside of this, no evidence shows Oxford practiced witchcraft. The servants’ gossip about Earl was gratuitous, as it had nothing to do with the story.

Earl’s excitement to meet the lady again was tempered by despair of his own lust, which he says would “Turn her into a devil”:

EARL

...Her body is the Chariot of my soul,
Her eyes my body’s light, which if I want [lack],
Life wants, or if possess, I undo her;
Turn her into a devil, whom I adore,
By scorching her with the hot steam of lust.
’Tis but a minute’s pleasure: and the sin

Scarce acted is repented. Shun it then:
 O he that can Abstain, is more than man!
 Tush. Resolv'st thou to do ill: be not precise
 Who writes of *Virtue* best, are slaves to vice.
 What's bad I follow, yet I see what's good.
 [4.2, sigs. F3-F3 verso] (underlines added)

The above speech resembles Shakespeare's sonnet about lust (Hoy 2:223), which "leads men to this hell."

Th' expense of Spirit in a waste of shame
 Is lust in action, and till action, lust
 Is perjur'd, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
 Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight
 ...
 Mad in pursuit and in possession so,
 Had, having, and in quest to have extreme,
 A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe;
 Before a joy proposed, behind a dream.
 All this the world well knows yet none knows well,
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.
 [Sonnet 129] (underlines added)

Earl's passion for the younger married Mistress Justiniano parallels Oxford's passion for Anne Vavasour, his mistress, who was about ten years younger than he. Vavasour was almost certainly the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's sonnets, whom the great author loved and lusted after, and who was similarly younger than the poet. Oxford's affair with Vavasour occurred circa 1579–81, but likely was rekindled after the death of Oxford's first wife in 1588, a time when Vavasour was married. Interestingly, Mistress Justiniano's eye color is described as "black" (1.2), like that of Vavasour (in her portrait by De Critz) and that of the Dark Lady (Sonnet 132).

With the exception of practicing witchcraft, the above characteristics of Earl in *Westward Ho* fit the 17th Earl of Oxford. In addition, Earl has a poetic bent, and speaks in blank verse, unlike the other characters. In one passage, Earl relates that he has watched Mistress Justiniano's windows at "early Sun" to catch a glimpse of her:

EARL
 ...A thousand mornings with the early Sun,
 Mine eyes have from your windows watch'd to steal
 Brightness from those... [2.2, sig. C3 verso]

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These lines are reminiscent of *Romeo and Juliet* (2.2), when Romeo likened Juliet to the dawn as she emerged on her balcony:

ROMEO

...But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

“That Plague,” Earl

When Justiniano learns his wife will meet Earl again, he forms a plot: it is he who comes at the appointed time, masked and wearing a jeweled gown that Earl had gifted his wife. When Justiniano removes his mask, Earl is bewildered, thinking “her” a sorceress, and threatens to kill “her.”

Calling Earl an “unseasonable Lecher,” Justiniano declares himself the lady’s husband, and then reveals her lifeless body behind a curtain. Justiniano admits that he poisoned her, but says it was Earl’s “lust” that “there strikes her dead.” This is exactly what happened in *Satiro-mastix*. When Earl calls for his servants to capture Justiniano, three “citizens” enter the scene and see the corpse. Justiniano explains to them that he gave her “Strong poison” to save her from “that plague,” Earl:

...that plague [i.e., Earl],
This fleshly [lascivious] Lord: he doted on my wife,
He would have wrought on her and play’d on me.
But to pare off these brims, I cut off her,
And gull’d him with this lie, that you [i.e., Earl] had hands
Dipp’d in her blood with mine...
[4.2, sig. F4 verso]

Justiniano further explains his motives:

...but this I did,
That his [Earl’s] stain’d age and name might not be hid.
My Act (though vild) [vile] the world shall crown as just,
I shall die clear, when he [Earl] lives soil’d with lust:
[4.2, sigs. F4 verso-G1]

Justiniano murdered his wife so that Earl’s “stain’d age and name might not be hid” (a line that seemingly reacted to Shakespeare’s sonnet 72, “My name be buried where my body is, /And live no more to shame nor me nor you”). Earl “lives soil’d with lust” and Justiniano wanted “the world” to know it. Seconds later, it is revealed that Justiniano’s wife was not murdered: it was all a charade. She awakens, and Justiniano tells Earl:

See, *Lucrece* is not slain... [4.2, sig. G1]

Earl is humiliated, and penitently rebukes himself:

...Mine own shame strikes me dumb...
 The jewels which I gave you: wear: your fortunes,
 I'll raise on golden Pillars: fare you well,
 Lust in old age like burnt straw, does even choke
 The kindlers, and consumes, in stinking Smoke. [4.3, sig. G1]

Earl exits. Justiniano congratulates his wife for fooling Earl,

this grave, this wicked elder... [4.2, sig. G1]

and tells her

...if all the great Turks' Concubines were but like thee...
 [4.2, sig. G1 verso]

Likening Earl to “the great Turks” is another hint that the 17th Earl of Oxford was meant, as “Turk” was Queen Elizabeth’s pet name for him. “Lucrece” obviously invoked Shakespeare’s poem, *The Rape of Lucrece*, a further clue that Earl was Oxford/Shakespeare; it also subtly insinuated that he is like Prince Tarquin, the rapist of Lucrece.

After this scene, Earl is not mentioned again in the play; allusions to Shakespeare, however, follow, including “mad *Hamlet*,” “midsummer night,” and “every inch of flesh” (“every inch a king,” *King Lear*). Earl’s story is a subplot of *Westward Ho*; the main plot, as some critics have noted, resembles Shakespeare’s comedy, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.¹⁷ At least twenty Shakespeare allusions can be found in *Westward Ho*.

Earl appears in only two scenes (2.2 and 4.2) in *Westward Ho*. It is thought that Dekker alone wrote them based on a study of parallel passages in his other works (Pierce 44-51, 60-3). Dekker, therefore, quite candidly stated his purpose for “Earl” Oxford’s defamation: so his “stain’d age and name might not be hid.” He wanted Oxford’s immorality to live after him, despite admitting that the disparagement was vile (“vild”). Dekker’s choice of the word “stain” may have been intentional, as this was the word Oxford/Shakespeare used to address his own infidelity:

...If I have ranged,
 Like him that travels I return again,
 Just to the time, not with the time exchanged,
 So that myself bring water for my stain...
 [Sonnet 109]

To recap the 17th Earl of Oxford’s calumny in *Westward Ho*: an older gentleman, an earl, is lustful, practices witchcraft, wants to break up a marriage and commit adultery. These lines further denigrated Oxford:

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| “I wonder lust could hang at such white hairs” | [sig. C3 verso] |
| “I could not love this old man” | [sig. C4 verso] |
| “thou unseasonable lecher” | [sig. F1] |
| “What’s bad I [Earl] follow” | [sig. F3 verso] |
| “that plague, /This fleshly Lord” | [sig. F4 verso] |
| “his stain’d age and name” | [sig. F4 verso] |
| “this grave, this wicked elder” | [sig. G1] |
| [Earl] “lives soil’d with lust” | [sig. G1] |

Westward Ho was registered for publication to H. Rocket on March 2, 1605, which was only a few months after its debut performance. The first surviving edition, however, is dated 1607, and was printed by William Jaggard for John Hodgets. The evident delay in publishing may have been caused by the excising of controversial material, which would explain the text’s disjointed nature.¹⁸ The title page said the play “hath been diverse times acted by the Children of Paul’s,” which means that by 1607 hundreds of Londoners had seen Oxford’s defamation. Those who recognized Earl as the late Earl of Oxford may have thought twice about eulogizing him. Three well-known dramatists, however, did not stay silent.

Eastward Ho!

It is well accepted that *Eastward Ho*, a comedy written by Ben Jonson, George Chapman and John Marston, was an answer to *Westward Ho*. The stage debut of *Westward Ho* was late 1604, and *Eastward Ho* was written between January and March 1605 (ODNB, George Chapman). The reason for *Eastward Ho*’s nearly instant composition, however, has never been adequately explained. In my view, it is obvious: *Eastward Ho* specifically reacted to *Westward Ho*’s defamatory portrayal of the 17th Earl of Oxford, and its authors hurried to counteract it with a complimentary one. Thomas Dekker’s earlier anti-Oxford play *Satiro-mastix* was also targeted, as one of its characters, Peter Flash, believed to represent Dekker, evidently reincarnated as the bounder Sir Petronel Flash in *Eastward Ho*.¹⁹

In contrast with the lust-driven Earl in *Westward Ho*, Oxford/Shakespeare’s character in *Eastward Ho* is Touchstone, a morally upright husband, citizen and goldsmith. “Touchstone” is a verb and noun construct like “Shake-speare.” His first name is William. Touchstone’s apprentice, Quicksilver, calls his master “Sweet Touchstone” (2.1); contemporaries often called Shakespeare or his works “sweet” (Oxford/Shakespeare’s character in *Satiro-mastix*, King

William Rufus, was called “sweet-William”). Touchstone and Oxford both had daughters (two and three respectively).

Uncharacteristic of most goldsmiths of the period, William Touchstone is well read and often breaks out into verse, which suggests that Touchstone’s real craft was poetry, not crafting gold pieces. If so, then his apprentices were actually aspiring writers, which would make the “bad” apprentice, Quicksilver, representative of Dekker. Touchstone fires Quicksilver, disgusted by his insults and drunkenness. Later in the play, Quicksilver is imprisoned and reforms, then reconciles with Touchstone by reading a verse he wrote about repentance.

Touchstone’s “good” apprentice is “Golding,” a name associated with Oxford: his uncle, Arthur Golding, a noted Latin scholar, is believed to have tutored Oxford as a juvenile and dedicated two published translations to him. Moreover, Golding’s translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, published in 1565 and 1567 when supposedly he was tutoring Oxford, greatly influenced Shakespeare.

For seasoned playgoers, “Touchstone” would have immediately brought to mind the character of the same name in Shakespeare’s comedy *As You Like It*. Shakespeare’s Touchstone, a courtier-clown, figuratively tells William—a simple young man born in the Forest of Arden—that he, Touchstone, is the great author “William Shakespeare” (not the unlearned rustic with a similar name):

TOUCHSTONE [*to William*]

...For all your Writers do consent, that *ipse* is he: now you are not *ipse*,
for I am he. [*As You Like It*, 5.1] (underline added)

Touchstone’s self-revelation undoubtedly inspired the name for Oxford/Shakespeare’s character in *Eastward Ho*.

Although “Shakespeare” was never mentioned in *Eastward Ho*, his presence was invoked throughout the play, with (by my count) twenty-five allusions to nine different Shakespeare plays (most found by orthodox scholars). For example, a drunken Quicksilver blurts out famous lines from contemporary plays, mimicking Pistol in the tavern scene in *2 Henry IV* (2.4). Touchstone parodies Hamlet’s line “I am but mad north northwest” (*Hamlet*, 2.2), with “Do we not know north-north-east? North-east-and-by-east? East-and-by-north? Nor plain eastward?” (*Eastward Ho*, 4.2). In another scene, Touchstone’s daughter Gertrude sings Ophelia’s song about her dead father in *Hamlet*:

GERTRUDE

His head as white as milk,
All flaxen was his hair:
But now he is dead,

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*And laid in his Bed,
And never will come again.*

God be at your labor. [*Eastward Ho*, 3.2, sig. D4] (underlines added)

Ophelia's song in *Hamlet* (4.5):

*And will he not come again?
And will he not come again?
No, no, he is dead,
Go to thy death-bed,
He never will come again.
His beard was white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll [head];
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan;
God ha' mercy on his soul!*

And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God be wi' you!
(underlines added)

Gertrude's song in *Eastward Ho* was unrelated to the plot, and she started singing it as soon as her father, William Touchstone, entered the room; the song is one of eight allusions to *Hamlet* in this scene (3.2), including a minor character named Hamlet. With this perspective, one can view Gertrude's song as a veiled memorial to Shakespeare, the father of *Hamlet*. The great author's recent death would also explain *Eastward Ho*'s paraphrase—in two instances—of Hamlet's remark about his mother's quick remarriage after his father's death:

...the funeral baked meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
[*Hamlet*, 1.2]

Below are the two paraphrases in *Eastward Ho*:

...that the cold meat left at your wedding might, serve to furnish their
Nuptial table. [*Eastward Ho*, 3.2, sig. D3v]

the superfluity and cold meat left at their Nuptials, will with bounty
furnish ours. [*Eastward Ho*, 2.1, sig. B4v]

In addition, Gertrude's sister, Mildred, entered the room with Touchstone, and she was holding rosemary; this not only reinforces the allusion to Ophelia, as she picked rosemary prior to singing her song (Horwich 227), but rosemary branches were customarily placed on top of coffins.²⁰

Furthermore, collaboration of such prominent writers as Jonson, Marston and Chapman on one play was unusual (Van Fossen 2), which supports the idea that they had united for a purpose: to counteract *Westward Ho's* awful portrayal of Oxford/Shakespeare, and to memorialize him. Presumably, they knew him, as they were joint contributors to *Love's Martyr* four years earlier. The second, expanded quarto of *Hamlet* was published in late 1604/early 1605, which *Eastward Ho's* authors had undoubtedly thoroughly read and used for their play.

Eastward Ho likely debuted on the public stage between mid-March and mid-June 1605 (Petter xxiii), evidently without incident. The text received license to print on September 4, 1605, but shortly after its publication, the government took offense. Jonson and Chapman were jailed that same month, and they were threatened with mutilation, a punishment for sedition (Donaldson, 207-08). About four to six weeks later, they were released. Critics today believe their arrest was caused by the play's references to the Scots, but the excised material is hardly offensive (oddly, a cameo appearance of King James was not excised). Despite the government's furor, *Eastward Ho* was printed three times in 1605, which was unprecedented. And the play was not banned. In fact, it was performed at least twice after the incident, once for the royal court in 1614.

In my view, it was not *Eastward Ho's* text that caused the problem, it was Jonson, Chapman and Marston's previous involvement in *Love's Martyr*; evidently, *Eastward Ho's* authors were unknown until their names were blazoned across the 1605 title page. Perhaps *Eastward Ho* was a convenient excuse to punish these authors for their contributions to *Love's Martyr*, to ensure their silence about a hidden heir of Queen Elizabeth, and to dissuade them from writing again about Oxford/Shakespeare in a positive light. Apparently, the revelation of *Eastward Ho's* authors was tantamount to declaring that the play was about him. Authorities evidently preferred a wholesale blackout of eulogies for, or discussion about, Oxford/Shakespeare.

Tellingly, Dekker and Webster were untouched by the authorities after their character assassination of Oxford in *Westward Ho*. To the contrary, soon after *Eastward Ho* was produced, these authors responded with another play, *Northward Ho*. It appears, however, that this last play in the *Ho* series was devoid of controversial or defamatory material. Perhaps Dekker and Webster merely wished to profit on the notoriety that arose from *Eastward Ho*.

Dekker's Motivation

What motivated Thomas Dekker to twice malign a nobleman whose dramas he knew so well and evidently had admired? To understand Dekker, the words of Ben Jonson should be considered. Demetrius in Jonson's play,

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Poetaster, is commonly accepted as representative of Dekker. An actor says that Demetrius/Dekker was hired “to abuse Horace,” i.e., Jonson, “in a Play”:

HISTRIO

...one *Demetrius* [Dekker], a *dresser* of Plays about the Town, here; we have hir'd him to abuse *Horace*, and bring him in, in a Play, with all his Gallants...

CAPT. TUCCA

...Can thy Author [i.e., Demetrius/Dekker] do it impudently enough?

HISTRIO

O, I warrant you, Captain: and spitefully enough too; he [Demetrius/Dekker] has one of the most overflowing villainous wits, in *Rome*: He will slander any Man that breathes; If he disgust him.
[*Poetaster* (3.4), sigs. F3 verso-F4, 1602 edition] (underlines added)

For hire, Demetrius/Dekker could “slander any Man that breathes,” according to Jonson. At the close of *Poetaster*, Demetrius/Dekker was “indicted” for “calumny.”

A very likely motivation for Dekker’s slander of Oxford was his persistent financial problems. He served time in debtor’s prison in 1598, 1599, and finally for a seven-year period (1612-1619) (*ODNB* Thomas Dekker). Quick-silver, the bad apprentice in *Eastward Ho* who likely represented Dekker, also went to debtor’s prison. Being constantly in debt certainly made Dekker vulnerable to accepting bribes.

Dekker may have known Oxford. It is believed that Dekker helped write *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall*,²¹ a play performed “sundry times” by Oxford’s acting company (according to the 1600 title page). In addition, Dekker’s *Satiro-mastix* (4.2) alluded to *The History of George Scanderbeg*, a play also performed by Oxford’s “servants,” as noted in the Stationers’ Register.²²

Who Wanted to Slander Oxford?

It would not be surprising if Sir Robert Cecil, principal secretary to Queen Elizabeth (and later to King James), was found responsible for hiring Dekker to slander Oxford on the London stage. During this period, many linked Cecil, who had curvature of the spine, with the hunchbacked villain, Richard III, in Shakespeare’s history play *Richard III*, even though it had been written at least a decade earlier. And Cecil’s late father, Lord Burghley, had been lampooned as the character Corambis/Polonius in *Hamlet*,

published in 1603 and 1604/05. For Cecil, execrating Oxford in a play would be appropriate revenge.

More importantly, depicting Oxford as immoral would also reflect on his political views, which were displayed in *Love's Martyr*. Oxford/Shakespeare's choice of successor to Queen Elizabeth was her natural child. Those who were privileged enough to view Shakespeare's sonnets, then circulating in manuscript, may well have connected this child with the Fair Youth. Before the Essex Rebellion, Cecil apparently favored the Spanish Infanta-Archduchess Isabella as the queen's successor. After the Earl of Essex revealed this at his treason trial, Cecil turned to the King of Scotland.

In 1601, Jonson was questioned by the Lord Chief Justice about his play, *Poetaster*; that Dekker was not questioned for *Satiro-mastix*, his reply to *Poetaster*, further suggests that Dekker had support of highly placed people. Dekker and Webster were not prosecuted for defaming Oxford in *Westward Ho*, yet two of the authors of *Eastward Ho*, which depicted Oxford/Shakespeare in a positive light, *were* prosecuted. This implies that "authority," like Cecil, was behind Dekker and Webster. It had to have been a powerful official like Cecil to allow the slander of a highly ranked nobleman without repercussion.

Cecil likely knew, or knew of, Dekker as three of his plays were performed for the royal court between 1599 and 1601.²³ Significantly, Dekker was back in debtor's prison in late 1612, about six months after Cecil had died (he owed £40 to the father of his co-author, Webster) (*ODNB Dekker*). Was it merely coincidence that Oxford's first eulogy in print occurred after Cecil's death?²⁴

CLERMONT

I over-took, coming from Italy,
 In Germany, a great and famous earl
 Of England, the most goodly-fashion'd man
 I ever saw; from head to foot in form
 Rare and most absolute; he had a face
 Like one of the most ancient honor'd Romans,
 From whence his noblest family was derived;
 He was beside of spirit passing great,
 Valiant, and learn'd, and liberal as the sun,
Spoke and writ sweetly, or of learned subjects,
 Or of the discipline of public weals;
 And 'twas the Earl of Oxford...
 [*Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* (3.4), pub. 1613]
 (underline added)

Oxford "Spoke and writ sweetly," wrote George Chapman, co-author of *Eastward Ho*. A "sweet" writer obviously suggested Shakespeare.

Conclusions

The late 1604 play *Westward Ho* featured a subplot with a character named Earl that bore a strong resemblance to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Although co-authored with John Webster, Dekker evidently wrote the subplot in question, which portrayed the recently deceased Oxford in an unsavory light. A similar Oxford-like character appeared in Dekker's earlier play *Satiro-mastix* (1601) with a similar subplot; both Oxford characters had licentious and immoral inclinations. Incidental to both plays, these subplots were seemingly incorporated with the clear intent to slander.

Such criticism of an artist beloved by many in the literary community inspired a backlash, i.e., the play *Eastward Ho* by Jonson, Marston and Chapman. In direct opposition to Dekker's *Satiro-mastix* and *Westward Ho*, their Oxford character was moral and industrious. Master craftsman Touchstone, who has a penchant for poetry, and whose name mimics that of Shakespeare's courtier-clown in *As You Like It*—combined with numerous Shakespeare allusions in the play—makes it clear that he represented the great author. Gertrude in *Eastward Ho* singing Ophelia's song in *Hamlet* about the death of her father, who was alive and well throughout the play, and other hints, indicate the play was not only a defense of Oxford/Shakespeare, but a memorial to the "father" of *Hamlet*. This adds a new dimension to what Dekker termed "that terrible *Poetomachia*, lately commenced between *Horace the second*, and a band of lean-witted *Poetasters*" in *Satiro-mastix*'s preface. What began as caviling between Marston, Dekker and Jonson morphed into attacks on, and defense of, Oxford/Shakespeare.

Dekker's slander of Oxford/Shakespeare in two plays was probably calculated to undermine the latter's standing and authority due to his view on the succession, which was publicly laid bare by his involvement with *Love's Martyr*. This allegorical fiction, published in the second half of 1601, alluded to a direct and living heir of Queen Elizabeth. A similar theme can be found in the sonnets of Shakespeare, which were then circulating in manuscript. Oxford/Shakespeare's position did not agree with that of Secretary of State Sir Robert Cecil, who, soon after the Essex Rebellion, plotted on behalf of King James VI of Scotland, despite the fact that foreign-born James was legally unqualified to rule England. Cecil, therefore, may have been behind the theatrical propaganda against Oxford.

The plethora of Shakespeare allusions in *Satiro-mastix* and *Westward Ho* betrays Dekker's deep familiarity with his works, and presumably, admiration. Dekker's money problems certainly made him susceptible to "slander any Man" in a play—that is, for a good price.

Perhaps penitent for his involvement in *Westward Ho*, John Webster praised *Eastward Ho* writers Chapman and Jonson in the first edition of *The White Devil* (1612). “*Shake-speare*” was also praised, his name placed before that of Dekker, Webster’s former collaborator.²⁵

The public non-recognition of Oxford/Shakespeare’s death can be summed up as follows: during his lifetime, Oxford did not want recognition as a poet-dramatist to protect his illustrious family name. After death, however, such recognition would have been acceptable. This did not happen for Oxford because it was generally known that he supported a hidden child of Queen Elizabeth as her successor, as allegorically advertised in *Love’s Martyr* and in his circulating sonnets. As Oxford died only 15 months after James, King of Scotland, had succeeded to the English throne, political fear overwhelmed the need to praise him or to associate him with the great author “William Shakespeare.” In addition, Oxford’s defamation as an immoral lecher in two popular comedies by Thomas Dekker—triggered by *Love’s Martyr*, and possibly funded by Sir Robert Cecil—further dampened enthusiasm to laud the greatest author of the age. The near suppression of praise or recognition of Oxford, the true Shakespeare, persisted to at least 1640, when an anonymous author wrote, “*Shake-speare* we must be silent in thy praise” (*Wits Recreations*).

Endnotes

1. The seven authors who had dedicated books to the Earl of Oxford still living in 1604: Arthur Golding (d. 1606), *The Histories of Trogus Pompeius* (1564), *The Psalms of David and others* (1571); Thomas Bedingfield (d. 1613), *Cardanus Comfort* (1573); Thomas Twyne (d. 1613), *The Breviary of Britain* (1573); George Baker (d. 1612), *The Composition or Making of the Most Excellent and Precious Oil called Oleum magistrale* (1574), *The Practice of the New and Old Physic* (1599); Anthony Munday (d. 1633), *The Mirror of Mutability* (1579), *Zelauto* (1580), *Palmerin d'Oliva*, parts 1 and 2 (1588); John Lyly (d. 1606), *Euphues and His England* (1580); Henry Lok (alive as of 1606), *The Book of Ecclesiastes* (1597).
2. The first edition of *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), published by John Danter/Edward Allde, was called a “monstrous theft” by the author(s) of *Return from Parnassus, Part 1* (circa 1599-1600). *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1598-99), a collection of Shakespeare’s poems, was an unauthorized edition by William Jaggard, according to Thomas Heywood in *An Apology for Actors* (1612).
3. See transcript by Nina Green, “Letter and report dated 10 October 1603 from Sir John Peyton to Sir Robert Cecil...” (TNA SP 14/4/14, ff. 27-9), www.oxford-shakespeare.com/.
4. The story of Desire and Lady Beauty, as told in royal Christmas entertainments of 1561/62, allegorized the wish of the Earl of Leicester (Desire) to marry Queen Elizabeth (Beauty). It was followed by a masque with “Beauty’s dames,” presumably the queen’s attendants (Gerard Legh, *The Accedens of Armory*, 1562). In January 1581, Sir Philip Sidney allegorized Queen Elizabeth as Perfect Beauty in tiltyard entertainments (“The Fortress of Perfect Beauty”), as related by Henry Goldwel in *A Brief Declaration of the Shews, Devices, Speeches, and Inventions...* (STC 11990). In 1599, Queen Elizabeth was called “Beauty’s rose” (Sir John Davies, *Hymns of Astraea in Acrostic Verse*, Hymn 7), and in 1602 was openly addressed as “Beauty’s rose” in verses at Harefield Place, home of Sir Thomas Egerton (Mary C. Erler, “Sir John Davies and the Rainbow Portrait of Queen Elizabeth,” *Modern Philology*, vol. 84, no. 4, May 1987, p. 362).
5. “Rose” may be a pun on “Wriothesley,” the surname of the 3rd Earl of Southampton, who was almost certainly the Fair Youth of Shakespeare’s sonnets.

6. Of the four surviving copies of *Love's Martyr* (1601), only one is complete, held by the Folger Shakespeare Library. The other three were tampered with: one has the date sliced off the title page; one has pages missing from the front and back; and one copy's title page was replaced with an entirely different one, with a changed title and date. See Chiljan, "The Importance of *Love's Martyr* in the Shakespeare Authorship Question," *Brief Chronicles*, vol. 4 (2012-13).
The printer of *Love's Martyr*, Richard Field, was evidently unaffected by his involvement with the work, but the same may not be true for the publisher, Edward Blount. *Love's Martyr* was Blount's sole publication in 1601, and he published no books in 1602—an anomaly, as Blount otherwise published books each year from 1597 to 1640. Field's name did not appear on *Love's Martyr's* title page, but Blount's initials did. Later, Blount would publish (with William and Isaac Jaggard) Shakespeare's First Folio (1623).
7. *Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God to call to his mercy out of this transitory life our sovereign lady...1603* (STC 8298).
8. Jonson had authored the two "Humor" comedies, *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) and *Every Man out of His Humour* (1599). *Satiro-mastix* was registered as "the untrussing of the humorous poet," and this was also the running title of the printed edition; evidently, "Satiro-mastix" was a late addition to the title. Edward Pudsey noted it as "Vntruss: of ye Poet. Dekker" [verso 42] (Juliet M. Gowan, *An Edition of Edward Pudsey's Commonplace Book (c. 1600-1615)*, 1967, vol. 1, p. 326).
9. William II, who reigned in England 1087-1100.
10. "Lucrecia Sweet Shakspeare," W. Covell, *Polimanteia* (1595); "Honey-tongued Shakspeare," Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia* (1598); "Honey-tong'd Shakspeare" and his characters' "sug'red tongues," John Weever, *Epigrams in the oldest cut* (1599); "And Shakspeare thou, whose honey-flowing vein," Richard Barnfield, *The Encomion of Lady Pecunia: or the praise of money* (1598); "sweet Mr. Shakspeare" was said twice in *The Return to Parnassus, Part 1* (c. 1599-1600); "Sweet Swan of *Avon!*," Ben Jonson's elegy to Shakespeare (First Folio, 1623).
11. Poem addressed to the Earl of Southampton by Gervase Markham in *The Most Honorable Tragedy of Sir Richard Grinvile, Knight* (1595); eulogy of Shakespeare by Hugh Holland, First Folio (1623).
12. Author Michael Drayton may also have been portrayed as Asinius Bubo; critics have noted that "asinus bubo" in Latin, "Ass owl," probably referred to Drayton's poem, *The Owl*. Dekker may have named this character after Asinius Lupo ("ass wolf" in Latin) in *Poetaster*.

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13. *Love's Martyr's* release was certainly after June 14, 1601, the day Sir John Salusbury was knighted; the parliamentary bill making it illegal for the writing or publishing of books about the succession was proposed circa October 1601, as noted by Hume.
14. Sir Vaughn in *Satiro-mastix* also fails in his love suit to the widow, Mistress Miniver.
15. That *Westward Ho's* stage debut was “before Christmas” is based on a passage in Dekker and Webster's subsequent play *Northward Ho* (1605), as noted by F.G. Fleay (*A Biographical Chronicle of The English Drama*, London, 1891, vol. 2, p. 270):

DOLL

What then? marry then is the wind come about, and for those poor wenches that before Christmas fled Westward with bag and baggage, come now sailing alongst the lee shore with a Northerly wind... [1.2, sig. B1 verso, stc 6539] (underline added)

Westward Ho was still being written late September 1604 due to mention of “the book of the siege of Ostend” (4.2), i.e., *A True History of the Memorable Siege of Ostend* (a translation by Edward Grimeston, registered on September 20, 1604, STC 18895).

16. In his dedication to the 17th Earl of Oxford, John Farmer wrote: “using this science [i.e., music] as a recreation, your Lordship has overgone most of them that make it a profession” (*The First Set of English Madrigals*, 1599).
17. In *Westward Ho*, three married men visit the prostitute, Luce; in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, three men vie for the hand of Anne Page. In *Westward Ho*, the wives of the three married men flirt with three London men, with no intention of having affairs; in *Merry Wives*, two wives pretend to flirt with Falstaff, who tries to court them. “Brentford” and “Hungarian” are mentioned in both plays. See also Rebecca Olson, “Revising Jealousy in “The Merry Wives of Windsor,”” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, vol. 25, 2012, pp. 184-85.

Westward Ho was also inspired by the fiction *Westward for Smelts* (written circa 1603), in which women tell stories on their boat trip going westward (from London to Brentford). The phrases, “westward for smelts” (2.3), “westward smelts” (5.3), and “catch smelts” (4.3) all occurred in *Westward Ho*.

18. Regarding *Westward Ho*, Mary Hunt wrote, “The Earl scenes are not well dovetailed into the intrigue drama...” (*Thomas Dekker: A Study*, Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1911, p. 107). *Westward Ho* was called “one of the most incoherent plays in Elizabethan drama” (Thomas Marc Parrott and Robert Hamilton Ball, *A Short View of Elizabethan Drama*, New York, 1958, p. 109).
19. My thanks to Professor Roger Stritmatter for suggesting the possible connection between the two characters.
20. In *Romeo and Juliet* (4.5), Friar Laurence says to Juliet’s father, “Dry up your tears, and stick your rosemary /On this fair corse” [i.e., Juliet’s].
21. This play’s title was possibly based on a line in *Romeo and Juliet* (1.1).
22. *Scanderbeg* was registered for publication on July 3, 1601, but no printed editions have survived.
23. December 27, 1599, *Old Fortunatus*; January 1, 1600, *The Gentle Craft* (later titled, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*); 1601, *Phaeton*.
24. Oxford was eulogized within a tribute to his daughter, Susan Vere, Countess of Montgomery in *Ourania* (published in 1606); Oxford’s full name, however, was not given, only “Earl,” “Oxonian line,” and “Vera” (referring to Susan). Oxford’s learning, generosity, and jousting prowess were mentioned, but not his writing. Author N.B. (Nicholas Breton or Nathaniel Baxter) was evidently in Oxford’s entourage during his 1575-76 continental tour.
25. “Detraction is the sworn friend to ignorance: For mine own part, I have ever truly cherished my good opinion of other men’s worthy Labors, especially of that full and heightened style of Master Chapman. The labor’d and understanding works of Master Johnson: the no less worthy composures of the both worthily excellent Master *Beaumont* and Master *Fletcher*: and lastly (without wrong last to be named), the right happy and copious industry of M. Shake-speare, M. Dekker, and M. Heywood, wishing what I write may be read by their light...” (“To the Reader,” *The White Devil*, STC 25178) (underlines added).

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