"TO. THE. ONLIE. BEGETTER. Making sense of the Dedication": A response to Ramon Jiménez' Article with that title, contradicting mine

by John M. Shahan

he current issue of *The Oxfordian* (TOX 23, 2021) includes two articles taking contradictory positions on the dedication to Shakespeare's Sonnets: the article by Ramon Jiménez referred to in the title of this article, and an article by me titled "The Strange Case of 'Mr. W. H.': How we know the dedication to Shakespeare's Sonnets is a cryptogram, and what it reveals" (195–241). The announcement of TOX 23 described the two competing articles as a "debate," as follows:

A point-counterpoint debate takes place between Ramon Jiménez and John M. Shahan on whether the dedication of *Shake-speare's Sonnets* was written by Thomas Thorpe, the publisher, or Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, as a double cryptogram. (SOF email, Sept. 16, 2021)

I had shared my article with Jiménez after submitting it, and we had communicated about it, but he never told me that he had also written an article about the dedication. It was only when I read that paragraph that I learned Jiménez had written an article on the dedication, contradicting mine. TOX editor Gary Goldstein then invited each of us to write a response to the other's article, with no word limit, and he said our responses would be published online on the SOF website, with the TOX 23 articles.

I would not have framed the issue to be debated as it is stated in the above paragraph. It calls on me to defend a position that was not the main point of my article and not among my conclusions: that the Sonnets' dedication was written by Edward de Vere as a double cryptogram. As stated in its title,

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my article is essentially about "how we know the dedication to Shakespeare's Sonnets is a cryptogram." I claim to have proved that it is, and that it contains a "hidden message" pointing to Edward de Vere as the author of the Sonnets, and also the hidden name "Henry Wriothesley," presumably identifying him as the "Fair Youth" of the Sonnets, and as the Sonnets' dedicatee.

That, to me, is the heart of my article and the reason why I wrote it. Having accomplished that, I addressed other issues, including discussing near the end who wrote the dedication. I speculated that "Perhaps he (Oxford) collaborated on it...with Thorpe and/or a math expert like John Dee," and I concluded that "This is all speculation; we will...never know who devised the dedication, but it [collaboration] is a scenario that is coherent and logically consistent with the facts" (232).

Keep in mind that my article wasn't yet published, so Jiménez could not openly rebut my article, even though he knew its contents because I had shared it with him. So where does he say he got the idea that someone proposed Oxford wrote the dedication to the Sonnets, not Thomas Thorpe? He claims that John Rollett, in his 1997 article, said that Oxford wrote the dedication, as follows:

"In an article in *The Elizabethan Review* in 1997, Dr. John Rollett introduced the idea that Oxford himself, that is, Edward de Vere, wrote the *Sonnets*' Dedication and concealed in it his name and the names 'Henry' and 'Wriothesley,' to identify Mr. W. H. and the Fair Youth." (Jiménez, TOX 23, 171)

This claim is false. Nowhere in Rollett's article does he ever say that Edward de Vere wrote the dedication. Nor, during his entire analysis of the dedication, did he speculate about who wrote it. How did a meticulous scholar like Jiménez make such an egregious error? I can only guess, but it appears that although he claims in his article that he is rebutting Rollett, he is really rebutting me, even though I was just speculating about it and didn't conclude that Oxford wrote the dedication.

Since I did not make the claim attributed to me, I am tempted to decline to defend it in a debate, except Mr. Jiménez' article also deals with other, more important questions, such as whether the dedication is a cryptogram, and his handling of those is also erroneous and so must be addressed. But I will address them in an order of my own choosing, based on what I think is most important.

Jiménez' article makes these four main claims (168):

- 1. The Dedication was composed by the publisher, Thomas Thorpe.
- 2. There is no secret message or code..., nor any significance in its shape or typography.

- 3. The Dedication is a straightforward, if awkward, expression of good wishes to William Hall, a fellow stationer, and the supplier of the Sonnets' manuscript.
- 4. Edward de Vere was not involved with the Dedication in any way.

Since my article focuses mainly on proving that the dedication to the Sonnets is a cryptogram, I will first rebut Jiménez' claim that it is *not* before addressing his other points. One's conclusion about whether it was created as a cryptogram has implications for each of Jiménez' other points.

Part One: Is the Dedication a Cryptogram?

Figure 1 shows a facsimile of the dedication as originally published in *Shake-speares Sonnets*. Here is what Jiménez says about how Rollett came to look for a cryptogram in the dedication, based on his reading of Rollett's 1997 article in *The Elizabethan Review*:

Because of the Dedication's "unusual appearance, peculiar syntax, and obscure meaning," as well as questions about it raised by various scholars, Rollett surmised that it contained a cipher (97).

This brief description gives the impression that Rollett had little reason to suspect the dedication might be a cipher but quickly jumped to that conclusion. No, he was slow and deliberate about it. The phrase Jiménez quotes above is on the first page of Rollett's article (page 93, not page "97"), and the full quote shows that Rollett was expressing the views of eminent Harvard Shakespeare professor Hyder E. Rollins in his book on the Sonnets, which Rollett references:



Figure 1: The dedication page of Shakespeares Sonnets, published in 1609.

Commentators for over two hundred years have admitted to being puzzled by its unusual appearance, peculiar syntax, and obscure meaning. (Rollett, 93)

The "questions about [the dedication] raised by various scholars," as Jiménez puts it, omits that Rollett's main influence was the eminent Shakespeare

scholar Leslie Hotson, the first person to try to decipher the dedication. In his book *Mr. W. H.* (1964), Hotson describes the dedication as:

enigmatic, puzzling, cryptic, recalling the Elizabethans' characteristic fondness for anagram, rebus, acrostic, concealment, cryptogram, 'wherein my name enciphered were.'.... Is there possibly something more than initials [Mr. W. H.] hid and barred from common sense here...which we are meant to look for? (Rollett, 94–5)

After noting several peculiarities of the dedication suggestive of a cryptogram, Hotson claimed to have found the identity of "Mr. W. H." Rollett studied Hotson's analysis carefully, ultimately rejecting his solution; but he found the possibility of a cryptogram plausible and so decided to try to decipher it himself. As a scientist with a doctorate in physics and a master's degree in English, plus the determination to stick with the task over decades, he proved to be well suited to the task.

Rollett also points out that Ben Jonson, in the dedication to his *Epigrammes* (1616), addressed to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, writes that in creating his *Epigrammes*, he "had nothing in my conscience, to expressing of which I did need a cypher." Rollett cites Edward Dowden, who writes "some critics have supposed that Ben Jonson is alluding to Shakespeare's Sonnets" (95–6).

The main reasons Rollett suspected the dedication might be a cryptogram are (1) the mystery of the identity of "Mr. W. H.", and (2) the mystery of the identity of the "Fair Youth," to whom the poet writes "your name…immortal life shall have" (sonnet 81), but then the Youth isn't named. It is natural to seek for the identities of Mr. W. H. and the Youth, to wonder whether they are the same, and to suspect that the dedication itself might contain hidden information giving answers.

Peculiarities of the Dedication

In a section on "Peculiarities of the Dedication," Rollett lists these seven oddities, each of which is accounted for in his proposed solution to the dedication as a double cryptogram (96–7):

The natural order for a dedication would be... 'To the dedicatee:

 (a) the dedicator (b) wisheth (c) blessings.' But in this dedication the natural order is inverted, and it has the form 'To the dedicatee:
 (c) blessings (b) wisheth (a) the dedicator.' Hotson comments that it is the only dedication he has seen 'which puts the sentence backwards'. To 'expose its conspicuous peculiarity,' he reproduces nine other dedications as examples of normal word order....

- 2. Awkwardness of wording is evidenced further by the close conjunction of 'wisheth' and 'well-wishing'; surely the writer could have avoided the repetition of the root word 'wish' by saying something such as 'well-willing', 'well-disposed', 'benevolent', 'amiable' or 'friendly'? Also, the phrase 'these insuing sonnets' jars slightly...; one might... have expected either 'these sonnets', or 'the insuing sonnets'....
- 3. It is all in capital letters (except for the 'r' of 'Mr.'). As far as has been ascertained, there are only two other lengthy dedications of the period all in capital letters (those to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Jonson's *Volpone*).
- 4. The spelling of the word 'onlie' is very unusual; the most common spelling of the word at the time was 'onely'. In the First Folio of 1623, the word appears as 'onely' 67 times, 'only' 5 times, 'onelie' twice, and 'onlie' once. (In the sonnets, 'onely' occurs 4 times, 'only' twice, and 'onlie' not at all.)
- 5. There are full stops [periods] after every word, a most remarkable feature, believed to be unique to this dedication; to date, no other example has been reported.
- 6. The hyphens joining two pairs of words into compound adjectives are unusual in being lower-case, instead of the expected upper-case hyphens.
- The lines of the Dedication are carefully proportioned to form three blocks, each in the shape (roughly) of an inverted triangle. The line spacing is subtly increased between the middle five lines, as if to emphasize this feature. (Rollett 1997, 96–7)

Of these, Jiménez ignores #1, the inverted syntax. Re: #2, he does not dispute the oddity of the close conjunction of "wisheth" and "well-wishing," but he provides one other, later example of Thorpe using "these ensuing." So perhaps "these insuing Sonnets" wasn't so unusual for Thorpe.

Re: #3, on the capital letters, Jiménez writes: "Inverted triangles and capital letters were common in many title pages and dedications of the period, such as those in figures 9–16." But only figures 9 and 11 show dedications all in caps—the same two that Rollett mentions: "those to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Jonson's *Volpone*." Rather than refuting oddity #3, Jiménez confirms it by failing to find a third example. Rollett was right: dedications all in caps were rare at the time.

Re: #4, Jiménez does not dispute that the spelling of the word "onlie" is "very unusual."

Re: #5, the full stops after every word, Jiménez points out that in publishing Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* in 1605, "Thorpe printed a Senatorial proclamation in Act V in the same style that he printed the Sonnets Dedication, that is, 'after the manner of a Roman inscription, capitalized, and with a stop after each word' (Duncan-Jones, 'Unauthorized' 157)'' (169). Yes, it is fairly similar, but its use in a Roman Senatorial proclamation in a play about a Roman general is unsurprising. Why would he then use that style in the dedication to the Sonnets—an entirely different context? Rollett is correct that it seems to be unique to this dedication with no other example yet reported.

Re: #6, Jiménez ignores Rollett's observation that "The hyphens joining two pairs of words into compound adjectives are unusual in being lowercase, instead of expected upper-case hyphens." He misses the significance and complains that Rollett's hidden message, "These Sonnets all by ever," requires that only "ever" in "ever-living" be used "even though there is no period after *ever*" (183). But Rollett explains that in counting off words he treats the lower-case hyphens "(hardly distinguishable from [periods])," as indicating the compound words are to be counted separately (108). The lowercase hyphens provided a rationale for trying one of just two options, and it proved to be the one that yielded something intelligible. So Rollett was not being arbitrary. The periods are one type of punctuation separating words, and lower-case hyphens are another.

Re: #7: the lines of the dedication forming three inverted triangles. This is a key feature of the dedication and of Rollett's solution. Jiménez addresses it in a section titled "The Appearance of the Dedication," in which he more generally assesses the validity of Rollett's "hidden message." (Rollett uses "hidden message" to refer to the 5-word message pointing to Oxford as the author, and he uses "hidden name" to refer to the name "Henry Wriothesley," which he also discovered. I do the same, but Jiménez calls the *name* the "hidden message" even though it is not a message.) Sticking with Rollett's terminology, I will first address Jiménez' critique of the hidden message before dealing with his critique of the hidden name, the same order as in my article in TOX 23.

The Hidden Message

Jiménez describes Rollett's account of his discovery of the hidden message as follows:

Rollett suspected that the arrangement of the words of the Dedication, in three inverted triangles, contained a clue to "concealed information." He reasoned that the full-stops or periods after each word suggested that counting them would reveal the clue. After trying several methods of counting, and finding nothing promising, he noticed that the number of lines in each triangle produced a set of three numbers—6, 2 and 4. He continued: "Counting through the Dedication, using these numbers as the key, we obtain the following sequence of words: "THESE . SONNETS . ALL . BY . EVER" From this, he concluded that "these words appear to point to an author other than Shakespeare (108)." (183)

This is mostly accurate, except Rollett did not say he thought the inverted triangles "contained a clue to 'concealed information," or that "the...periods after each word suggested that counting them would reveal 'the clue." He thought counting words might reveal a *message*, then noticed that the inverted triangles might supply a key to how to count them, which proved to be correct.

Jiménez then says:

It is obvious that this series of actions requires at least four different decisions by the decoder as to how to proceed.

Well, so what? Who ever said that solving a cryptogram couldn't involve any decision-making? What is he complaining about here? The answer is that earlier in his article Jiménez quoted and tried to apply some of the validation criteria that leading cryptologists William F. and Elizebeth S. Friedman describe in their book *The Shakespearean Ciphers Examined* (1957), but he did not understand and apply all of them correctly. One of the validation criteria that Jiménez quotes is:

"If any element of the key is such that it demands a decision by the decipherer which is based on subjective considerations..., it will be difficult for the decipherer to get an incontestable answer (214–5)." (182)

Jiménez apparently thinks this means that a decipherer should not have to make many decisions in solving a cryptogram, so he faults Rollett solution for requiring "four decisions" to this point. This is wrong. What he misses is that the criterion is about *the application of the "key" to a text*. Once a key is discovered, then the *key* must be applied without any decisions based on subjective considerations. It does not mean that a decipherer cannot make decisions when looking for a key.

Rollett's article provides an example of the correct application of a key, and another example of an incorrect application. First, he applied the key 6-2-4 rigidly, counting off words while cycling through those three numbers, through the first five words of his message without any deviations. That was correct. But then he stopped before counting to the end, ignoring that doing so would add the two words "the forth" to the message. Why? He could not explain their meaning, so he assumed that they were not part of the message. (See my article in TOX 23 for their meaning.) This was an incorrect, subjective consideration. That is what the Friedmans' criterion is about. Jiménez then summarizes the rest of Rollett's procedure:

From this point [the discovery of the 5-word message], it was an easy step to find the name Edward de Vere among the multiple candidates for the authorship of the Shakespeare canon, and to conclude that the layout of the Dedication contained a statement that it was he who had composed the Sonnets, and that therefore he was Shakespeare.

This is a gross over-simplification. Here is Rollett's account of how it played out:

When the 5-word message was found, I took it for granted that the author of the Sonnets was William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, had never heard of Edward de Vere, and in any case, prompted by Leslie Hotson, was (like him) looking for a clue to the identity of "Mr. W. H." At the time of its discovery the message appeared to be meaningless and was promptly forgotten. Two or three years later a reading of the article on Shakespeare in the Encyclopedia Britannica revealed that a leading candidate for the authorship...was a certain Edward de Vere, whose name might well be indicated by "EVER".... Although the message now acquired a possible meaning, it was dismissed as a curiosity of no significance. Wishful thinking can therefore be ruled out in the case of the hidden message. It was not until a further 20 years or so had elapsed that a second reading of Charlton Ogburn's landmark work suggested that it would be worth investigating the odds that an accident of chance might have produced the hidden message. (117)

Is the key 6-2-4 due to chance?

I now turn to something Jiménez does *not* mention—an egregious omission that says a lot about his objectivity in assessing Rollett's hidden message pointing to Oxford as author of the Sonnets. Rollett called special attention to it, so it should have been hard to miss. Here's what Rollett said:

We now come to a crucial point. It might be wondered why the hypothetical designer of the cipher should choose, apparently at random, the set of numbers '6, 2, 4' as the cipher key.... But this set, remarkably..., consists of the numbers of letters in the three parts of the name 'Edward de Vere'. Thus, out of perhaps a hundred available choices of sets of two or three small numbers, our cryptographer (and we can now feel more confident of his existence) chose the one set which would serve to confirm the correctness of the decipherment, once it had been carried out. (108–9) How could any careful scholar, seeking to give his readers an accurate understanding of Rollett's proposed hidden message pointing to Oxford as the author of the Sonnets, fail to mention that the key that revealed the message corresponds to the number of letters in the three parts of his name? It is the strongest piece of evidence supporting Rollett's solution, and Jiménez never mentions it.

This piece of evidence is so powerful that it prompts us to ask whether it could be due to chance. If not, it is virtually certain that the dedication was specifically designed to convey this message. Rollett thought it was intentional but couldn't prove it. This is the subject of the most important section of my article, which I think does prove the key was no accident. Here is the passage that describes the subtle, but critically important, discovery that prompted me to write my article:

Let's look at the first six lines of the dedication [see in figure 1]... Most importantly, look at the lower-case "r" in "Mr." and consider why it is there. Many reproductions of the dedication, even if otherwise accurate, make it "MR.," with an upper case "R," so infectious is the idea that the dedication is all in caps.... What is the effect of making the "R" upper case? It usually makes the third line slightly longer than the second, altering the first inverted triangle with six lines, making it two lines, then four (2-4-2-4) [instead of 6-2-4]. Here are the second and third lines in Times New Roman font:

THESE . INSUING . SONNETS. MR. W. H. ALL . HAPPINESSE.

But what matters is the type used in printing the dedication. Looking at it, an upper case "R" would make it difficult, though perhaps not impossible, to get the third line shorter than the second. There is a little extra space between "W. H." and "ALL," but it is needed to cue a pause before wishing the dedicatee "ALL . HAPPINESSE."

There is almost no space, however, between "Mr." and "W. H.," or between "ALL" and "HAPPINESSE" in the third line—unlike in the second line, where there is space on both sides of the two full stops [periods]. This suggests an intent to increase the spacing in the second line, and decrease it in the third, to keep the third shorter than the second. This, in turn, supports the idea that the reason for the lower-case "r" in "Mr." is to help keep the third line shorter than the second without the third looking too tightly spaced [thereby achieving the key 6-2-4].

Now look again at the lower-case "r" in "Mr." in the facsimile of the original. Notice that it is *not* a standard lower-case "r." There is not

another like it in the entire volume of the Sonnets! ... It is miniscule and sits high above the line of print (unlike every other lower-case "r" in the volume), in the narrow space between the "M" in "Mr." and the full stop after it. Why would this be? This lower-case "r" appears to be a unique contrivance, designed just for that position, to take as little space as possible in that line to keep it shorter than the line above.

What does it mean to suggest that the shape of the dedication is due to chance? It means that a typesetter with a standard set of type, intending to make it symmetrical but otherwise making random decisions, chanced upon the shape with 6, 2, and 4 lines. The unique lower-case "r" shows that this is *not* what happened. There was nothing the least bit random about creating a unique contrivance and putting it in that specific spot. And it is not credible to think it accidentally got mixed in with the standard lower-case "r's" and the typesetter picked it at random at that point without noticing the difference.

If the process were random, the typesetter would have placed an upper-case "R" there along with the other upper-case letters. The fact that he chose a lower-case "r" for that position shows a clear intention to encode the key 6-2-4 in the shape of the dedication. The fact that he also went to the trouble to create a *unique* lower-case "r" for that spot shows that he was willing to go further and call attention to the fact that he had done it. That lower-case "r" clearly shows that the dedication was designed as a cryptogram, as the cryptographer probably knew. It is not too strong to say that it amounts to *proof*.

Validating the Hidden Massage

One would think that after describing Rollett's discovery of the hidden message he would have assessed whether it meets the Friedmans' validation criteria. That would have been appropriate, because the criteria were intended to validate such messages, but ironically Jiménez did not use them to assess the hidden message, even though he had used them earlier with the hidden name in ways that were *not* appropriate. I did use the Friedmans' validation criteria to assess the hidden message in my own article, and I found that it clearly meets all of them (209–212).

Rollett also used them, although not always correctly, as I explain in my article (209). One way in which he did use them correctly is in estimating the odds that his solution occurred by chance. He estimated the odds for his five-word message at roughly "1 in 10 billion" (210). I concurred with this for the five-word message and added that:

The odds of the message occurring by chance may be much more remote than Rollett estimates because the message has seven words, not five, and we now know it is much less likely that the key occurred by chance than Rollett thought. Several aspects of the dedication suggest the shape was no accident, most notably the unique lower-case "r," and it is extremely unlikely that all of them occurred by chance. (211)

Jiménez neither critiques Rollett's estimate nor gives one of his own. Nor did he come up with an alternative message to call the uniqueness of Rollett's solution into question, which would have been an effective way of refuting it. Instead, he writes:

On the face of it, it is hard to believe that any reader could find his way through this tortuous process, making four or five correct decisions as to which way to proceed, and arrive at the revelatory phrase. (183)

Again, the number of decisions involved is irrelevant. It is the logic of the solution that matters, and Rollett's solution is very logical. As for it being too difficult for "any reader" to find his way through it and discover the solution, it obviously was not created to be solved by "any reader." That is normally true of cryptograms. They are not meant to be solvable by just anyone in a short amount of time. As Rollett explains in his article:

A sophisticated cipher argues strong motives; this is no recreational puzzle to while away a leisure hour. If it was important not to print the names of the protagonists on the title or dedication pages, it was equally important not to make the recovery of the names too easy, otherwise the objective of concealment (for perhaps two or three decades, one might suppose) would have been lost at the outset. (115)

This makes sense to me. Perhaps Jiménez missed it. He goes on:

It is hard to imagine Thomas Thorpe, or anyone else, constructing this unstable assemblage of letters that contained both a plain and a hidden message. (183)

What does "this unstable assemblage of letters" refer to? He doesn't say. It is an assemblage of words, not letters, with nothing "unstable" about them. As for it "containing both a plain and a hidden message," yes, that is precisely what innocent letter ciphers do.

Jiménez then writes:

Did he start with three names and try to write a dedication around them? Or did he start with a dedication and try to conceal three names in its text? (183)

Rollett gives a detailed, credible explanation of how the cryptogram was constructed (109–112). Not that it is necessary to know how a cryptogram was constructed to determine that it is valid.

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Jiménez again:

No one, in the centuries since the Sonnets were printed, nor anyone in the nearly 80 years since the revelation that Edward de Vere wrote them, detected any hint of his name in the Dedication until Rollett did so in 1997. (183)

Rollett (who spotted the reference to de Vere *in the 1960s*) addresses this in detail in his article:

One answer to this question lies in the publishing history of the Sonnets. To begin with, it seems likely that many of those who bought the original copies would have known the names of the people involved, and therefore would have had no motive for looking for them in the Dedication. Since the names were not displayed on the title or dedication pages, it must be assumed that it was necessary, for important personal or political reasons...for the identities of the protagonists to be suppressed. No-one at the time would have published the solution, even if they had found it.

The fact that so few copies (13) of the original edition have survived to the present time, and that it was not reprinted for 31 years, while during this period *Venus and Adonis* was reprinted 16 times and *Lucrece* 7, have led several commentators...to suggest that the bulk of the first printing was called in, and further printings forbidden (there is no other evidence for this). When the Sonnets were first reissued in 1640 by John Benson, the Dedication was omitted, and the next edition to include the Dedication was that published in 1711 by Bernard Lintott. His reproduction was very close to the original, but instead of 'ONLIE' has 'ONLY', so that the transposition cipher was damaged twice over, the first 'E' of 'WRIOTH-ESLEY' being replaced by 'Y', and the number of letters being reduced to 143 (its factors 11 and 13, if taken as keys, point to rectangular arrays that contain nothing of interest). Not until 1766 was Thorpe's original Dedication reprinted accurately, by George Steevens.

The edition by Steevens (who dropped the Sonnets from all his subsequent editions of Shakespeare) was soon followed in 1780 by Edmond Malone's. This was the first modern scholarly edition of the Sonnets. It repeated the wording of the Dedication, but changed the spelling of three words, reducing the number of letters in each, thereby completely destroying the transposition ciphers...in addition the layout was altered and the full stops [periods] omitted. [See Figure 7 in Rollett's article (114) for how Malone caused the Dedication to be printed.]

Thus, it had been rendered impossible to decipher either cryptogram. Later editors in the 18th and 19th century mostly followed Malone in

perpetrating these or similar 'improvements'...so that anyone suspecting a cryptogram would very probably have been defeated at the start. Not until 'Thomas Tyler's facsimile of 1886 in photolithography was the reader...provided with a Dedication that was self-evidently authentic.' Even at the present time, editions of the Sonnets prepared by scholars of international reputation and issued under the imprimaturs of great universities and august publishing houses, regularly distort the spelling, layout, or punctuation in a multitude of different ways. (For example, the Oxford Shakespeare reproduces correctly the layout and full stops, but repeats the four misspellings of Malone; the Macmillan Sonnets gets the layout right, but has the same wrong spellings, omits the full stops, and substitutes lower-case for capitals in the body of the text. Many more examples could be given.) Only those editions of the Sonnets which include a photographic reproduction of the Dedication page offer the would-be decoder any chance of solving the ciphers. As a consequence, during the 388 years since it was first published, and for the 230 years since doubts over the authorship first began to surface in print, corrupted versions of the Dedication have vastly outnumbered accurate copies, and it would be pure chance if one of these last happened to fall into the hands of a possible decipherer.

A contributory factor to its non-solution in the past was a lack of appreciation of the delight the Elizabethans took in word play and word games, puns, anagrams, acrostic verses, concealed dates on tombs and monumental brasses in churches, and literary puzzles of all kinds. The intellectual climate which produced such simple but effective ciphers had been lost sight of, and only in recent decades has it been realized how many subtle 'conceits and personal allusions have been missed by earlier researchers.... Finally, it would seem that there are very few people, even today, who are simultaneously interested in the identity of 'Mr. W . H.' and possess some knowledge of elementary cipher techniques. (113–115)

Here again, all of this makes sense to me. It provides a satisfactory answer to Jiménez' question.

Rereading it now, I'm struck by how precisely the dedication had to be laid out to work properly. Jiménez would have us think it's all a coincidence that it works exactly right to produce Rollett's two solutions, answering *the two questions that one would most like answered about the Sonnets*—who wrote them and who was "Mr. W. H." and the "Fair Youth" to whom most are addressed? It is not credible that this is just a coincidence.

I would also note that the Friedmans do not include a validation criterion requiring that a cipher be solved within a given timeframe. There is no

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"statute of limitations" on how long it can take. They only require that it meet their criteria. Here is a quote from their book:

We shall only ask whether the solutions are valid: ...whether the plain texts make sense, and the cryptosystem and the specific keys can be, or have been, applied without ambiguity. Provided that independent investigation shows an answer to be unique, and to have been reached by valid means, we shall accept it, however much we shock the learned world by doing so. (26)

They even made it clear that the reason they offered validation criteria in their book was to help future cryptologists looking for ciphers in Shakespeare's works do better than their predecessors. They would not have done that if they thought it was already too late to discover a valid solution.

Jiménez then writes:

Despite Rollett's claims to the contrary, the appearance of the Dedication is not unusual. Inverted triangles and capital letters were common in many title pages and dedications of the period, such as those in figures 9–16. They were also prominent in publications by Thomas Thorpe and those printed by George Eld both before and after they collaborated on the *Sonnets* in 1609. (184)

This is misleading. In some ways the dedication is unusual and in others it is not. Looking at figures 9–16 in his article (184–86), notice that other than the two all in capital letters (which, again, Rollett mentions,) none closely resembles the Sonnets' dedication in any important way. None has full stops after each word. None has a shape that could constitute a recognizable key.

Jiménez also calls our attention to their symmetrical shapes (186), but Rollett did not include the dedication's symmetry on his list of peculiarities. Symmetrical dedications were common, so the Sonnets' dedication being symmetrical would not have aroused suspicion—what one wants in an innocent letter cipher such as we have here. Superficially, an innocent letter cipher, by definition, should appear to be "innocent" of hidden information, so it is hardly surprising that the Sonnets' dedication would look very much like other dedications. The symmetry helps to achieve that.

Re: the uniqueness of the periods after each word, Jiménez writes:

The only distinctive feature of the Dedication, the period after each word, is hardly indicative of "concealed information." It is simply "a printer's convention used in imitation of lapidary inscriptions and monumental brasses.... The lapidary format, though cryptlike, is any-thing but cryptic" (Foster 43).

Rollett never said that the periods are "indicative of concealed information" or that the format is "cryptic." He already suspected the dedication might contain concealed information for all of the other reasons that had led numerous leading scholars, and especially Hotson, to suspect it might. But, once he had decided to try to decipher it himself, it was natural to ask whether the periods—a unique feature—might be relevant to a solution and hit on the idea that they suggest counting words. This was a natural, straightforward, logical deduction, and it turned out to be correct.

The period after each word is *not* the only distinctive feature, although it is the most obvious one. The inverted syntax is also unique and each of the other five oddities is real, though less obvious.

Also, putting a period after each word is *not* "a printer's convention used in imitation of lapidary inscriptions or brasses." Some "convention" when there is only one extant example of it. Further, as Rollett explains in his article, it differs from the appearance of Roman monument inscriptions:

It is sometimes suggested...that the Dedication is laid out in capital letters and full stops in imitation of an incised stone monument, such as...in classical Roman times. But invariably in such inscriptions the stops are symmetrically placed, both at the beginning and end of each line, as well as between words. Moreover, they are nearly always placed mid-way between the printing line and a line defined by the tops of the characters, rather than on the printing line itself. Laid out as a typical Roman monumental inscription ..., the Dedication would look as in Figure 5. (107)

Jiménez then asks:

Furthermore, to whom was Thorpe communicating this hidden message? And from whom was he concealing it? If he wanted to tell the ordinary reader that de Vere was Shakespeare, he picked a devilish way to do it. If he wanted to give one or more specific people the same message, why didn't he just tell them, rather than conceal it in an elaborate puzzle in a printed work? (186)

These are fair questions, although one need not answer them to prove that the solutions are valid. We cannot know for sure what the encryptor intended because he didn't tell us, but we can make inferences. Rollett thought the solutions were written for posterity, not contemporaries, as seen when he guessed that they were meant to remain hidden "(for perhaps two or three decades)" (115). The fact that the dedication itself includes everything needed to solve the encryptions supports this view.

I agree that it looks like it was written for posterity, although the encryptor may also have had a select group of contemporaries in mind—people in the

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know who would be able to appreciate it. The Friedmans recognized that a cryptogram might be written for posterity when they said that a covert communication might be directed at an audience "in a later generation" (Friedmans 1957, 16).

Jiménez suggests elsewhere that the author didn't care if his works were published and wouldn't have cared if his identity were never revealed. I disagree and will address this question below.

Finally, Jiménez calls attention to Rollett's later rejection of his own discovery:

In 2004, in an unusual act of intellectual honesty, Rollett wrote that the fact that the phrase he found lacked a verb "cast doubt on the validity of the proposed solution." He conceded that "a three-element key such as 6-2-4 is far too ingenious or sophisticated for the Elizabethan or Jacobean period. In the same year, Rollett abandoned Oxford as the genuine Shakespeare, and then, a few years before his untimely death in 2015, proposed William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby, as the author of the canon. (186–187)

Note that in saying that Rollett "conceded" that the key 6-2-4 is too ingenious and sophisticated, Jiménez implicitly agrees. Although he calls this "intellectual honesty," it was, in fact, an act of sheer folly and nonsense. The reasons Rollett gives for changing his mind do not stand up under scrutiny. If the key 6-2-4 is "ingenious and sophisticated," which it clearly is, then how did it get there? Pure chance? That is what Rollett's rejection of it implies. It is not credible. The odds that such a key, giving a message pointing to Edward de Vere as author of the Sonnets, confirmed by the key matching the number of letters in the three parts of his name, could be due to chance are incredibly small. It is much more likely that some ingenious Elizabethan deliberately created it.

It is also odd that Rollett rejected the hidden message pointing to Oxford but not the appearance of Henry Wriothesely's name, since the former is the more clearly valid of the two. What gives? The motive for Rollett's change is clear in Jiménez' observation of Rollett's switch from Oxford to Derby as Shakespeare, which made it *necessary* to repudiate his discovery pointing to Oxford.

I address Rollett's switch in my article in a section titled "Rollett Recants." It is worth reading. None of the three reasons Rollett gives for rejecting the validity of the hidden message pointing to Oxford is consistent with the Friedmans' validation criteria. Here's my concluding paragraph:

The fact that Rollett was the first person to call attention to the hidden message does not imbue him with special authority to determine its validity. He is subject to the same rules and validation criteria as every other scholar, and, sadly, his revised position is illogical. It is unfortunate that he did not live to see the intentionality of the key 6-2-4 encoded in the shape of the dedication confirmed. If he had, he might have [continued to accept] the solution... (230)

Jiménez concludes that, "The explanation of the Dedication that Rollett proposed [has] too many arbitrary decisions and too little evidence" (187). Plus, it's much too ingenious and sophisticated. His conclusion is unjustified. The hidden message meets *all* of the Friedmans' validation criteria.

Rollett's proposed hidden message accounts for four of the seven peculiarities that he identified: #1: the inverted syntax, which was required to get the right words spaced properly to be revealed by the application of the key; #5: the full stops, or periods, after every word/initial that suggested counting words to find a message; #6: the unexpected lower-case hyphens, which suggested that the compound words be counted separately; and #7: the lines of the dedication forming the shape of three inverted triangles with 6, 2 and 4 lines—the key that led to the discovery of the message. It is remarkable that Rollett's solution accounts for them. The hidden name accounts for the rest.

The Hidden Name (Henry Wr-ioth-esley)

As mentioned earlier, Rollett and Jiménez both deal with the hidden name first, then the hidden message; but both here and in my TOX article I address the hidden message first because it was discovered first, and it is the more obviously valid of the two and less likely to be due to chance. The discovery of the hidden name should be seen in that context. Yes, it is more difficult to find, requiring scrutiny of many arrays of letters, but by then one has confirmation that the dedication is, in fact, a cryptogram, but without yet having solved the mystery of the identity of "Mr. W.H." A decipherer would therefore be strongly motivated to do a thorough search for a transposition cipher with the expectation that prospects for success are good, which turned out to be the case.

Jiménez begins by claiming that:

The words and phrases in the Sonnets Dedication were not unusual at the time. In the words of Donald Foster, "The same basic sentence, with varying incidentals, appears in hundreds of Renaissance book dedications, most frequently as an epigraph to a longer 'epistle dedicatory,' as in another of Thorpe's publications, *The Preachers Travels* by John Cartwright (figure 2):" (178).

But Thorpe's dedication to *The Preachers Travels*, shown in Jiménez' figure 2, does not support his claim. The only words they have in common are "To the" and "wisheth...happiness."

Jiménez then writes:

The message (sic) alleged...to be hidden in the...Dedication consists of the two names "Henry" and "Wriothesley." The first question that arises about such a message...is why it was necessary in this publication of the *Sonnets*. Wriothesley had already been associated in the most intimate way with Shakespeare in the dedications of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* years earlier. Moreover, if Thomas Thorpe found it necessary to connect Wriothesley with the *Sonnets*, why didn't he simply do so, rather than conceal his name in such a way that it remained hidden for hundreds of years? (178–9)

Obvious answer #1: to reveal Henry Wriothesley's identity as the Fair Youth of the Sonnets to posterity. Most were addressed to him, and in a more intimate way than in the two dedications. In Sonnet 81 the author specifically says that "Your name from hence immortal life shall have," but then he is not named, creating an apparent mystery, which is answered by the hidden name.

Obvious answer #2: the Sonnets are scandalous, depicting a love triangle among an older and a younger man and a Dark Lady. Why would Thorpe want to expose the still-living Wriothesley?

Obvious answer #3: Thorpe would not have known it would take so long to decipher the name. Also, perhaps it was discovered much earlier, but nothing about it appeared in print at the time.

Jiménez then gives this account of Rollett's discovery of the name:

From the numerous types of ciphers possible, he chose to seek the message in a "transpositional cipher," that is, a cipher that rearranges the letters in the plain text. Rollet produced the following rearrangement of the text in what he called a "perfect rectangular array" of 8 rows of 18 letters in which the name WR IOTH ESLEY could be made out in three unattached sequences, reading vertically downward, upward, and down again in columns 2, 11, and 10 (figure 3): (179)

Т	0	Т	Η	Ε	0	N	L	I	E	В	Ε	G	Ε	Τ	Τ	Ε	R
0	F	Т	Η	Ε	S	Ε	I	N	S	V	Ι	N	G	S	0	N	N
E	Τ	S	Μ	r	W	H	А	L	L	H	А	Ρ	Ρ	I	Ν	Ε	S
S	Е	А	N	D	Τ	Η	А	Τ	Ε	Т	Ε	R	Ν	Ι	Τ	Ι	Ε
Р	R	0	М	Ι	S	Ε	D	В	Y	0	V	R	Е	V	Ε	R	L
Ι	V	Ι	N	G	Ρ	0	Е	Τ	W	I	S	Η	Ε	Τ	Η	Τ	Η
Ε	W	Ε	L	L	W	Ι	S	Η	I	N	G	А	D	V	Ε	Ν	Τ
V	R	Ε	R	Ι	Ν	S	Ε	Т	Т	Ι	Ν	G	F	0	R	Т	Η

Figure 3 from Ramon Jiménez' article.

Although Jiménez says that Rollett chose "from the numerous types of ciphers possible," they are of two basic types: transposition ciphers and substitution ciphers, as the Friedmans explain. The comment appears intended to suggest there was something arbitrary about what Rollett did, but this is not so. Transposition ciphers were well known, so it was quite natural to look for one.

Otherwise, Jiménez' account of it is accurate, although saying that WR-IOTH-ESLEY is in three "unattached" sequences neglects to mention that "IOTH" and "ESLEY" are in adjacent columns.

Jiménez writes: "Support for the correctness of this decipherment," Rollett continued, "comes from the perfect array with 9 rows of 16 letters," which, reading downward diagonally from the second row spells HENRY (figure 4). (179)



Figure 4 from Ramon Jiménez' article.

And Jiménez then writes: "In an array with 15 letters in each row (the last being incomplete)," Rollett continued, "the name can be read out vertically in the 7th column" (figure 5): (180)



Figure 5 from Ramon Jiménez' article.

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Jiménez then recounts Rollett's conclusion:

From these three arrays, or grids, Rollett concluded that "It is a reasonable deduction (though perhaps not an inescapable one) that the full name 'Henry Wriothesley' was deliberately concealed in the Dedication, in order to record for posterity his identity as 'Mr. W. H". He also concluded that Henry Wriothesley was indeed "the young man to whom many of the sonnets were addressed..." (98).

In analyzing how the double cryptogram was created, Rollett also explains why "Henry" is in a different array from "Wriothesley," and why "Wriothesley" had to be in at least two segments. He wrote that,

The cryptographer has to decide whether to place the name 'Wriothesley' in the same array [as 'Henry'], and introduce a second letter 'Y', or to use the same 'Y' [in 'BY'] and go for an array of a different size. The second option has the advantage...that he does not have to search for another usable word containing a letter 'Y', and also the name will be less obvious, since the presence of two 'Y's in the text might alert someone to the possibility that a name containing two 'Y's was concealed in the text.... To make use of the 'Y' of 'BY', the name 'Wriothesley' must be broken up into segments, since the letter occurs roughly half-way through the text. (111)

This is a very simple, credible explanation for why the name appears as it does. The complete name "Henry Wr-ioth-esley" does appear, however,—all 16 letters of it—which is remarkable.

The only real flaw in the appearance of the name is that the letters "WR" are widely separated from the rest of it. Of this, Rollett wrote:

The [final] task for the cryptographer was to get the letters 'WR' into the bottom of column 11, in which endeavor he failed; he made up for it by getting them into the bottom of column 2. (112)

If the cryptographer had succeeded in that, i.e., getting the full last name into two segments with 5 and 6 letters in adjacent columns, there would be no doubt about the validity of the encryption. The appearance of "WR" in the bottom two rows seems to suggest this may have been his intent. Notice also that the final phrase, "wisheth the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth," includes three "W's" and three "R's," as if the encryptor was working with words containing those letters to try to get "WR" beneath "IOTH" in column 11. In the end he decided that it was good enough.

Why would the encryptor have been satisfied with the last name in three segments? Rollett says:

So that it would be that much more difficult to decipher. He would then have been able to argue, if the name was discovered and he was questioned by the authorities, that it was a coincidence; he might avoid an unpleasant fate thereby [since naming the Youth was apparently prohibited]. (115)

That's two reasons: it could not be too easy to solve, and it had to be deniable if discovered too soon. Both reasons seem valid, but there are two other possible reasons mentioned in my article:

First...it is very difficult to design a cryptogram with a cover text and...*two* plain text messages and get all three to appear perfect. The [encryptor] may have decided that the message pointing to an alternative author was more important, so he was willing to compromise on "Wr-ioth-esley."

Second, anyone attempting [a decipherment] would have been trying to identify "Mr. W. H." and would not be expecting a message about another author. If the name, when found, had appeared perfect, or nearly perfect, the decipherer would have thought that he had succeeded, and so there would be no need to look for anything else. The message pointing to de Vere might never have been suspected and so never found. This might have defeated the cryptographer's main purpose. Leaving the letters "WR" widely separated from the rest of the name in the same array makes the decipherer ask why and suggests that he should keep looking for something else that made it necessary. If enciphering the name was the main objective, it seems strange that the letters "WR" would be so separated from the rest of the name, but if not the main objective, it is not. (228)

Jiménez makes this complaint about the grids:

It will be noticed, first, that the last grid shown is five letters short of symmetrical, and that if it were symmetrical, or "perfect" as Rollett describes the other two, the name HENRY would not line up vertically. This illustrates a feature of all three grids—they are arbitrary. The number of possible grids, symmetrical or not, in a message of 144 letters is over 70. The decoder would, therefore, have to try out dozens of possible grids to locate the hidden message. (180)

No, there are 8 perfectly rectangular grids with from 6 to 30 rows, and 24 imperfect grids with from 5 to 29 rows, for a total of 32 that one might have to inspect if one had to inspect them all. But that was not necessary. Rollett first searched the perfect grids, starting with the 12 x 12 grid, and quickly spotted the segment "ESLEY" in the 8 x 18 grid, reading straight down from the top. He thought that the encryptor probably did that to make it easy to spot for anyone looking for the name Henry Wriothesley. It was then a simple matter to see the rest of the name in the same grid. Having found the last name, he assumed "HENRY" must be there somewhere and soon saw that

those letters are 15 letters apart in the dedication, so they align in the grid with rows of 15 letters.

He then searched the rest of the grids to see what else they might contain, but nothing of interest. Yes, it takes time to examine each grid, so only someone very motivated would go to the trouble. But once one decides to do it, perhaps after being convinced the dedication truly is a cryptogram, it isn't hard to scan the grids to see what is there. The fact that Rollett did it shows it can be done. And it was not so difficult to spot the hidden name once he started looking. As Rollett points out,

John Dee would have been surprised that the transposition ciphers evaded detection for so long, since he regarded this kind of cipher as "such as eny man of knowledge shud be able to resolve." (115)

Just because it takes some time and work does not call the results into question. Jiménez would not have gone to the trouble, but Rollett did, and so he was the one who made the big discovery.

And Jiménez complains about the lower-case "r":

Another feature of Rollett's three grids is that the letter "r," which was printed in superscript in the Quarto, is given the same weight as the other letters, another arbitrary decision...If the writer intended the "r" to be included in the grid, and given the same weight as the other letters, why wouldn't he simply print it as a capital ...? An "MR" would have left no doubt. As it happens, including the "r" in the grid is essential to obtaining the names "Henry" and "Wriothesley." Eliminating it removes each name from its respective grid (figure 8): (181)

As I said earlier, the lower-case "r" is necessary to encrypt the key in the shape of the dedication. It's in the dedication, so it was natural for Rollett to include it among the 144 letters he used, and it turned out that it was a fruitful decision. If it hadn't been, there was just one other option to try. The lower-case "r" is not a flaw. Rollett's decision to include it was quite reasonable and correct.

He then tries to apply the Friedmans' validation criteria, even though they were not all intended for this type of encryption, repeating Rollett's clearly inappropriate use of them. Jiménez writes:

In his article, Rollett repeatedly cited the "criteria for assessing whether a solution of a supposed cipher is genuine or not" that appeared in *The Shakespearean Ciphers Examined* by William and Elizebeth Friedman:

• the key to the cipher should be given unambiguously, either in the text or in some other way, and not contrived to fit in with preconceived ideas;

- the decoded message should make good sense, and have been sufficiently important to have been worth concealing;
- the message should have been hidden where it had a high probability of being found. (182)

Yes, these quotes are correct, but only the first of them is entirely as specified by the Friedmans. Rollett was correct that "the decoded message should make good sense," but not that it must be "sufficiently important to have been worth concealing." That's nowhere in the Friedmans' book. Nor did they say that a message must be "hidden where it had a high probability of being found." I do not know where Rollett got those, and on the face of it they do not sound like valid criteria. But Jiménez nevertheless used Rollett's incorrect and inapplicable validation criteria. He writes:

As to the first criterion [above], Rollett writes, "With regard to the cipher keys, these are factors of 144, the number of letters in the text...." It is true that in two of his three grids the number of columns and rows are "factors," that is, exact divisors of 144. But ... there are [numerous] differently-shaped grids...How is it unambiguous that one or another should be used? (182)

Jiménez is correct here. Rollett was mistaken when he said that factors of 144 are cipher "keys." Here is what I say about it in my article:

[Rollett] writes that the cipher keys "are factors of 144, the number of letters in the text" (99). This is not a genuine "key." It is not free of ambiguity (which of the many sets of factors is correct?), nor does its use follow automatically with no need for judgment. Rollett's solution is what the Friedmans call an "unkeyed transposition cipher" (18, 20). They depend for their solution on rearranging, scrutinizing, and spotting meaningful patterns in texts thought to conceal information. The validation of such systems requires the use of the two remaining Friedman criteria: estimation of the odds that a solution occurred by chance and showing that it is unique.

In Appendix B to his article, Rollett shows his calculation of the odds that the name "Henry Wr-ioth-esley" occurred by chance....[to be] "of the order of 1 in (very roughly) 30 billion" (104). This estimate is not correct. He made two errors that greatly reduced his odds estimate. (224)

In my article, I correct the two errors and estimate the odds of the name occurring by chance at roughly 1 in 8.3 million, as shown in the Appendix (238–241). Based on this, I concluded:

While not near 1 in 30 billion, these are still very remote odds and strongly support the view that the occurrence of the complete name "Henry Wr-ioth-esley" was no accident but was deliberate. Rollett put a lot of effort into checking to see if his solution was unique. He scanned the columns of all arrays with rows of from 6 to 30 letters, reading both up and down, to spot words three or more letters in length. Reading down only, he found "180 3-letter words, 42 4-letter words, and 3 5-letter words, plus the segment 'esley' with similar results reading upwards" (104). Rollett and I also consulted three orthodox scholars (two of them mathematicians) who tried, unsuccessfully, to find some other name as unlikely to have occurred by chance as "Henry Wr-ioth-esley." So I concluded that "Between the long odds of the name occurring by chance and the uniqueness of the solution, that is sufficient to meet the validation criteria specified by the Friedmans" (225).

Jiménez, however, thinks that Rollett's solution is not unique and that he has found two other solutions, but that it is unnecessary for him to calculate the odds that they occurred by chance. He writes:

Another "perfect" grid would produce, in the same disjointed fashion as in the WR IOTH ESLEY grid, both spellings, HA RV EY and HE RV EY, of the name of another candidate for Mr. W. H. (figure 6)," adding that "In either spelling, Sir William's initials are in the right order." (180)

T O O F E T	T T S	H H M	Erp	O S W	N E H	L I A	I N L	E S L	B U H	E I A	G N P	E G P	T S I	T O N	E N E	R N S	Figure 6 from Jiménez' artici
S E P R	A	N M	D T	T	H E	A D	T B	E Y	T	E II	R R	N E	I V	T E	I R	E T.	
P R	0 т	M	I	S	E	D F	В	Y	0	U c	R	E	V	E	R	L	
E W	E	L	L	W	I	S	H	W I	N	G	A	D	V	E	N	T	
U R	Ε	R	Ι	N	S	Ε	Т	Т	I	N	G	F	0	R	Т	Η	

And he writes, "In the same grid, yet another name, HER BE RT can be pieced out (figure 7)," adding that "Sir William Herbert, whose initials are also in the right order, is another candidate for Mr. W. H." (181)

T O T H E O N L I E B E G E T T E R O F T H E S E I N S U I N G S O N N E T S M r W H A L L H A P P I N E S S E A N D T H A T E T E R N I T I E P R O M I S E D B Y O U R E V E R L I V I N G P O E T W I S H E T H T H E W E L L W I S H I N G A D V E N T U R E R I N S E T T I N G F O R T H

Ramon

Regarding the odds that Rollett's solution and his two alternative solutions occurred by chance, Jiménez writes:

Rollett further claimed that the likelihood that the names he found in the grids occurred by accident was one in several billion (109) [which I've corrected in my article to 1 in 8.3 million]. But considering that different names, "Harvey," "Hervey" and "Herbert," each relevant to the question, also appeared in a grid renders this calculation meaningless.

No, this is wrong, and obviously so. How is it that the validation of Rollett's proposed solution requires estimating the odds that it occurred by chance, but Jiménez' proposed solutions do not? Jiménez' two short names appearing by chance don't negate a solution clearly not due to chance. Although Jiménez did not estimate the odds for his two solution, one can tell by looking at them that they are due to chance and nowhere near the remote odds Rollett's solution is due to chance.

Rollett found the full name "Henry Wr-ioth-esley"—16 letters, with two 5-letter and one 4-letter segments. Four and 5-letter words and segments are rare, as Rollett points out (102), and the fact that his solution has three of them contributes enormously to the remote odds it is due to chance. "HA RV EY" and "HE RV EY" have only six letters, and each has only three 2-letter segments. Stringing together three widely separated 2-letter segments is very unimpressive, to say the least. "HER BE RT," with seven letters and just one 3-letter segment plus two 2-letter segments, is not much better. And the obvious question in both cases is where is the name "William" to be found? The idea that these two weak contrivances are at all comparable to Rollett's solution is nonsense.

The requirements for encrypting the hidden name account for the three remaining peculiarities: #2: the awkward wordings, and #4: the highly unusual spelling of "onlie," which were needed to encipher the name Henry Wriothesley; and #3: the dedication appearing in capital letters (except the "r" in "Mr."), which suggested arranging the letters in grids to look for a transposition cipher. Jiménez either ignores them or says that there is nothing significant about them, but he is wrong.

Finally, before submitting his article to *The Elizabethan Review*, Rollett sent it to *Cryptologia*, the leading international journal of cryptologists, where two reviewers recommended that it be published. It was rejected by founding editor David Kahn, an opponent of the authorship issue. The fact that two cryptologists found it worthy of publication speaks well of Rollett's solutions.

Part Two: Other Questions

In Part One we established that Ramon Jiménez' criticisms of John Rollett's double cryptogram solution are badly flawed and that my article confirming the validity of Rollett's work is correct. This has implications for the other questions Jiménez raises in his article, since it means that not everything is as it at first appears, and so other aspects of the dedication may also be misleading.

The first question is who actually wrote the dedication, carefully constructing it as a cryptogram? Does the evidence say that Thomas Thorpe did it entirely on his own, as Jiménez seems to think? Or was he fronting for unknown others who had the motive and necessary expertise to pull it off? It is difficult to imagine he would have had the ability, experience, or motivation to do it himself.

The Author of the Dedication

Jiménez claims that,

On the available evidence, the author of the dedication must be Thomas Thorpe. The occasion of the dedication, its extravagant style, its typographical features, Thorpe's relationship to the addressee, and even his use of his initials to sign it, all comport with his previous practices.... Thorpe's other dedications were [also] similar in style to the one he wrote for the Sonnets. (169)

The "available evidence" that Jiménez considered does not include the fact that the dedication is a cryptogram. That puts the question of Thorpe's role in creating the dedication in another light.

Keep in mind that the dedication is an "innocent letter cipher"—a type of concealment system—and thus designed to appear to be what it purports to be, a dedication written by Thomas Thorpe. So, it is unsurprising that this is what it appears to be even though it contains hidden information and others may have been involved. But, since Thorpe, as its publisher and with his initials at the bottom of it, would be taking responsibility for it, he may also have been involved in its creation. He may even have written a draft of it, which was then revised to include the hidden information.

But first, let's look at the evidence Jiménez cites to see just how strongly it does point to Thorpe. Rollett wouldn't have agreed that the dedication's "extravagant style and typographical features" comport with Thorpe's previous practices. He quotes Northop Frye, who characterized it as "one foundering and illiterate sentence" [including the strange, apparently unique, inverted syntax], and said that he found this "the more surprising in view of the fluency and wit displayed in Thorpe's other dedications" (94). Rollett gave examples in Appendix A, where he writes:

We give here the opening sentences of four of Thomas Thorpe's dedications. These demonstrate fluency, wit, and a love of wordplay, qualities all...lacking in the Dedication to the Sonnets.... Thorpe's special flavor lies in subtle and erudite wordplay, involving puns and contrasting pairs of words.... It seems unlikely that a man with such a...style would have composed the barely grammatical and nearly incomprehensible sentence which forms this Dedication. Either Thorpe wrote out of character, or someone else...wrote [it] and attached Thorpe's initials to it. (100)

Jiménez agrees about wordplay, writing: "Of Thorpe's eight surviving prefaces and dedications, only one, published in 1616, was without 'punning and elaborate conceits' (Foster 47)" (169), as if the Sonnets dedication included any. He claims that "Mr. W.H. ALL" means "Mr. W. HALL," and calls this a "visual pun" (175). What Jiménez suggests is a similarity between the Sonnets' dedication and Thorpe's others appears to Rollett, Northrop Frye, and me, to be a difference.

Jiménez points to the use of Thorpe's initials, "T. T.," twice in the Sonnets as another similarity:

Thorpe published one dedication before the 1609 Quarto, and three afterward, signing them with his initials, using one or two letters—Th. Th., Th. Th., T. Th.—just as he used T. T. on both the title page and the dedication page of the Sonnets." (169)

But of the four dedications Rollett mentions in his Appendix A, he writes: "These dedications are signed...: Thom. Thorpe, Th. Th., Th. Th., T. Th.; none is signed T.T." (101). Rollett is correct, and Jiménez is wrong in saying "just as he used T. T." None of his examples show those initials. Here again, something that Jiménez says is a similarity is an obvious difference. Later, Jiménez correctly says that "it was common for publishers and printers to use their initials on title pages and dedications" (170). Agreed. The initials "T. T." clearly seem to attribute the dedication to Thorpe, and yet the difference from his usual practice raises questions about whether it is true.

So, when Jiménez says that "Thorpe's other dedications were similar in style to the one he wrote for the Sonnets," he exaggerates the similarities and ignores the differences, even ignoring seven "peculiarities" Rollett found in the Sonnets' dedication that are not in Thorpe's other dedications.

Jiménez ends by siding with all the scholars before Rollett who missed the cryptograms, writing that "Thorpe's authorship has been the nearly unanimous opinion of scholars of the Dedication for the last 300 years, including Oxfordian scholars" (170). Yes, and we all know that hundreds of years of scholarly opinion cannot be wrong, even if they did miss that double cryptogram bit. It was *made* to look like Thorpe wrote it, so it is hardly surprising that most scholars were taken in, as with the First Folio. It might have been different had they known then what we know now.

The Role of Edward de Vere

Again, here Jiménez is ostensibly critiquing a claim made by John Rollett in his 1997 article in *The Elizabethan Review*, except Rollett made no such claim. Nor did I reach a conclusion about it in my article, but I will reply as if I had made such a claim and not merely speculated about it.

Jiménez writes:

The first question that arises about this claim is why Oxford would write a dedication to be attached to an unpublished manuscript of his Sonnets. Other than the dedications of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* in 1593 and 1594, there is no evidence that he had any interest or role in the publication of his plays or poems.... In the Sonnets, he referred to the endurance and permanence of his "rhyme," but...there is no evidence that he wanted them published, either during his lifetime or after his death." (171)

Oxford would have wanted his Sonnets published some years after his death to reveal secrets too sensitive to expose during his lifetime. The sonnets are scandalous, so the need for delay is clear. But he probably wanted them published eventually to reveal his identity, the identity of the Fair Youth, the nature of their relationship, and to fulfill his promise to the Youth to immortalize him.

Oxford's involvement in the publication can be inferred from Alastair Fowler's discovery of the numerological structure in the shape of a pyramid, or triangle, described in my article (217–220). Having created such an elaborate, sophisticated structure, it makes no sense to think that Oxford would have left it to chance that the sonnets would be laid out correctly to preserve the structure. Like the dedication, it had to be laid out very precisely, which would have required his oversight. They had to be published in authorial order, and the three irregular sonnets had to be maintained. This required Oxford's involvement, and if he was involved in that, why not also the dedication?

Jiménez points out that Sidney Lee thought the author was uninvolved in the publication, in part because "there are probably on an average five defects per page or one in every ten lines (Lee, Sonnets 41)" (172). But these are minor defects that didn't interfere with the structure—what Oxford would have cared about.

What sort of evidence would one *expect* to find, from his lifetime, that Oxford wanted his works published, given that he was apparently concealing

the sensitive secret that he was Shakespeare? His descendants never revealed it, so if he arranged for them to publish his works after his death, we would not know it. Nor would he have put anything in writing to any publisher of his works.

Some of the best evidence that Oxford wanted his sonnets published is in the sonnets themselves. Jiménez says the author "referred to the endurance and permanence of his 'rhyme," apparently referring to sonnet 55:

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rime; But you shall shine more bright in these contents Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time.

It seems clear that the poet thinks this work, and the memory of the Youth, will outlive marble. How would that be possible if they were never published? Yet Jiménez refers to this sonnet and then says that "there is no evidence that he wanted them published, either during his lifetime or after his death." I think that these opening lines of Sonnet 55 constitute exactly such evidence.

Also, the final couplet of sonnet 18 reads:

So long as man can breathe, or eyes can see, So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

The final couplet from sonnet 107:

And thou in this shalt find thy monument, When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

And, most importantly, from sonnet 81:

Your name from hence immortal life shall have... Your monument shall be my gentle verse... Which eyes not yet created shall o'er read...

How would these promises come to fruition if they were never published? As I say in my TOX article, "Unless one believes 'Shakespeare' was a feckless wonder, whose word meant nothing, he probably had a plan...for fulfilling his promise [in Sonnet 81] when he made it" (230–31).

There are also good reasons to think that Oxford wanted his *plays* to be published after his death. Alexander Waugh, in his article "1591—A Watershed Year for Oxford and the English Theatre," in the current issue of the *De Vere Society Newsletter* (July 2021, 4–18), concludes:

According to Oxfordian theory, the years between 1591 and Oxford's death in 1604 were profitably spent correcting, revising, augmenting and imbuing with his own unique genius such works as had been

incubated during his superintendence of the government's 'policy of plays'. This theory is supported by notices on title pages of Shakespearean quartos and in prefatory remarks to the First Folio, suggesting that it is to this late, solitary period of Oxford's intellectual life that the genius of Shakespeare is most surely owed. (15)

It makes no sense to think Oxford spent thirteen years revising and finalizing his plays with such care but didn't care if they were published. He clearly did want them, and his Sonnets, published. If he hadn't wanted them published, we probably wouldn't have such an extensive body of work.

Jiménez asks:

If he wished his sonnets to be published after his death and attributed to him, why would he compose an opaque dedication, and conceal his and his dedicatee's identities in a hidden message?

Again, because their identities were a sensitive secret that he didn't want to be revealed too soon. He clearly did not want the Sonnets attributed to him immediately and directly upon publication, so he composed, or had someone compose, the dedication as a cryptogram to reveal it eventually.

Jiménez:

He had already, in his two previous dedications, revealed his heartfelt, if not abject, devotion to Henry Wriothesley..., the person alleged to be the onlie begetter by most scholars of the Dedication. The two previous dedications appeared over the name 'William Shakespeare,' so Wriothesley's name had already been associated with the name on the Sonnets' title page." (171)

He obviously wanted to do more. He wanted to reveal that Wriothesely was the Youth addressed in most of the first 126 sonnets, although he could not do so too openly because of their contents. The two dedications are no substitute for the Sonnets in revealing the nature of their relationship. The dedications associated Wriothesley with Shakespeare, but not Oxford, author of the Sonnets. He told Wriothesley his name would be "immortal" and that the Sonnets would be his monument but then he is not named. Encrypting his name in the dedication is how Oxford kept that promise. And by creating the mystery of the identity of "Mr. W.H.," leading some to suspect a cryptogram and try to decipher it, he was also able to reveal his own identity to posterity via another solution.

Jiménez:

Assuming he would write such a dedication, it is conceivable that he would address it to the person or persons who were the subjects of his sonnets. But...why would he refer to the onlie begetter when his sonnets were addressed to two, or perhaps three, different people?

Because the "begetter" was the one who had inspired the author to write the Sonnets, not the Dark Lady or the Rival Poet. Most are addressed to the Youth. He was the one the author loved and was inspired by. Without him, Oxford might not have written, or arranged the publication of, the sonnets about the others.

Note that the use of the word "onlie" implies that the author is speaking authoritatively. He is the person in a position to know that there was only one inspirer of the Sonnets and who that person was. Assuming that "begetter" means inspirer, only the poet of the Sonnets could have known there was just one inspirer and say so authoritatively with the use of "onlie." Thorpe would not have been in a position to know that. (And Thorpe would have been incorrect in saying that William Hall was the "onlie" begetter since, as we will see below, Jiménez believes there were actually two procurers, William Hall and Anthony Munday.) The use of "onlie" clearly implies Oxford's involvement, although it is also essential to both encryptions.

Jiménez:

Why would he address this onlie begetter as Mr, an honorific entirely inappropriate, even insulting, to an earl? Those claiming Oxford's authorship explain this as correct, since Wriothesley, upon his imprisonment in February 1601, was stripped of his earldom. For Oxford to address him as Mr seems unnecessarily punctilious, especially since King James freed him and restored his title in 1603. And why, after Wriothesley's earldom was restored, wouldn't Oxford correct the text at some time during the following year?" (171)

Rollett was *not* among "those claiming Oxford's authorship," but he did say that the dedication may have been written while Wriothesley was in the Tower and simply "Mr." Wriothesley (98). This was the case around the time the later sonnets were written, and it is a credible explanation. It may also have been too revealing if the dedication indicated that the begetter was a nobleman. People would have suspected it was Wriothesley and would have been looking for confirmation. Best to throw them off the track by making the title "Mr.," especially if it was true when written. For this same reason, Oxford may have decided to retain it after Wriothesley's title was restored. And correcting the text would have required reworking the encryptions, which wouldn't be easy.

Rollett also called attention to a contemporaneous indication that Wriothesley's title *was* altered. I mentioned above that Rollett had called attention to a passage in the dedication to Ben Jonson's *Epigrammes* which some scholars have thought alludes to a cipher in Shakespeare's Sonnets, but the passage also alludes to a change of title. Here are the relevant excerpts from Rollett's article: In 1616 [Jonson] published his *Epigrammes*, part of his *Workes*, with a dedication to William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, which begins:

MY Lord. While you cannot change your merit, I dare not change your title: It was that [your merit] made it [your title], and not I. Under which name, I here offer to your Lo: the ripest of my studies, my Epigrammes; which, though they carry danger in the sound, doe not therefore seeke your shelter: For, when I made them, I had nothing in my conscience, to expressing of which I did need a cypher. [clarifications inserted]

According to Edward Dowden, writing in 1881, some critics have supposed that Ben Jonson is here alluding to Shakespeare's Sonnets, because of the words "I dare not change your title". It has always been a puzzle that the dedicatee should be addressed as "Mr." if, as is generally supposed, he was a nobleman (invoked in the sonnets as Lord, prince, king, sovereign).... But the most intriguing aspect of Jonson's remarks is the reference to a cipher. By saying in his dedication that he had "nothing in my conscience, to expressing of which I did need a cypher," he seems perhaps to imply that some other dedication did make use of a cipher, and the reference to a change of title may well point to the Dedication to the Sonnets. (95–96)

Jonson knew Thorpe, who published his *Sejanus* (1605). He may have known about the change of title and that the dedication was a cryptogram. He may even have helped write the dedication. That would be consistent with the role he later played, writing the front matter of the First Folio.

Jiménez:

Moreover, if Oxford were so involved in the typography of the Dedication, why would he have allowed his nom-de-plume, "Shakespeare," which he had revealed more than 15 years earlier, to be printed as Shakes-speares (sic) on the Sonnets title page? As two of the most scrupulous Shakespeare scholars, Sidney Lee and E. K. Chambers, have asserted, Shakespeare had nothing to do with the Sonnets publication. (171)

I assume that the spelling "Shakes-speares," with an extra 's' in the middle of the name is a typo and that the question is about why Oxford would have allowed that name to be hyphenated at all. The name was hyphenated in 45% of its appearances on the works, which says it was acceptable. The hyphen suggests the name is a pseudonym, and Oxford may have wanted to so indicate then. When Lee and Chambers say that "Shakespeare" had nothing to do with the Sonnets publication, they mean the Stratford man. I agree. They did not know the dedication was a cryptogram, as we know now. Their judgment is suspect because they never realized Shakspere was not the author. Jiménez: "Why would Oxford wish *that eternitie* to the *begetter* when he had already promised eternity, that is, immortality, to that person in several sonnets?" (172).

Because although he promised the Youth immortality in the Sonnets, he never named him there. By wishing him "that eternitic promised," he makes it clear that Mr. W.H. is also the Fair Youth. (Notice that here Jiménez acknowledges that the begetter is the person addressed in the Sonnets.)

Jiménez:

Whom had he in mind in the phrase *our ever-living poet*? The only poet visible in the Dedication is the author of the *Sonnets* themselves. It would be peculiar for de Vere, as that author, to refer to himself in that way." (172)

Oxford would have been writing from the perspective of the purported author of the dedication, Thomas Thorpe. Again, it is an innocent letter cipher, not meant to be from Oxford's viewpoint. Oxford, as a pretty good playwright, was capable of writing from the viewpoints of other people, including from the viewpoints of people who would ostensibly be writing long after he had died.

That is my response to the specific issues Jiménez raises. In the section of my TOX article titled "Discussion: Who wrote the dedication?" (230–232), which apparently inspired Jiménez' article, I give my rationale for thinking that Oxford *may* have been behind the creation of the dedication. I question why Thorpe, or anyone other than Oxford, would take the initiative to do such a thing. The question of motive is central, so that is its focus. I see no reason to change my mind about it. It is based entirely on the premise that the dedication is a cryptogram, which I think I've proved.

The Disputed Words and Phrases in the Dedication

Here Jiménez addresses the meanings of "begetter," "ever-living," "adventurer," and "set forth." There can be little doubt about the meanings of the latter three terms. I agree with him on those.

The question in dispute is whether "begetter" means "procurer," or "inspirer"? Jiménez analyzes both possibilities in detail, identifying numerous reputable scholars on both sides of the question. In the end, he acknowledges that "most modern scholars of the Sonnets...consider the begetter [to be] the inspirer of the Sonnets," but adds that "These two contradictory interpretations of the phrase, as provider or inspirer, have persisted to the present day" (174). But he seems to believe "inspirer" is correct when he asks, "Why would Oxford wish *that eternitie* to the *begetter* when he had already promised eternity, that is, immortality, to that person in several sonnets?" (172). Yet Jiménez claims "procurer" is correct because he thinks the onlie begetter was William Hall,

An obscure stationer active in London...who was first proposed as the procurer of the Sonnets' manuscript by Sidney Lee in 1898. Both Lee and, later, B. R. Ward asserted that Hall, a resident of Hackney, obtained the manuscript and provided it to Thorpe (Lee, *Shakespeare* 672–85). (172)

Jiménez concludes:

Thus, by adopting the meanings of begetter as provider of the Sonnets manuscript, of our ever-living poet as the author of the Sonnets, of the well-wishing adventurer as Thomas Thorpe, and of setting forth as publishing a literary work, the result is the sentence ...:

On the occasion of this publishing venture, I wish Mr. W. H., the sole provider of the manuscript of these sonnets, all happiness and that eternity promised by our immortal poet.

Only by adopting these particular meanings does the entire Dedication not only make sense, but also accurately describe the circumstances of the publication by Thomas Thorpe of a book of Sonnets, after he was provided the manuscript by William Hall. (175)

I disagree. He has *asserted* that William Hall procured the manuscript of the Sonnets and gave it to Thorpe but hasn't proven it. An equally credible summary sentence, if not more so, would be:

On the occasion of this publishing venture, I wish Mr. W. H., the sole inspirer of these sonnets, all happiness and that eternity promised to him in them by our immortal poet.

Jiménez later gives a circumstantial case for William Hall as Mr. W. H., and I will come to that, but first I want to ask if it makes sense to think it was Hall from what we find in the dedication.

If William Hall was the dedicatee, why did Thorpe not address him openly? When Thorpe wrote his first dedication to another stationer, Edward Blount, he identified him clearly as its dedicatee. Why make it difficult for readers to figure out that the Sonnets were dedicated to a William Hall? If it was a straightforward dedication from publisher to procurer, why make him hard to identify? There were good reasons to hide the identity of the Fair Youth, but why hide the identity of Hall?

If Thorpe was addressing William Hall as "the onlie begetter," meaning procurer of the Sonnets, why say "onlie"? Why not simply "To the begetter"? To clarify that there was just one procurer? Why would that be necessary? There is nothing unclear about "to the begetter," so why "onlie"? But if begetter means inspirer, it makes sense because there were three characters in the Sonnets. It was therefore necessary to single out Mr. W.H. as the only one of the three who inspired them.

If "Mr. W. H. All" is meant to be read as 'Mr. W. Hall," why is there a wider separation between the H and All than between other words? One would think that if that were the intent there would be less space between them, not more. The difference is noticeable and seems to suggest a pause.

Why would Thomas Thorpe wish William Hall "that eternitie promised by our ever-living poet"? The poet promised to immortalize the Youth; wishing him "that eternitie promised" makes sense. The author didn't promise to immortalize Hall, so why would Thorpe extend the promise to him?

Absent credible answers to these questions, it is unlikely that the Sonnets were dedicated to Hall. Charlton Ogburn, Jr., who raised the latter two and other issues, also rejected Hall (TMWS, 332).

The People in the Dedication

Jiménez uses the plural "People," but this section is really all about making the case for William Hall as "the onlie begetter." He begins by saying:

The best evidence is that *the onlie begetter*—*Mr. W. H.*— is William Hall, a fellow stationer who appears to have had access to manuscripts left by de Vere at his death. The phrase *Mr . W. H. ALL* is an obvious visual pun that should be read as "Mr. W. Hall," a reading first proposed in 1867 by Ebenezer Forsyth. (175)

If it is so "obvious" that "*Mr*. *W*. *H*. *ALL*" is a "visual pun that should be read as 'Mr. W. Hall," why was it not noticed and commented upon until 1867, 258 years after its publication in 1609? It's not as if it was too sensitive to put into print, so what's the basis for saying it was "obvious"? No, it is not obvious, and the extra space between "H." and "ALL" shows that it wasn't intended.

What is this evidence that William Hall "had access to manuscripts left by de Vere at his death"? Jiménez presents a circumstantial case based on the research of Sidney Lee and Col. B. R Ward. He starts by pointing out that in his biography of Shakespeare, Sidney Lee proposed that Hall was Mr. W.H. on this basis:

On at least one previous occasion, Hall had acquired a manuscript by a deceased author, and arranged its publication. In 1606, he obtained

the manuscript of *A Foure-Fould Meditation*, a collection of poems by Philip Howard, 13th Earl of Arundel, and...other Catholic writers (175)

Jiménez elaborates:

Hall...signed the dedication of Eld's edition of Howard's poems with the initials "W. H." In a Bibliographical Note to a reprint of this edition in 1895, the editor, Charles Edmonds, wrote, "I have always presumed this 'W. H.' to be the same 'W. H.' who gave Shakespeare's Sonnets to the world..." (Southwell viii). As Alden Brooks wrote in 1943, "it is most unlikely that there should have been about the year 1609 two persons with the initials W. H. both engaged in procuring poems for the publishing trade" (141). *A Foure-Fould Meditation* was printed in 1606 by George Eld, the printer of the *Sonnets* three years later. (176)

Note that Charles Edmonds and Alden Brooks both assumed that Mr. W. H. was the *procurer* of the Sonnets, contrary to today's prevailing view that he was the *inspirer*. They also did not know that the dedication is, in fact, a cryptogram containing the hidden name "Henry Wr-ioth-esley."

Jiménez continues:

In 1608, Hall was granted permission to publish a manuscript by Justin, the Christian martyr, which he did the next year.... With this publication, his name appeared on a title page for the first time It entitled him to the prefix 'Mr.' in all social relations'' (Lee, *Shakespeare* 683 n.1).

These facts confirm that William Hall used the initials "W. H." both before the *Sonnets* were printed (on a dedication) and afterward (on a title page), and that it was not unusual for him to acquire a manuscript of a deceased author. (176)

William Hall's initials are, indeed, W. H. The fact that Hall acquired the manuscripts of 1-2 other deceased authors is not good evidence that he acquired the manuscript of Shakespeare's Sonnets.

Jiménez:

In 1922, Col. B. R. Ward was able to place William Hall in the parish of Hackney in 1608, and to associate the passing of the *Sonnets* manuscript from him to Thomas Thorpe with the dissolution of Oxford's household in Hackney, and his widow's sale of Brooke House in 1609 (18–21). (176)

Note the ambiguity of "associate." What does that mean? Exactly how did Ward associate them? Did Ward find evidence the manuscript was passed, or only that William Hall lived in Hackney? I tried to find out by checking pages 18–21 in Ward's book, but they do not deal with this topic.

Jiménez:

To this end, Ward found the christening of a Margaret Gryffyn recorded in a register at St. Saviour's Southwark in 1592 (Looney 2:219). Further, in the Hackney Parish Registers, Ward found an entry recording the marriage of a William Hall and Margery Gryffyn in August 1608 (Looney 2:220). More than one scholar has noticed that Thorpe's wish of *all happiness* might...be an appropriate sentiment to extend to a newly married man (Stopes 344; Anderson 365). (176)

Note that this is how Col. Ward "placed William Hall in the parish of Hackney in 1608" (above). "Shakespeare" wished Henry Wriothesley "all happiness" in the dedication to Lucrece (1594). Echoing that earlier dedication would be an appropriate sentiment to extend to Wriothesley.

Jiménez:

Additional evidence for William Hall's presence in the parish of Hackney appeared in three articles by Col. Ward, published in the *Hackney Spectator* in August and September 1924.

In the Feet of Fines for Hackney, a transaction was recorded in 1600 "between James Knowles and John Costerdyne, plaintiffs, and William Hall and Elizabeth his wife and William Watkinson defendant ..." (Looney 2:219). The supposition here is that Hall's wife, Elizabeth, died sometime before 1608. Although it is not certain that the William Hall and Margaret or Margery Gryffyn mentioned in these documents are those now under scrutiny, the possibility that they are the same people requires that this evidence be included in the discussion. (177)

So now we learn it is possible the William Hall in Hackney in 1608 was not the stationer at all!

Additional evidence that William Hall may have had access to manuscripts left by Edward de Vere at his death lies in Hall's relationship with Anthony Munday, playwright, translator, and a known associate of de Vere. (177)

William Hall and Anthony Munday were both apprenticed to the printer John Allde in the late 1570s (Turner 5, 14, 26; McKerrow 121). Munday's first surviving publication, *The Mirrour of Mutabilitie*, was printed by John Allde in 1579. After Munday's effusive dedication to the Earl of Oxford, there follow several verses commending the author, including one from William Hall "in commendation of his kinsman Anthony Munday," signed with the initials "W. H." (Munday 19). (177)

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Munday had been associated with Oxford since his teenage years and had dedicated a novel and half-a-dozen translations to him during the 1580s and 1590s. Moreover, Munday was also involved with Oxford/ Shakespeare in the composition and revision of *Sir Thomas More*, a play dated as early as 1593 and as late as 1608 (Jowett 424–43). (177)

So, Jiménez cites Jowett's late date of 1608 for *Sir Thomas More* to get Munday close to Oxford. Yes, Munday *had been* close to Oxford, but nothing shows he was close to him in his final years, or so close to Elizabeth Trentham in 1608 that he could have passed the Sonnets to William Hall.

And it's unlikely that Trentham would have wanted such scandalous poems ever to be published. It would have been extremely embarrassing to her to have Oxford's secret love triangle revealed. Jiménez never mentions the Sonnets' scandalous nature, which is a major problem for his theory. It is not as if such poems could casually be passed on to be published like other poems, or a play.

And a big problem with involving Munday is that Hall wasn't then the "onlie" begetter-procurer. If two people were involved in procuring the Sonnets, why would Thorpe say there was just one? The idea that Munday acquired the Sonnets and passed them to Hall, who passed them to Thorpe is an unproven, unsubstantiated, and unlikely theory. It should not be regarded as anything more.

Jiménez:

A manuscript of *Troilus and Cressida*...became available in 1609, and was printed by *Sonnets* printer, George Eld. A second state of this printing contained a "publisher's advertisement" that referred to "the grand possessors' wills" [intentions] and the "scape it [the play] hath made" (Bevington 120–2). (177)

These facts support the claim by Sidney Lee that *the onlie begetter* was William Hall, and the subsequent claim by Col. Ward that William Hall likely had access to a manuscript of Oxford's Sonnets, and perhaps other manuscripts, around the year 1609 through his "kinsman," Anthony Munday. (177)

It is an interesting coincidence that the play *Troilus and Cressida* was also published by George Eld in 1609, after allegedly having escaped from the possession of unnamed "grand possessors." And it is an interesting coincidence that a William Hall lived in Hackney around that same time. They do not, however, constitute proof of Sidney Lee's theory that Hall was "the onlie begetter." We do not know that the William Hall in Hackney was the same as Thorpe's stationer colleague, and, even if he was, it does not prove

that he acquired the Sonnets and passed them on to Thorpe. Sidney Lee's and Col. Ward's "claims," as Jiménez calls them, are an unproven theory, no more.

Jiménez:

Because of the prefix *Mr* attached to the initials *W*. *H*., neither the Earl of Southampton nor the Earl of Pembroke can be *the onlie beget*-*ter*. At the time, the use of such a designation for an earl was strictly forbidden. The government was "always active in protecting the dignity of peers," and an offense of this type would have constituted defamation.... Wriothesley's title had been restored in 1603, long before the *Sonnets* were printed.... Thomas Thorpe, in 1610 and 1616, dedicated publications to William Herbert, addressing him in both... as Earl of Pembroke. (178)

Jiménez seems to think that if Thorpe had wanted to dedicate the Sonnets to Henry Wriothesley he would have referred to "the onlie begetter" as "Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton." Now *that* would have been defamation! Again, Jiménez ignores that the Sonnets are scandalous. Was there anything scandalous about the two publications Thorpe dedicated to William Herbert? If not, it is not a comparable situation. There were sensitive secrets involved with the publication of the Sonnets that probably required deviations from normal practices. As Rollett explained,

Since the names were not displayed on the title or dedication pages, it must be assumed that it was necessary, for important personal or political reasons...for the identities of the protagonists to be suppressed. (113)

Not only could the real author and Fair Youth not be openly identified, any surreptitious allusion to either of them had to be deniable. Thorpe, as publisher and ostensible author of the dedication, needed to be able to credibly deny any intent to identify *the onlie begetter* as Henry Wriothesley. Using the initials "H. W." would have been obvious, and a hint that he was an earl even more so. Reversing the initials and giving him the title "Mr." (true at one time) provided deniability, while hinting that there might be something more to find, leading to the discovery of the hidden name.

Since there was no contemporary commentary on the Sonnets and no second printing until 1640, they may have been suppressed. Perhaps someone, like Henry Wriothesley, really *was* offended. It's easier to explain their suppression if Mr. W. H. was Wriothesley than if he was William Hall.

Finally, I would again call attention to the passage in the dedication to Ben Jonson's *Epigrammes* that alludes to a change of title (see full quote above

in section on The Role of Edward de Vere). As noted there, "According to Edward Dowden...some critics have supposed that Ben Jonson is...alluding to Shakespeare's Sonnets, because of the words 'I dare not change your title." Thus, Ben Jonson, an authoritative contemporary source, suggests that a nobleman's title *was* changed in some other dedication, and the leading contender is Mr. W.H. in the dedication to the Sonnets. Perhaps it isn't as impossible that Wriothesley's title could have been changed as Jiménez thinks. I agree it's unlikely Thorpe would have done that on his own authority. Oxford is another matter.

Conclusion

Jiménez fails to prove any of the four main claims that he makes about the Sonnets' dedication in his article. Most importantly, he fails to prove that "there is no secret message or code..., nor any significance in its shape or typography." His analysis of Rollett's proposed cryptogram solutions is badly flawed. He misunderstood one of the Friedmans' validation criteria, meant to apply only to the use of cipher keys, and applied it to other aspects of decryption where it was inappropriate.

In describing Rollett's hidden message he failed to mention that the key 6-2-4 corresponds to the number of letters in the name "Edward de Vere," a powerful confirmation the solution is correct.

He disputes the validity of Rollett's discovery of the complete 16-letter name Henry Wriothesley by finding two disjointed 6-letter last names of other candidates and suggesting they are as good, even though they are surely due to chance versus odds of 1 in 8.3 million for Rollett's discovery.

He ignores that Rollett's reasons for rejecting his own hidden message discovery make no sense.

He fails to prove that the dedication "was composed by the publisher, Thomas Thorpe." Thorpe was responsible for it and so was probably involved and had to approve it, but once one realizes it is a cryptogram revealing the identities of the author and Fair Youth it is hard to imagine that Thorpe would have been able to construct it on his own or would have been motivated to do so. The dedication to the Sonnets has peculiarities that are found in none of his other dedications.

He fails to prove that the dedication is addressed to William Hall or that he procured the Sonnets. Jiménez' claim that "Mr. W. H." was William Hall is based on weak circumstantial evidence and ignores contrary evidence and

arguments that don't support his theory. Most importantly, he fails to recognize that the dedication is a cryptogram with one solution pointing to Henry Wriothesley. If it were Hall, Thorpe would not have had to hide his identity, or called him the "onlie" begetter.

He fails to prove his claim that Edward de Vere was not involved with the dedication in any way. No one would have had a stronger motive to create a cryptogram revealing his identity as author and Wriothesley's identity as the Fair Youth after he had promised him immortality in sonnet 81. He created a complex triangular structure that was maintained when the Sonnets were published, and it is unlikely that it happened without him. So, he may also have helped write the dedication. Only Oxford, not Thorpe, was able to say with authority that Mr. W. H. was the "onlie" begetter. I've speculated that he may have been involved, but I make no claim to have proved that he was.

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