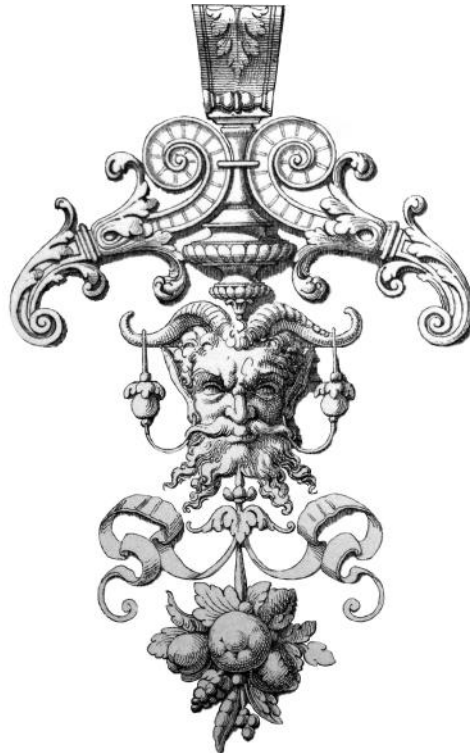


The Oxfordian

Volume 24

October 2022

ISSN 1521-3641



The Oxfordian is the peer-reviewed journal of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, a non-profit educational organization that conducts research and publication on the Early Modern period, William Shakespeare and the authorship of Shakespeare's works. Founded in 1998, the journal offers research articles, essays and book reviews by academicians and independent scholars, and is published annually during the autumn.

Writers interested in being published in **The Oxfordian** should review our publication guidelines at the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship website: <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/the-oxfordian/>.

Our postal mailing address is:

**The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship
PO Box 66083
Auburndale, MA 02466
USA**

Queries may be directed to the editor, Gary Goldstein, at oxfordian@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org

Back issues of *The Oxfordian* may be obtained by writing to: newsletter@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org

Front Cover: oil painting of Venus and Adonis (c. 1554) by the Italian painter, Titian. During Shakespeare's time, it could have been seen only in Titian's home in Venice. Equally important, it was the only one of Titian's five versions of this scene in which Adonis wears a "bonnet", which Shakespeare describes in his poem of *Venus and Adonis* (1593):

He sees her coming and begins to glow...
And with his bonnet hides his angry brow...
Fall askance he holds her in his eye...
ll.337–339

Shakespeare refers to Adonis's bonnet two more times in V&A—see II.1081–90. While William Shakspeare of Stratford never left England, Edward de Vere traveled throughout Italy during 1575-76, making Venice his home base, where Titian worked until his death in August 1576.

The contents of *The Oxfordian* are indexed in the following bibliographies: The Modern Language Association International Bibliography, ProQuest (Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature), the World Shakespeare Bibliography, and Gale Academic OneFile.

Acknowledgements

Editorial Board

James Boyd	Ramon Jiménez	Roger Stritmatter
Charles Boynton	Vanessa Lops	Richard Waugaman
Lucinda S. Foulke	Luke Prodromou	
Wally Hurst	Don Rubin	

Editor: Gary Goldstein

Proofreading: James Boyd, Vanessa Lops and Alex McNeil

Graphics Design & Image Production: Lucinda S. Foulke

Permission Acknowledgements

Illustrations used in this issue are in the public domain, unless otherwise noted.

Cover image from the collection of Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, UK.
<https://artsandculture.google.com>, image distributed under a CC-BY 2.0 license.

Table of Contents

Research Articles

- 9 **In Memoriam: Warren Thomas Hope (1944-2022)**
A tribute to one of the outstanding leaders of the Oxfordian movement in the United States: scholar, writer, editor and professor.
- 11 **From the Editor—Interdisciplinary Scholarship and the Authorship**
The insight of interdisciplinary scholarship has enhanced the Oxfordian case despite the continuing censorship of academics, thereby laying a foundation for the time when the modern academy embraces a true liberal culture.
- 13 **The Grand Deception of the First Folio**
by Katherine Chiljan
A detailed examination as to how the prefatory materials of the First Folio demonstrate that its financiers deliberately designed its production as a tool of strategic deception regarding the authorship of Shakespeare's works.
- 33 **A Contrarian View of the First Folio: Why Was It Published?**
by James A. Warren
The author proposes that the First Folio was designed by the Incomparable Pair of brother Earls to enable Edward de Vere to be easily revealed as William Shakespeare at a future date—when a different political environment would facilitate its acceptance.
- 57 **A Companion for a King: “Shakespeare...THOU HADST BIN [An Earl]”**
by Matt Hutchinson
The author demonstrates that the reference to “a companion for a King” in John Davies’ epigram, *To Our English Terence, Mr. Will Shake-speare*, shows that Shakespeare was very likely an Earl.

63 “Sogliardo” and Greene’s Upstart Crow

by Matt Hutchinson

The author shows how several topical allusions in the 1590s point to Shakespeare being compared to a crow as well as to several poems by Edward de Vere.

69 Some Autobiographical Aspects of *Timon of Athens*

by Warren Hope

The late author compares the hero of *Timon of Athens* and the career and life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, showing how similar they are in terms of interests, psychology and behavior.

73 Triumphal Numbers and the “Stigma of Print”: Michael Drayton’s Encomium to Shakespeare in Agincourt

by Roger Stritmatter

The article explores the application of Jacobean aesthetic doctrines associated with the idea of “triumphal forms” to Michael Drayton’s encomium to Shakespeare in his 202-line friendship poem, originally printed in 1627.

111 Employing Mathematics to Identify the Real Shakespeare

by Paul Chambers

The author proposes that the tool of Bayesian mathematics can be successfully employed to demonstrate the probability that Edward de Vere was the true author of the Shakespeare canon.

131 Are the Paratexts of *Sejanus His Fall* an Homage to Edward de Vere?

by Heidi Jannsch

This paper investigates to what extent the paratexts of Ben Jonson’s play, *Sejanus*, praises Edward de Vere after his demise in 1604, when his reputation was being publicly censored by the state.

149 Shake-speare's Sonnets: Their Dates, their History, and the Story They Tell

by Stephanie Hopkins Hughes

The author examines the knowledge revealed in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, often seen as private letters written in verse, for what it can tell readers about the author and his social circle of friends and lovers.

171 "Nothing is Truer than Truth" and Shakespeare

by Richard Waugaman

In this essay, the author investigates the way in which truth was viewed by Shakespeare, while analyzing the Shakespeare play, *All's Well That Ends Well*, as an example of the dramatist's application of the principle in his creative work.

193 What is Hamlet's Book?

by Sky Gilbert

In this scintillating examination of Ancient Greek and Renaissance philosophy in the works of Gorgias and Girolamo Cardano, the author attempts to determine the identity of the book that Hamlet is seen reading in the play of the same name.

211 The 17th Earl of Oxford and the Occult

by Richard Malim

The author traces de Vere's interest in the occult as it appears in Giordano Bruno's works as well as the Shakespeare plays, along with de Vere's relationship with Dr. John Dee—a proponent of both the scientific method and occult practices.

237 Stratfordian Epistemology and the Ethics of Belief

by Michael Dudley

This monograph delves into how we know what we know about the Shakespeare authorship question—and to what extent the modern scholarly community is ethical in how it pursues an answer to that question.

Book Reviews

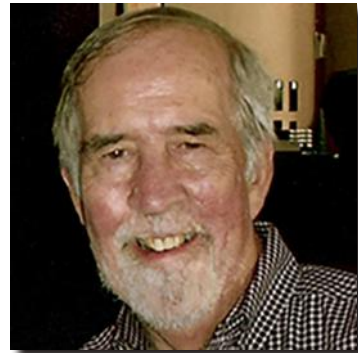
- 271 **The First Oxfordian Edition of *Twelfth Night***
by Michael Delahoyde
Reviewed by Felicia Londré
- 275 **The Concluding Volume of Bronson Feldman's *Trilogy on Shakespeare***
by Bronson Feldman
Reviewed by James A. Warren
- 283 **A New Oxfordian Critical Edition—*The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth***
by Ramon Jiménez
Reviewed by Michael Delahoyde
- 289 **Delineating Shakespeare's Education**
by Stephanie Hopkins Hughes
Reviewed by Don Rubin
- 295 ***Oxford's Voices: What Shakespeare Wrote Before He Was Shakespeare***
by Robert R. Prechter, Jr.
Reviewed by Phoebe Nir
- 301 **Was Shakespeare a Literary Revolutionary?**
by Richard Malim
Reviewed by Gary Goldstein



In Memoriam: Warren Thomas Hope (1944–2022)

We are saddened by the loss of Warren Hope, longtime Oxfordian, former editor of the Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter, co-author of *The Shakespeare Controversy*, and friend to many in the community.

Warren Thomas Hope, the youngest of two sons, was born to John and Emma Hope in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on July 2, 1944. He died on May 23, 2022 as a result of lung disease. A true scholar and man of letters, his life's vocation included research, writing, editing, publishing, and teaching.



He was a graduate of Central High School, Community College of Philadelphia, and Temple University. At Community College of Philadelphia, he was taught by Dr. A. Bronson Feldman, who became an influential figure in his life both intellectually and personally, and later became his literary executor. Warren pursued higher education at Temple University, earning a BA, MA and PhD in British Literature there. His dissertation was on the Scottish poet Norman Cameron and Warren traveled to England, where Cameron eventually lived, to conduct primary research for his thesis. He collected Cameron's work for publication, later partnering with fellow Cameron enthusiast Jonathan Barker on an expanded collection. Warren went on to write the definitive biography of Norman Cameron and recently completed a revised edition, which has just appeared in print: *Norman Cameron: His Life, Work and Letters* (Greenwich Exchange).

A Shakespearean scholar, he was fascinated by questions surrounding the authorship of Shakespeare's plays and became a devout Oxfordian, asserting that the 17th Earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere, was the true author of Shakespeare's work. As a result, he was involved for decades with the Shakespeare Oxford Society, now known as the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. To that end, he served as editor of the Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter for three years, and later co-wrote *The Shakespeare Controversy* with Kim Holston, published in 1992 and 2009 by McFarland Publishers, a book which explores and analyzes the authorship question.

In a 2011 online review, scholar Roger Stritmatter wrote, "If you are looking for a serious study of the history of the authorship question, this is the book—along with Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth & the Reality*—to read."

Warren was also a published poet and several volumes of his poetry have appeared in print, culminating in his collection, *Adam's Thoughts in Winter* 1970-2000. He published biographical study guides on Robert Frost, Philip Larkin and Seamus Heaney for the Greenwich Exchange, and wrote countless articles, essays, and reviews for *The Elizabethan Review* and *The Oxfordian*, peer reviewed journals that focus on the English Renaissance. A publisher himself, he produced a poetry newsletter entitled "Drastic Measures" and founded Fifth Season Press, publishing work that he felt deserved readership.

A United States Air Force veteran, Warren served from 1963 to 1967, including time as a medic in Vietnam. He was a long-time employee of the Institutes, an insurance education organization in Malvern, Pennsylvania. He retired in 1999 as Vice President of Publications and went on to pursue a second career as a professor. He taught at several Philadelphia area universities, including Temple University, University of the Sciences and Holy Family University.

As a life-long soccer fan, Warren followed international football closely and was a devoted supporter of the British football club Arsenal. A resident for many years of Havertown, Pennsylvania, he enjoyed strolls in Merwood Park and standing on his front porch to watch neighborhood holiday parades.

Warren is survived by his daughter, Jessica Hope of Furlong, Pennsylvania; his stepson, Jason Townsend (Andrea) of Clinton, New York; their two children, Phoenix and Sierra Townsend; his brother, John Hope (Linda) of Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania; and John's sons. Memorial gifts in Warren's honor may be made to Delaware County Literacy Council, where he volunteered: Delaware County Literacy Council, 2217 Providence Avenue, Chester, PA 19013 or delcoliteracy.org/donate.

From the Editor: Interdisciplinary Scholarship and the Authorship

Twenty-five years ago I proposed an interdisciplinary approach for solving the Shakespeare authorship question, and my intellectual commitment to that methodology remains strong given the achievements of Oxfordian scholars in the past generation. I believe that marshaling the vast body of knowledge required to persuade scholars in the Humanities that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, wrote the Shakespeare canon can only be executed successfully through such an approach.

This 24th volume of *The Oxfordian* demonstrates the validity of that approach, with papers encompassing a wide spectrum of disciplines in the Humanities and Sciences. Many papers integrate multiple fields in their scholarly research, such as literature, philology, Elizabethan culture and history (see Hutchinson and Stritmatter). One paper (Chambers) uses a combination of literary publication and Bayesian probability mathematics. Another (Dudley) employs epistemology and ethics. Yet another (Waugaman) incorporates dramatic literature with psychology and philology.

I believe the insight generated by combining standalone scholarly disciplines has been overlooked by mainstream academics because they prefer to remain isolated in their particular fields of expertise. For example, literature professors rarely raise their heads above the parapet of the text and thus remain ignorant of the social and political contexts that envelop the play, poem or novel.

When traditional Shakespeare advocates do venture to embrace other disciplines, such as computer science, they mostly misuse the methodology. This was recently demonstrated by the general editors of Oxford University Press's latest edition of the Shakespeare canon in 2016. Taking the texts of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, they simply applied an algorithm that measured the extent of conjunctions and prepositions used in the author's play-text compared to other contemporary dramatists. The editors contend that this was a definitive method of identifying authorship of particular plays, yet a considerable contingent of experts in theater and literature refuse to accept their conclusions.

More depressing is the continuing refusal of Shakespeare professors to accept the rigor of the Oxfordian hypothesis simply because the evidence in its support is largely circumstantial. In contrast, their demand for direct evidence is never applied to other intellectual questions. Indeed, modern academics are willing to accept a paucity of evidence before declaring a consensus on a variety of issues, from the science of climatology to the legal validity of free speech on campus. Often, it is political ideology alone that drives modern academia. In the face of such intellectual corruption, Oxfordians may be allowed to vent their frustration, but should not despair given that researchers continue to generate discoveries that, under a different intellectual environment, will triumph.

Until academia recovers its institutional integrity, we will have to endure the Shakespeare tautology that "Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare because his name is printed on the title pages of the Shakespeare quartos published during his lifetime." On this score, there is the hope that the zeitgeist will be transformed.

We also need to remind ourselves and others of the logical coherence of the Oxfordian case—a key indicator of the truth of a theory.

Finally, we should be encouraged by the insight of Australian journalist Richard Fernandez, quoted by Michael Dudley in this issue.

If the costs of the lie exceed the energy necessary to sustain the illusion it inevitably collapses.... Normally the narrative will continue as before until the apologists suffer what amounts to a loss of faith. This happens to individuals but sometimes it occurs among entire populations. A loss of faith destabilizes the entire edifice of self-deception and can push it over the tipping point.

— Gary B. Goldstein

The Grand Deception of the First Folio

by Katherine Chiljan

Next year will be the 400th year anniversary of the First Folio, the very first collection of plays written by William Shakespeare. Registered for publication in November 1623, and released soon afterward, the Folio has over 900 large-sized pages, termed “folios”; the Second, Third and Fourth editions followed, all published in the 17th Century.

Among the 36 plays it contained, 20 were previously unprinted—they suddenly came into existence with the First Folio.¹ It was the greatest event in English literature at that time and perhaps in history. Without the Folio the world may never have read, or known about, *The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Julius Caesar*, *Anthony and Cleopatra* and 15 other Shakespeare plays. The Folio also contained the first ever known image of Shakespeare.

William Shakespeare: who was he?

Shakespeare was the most celebrated and prolific poet and playwright of the 16th and 17th Centuries, creating works of great wit and learning, philosophy, love, tragedy and history, filled with the most beautiful, majestic, and musical lines in literature. Moreover, Shakespeare invented over 1,900 words in English (Price 235), and whether we know it or not, we continually speak his famous phrases in our daily idiom, from “to be or not to be,” “brave new world, and “laughing stock,” to “off with his head,” “foregone conclusion,” and “into thin air,” etc.

In his own time, Shakespeare's works were praised by and influenced his contemporaries; indeed, his impact on artists thereafter has been so great it cannot be fully measured. Shakespeare displays in his plays and poems an incredible breadth of knowledge with a 17,000 unique word vocabulary (Hart 242), at least twice that of his contemporaries.

Seventeenth century luminaries thought that Shakespeare's Folio was essential reading. King Charles I kept a copy of the Second Folio near his bed and made notes in it,² and Sir John Suckling (d. 1641), a poet-playwright himself, posed with the Folio in his portrait by Anthony Van Dyck (Frick Collection, New York, NY); the page is open to *Hamlet* (Waugh, *Sir Anthony Van Dyck & Sir John Suckling Knew*). Over 230 copies of the First Folio survive today, also attesting to its importance, yet mysteriously, very little commentary followed its release.

At first glance, this magnificent book would inspire the 17th Century reader's awe, as well as excitement, to learn something personal about the great author. Unfortunately, the prefatory pages provided no biography, were ambiguous about where he lived, and confused the reader further with mendacity and contradictory information. This paper will analyze the Folio's opening pages, the messages it tried to convey, and how it is the genesis of the Shakespeare authorship controversy.

The Preface: Title Page Engraving

The first indication that something was amiss with the First Folio was on the title page, which showed a large, and strange, engraving of a man purporting to be the great author. His head is oversized, even deformed, the face gritty or unshaven. The verse opposite, written by poet-playwright Ben Jonson, tells the reader not to look at it: "Reader, look /Not on his Picture, but his Book." Why then was it included? No other portrait made by the engraver, Martin Droeshout, depicted a human being so contrary to nature. It was not from a lack of skill—Droeshout engraved a "natural" portrait of James, 2nd Marquis of Hamilton (National Portrait Gallery, London), the same year as the Shakespeare engraving. Furthermore, Droeshout's engraving provided nothing to

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

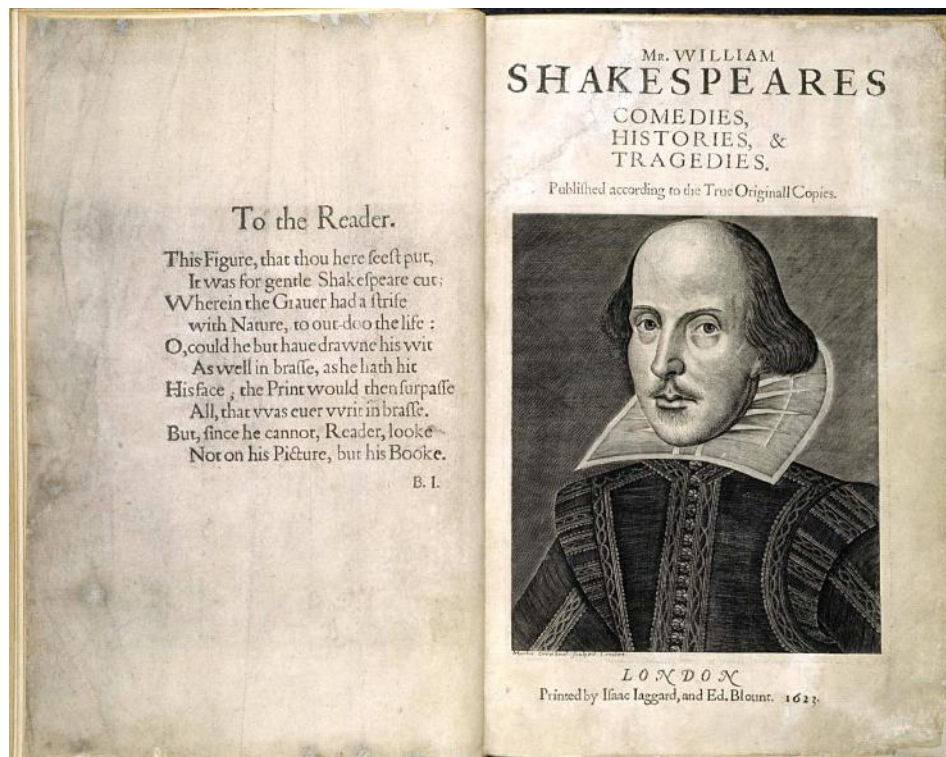


Figure 1: Opening pages of *the First Folio* (1623), from the *Huntington Library, San Marino, CA* (RB56420).

indicate that the man was a poet or playwright, like laurel leaves (symbol of poetic victory), books, pens, inkpots, etc. Ben Jonson was portrayed with laurel leaves and books. George Chapman's portrait is surrounded by clouds and Latin mottoes, one saying, "Here is the glory of Phoebus," referring to the Greek god of arts and poetry. Samuel Daniel was portrayed next to two Greek gods. Yet the most celebrated dramatist in his time has none of this, just a man in gentleman's dress, what I call, "a gentleman monster."

The Folio and the Authorship Controversy

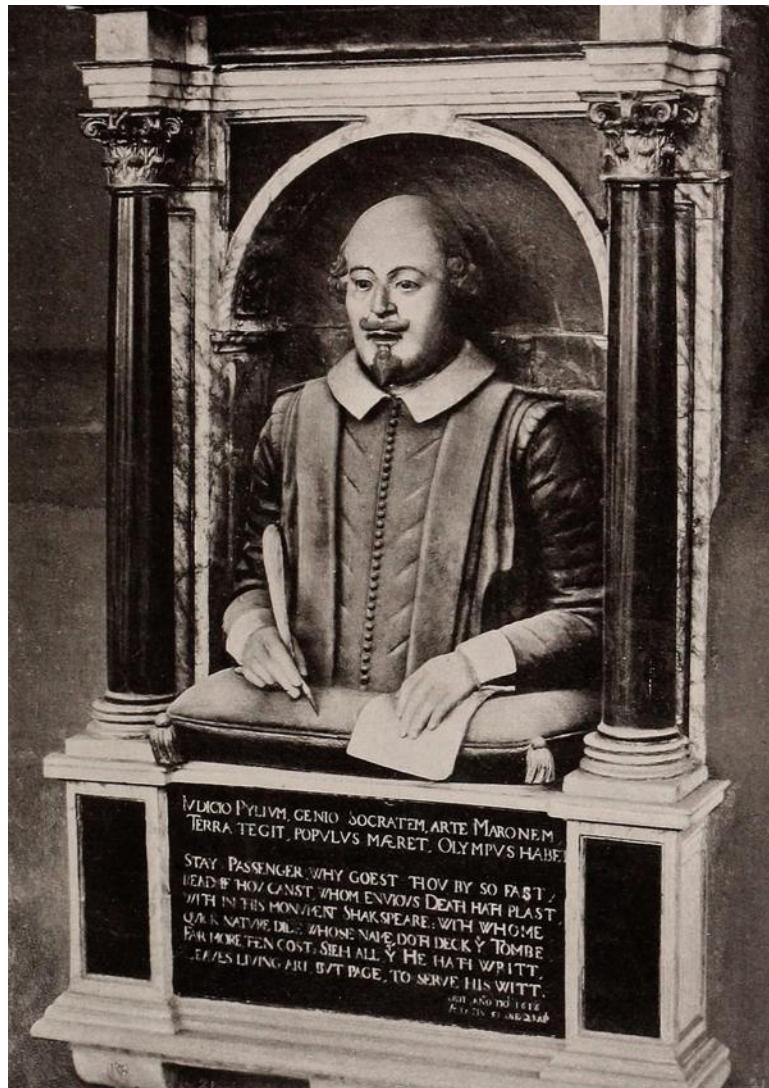
The Folio's title page is followed by 14 pages containing Shakespeare tributes, a dedication letter, a letter to the reader, and lists of Shakespeare plays and actors. In his Folio elegy, Ben Jonson calls Shakespeare, "Sweet Swan of Avon!"; a few pages after that is Leonard Digges's tribute mentioning Shakespeare's "Stratford Monument." Together, one could deduce that the great author came from the small Warwickshire town of Stratford-upon-Avon. And indeed, there was a Shakespeare monument in its church. This, in total, is Shakespeare orthodoxy's main proof that William Shakspeare, who was christened there in 1564 and who died there in 1616, was the great author, William Shakespeare.



Figure 2: Sir William Dugdale's sketch of the Shakespeare monument in Stratford-upon-Avon, circa 1634, picture courtesy of Sir William Dugdale. Photo by Alexander Waugh, reproduced by his kind permission.

But there are problems with this conclusion. Those who went to Stratford-upon-Avon to see the Shakespeare monument—and they did so within two years of the Folio's release³—did not see a writer's monument but rather a monument to a wool dealer. We know this from Sir William Dugdale's circa 1634 sketch, seen by many for the first time in Diana Price's *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (2001), which showed an effigy of a man holding a woolsack, not today's effigy which holds pen and paper on a cushion. The effigy's face was fully bearded with a drooping mustache in Dugdale's sketch, whereas today's effigy sports a goatee and upturned mustache, a style not in fashion in England until the 1620s, years after William Shakspeare's death. Moreover, neither face resembled Droeshout's Folio portrait.

Figure 3: The “Shakspeare” Monument in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, photographed by Thrupp, as appeared in The Portraits of Shakespear by J. Parker Norris, Philadelphia, PA, 1885, 37.



Another important difference is that Dugdale’s sketch (later engraved by Wenceslaus Hollar) showed leopard heads—Stratford-upon-Avon’s symbol—upon the columns flanking the effigy, which are not in today’s monument. This feature, among others, led Richard Kennedy to conclude that the monument was originally that of John Shakspeare, William’s father, who had dealt in wool. John Shakspeare served in various town offices, so leopard heads would have been appropriate in a monument to him, but inappropriate for his son, William, who held no town office.

Dugdale’s sketch is documentary proof that the monument changed after circa 1634, and obviously, it was changed to depict a writer, which my research indicates took place circa 1649-50. This means that, at the time of the Folio’s

printing, there was no monument *to a writer* Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon. Digges' "Stratford Monument" may have meant something, or somewhere, else. In context, Digges wrote that Shakespeare's works will outlive his tomb, adding:

...when that stone is rent,
And Time dissolves thy *Stratford* Monument,
Here we alive shall view thee still.

"Dissolve" means to vanish, but also "To do away with as false or erroneous; to refute, confute" (*OED* 11a). Perhaps Digges' underlying message was that, in time, the fraud in Stratford-upon-Avon will be refuted, and those "alive" will see the true author; a similar message about time uncovering something appeared on the original monument, in which angels or boys held an hourglass and spade (they now hold an hourglass and an inverted torch). Whatever Digges meant, this piece of Folio "evidence" pointing to Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon as the great author was false.

Jonson's address to Shakespeare in his Folio elegy, "Thou art a Monument, without a tombe," may also have had an underlying meaning. Monument could be defined as "a written document or record" (*OED* 3a), so perhaps Jonson was disclosing that "Shakespeare" is a body of writing, not a real person—a tomb, therefore, would be unnecessary.

"Thou art a Monument, without a tomb" was also Jonson's reply to William Basse's poem, circulating in manuscript, which fancifully called upon famous dead poets buried in Westminster Abbey to make room for Shakespeare, where he should be buried. Oddly, Jonson said no to the idea. His rebuke, in my opinion, was to prevent the reburial of the wrong man—William Shakspeare—in the Abbey. The fact that William Shakspeare's gravestone has no name on it—only a curse—supports this idea.

The monument's inscription also does not identify the deceased as an author. The bewildering line, "Sieh all that He hath writ, / leaves living art but page, to serve his wit," does not indicate a poet-playwright. The inscription included, however, the Latin phrase, "arte Maronem"—the art of Maro. Maro was the cognomen of the classical poet, Virgil. Only a highly literate person would know this, but regardless, it was inapplicable to Shakespeare, whose art was far more influenced by the classical poet Ovid than Virgil. If this monument was meant for a poet, then why was it not openly stated, like Edmund Spenser's tablet in Westminster Abbey, which was inscribed, "The Prince of Poets in his Time?"

Of course, John Shakspeare could not write—he signed with an X—and as far as known, his son William was also illiterate, with no surviving letters or evidence of education. The wool-dealer effigy and "all he hath writ," therefore, are incompatible, indicating that the inscription tablet was

changed—changed to *hint* that the deceased was a writer, so as not to confuse locals who knew the Shaksperes. In late 1622, records show that work was done in the church’s chancel where the monument is located (Fripp 2: 849).

Dismissing Digges’ “Stratford moniment” as evidence for William Shakspere as Shakespeare demolishes one of the two pillars of the traditional theory of authorship. The other pillar is Jonson’s line, “Sweet Swan of Avon!,” but that too is not what it appears. “Swan” was a term for poet during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras; Avon, as discovered by Alexander Waugh, was another contemporary name for Hampton Court Palace, where royal entertainments were performed (Waugh, *The Oxfordian*). Thus, the phrase could mean “sweet poet of Hampton Court Palace”—totally contrary to the official narrative for William Shakspeare, who supposedly wrote plays only for the public theater.

Are we in the 21st Century inferring too much from these statements? No, because contemporaries hinted that Shakespeare was a nobleman, or a man of rank, and that he wrote anonymously or used an alias. The two go together, as then it was considered frivolous for a nobleman to spend his time writing poetry and plays, and déclassé if they were printed, or if his plays were publicly staged for commercial profit. Indeed, it would amount to a loss of caste.

One contemporary reference that Shakespeare was a pen name was made by John Davies of Hereford, who addressed “Shake-speare” as “our English Terence” (*The Scourge of Folly*, 1611); it was then believed that the ancient Roman dramatist, Terence, was a front or a pseudonym for two noblemen-playwrights. “Shake-speare” was hyphenated, indicating a descriptive, made-up name. In the 16th–17th Centuries, about half of printed references hyphenated Shakespeare, as seen in the 1603 edition of *Hamlet*. In an earlier work (*Microcosmos* 1603), Davies wrote that “W.S.,” i.e., William Shakespeare, wrote as a pastime, not as a profession, and at least two other contemporaries implied Shakespeare had died by 1609, yet William Shakspere was still alive.

Because contemporary comments and the Folio preface’s information do not comport, a closer critical look at the preface is justified, for this book connected William Shakspeare with the great author for the very first time. What we find are further ambiguities, unverified information, and some outright lies, all undermining its credibility.

Folio Ambiguities

The most significant piece of mendacity in the Folio’s preface is that the dedication letter and letter to the reader, both signed by actors John Heminges and Henry Condell, were written by them; since the 18th Century, scholars have accepted Ben Jonson’s authorship of both. The dedication letter

contains language and images from the classical writers Pliny and Horace. Heminges and Condell were neither scholars nor writers (Condell was a grocer after his stage career). Jonson, however, was a scholar well versed in the classics, so much so, that he was known as “English Horace” by his contemporaries.

In addition, many phrases in the actors’ letter to the reader echo phrases Jonson wrote before and after the Folio. Edmond Malone first noted the following examples (*William Shakespeare*, 2: 663–671):

- a. departed from that right (Heminges and Condell, 1623)
 - departed with my right (Jonson, *Cataline*, 1611)
 - departed with his right (Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, 1614)
 - My right I have departed with (Jonson, *The Devil is an Ass*, 1616)
- b. Judge your six-pen’orth, your shillings worth, your five shillings worth at a time, or higher (Heminges and Condell, 1623)
 - judge his six pen’worth, his twelve-pen’worth, so to his eighteen-pence, two shillings, half a crown... (Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, 1614)
- c. arraign Plays daily (Heminges and Condell, 1623)
 - arraign plays daily (Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, 1614)
- d. There you are number’d. We had rather you were weigh’d. (Heminges and Condell, 1623)
 - *Suffrages* in Parliament are numbered, not weigh’d (Jonson, *Timber, or Discoveries*, 1641)
- e. how odd soever your brains be, or your wisdoms, make your license the same (Heminges and Condell, 1623)
 - how odd soever men’s brains, or wisdoms are, their power is always even, and the same. (Jonson, *Timber, or Discoveries*, 1641)
- f. to him that can but spell. (Heminges and Condell, 1623)
 - if thou canst but spell (Jonson, *The New Inn, or the Light Heart*, 1628)

Besides the Jonsonian echoes, the letters were not complimentary to Heminges and Condell. The dedication letter opens with the actors saying they “are fall’n upon the ill fortune” of the “enterprise,” meaning the Folio, calling Shakespeare’s plays “trifles”—three times!—giving the impression of two fools who cannot discern great literature. Moreover, in their letter, the actors urge the reader to buy the book, as if desperate to recoup their investment; it was truly comical—Jonson was, after all, a comedy writer. This contradicts the dedication letter, in which the actors say they published the

Folio “without ambition” of “self-profit.” The falsehood that Heminges and Condell wrote these two letters taints the entire preface, calling into question everything it contains.

Jonson’s Folio elegy seems to chastise the actors’ dedication letter, which he covertly wrote. Shakespeare is “Above th’ill fortune of them,” writes Jonson, in a direct reference to the actors’ “ill fortune” of the Folio enterprise. Jonson says that “Ignorance,” “blind affection,” and “crafty malice” are not the way to praise Shakespeare, apparently meaning the two actors.

Furthermore, Heminges and Condell published Shakespeare’s plays, called “Orphans,” as an “office to the dead,” as said in their dedication letter. Heminges and Condell did appear in William Shakspeare’s will but there was no mention of their being his literary executors; they only received a small bequest to purchase mourning rings. In both of their letters, Heminges and Condell say they “collected” Shakespeare’s plays, which contradicts their doing an “office to the dead.” By the way, William Shakspeare’s will makes no mention of unpublished play manuscripts, books or theater shares.

That the Folio was Heminges and Condell’s production is contradicted by the end page, which says the book was “Printed at the Charges of” Jaggard, the printer, and Edward Blount, John Smethwick and William Aspley—all known publishers; this declares the Folio was a business endeavor, not a charity for the orphaned Shakespeare plays.

Moreover, in their dedication letter, Heminges and Condell ask the Folio’s dedicatees—the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery—to be forgiven for the faults the book contains. This implies that they edited the plays, but no evidence supports it. The apparently uneducated Heminges and Condell would have had a difficult time editing the highly erudite Shakespeare plays.

In addition, while alive, Shakespeare received “so much favor” from the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, and was their “servant,” say Heminges and Condell in their dedication letter. There is no evidence of this.

Further Acts of Deception

Shakespeare wrote easily: “His mind and hand went together. And what he thought he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers,” say Heminges and Condell. This fosters the idea that Shakespeare was a natural genius. Jonson contradicts this in his elegy, saying Shakespeare kept revising lines, “sweating” at “the Muses anvil” to perfect them, “so richly spun, and woven so fit...”

The actors' letter to the reader refers to the Folio preface contributors—Jonson, James Mabbe, Hugh Holland, and Leonard Digges—as Shakespeare's "Friends." There is no historical evidence of this. Jonson related a personal anecdote about Shakespeare in his private papers, but this was written years after William Shakspeare's death. The others were not professional writers, and had no theater involvement. One wonders why the Folio did not include tributes by more dramatists, like John Fletcher, Shakespeare's supposed co-author of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and George Chapman and John Marston, who had contributed poems, along with Shakespeare, in *Love's Martyr* (1601).

Shakespeare's play texts are "Published according to the True Original Copies," declares the Folio's title page; it was also mentioned in Heminges and Condell's letter to the reader, and on the last preface page. This is clearly false. Several Folio play texts were taken from earlier printed editions which contained flaws of misspelling, repeated text, missing text, confused text, unclear stage directions, etc. Such faults are also found in the previously unpublished Folio plays.

Martin Droeshout's portrait engraving of Shakespeare is the great author's likeness. In 1623, William Shakspeare had been dead for seven years—what was Droeshout's image based upon? It is unknown. The image has no light source since everything is evenly lit; this, and the unusually large image size, highlights the two lines shown at the neck. Along with the wooden face and strange, uneven hair, the overall impression is that the true author is wearing a mask, i.e., "William Shakespeare" is someone's cover name.

Jonson's verse, opposite to Droeshout's engraving, tells the reader not to look at it, probably because he knew it was not the real Shakespeare's portrait. Jonson says the true image of Shakespeare is to be found in "his Book," meaning the plays, which reflects someone with high learning, an aristocratic point of view, and presumably true-life incidents. As far as known, the humbly born and probably illiterate William Shakspeare has no biographical parallels in the entire Shakespeare canon.

The Folio's title page credits Edward Blount as its printer: this, too, is incorrect, for the book was printed by William Jaggard and his son, Isaac. Blount was the Folio's publisher.

The Folio contains "all" of Shakespeare's "Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies," according to the second title page, which precedes the first page of *The Tempest*. Incorrect. What of *Pericles*, which was added to the Third Folio (second issue) of 1664? Or *The Two Noble Kinsmen*? What about the now accepted Shakespeare history play, *Edward III*? What of *The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England* and *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*,

and three others proved as Shakespeare's by Ramon Jiménez in *Shakespeare's Apprenticeship* (2018)? Interestingly, "all" is contradicted in the Shakespeare play list, which says the Folio contains "several Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies..."

Shakespeare was among the "Principal Actors" in his own plays, as seen in the Folio's Shakespearean actors list. Although a member of the King's Men acting company in 1603, there is no contemporary evidence that he actually acted, and the roles he played are unknown. Shakespeare, however, was named as an actor in Jonson's plays *Sejanus*, *His Fall* and *Every Man In his Humor*, but this is posthumous information, like that in the Folio, and supplied by the duplicitous Jonson.

Jonson "beloved" Shakespeare, as said in his Folio elegy's title. If William Shakspeare was the great author, then why didn't Jonson pen a tribute to his "beloved" in 1616 when he passed? Jonson had the perfect opportunity to do so in his 1616 collected works, but no, he allowed seven years to pass.

Jonson even *censured* Shakespeare in a personal conversation with William Drummond in 1618, saying that "Shakspeer wanted art"—meaning, he lacked art. And recalling Heminges and Condell's supposed statement that Shakespeare never blotted out a line, Jonson wrote, "would he had blotted out a thousand" (*Timber: or Discoveries Made upon Men and Matter*, 1641). In the same work, Jonson said that Shakespeare "redeemed his vices, with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised, than to be pardoned."⁴ These are hardly remarks made about someone beloved.

Jonson wrote in his Folio elegy to Shakespeare, "And though thou hadst small *Latine*, and less *Greeke*," which seemed to imply he lacked knowledge of classical languages. This is completely false. Several books and articles detail Shakespeare's deep knowledge of them, including plays which were then untranslated into English (see Earl Showerman's several articles on this topic). And many words that Shakespeare coined were based on Latin and Greek roots. This lie was so blatant that a 1638 poem questioned it. Regarding Jonson's good command of Latin, H. Ramsay wrote, "That which your *Shakespeare* scarce could understand?" (*Jonsonus Virbius*).

But Jonson's line could be read another way. In context, Jonson wanted to "call forth" to life again the classical dramatists Aescalyus, Euripides, Sophocles, and others so that Shakespeare could hear their praise of his great plays, *even if* he had "small Latin and less Greek." The knowing reader would read it that way; the unknowing reader would think Shakespeare was classically deficient, which jibed with Heminges and Condell's "testimony" that Shakespeare was a natural genius. In fact, Jonson's phrase, "small *Latine*, and less *Greeke*," was not original; it had appeared in a 1563 book by Antonio Minturno,⁵ as noted by Jonson's editors, Herford and Simpson (*Ben Jonson*, 11:145).

Absent from the Preface

Precisely what is missing from the Folio's preface?

- (1) A biography of the great author. Not even the year he died was given—it merely states that he is dead.
- (2) Shakespeare's reputation as a poet. His long poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, both published during the 1590s, were popular during his lifetime, yet neither were mentioned. Nor was reference made to *Shake-speare's Sonnets*, published in 1609.
- (3) Composition dates of the plays, or an order of composition. To this day, it is uncertain when any Shakespeare play was written.

If the author was William Shakspeare, here are other notable omissions. (1) His coat of arms. Other writers were portrayed with them. (2) Notice that he was a member of the King's Men acting company. (3) Notice he was a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, as orthodox scholars believe. (4) An image of his supposed monument in Stratford-upon-Avon. (5) "Stratford-upon-Avon." The town's full name should have been given for clarity as the names of numerous English towns included "Avon" or "Stratford".

With five large blank pages in the preface, there was certainly space in which to add any of this information.

The Folio preface's lies apparently wished to convey the idea that the great author was *born* William Shakespeare, came from humble origins, and shared the same social status as actors Heminges and Condell. Yet Jonson, in his Folio verses, calls Shakespeare "gentle" three times; to contemporaries, "gentle" meant born into gentility or nobility, which did not apply to Shakspeare of Stratford. And Jonson seemingly revealed that Shakespeare was a descriptive alias by saying that his lines "shake a Lance,/ As brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance," emphasizing spear shaking, a warlike action or the sport of jousting. Furthermore, "Shake-speare" was hyphenated several times in the Folio's preface, indicative of a notional name—i.e., a pseudonym. Of course, Shakspeare's surname never included a hyphen; and his name in legal records was spelled almost always *without* the "e" in "Shake," meaning the first syllable was pronounced "Shack," not "Shake."

The Folio Revelation

That the First Folio preface was questionable or fraudulent is not just a 21st Century viewpoint. Within a year of the Folio's release, in 1624, a contemporary implied that it was a fraud. Gervase Markham, in *Honour in his Perfection*—a brief work about the Earls of Oxford, Essex, and Southampton, and

barons Willoughby—wrote that “Vere” was omitted from a recently published book, calling it a “pretty secret or mystery”:

Vere cannot be omitted: only in that Story there is one pretty secret or mystery which I cannot let pass untouched, because it brings many difficulties or doubts into the mind of an ignorant Reader; and that is, the mistaking of names... (17)

Markham wrote that Vere’s name was mistaken with another’s in the “Story”—meaning a book. In the lines that followed, Markham implied that the mistaken name was one that people knew was associated with Vere. He described this Vere as a “great Vertue,” and himself, in comparison, as “the least spark of Vertue which is...” Virtue is a talent, and Markham’s talent was soldiery and writing. No Vere soldier had an associative name, but a Vere writer did—Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, a recognized poet and playwright. Contemporaries said that Oxford wrote anonymously (*The Art of English Poesy*, 1589), and Gabriel Harvey, evidently alluding to the pen name, stated in Latin that Oxford’s “will shakes spears.”⁶ In another work (*Pierce’s Supererogation*, 1593), Harvey referred to the then recently published poem, *Venus and Adonis*, as “redoubtably armed with the compleat harness of the bravest Minerva,” implying that the poem’s author, “William Shakespeare,” was a cover name. Similarly, Edmund Spenser described a great courtier poet who had a warlike name, which could only be the spear-shaker, “Shakespeare” (*Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, 1595). The Earl of Oxford was a champion jousting at age 21, so Shakespeare would have been an apt pseudonym.

The recently published Vere book with the mistaken name that Markham complained about, therefore, was Shakespeare’s First Folio. Markham also wrote that this “injur’d” Vere, and accused a certain “pen” for “blanching” or lying:

the least spark of Vertue which is [i.e., Markham], cannot choose but repine [i.e., complain] when it finds a great Vertue injur’d by a pen whose blanching might make the whole World forgetful. (18)

Apparently, Markham was targeting Ben Jonson’s pen, which was behind the Folio’s fraud of Heminges and Condell’s letters. By the “mistaking of names,” Markham meant that Vere’s pen name was used instead of his real name, which “might make the whole World forgetful.” He was proved right—nearly 300 years passed before J.T. Looney discovered that the 17th Earl of Oxford was the true Shakespeare. Markham wrote a brief tribute to Oxford in the paragraph just before this comment, praising his character as learned, pious, and magnanimous, but omitting mention of his literary or dramatic achievement.

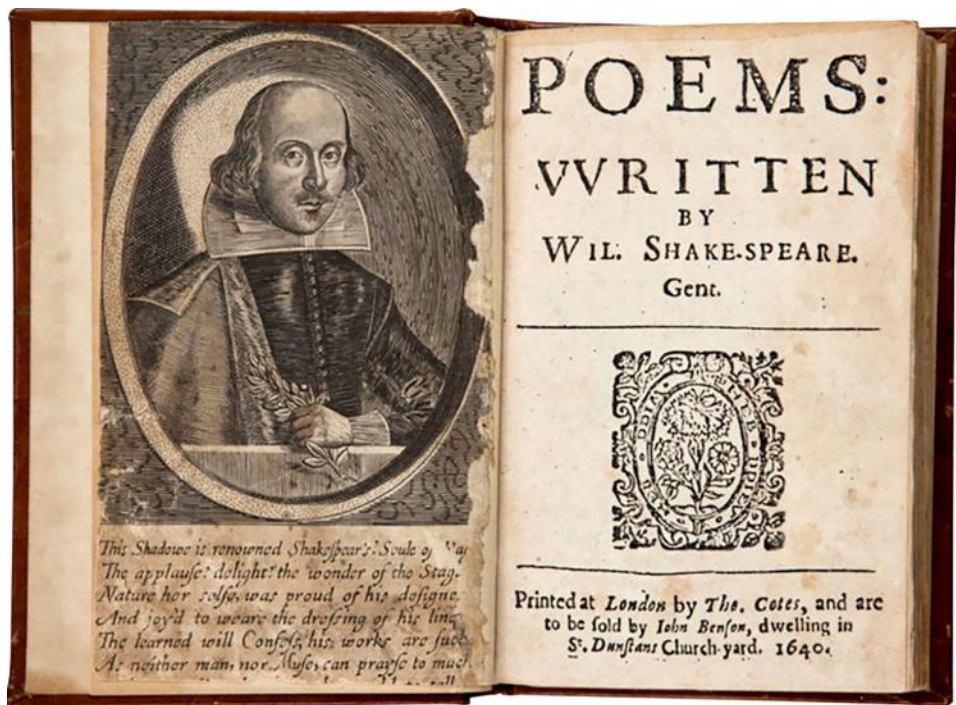


Figure 4: Poems: Written by Wil. Shake-speare. Gent. Note the verses underneath the image. Printed at London by Tho. Cotes, and are to be sold by John Benson, dwelling in St. Dunstons Church-yard, 1640. First edition.

A blatant criticism of the First Folio occurred in 1640, in *Poems: Written by Wil. Shake-speare. Gent.* The book featured an altered version of Droeshout's engraving to achieve a more human looking face and added bay leaves, which Droeshout had left out. An unsigned verse below it questioned Droeshout's image, followed by quotes from Jonson's Folio elegy:

This Shadow is renowned Shakespear's? Soul of th' age.
The applause? delight? the wonder of the Stage.

These questions about the Folio's Shakespeare portrait implied a deception, and were aimed directly at Jonson, although he was by then deceased.

The True Sponsors

Shakespeare orthodoxy usually takes at face value Heminges and Condell's statements that the Folio was their enterprise. Yet the expense for such a production was enormous, even if Blount, Jaggard, Smethwick and Aspley were contributing partners. It is thought that 750 copies were made of this 900 folio-page book, a project costing approximately £250 (Blayney 2, 26).

The bulk of the Folio's production expenses, therefore, must have come from its dedicatees, William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, and Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery. Pembroke was one of the richest and most powerful men in England.

The brother earls also had connections with the Folio's publisher, Edward Blount, and preface contributors Ben Jonson and Leonard Digges, all preceding the Folio's publication. Jonson dedicated two sections of his collected works (1616) to Pembroke, who likely patronized the book. Pembroke furnished Jonson with money to buy books, secured him a royal annuity, and even wrote a letter to Oxford University recommending Jonson for an honorary degree, which was granted. Edward Blount dedicated a translation to Pembroke and Montgomery and published one of Jonson's plays. Leonard Digges dedicated a translation to Pembroke and Montgomery, which was published by Blount. In addition, Folio contributor James Mabbe was good friends with Blount, and Folio contributor Hugh Holland was friends with Jonson. Martin Droeshout's uncle was associated with Marcus Gheeraerds, who made a portrait of the Earl of Montgomery. Digges, Holland and Mabbe had no theater connections; all, however, were university educated, making it likely they were hired to edit Shakespeare's plays for the Folio. Most notably, other than Jonson, *none* of the Folio's contributors, or its dedicatees, were associated with Heminges and Condell.

In late 1615, Pembroke was appointed the king's Lord Chamberlain, which controlled the Revels Office, giving him total control over the theater and of play publication. Strangely, from that point onward, Shakespeare play publication ceased. On two occasions, however, publishers issued a Shakespeare play, and each time Pembroke issued a halting order through the Stationers' Company. This was predicted in 1609; an anonymous letter to the reader that appeared in some copies of the quarto of Shakespeare's play, *Troilus and Cressida*, warned that Shakespeare's comedies will soon be out of print, alluding to the "wills" of the "grand possessors." The Shakespeare plays, therefore, were controlled by others in 1609, not by the great author, implying he was then deceased; his property would naturally pass to his family members, who were evidently "grand"—people of rank and power. The letter was addressed to the "ever" reader, a punning reference to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, who died in 1604. The Earl of Montgomery was a member of Oxford's family: he married Oxford's youngest daughter, Susan, shortly after his death. The Earl of Pembroke was nearly engaged to Oxford's second daughter, Bridget. The two brothers certainly qualified as "grand possessors," yet their involvement in the Folio's production is never explored by Shakespeare experts in academia, nor is the possibility that they were its initiators. If that was the case, then the ambiguities and contradictions in the Folio's preface were all executed with their approval.

Their Objective?

What was the brothers' purpose behind the Folio's misleading preface? Evidently, they wanted to control Shakespeare's image, to dispel the notion that "William Shakespeare" was a pseudonym, as believed by some before the Folio's release. The title page's large portrait of a man purporting to be someone born as William Shakespeare trumpets this to the reader.

In addition, the Folio's preface tried to fill in the void of the great author's personality, re-forming his image away from the highly ranked, scholarly author who wrote plays, into:

- A professional author and actor
- Friends and fellows of actors Heming and Condell
- A writer of natural genius, unlearned in the classics
- A man who hailed from Stratford-upon-Avon

Transforming Shakespeare into a man of humble origins with no court connections meant that he could not write satirically about real courtiers such as Sir Philip Sidney as Slender in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, or Sir Christopher Hatton, Lord Chancellor of England, as Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, or the powerful Lord Burghley, Lord Treasurer of England, who was lampooned as the wily counselor Polonius in *Hamlet*. The Earl of Oxford was Lord Burghley's son-in-law; he was the only playwright who knew Burghley intimately, and the only playwright who could survive writing such a portrayal.

Acknowledging William Shakspeare as the great author would decontextualize everything Shakespeare wrote, including the sonnets, which were clearly written by a nobleman, and seemed to reveal secrets touching upon the succession of Queen Elizabeth I. The middle-class striver from Stratford was the perfect front, not only because he was born with a similar name, but because he was involved in the theater. Surviving records, however, suggest that his involvement was only financial, as a theater investor and moneylender to acting companies.

The brother earls' motivation for the strategic deception that is the First Folio may never be completely known, but it had to be compelling to go to such lengths and expense. It must have been for the same reason that Oxford's death was met with complete silence, even though he was one of the highest-ranking noblemen in England. Not even still-living authors of books dedicated to Oxford publicly noted his death. In fact, Oxford was covertly disparaged soon after he died in the comedy *Westward Ho* (1605) by Thomas Dekker and John Webster. Even as late as 1640 this anonymous statement appeared: "*Shake-speare*, we must be silent in thy praise" (*Wits Recreations*).

During his lifetime, Oxford remained silent about his Shakespeare authorship, and some evidence suggests that he tried to prevent his works from being printed. This was to prevent the de Vere family from losing caste, and his literary peers respected his wishes, although they still made cryptic remarks publicly that suggested he was the great author. After Oxford's death, however, openly crediting him with the Shakespeare plays would have been acceptable, and for others to say so, but this did not take place. The courtier poet Sir Philip Sidney, for example, did not publish any literary works in his name while alive, but his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, published his *Arcadia* with his name on the title page several years after his demise.

Conclusions

The Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery could have simply employed the pseudonym to conceal the Earl of Oxford's identity in the First Folio, but they took the supplementary steps of adding a false face and incorporating clues that he was William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon. Indeed, if this book had never been printed, no one would have connected him with the great author. The authorship deception may have suppressed public commentary about the Folio, despite the book's popularity.

In essence, the First Folio preface was another piece of fiction orchestrated by Ben Jonson. Jonson knew Shakspeare, as he spoofed him as a character in two of his comedies as an ignorant fellow desperate to be a gentleman. In one of them, *Every Man in his Humor*, Jonson seemed to describe the Droeshout portrait in a line added to the play's 1616 version:

let the idea of what you are be portrayed in your face, that men may read in your physiognomy...*the true rare, and accomplished monster or miracle of nature.*" (1.2, italics in original)

A "miracle of nature" would help explain how a completely uneducated man could generate great works of literature. Francis Beaumont made a similar comment about Shakespeare in a verse addressed to Jonson, written before 1616: Shakespeare will be the example given to students of "how far sometimes a mortal man may go by the dim light of Nature" (Chambers 2:224). This scheme was apparently planned while Shakspeare was still alive.

Upon the First Folio's 400th anniversary, it would be fitting that academia recognize the hoax it has sustained over the centuries; only then can begin a whole new world of Shakespeare research and discovery.

Endnotes

1. *The First Part of the Contention*, and *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York*, published separately in 1594 and 1595, were likely the author's early versions of *Henry VI* Parts 2 and 3, rather than orthodoxy's belief that they were bad quartos of the same plays.
2. King Charles I's copy of the Second Folio is in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle (RCIN 1080415). Thanks to Bonner Miller Cutting for this information.
3. The monument's inscription was transcribed on paper with handwriting dated circa 1625 and inserted into a copy of the First Folio, now at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C. (First Folio No. 26). See Chiljan, *Shakespeare Suppressed*, Chapter 10.
4. Much of Jonson's commentary about Shakespeare in *Timber, or Discoveries* ("De Shakespeare Nostrati") derived from Seneca's *Controversia*, as noted in Sir George Greenwood's *Ben Jonson and Shakespeare*, Hartford, CT, 1922, 59–60.
5. Antonio Minturno, *L'Arte Poetica*, Venice (1563):
...there are some, who by chance know little of Latin and even less of Greek, who in Tragedy place Seneca, barely known by the Latin writers, before Euripides and Sophocles, who are considered by all to be the princes of tragic poetry. [Translated by Elizabeth Coggshalle]
6. Gabriel Harvey, *Gratulationis Valdinesis, Liber Quartus* (1578); Andrew Hannas, "Gabriel Harvey and the Genesis of William Shakespeare." *Shakespeare-Oxford Newsletter*, 29:1b, Winter 1993.

Works Cited

- Blayney, Peter W.M. *The First Folio of Shakespeare*. Washington D.C.: Folger Library Publications, 1991.
- Chambers, Edmund K. *William Shakespeare, A Study of Facts and Problems*. Oxford, 1930.
- Chiljan, Katherine. "Why was Edward de Vere Defamed on Stage—and his Death Unnoticed?" *The Oxfordian*, Volume 21, 2019.
- . "A Vere of "great Vertue" Wrote the Shakespeare Plays," *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, 57:1, Summer 2021.
- . *Shakespeare Suppressed: The Uncensored Truth About Shakespeare and His Works*. San Francisco, CA, 2011, 2016.
- Fripp, Edgar. *Shakespeare Man and Artist*. Oxford Univ. Press, 1938.
- Hart, Alfred. "The Growth of Shakespeare's Vocabulary," *Review of English Studies*. July 1943.
- Herford, C.H. and Percy Simpson, eds. *Ben Jonson*, Oxford, 1952.
- Kennedy, Richard J. *The Woolpack Man: John Shakespeare's Monument in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon*. Newport, OR: Stairway Press, 2005.
- Malone, Edmond. *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, ed. James Boswell. 21 volumes, Third Variorum edition. London, 1821.
- Oxford English Dictionary Online 2022 (OED)*.
- Price, Diana. *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Showerman, Earl. "Orestes and Hamlet: From Myth to Masterpiece." *The Oxfordian*, Volume 7, 2007.
- . Also, "Gods and Greeks in *The Winter's Tale*." *The Oxfordian*, 10, 2010.
- Waugh, Alexander. "Waugh on Jonson's 'Sweet Swan of Avon,'" *The Oxfordian*, Volume 16, 2014.
- . *Sir Anthony Van Dyck & Sir John Suckling Knew*, YouTube video, May 28, 2020.



A Contrarian View of the First Folio: Why Was It Published?

by James A. Warren

In the four centuries since publication of the First Folio in 1623, most Shakespeare scholars have cited the Folio as the most important of three steps taken in and around 1623 that firmly established William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon as the poet and playwright known as William Shakespeare. The other two steps were the creation of the Shakespeare monument in Trinity Church near the Avon River in Stratford and the portraits of Shakespeare painted during that time.

During the past 170 years, however, other scholars, doubting that Shakspeare was the real author, have cited those same three actions as evidence of his non-authorship. Many Oxfordian scholars—those who believe the real author of “Shakespeare’s” works was Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford—cite them as evidence of a deception designed to hide the identity of the real author. Professor Louis P. Bénézet, president of the American Shakespeare Fellowship in the 1940s, for instance, used the word “hoax” to describe the actions undertaken in 1623. He titled an article published in 1947 “The Shakespeare Hoax: An Improbable Narrative” (Bénézet, 1947); another, published in *The American Bar Association Journal* in 1960, was titled “A Hoax Three Centuries Old” (Bénézet, 1960).

I believe that the consensus views by Stratfordian and Oxfordian experts are both incorrect: I disagree with the traditional view that the three steps taken in and around 1623 prove Shakspeare’s authorship, and I disagree with the

Oxfordian interpretation that they were designed to conceal Oxford's authorship. On the contrary, I now believe that the steps were taken to reveal his authorship.

During research for *Shakespeare Revolutionized: The First Hundred Years of J. Thomas Looney's "Shakespeare" Identified* (2021), I discovered an intriguing question posed in a letter published in *The Washington Post* in 1948: "If the aim was to conceal that Oxford was Shakespeare, by 'changing the head and obliterating all identifying details' [in the Ashbourne portrait], why should anyone start with a portrait of Oxford as basis for a Shakespeare forgery in the first place?" (Mumpsimum, 1948, B4). If the goal had been to bury Oxford's authorship, wouldn't the logical step have been preparation of a portrait of Shakespeare from scratch, rather than alter a painting of someone else? Why begin with a portrait of Oxford, of all people, and alter details in it so as to hide his identity?

As I considered these questions, I recalled that in the early 1930s the Reverend Charles Sidney de Vere Beauclerk prepared mock-ups of six of the best-known portraits of "Shakespeare." After superimposing them, he demonstrated that they were so similar in all key aspects that they were, in fact, images of the same person, and that that person was Edward de Vere. Portraits examined by Beauclerk included those known as the Ashbourne, Welbeck, Felton, Grafton, Hampton Court and Janssen, as well as the Droeshout engraving in the First Folio. As Bénézet noted, "All have de Vere's color scheme: hazel eyes, auburn hair, brown beard, [and] ruddy complexion" (Bénézet, 1947).

Later in the same decade Charles Wisner Barrell examined three portraits of "Shakespeare"—the Ashbourne, the Janssen and the Hampton Court—using X-ray and infra-red technology, which revealed images beneath the surface showing they were actually portraits of Edward de Vere. As he demonstrated in an article published in the January 1940 issue of *Scientific American*, de Vere's actual hair line, collar ruff and sleeve ruffs had been painted over, as had other distinguishing marks—such as the image on his thumb ring and crests—and inscriptions had been altered and the artist's monogram scraped out (Barrell, 1940).

James A. Warren is the author of *Shakespeare Revolutionized: The First Hundred Years of J. Thomas Looney's "Shakespeare" Identified* (2021) and the creator of *An Index to Oxfordian Publications*, now in its fourth edition (2017). He is also the editor of the Centenary edition of Looney's "Shakespeare" Identified (2018) and "Shake-speare" Revealed: The Collected Articles and Published Letters of J. Thomas Looney. He has given presentations at numerous Oxfordian conferences and in 2020 was granted the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship's Oxfordian of the Year Award.



Beauclerk's comparison of the Welbeck and Ashbourne portraits of Edward de Vere.

Moreover, the Ashbourne portrait, now in the Folger Shakespeare Library, had remained in the possession of the descendants of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, at the Trentham Estates in Ashbourne, Derbyshire, until it was sold in 1910. It is the portrait of greatest value for the Oxfordian thesis for three reasons: (1) the sitter is clearly a nobleman who matches the appearance of Edward de Vere in all other known portraits of him; (2) it was labeled in Trentham family inventory records as of "Shakespeare" even though a portrait of Oxford of the same approximate size and date listed in the records was missing from the collection (Burris, 2002, 12); and (3) in it Oxford holds a small book bound up with crimson ribbons, a detail of inestimable importance. George Chapman, in his play *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (II.i), describes a poet who writes in a book, "Bound richly up, and strung with crimson strings" (Allen, 1931, 230–31; Burris, 2001, 1). Bringing the play and the portrait together firmly connects Oxford with Shakespeare.

The passage in which the phrase concerning an unnamed poet occurs—

And as the foolish poet that still writ
 All his most selfe-lov'd verse in paper royall,
 Or parchment rul'd with lead, smooth'd with the pumice,
 Bound richly up, and strung with crimson strings;
 Never so blest as when hee write and read

The ape-lov'd issue of his braine; and never
But joying in himselfe, admiring ever; —

ties them together in several ways, too. Here, and in other passages identified by Percy Allen in his *The Oxford-Shakespeare Case Corroborated*, Chapman is critical of Oxford-Shakespeare, at times appearing to be more a hostile opponent than a mere literary rival. In several plays and poems he describes Oxford as “selfe-lov’d,” as he does in the quoted passage about the unnamed poet. Also note the “never” and “ever” (E. VER) pun used in that context, as it was used in works by Shakespeare, Chapman and others, and in the preface to the quarto edition of *Troilus and Cressida* (discussed below).

And so, again the question: “If the aim was to conceal that Oxford was Shakespeare—why start with a portrait of Oxford as basis for a Shakespeare forgery in the first place?” In my view, the only explanation is that the over-paintings had been undertaken to connect the Earl of Oxford with Shakespeare; that is, the alterations had been made not to conceal Oxford’s authorship, but to reveal it.

Deliberate Ambiguity I

Can we understand more fully the state of mind of those who undertook the three steps of the over-paintings, the Folio project and the monument in Trinity Church?

We know who was behind these actions—the family and descendants of Edward de Vere, two of whom are identified in the Folio. The “Incomparable Pair of Brethren” prominently mentioned in the prefatory materials refers to Philip Herbert, the 4th Earl of Montgomery and a son-in-law of Edward de Vere, and his brother, William Herbert, the 3rd Earl of Pembroke, who had at one time been engaged to another of de Vere’s daughters. Other family members likely to have had a role in the Folio project were Oxford’s three daughters (one, Susan, married to William Herbert) and his son, Henry de Vere, the 18th Earl of Oxford.

I believe that Oxford’s family sought to preserve the plays through publication. Eighteen of these—fully half of the Folio’s 36 plays—had never been printed and might well have been lost had they remained in manuscript. It’s puzzling, though, that they left out of the Folio Shakespeare’s poems—his *Sonnets*, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*—that had the name Shakespeare on their title or dedication pages, while at the same time including plays that had never before been associated with the name. Among these were *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *All’s Well that Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*.

It has also been proposed that through publication of the Folio, “The Most Noble and Incomparable Pair of Brethren” sought to promote English nationalism at a crucial moment in English history. Historian and authorship scholar Peter W. Dickson has demonstrated that the First Folio was as much a political statement as it was a literary publication.¹ England at the time was undergoing the “Spanish Marriage Crisis,” an attempt by King James to marry his son, Prince Charles, to the daughter of King Philip IV of Spain, and thereby create political ties between Protestant England and Catholic Spain that many feared would destroy England’s religious and cultural identity. Publishing the plays would thus enhance and strengthen England’s unique cultural heritage.

Did Oxford’s family also plan to attribute the plays to Edward de Vere? One reason for thinking so is that they included what Percy Allen viewed as “the most personal of the Shakespearean plays” (Allen, 1930, 379), among them the comedies of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *All’s Well that Ends Well*, and *Measure for Measure*, and, among the tragedies, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *King Lear*. Is it not, Allen asks, “intensely significant to note that, of the comedies named above, not one was printed before the Folio of 1623 with the single exception of *Merry Wives*, which appeared in quarto in 1602, minus the revealing William scene? None of the more personal comedies, then, were authoritatively published until 1623, nineteen years after their author’s death!” (Allen, 1930, 379). He goes on to show that in the case of *Measure for Measure* and *All’s Well*, “the two most intimately autobiographical of all the comedies,” no record of any performance of the first exists prior to the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and of the second before the middle of the 18th Century.

These plays contain sensitive personal references to Edward de Vere in the sense that many of the most prominent characters were modeled, in part, after family, friends and colleagues close to de Vere, and many scenes depict events from his life. More important, many of the plays’ principal characters possess traits or personalities similar to Oxford’s and express thoughts that someone caught up in the events of his life would naturally have felt in response to them. As J. Thomas Looney observed,

The personality and career of Edward de Vere permeates the whole of the Shakespeare literature.... [A] certain psychological unity, a single personality under different moods and aspects, with many variations of external detail, runs through outstanding characters like Hamlet, Othello, Romeo, Berowne, Bertram, Prince Hal, Timon, and King Lear, along with the general assumption that this personality represents “Shakespeare” himself. Now, the singular fact is that this personality corresponds psychologically with the mentality revealed in Edward de Vere’s poems; and the known details of Oxford’s life are

represented in such combinations in the plays that...he may be proved the actual prototype. (Looney, 1921, 12)

At the same time, the idea that the Folio's editors intended to attribute the plays to de Vere seems ludicrous. If that had been their intention, doing so would have been easy enough: simply announce his authorship in the First Folio and include his true image, not the Droeshout engraving. Instead, they went the other direction, deleting passages from plays that connected them with Oxford.

Two such passages were removed from the 1604 Q2 edition of *Hamlet* when it was reprinted in the Folio. One passage was deleted from Act I, scene iv, lines 17–38, which begins with the lines “So oft it chanceth in particular men, / That for some vicious mole of nature in them.” In the view of Colonel Bernard R. Ward, founder of the Shakespeare Fellowship, it was removed because it “might have drawn attention to Oxford and the scandalous accusations preferred against him by Charles Arundel and Lord Henry Howard in 1581” (Douglas, 1924, 11). The editors of the Folio, Ward speculated, felt that it was necessary to draw a veil over some hidden scandal in Oxford's life, and he called attention to Grosart's reference to an “unlifted shadow” that “lies across his memory” (Ward, 1923, 7).

Another passage, an important speech of 57 lines in Act IV, scene iv, that begins, “How all occasions do inform against me, / And spur my dull revenge”—a soliloquy praised by Charles Swinburne as the very finest in the play—was also removed. Colonel Montagu W. Douglas, later to serve as president of the Shakespeare Fellowship for 17 years, defined this speech as a “meditation on cowardice” and speculated that “However magnificent the diction of this speech, the editors of the Folio appear to have thought that it would too obviously...draw attention to a different figure from the one engraved by Droeshout on the title page of the First Folio of 1623” (Douglas, 1924, 11).

Col. Ward also noted changes to Hamlet's cry in the final scene of the play in Q2. “The lines

O, God! Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown shall I leave behind me?

had been toned down in the Folio to a much tamer expression:

O good Horatio, what a wounded name.
Things standing thus unknown shall live behind me?

thus taking half the poignancy and all the reality out of the dying appeal that follows:

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart
Absent thee from felicity awhile,

And in the harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.” (Ward, 1923, 7)

A change for similar reasons was made to *Taming of the Shrew* in the Folio, as J. Thomas Looney explains:

Connecting the Christo Vary (alias Sly) episode with these matters, we have first a carefully carried out scheme to conceal the author of the great plays, and then a deliberate exclusion from the authorised edition of them, of the one and only passage that might betray the Earl of Oxford’s interest in them: a change so urgently demanded by the situation that an integral and characteristic element of the farce had to be sacrificed to it. Certainly, Oxford’s authorship of the play suggests a reason for the suppression quite simple and sufficient. (Looney, 1935, 176)

The change to which Looney refers is the removal of the second and third scenes with the drunken Sly that, along with the opening scene, comment on and disrupt the action taking place in the rest of the play. These two scenes, and a more extensive opening scene, had been present in *Taming of A Shrew*, but not in the revised version of the play published in the 1623 Folio as *Taming of THE Shrew*.

The text of *Richard II* was changed, too, in order to hide Oxford’s association with the play. The early quarto of *Richard II* contained a reference to de Vere’s ancestor, Robert de Vere, 9th Earl of Oxford. The reference to him was replaced in the Folio with “Salisbury,” thus, Looney explained, “completely wrecking the versification” (Looney, 1935, 176),² for no other reason than to cut the connection with the ancestors of the 17th Earl of Oxford.

Further, the epistle printed in some copies of the quarto of *Troilus and Cressida* was omitted from the Folio edition because it too obviously revealed Oxford’s connection with the Shakespearean corpus, with the phrase “A never writer to an ever reader: news” easily seen as an Elizabethan pun on de Vere’s name, as in “An E. VER writer to an E. VER reader: news.”

To get the plays published and hence preserved, the sponsors of the Folio appeared to be willing to risk identification of the plays with Oxford but only if the connections were not too obvious. They eliminated from the plays the passages most likely to lead readers of the time to suspect Oxford’s authorship, while leaving untouched much content which linked the plays to his life and personality.

They also took additional steps to make the connection with Oxford less likely. One was adding allusions to Shakspeare as the author in the Folio itself through Leonard Digges’ reference to, “thy Stratford monument” and Ben Jonson’s

phrase, “Sweet Swan of Avon,” thereby connecting the author with the town of Stratford on the Avon River. Another was a more complicated gambit that largely erased Oxford himself from the historical records, making it less likely that anyone who had not known him personally would make the connection between his life and personality on one hand, and characters and events depicted in the plays on the other. This salient point will be discussed further.

Deliberate Ambiguity II

Indications of Shakspeare’s authorship are also ambiguous, with indications in all three steps taken in 1623 that both support and cast doubt on it. If those who undertook them had wished to present convincing evidence of Shakspeare’s authorship at the monument in Trinity Church, they could have shown exactly where he was buried, included a clear statement that the person buried there was a writer and installed an effigy of a writer rather than someone holding a sack of grain with both hands. They did none of these. Instead, they placed on the tomb some doggerel —

Good friend for Jesus sake forebeare,
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be the man what spares these stones.
And cursed be he that moves my bones.—

that undercut the very impression the monument seemed designed to make. Richard F. Whalen has described other odd things about it and documented the history of the “repairs” that transformed the original figure of a dour man with a down-turned moustache clutching a large sack into the man with an up-turned moustache with hands holding pen and paper and resting on a cushion that is seen today.³

The prefatory material to the Folio is even more illogical. It contains no straightforward biographical information about Shakspeare: nothing about his life or acting and writing careers, no dedicatory poems by other writers; not even his Coat-of-Arms is included. The two phrases that appear to tie him to the Folio—“Sweet swan of Avon” and “thy Stratford moniment”—are located several pages apart and written by two different people. Whalen provides many other examples of “deliberate ambiguity that draws the reader into a maze of contradictions, equivocal language, and veiled meanings” (Whalen, 2013, 133)⁴ that need not be itemized here.

Other parts of the prefatory material go beyond ambiguity to outright deception in ways that undercut the validity or honesty of all other statements made in it. Even most traditional scholars today acknowledge that the letter signed by John Heminges and Henry Condell was written by Ben Jonson.

Their statement that they had taken it upon themselves to collect and publish the works in the Folio is also incorrect, as is their claim that the Folio was printed from “True Originall Copies,” “absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them,” written out by the author “with scarce a blot,” and then, apparently, handed over by him to his friends the actors to be published, but not until seven years after his death.

For close to a century, scholars have demonstrated that the actors’ statement was written by Ben Jonson alone and that they had no editorial role in preparing the Folio. Scholars have also shown that most of the plays in the Folio were not printed from “True Originall Copies.” As Bénézet noted almost eighty years ago, “There is not a ‘responsible Shakespeare scholar’ who believes it. What is more, they take no pains to conceal their skepticism” (Bénézet, 1944, 2). He cited three respected scholars who “admit that [the prefatory material in the Folio] cannot be taken literally. In other words, *it is not the truth*.” Stratfordian scholar Bruce Danner, nearly 70 years after Bénézet, writes of “the text of the First Folio[’s prefatory material], whose omissions, errors, and outright lies have long been common knowledge” (Danner, 2011, 147).

Then came the crux of Bénézet’s argument. “After a man is caught in one lie he is never believed again.... If we admit one lie, then what becomes of the authority for the rest of the story?... Not one of the ‘recognized Shakespeare authorities’ defends the Jonson-Heminges-Condell fiction. Yet, in the last analysis, this is the foundation stone of the whole Stratford edifice” (Bénézet, 1944, 5). In other words, if those statements were deliberately false, why would anyone believe the other statements pointing toward William Shakspeare as the author? Where does that leave the narrative of traditional authorship? Without any foundation whatsoever, says Bénézet.

Then there is the Droeshout engraving in the Folio cut “for” Shakespeare, not “of” him. Barrell had shown that the Ashbourne portrait had been altered to more closely resemble the Droeshout engraving. A rough comparison of the two suggests that the Ashbourne had served as the model for the engraving. If one of the images is reversed so that the sitters both face the same direction and if the images are resized, the size and distance between the eyes of the two are exact matches, and the size and shape of Oxford’s head exactly matches the mask shown in the Droeshout engraving.

Having presented reasons for believing that all three steps—the Folio, the Monument and the portraits—represent a deliberately ambiguous statement as to authorship of “Shakespeare’s” plays, we are confronted with the question of motive: why was this carried out?

Why the Deliberate Ambiguity?

Two explanations for the ambiguity present themselves. The first is that Oxford's family wanted the attribution to Shakspere to be permanent, but in 1623 was prevented by external conditions from making stronger statements in support of it. In this view the best that could be done at the time was the creation of an ambiguous story of Shakspere's authorship that could be strengthened later as conditions permitted.

Why might Oxford's family have wanted his authorship hidden permanently? Relatives might have wanted him remembered primarily as the 17th Earl of Oxford and Lord Great Chamberlain of Her Majesty's court. Perhaps, as senior members of a hierarchical, class-conscious society, that was of primary importance to them. Oxford had employed the pseudonym only during the last 11 years of his life, beginning in 1593 when the name William Shakespeare was attached to *Venus and Adonis*. They wanted the plays preserved, as well, or they wouldn't have gone to such great effort and expense to produce the Folio, but that was of secondary importance. The best solution, given this line of thinking, was to have the plays preserved but not attributed to Oxford.

Among the factors creating difficulties for attribution to Shakspere was that, in 1623, nobody in London or Stratford considered him to be the dramatist William Shakespeare, and if the attribution had been too blatant, people might have publicly disagreed. Shakspere had never claimed to have written any plays, and no documents exist today showing that anyone during his lifetime had ever said that he had. English scholar A.J. Pointon concluded that "William Shakspere was never Shakespeare and was never thought to be so during his lifetime" (Pointon, 2011, 1). Even professor Stanley Wells acknowledges that no document during William Shakspere's lifetime directly connects him with the literary works. He admits that "among the allusions [to the writer Shakespeare by his contemporaries] that I have cited so far...there is none that explicitly and incontrovertibly identifies him with Stratford-upon-Avon" (Wells, 2013, 81). "There is no 'air' of the actor in anything we know of Shakspere," writes Charlton Ogburn, Jr. "He was a mercenary businessman, and the only known remarks attributed to him by contemporaries (apart from his deposition in the Mountjoy case) concerned the enclosure of the common lands of Stratford.... His name is missing from records of actors in which it would certainly have appeared had he been one.... Only posthumously did Shakspere acquire the guise of an actor" (Ogburn, 1992, 193). English scholar Richard Malim goes so far as to declare Shakspere a "nonentity," writing that he "was no sort of actor or impresario, and indeed was seldom in London after 1599" (Malim, 2015, 14).

Many scholars today cite the Folio itself as the principal reason for believing in Shakspere's authorship, but of course the Folio did not exist before it was published. As scholar H. B. Simpson wrote in 1935, "One of the strongest arguments against the orthodox view is the fact that the first association of

the one name with the other [i.e., Shakspeare with Shakespeare] was made in the Folio of 1623” (Simpson, 1935, 32). Half a century later, Edward de Vere’s biographer Mark Anderson agreed: “Without these two posthumous memorials [the inscription on the Stratford monument and the introductory material to the First Folio]...it is scarcely conceivable that anyone would ever have thought of the Stratford Shakspeare as the writer” (Anderson, 2005, 41). And again, “If the professors can point to a single reference to Shakspeare of Stratford during his lifetime that links him with authorship of Shakespeare’s works or to a single reference in those years to the poet-dramatist that suggests he was the Stratford man—or, for that matter, identifies him with any actual person—they will do what no one else has been able to do” (114).

Another factor was that Oxford’s authorship appears to have been an open secret in literary and court circles. Courtiers certainly remembered that many of “Shakespeare’s” plays had been presented in the court or in private theaters, as entertainment created by Oxford, long before they appeared on the public stage or were published as by Shakespeare. They, too, might have publicly disagreed. So the attribution to Shakspeare had to be carefully executed. It had to be significant enough to imply his authorship, but not blatant enough to motivate those in the know to express public doubts about it. The idea of his authorship could be strengthened later, building on the foundation laid in 1623.

Efforts to hide Oxford’s authorship can, in fact, be seen as falling into three phases: before, during and after the years around 1623. Charlton Ogburn, Jr. holds that the decision to permanently conceal Oxford’s authorship was made and put into effect in 1597. “Everything falls into place...if we take it that in 1597 the persons in whose hands the matter rested decided that the authorship of the plays...would be lastingly concealed” (Ogburn, 1992, 194). The idea was floated that Shakespeare was Will Shakspeare, a tactic that “necessitated getting Shakspeare out of sight so that his glaring disqualifications for the role of the dramatist would not queer the game.... This he did, and in Stratford, except for perhaps an occasional visit to London and a brief sojourn in the city in 1604, he appears to have remained in affluent obscurity” (194–95).

The second phase was the three steps taken in and around 1623. As Bénézet explained it, “Oxford’s family decided that the plays must be released to preserve them for posterity. However, the authorship secret must not be betrayed.... [It recruited] a London monument-maker to plant a memorial in Stratford; two retired actors to pose as sponsors; Ben Jonson to forget his jealousy and to write both verse and fiction; [and] four printers to pool their resources.... A false Folio portrait and false clues in Ben Jonson’s dedicatory verses perpetuate the hoax compelled from on high, but preserve the Shakespeare plays for all time. A well-planned hoax” (Bénézet, 1947).

A.J. Pointon agrees with this scenario, writing that, “When this writer’s [Oxford’s] collected plays were published thirty years later, in 1623, in what would become known as Shakespeare’s ‘First Folio’, someone had the idea, not entirely original, of setting up a decoy for him, with hints that the pseudonym hid some other known real person. This person, most probably originating with those who planned the publication of this great book, cleverly used as decoy an actor-businessman from Stratford-upon-Avon with a name similar to “Shakespeare”—William Shakspeare—who, being dead, was not in a position to object” (Pointon, 2011, 1).

The problem that Oxford’s family faced in 1623 was that they had succeeded all too well in pre-1623 efforts to hide Oxford’s authorship. That is why, Pointon shows, the publication of Shakespeare’s collected works had been delayed year after year since it was first planned in 1616. Even in 1623, publication of the Folio came about only when the “grand possessors” were “forced by the threat of Jaggard and Pavier’s rogue publication. They knew that, if they published a full collection of Shakespeare’s great plays, a burst of curiosity about their author was bound to follow: for, whatever may be said to the contrary, it is obvious that the name Shakespeare was a pseudonym. There was simply nobody of that name operating in the literary circles of England” (Pointon, 2011, 113–14).

That is the reason there could be no outright statement that Shakespeare was Shakspeare of Stratford. They could provide only the weakest of hints, the “Sweet swan of Avon” and “thy Stratford monument” phrases three pages apart in the Folio’s prefatory material. The hints had to be “subtle and ambiguous” to avoid provoking a reaction “from those who knew Shakspeare and knew he could not write.” Even those subtle allusions required construction of a monument of some kind in Stratford “to give credence to the hints that were soon to be published about him. If readers of the First Folio had gone to Stratford and found nothing there to commemorate William Shakspeare, with at least some suggestion that he was a writer, suspicion must have been aroused” (Pointon, 2011, 117). “The Monument,” Pointon concludes, “was designed, not as a memorial to Shakspeare, but as part of the scheme to steal his identity” (131).

How then to attribute the plays to such a person in 1623? With deliberate ambiguity. Then, slowly, in a third phase, in the years after 1623, build on the base established in that year.

Why the Deliberate Ambiguity II?

A second explanation for the deliberately ambiguous identification of the author of the works in the Folio is similar to the first, but opposite in direction. Perhaps Oxford’s family wished to attribute authorship to him when the

Folio was published but was prohibited from doing so by external factors. In this scenario, publishing the works under a cover story of strategic deception was the best that could be done, so they used the flimsiest cover story they could so as to make it as easy as possible to abandon it later.

For a clue as to their actual intent, we can turn to Percy Allen, a professional theater critic in London who also wrote on French poetry and history and published extensively on the Shakespeare authorship issue. In discussing Elizabethan drama, Allen wrote of

the cunning skill of Elizabethan writers, in at once concealing and revealing interesting facts and identities beneath an innocent-looking, yet usually penetrable disguise; and the corresponding cleverness of readers—and...of the elite among theatrical audiences also—at penetrating such disguises, and perceiving accordingly the inner purport of the text. (Allen, 1934, 21)

Perhaps Oxford's family intended, with the steps taken in and around 1623, to perpetrate a real case of this Elizabethan literary practice, "at once concealing and revealing interesting facts and identities beneath an innocent looking, yet penetrable disguise."

Allen explained further that

Dangerous topicalities of course, had to be cunningly introduced; and the Elizabethan dramatists, Shakespeare among them, developed great skill at weaving contemporary allusions into a framework provided by well-known older plays, stories, sagas, or folk-tales, which were selected because their outlines, or plots, fitted conveniently in with the Elizabethan story that the playwright desired secretly to tell. (Allen, 1934, 21)

In the case of "cunningly introducing" Oxford's authorship through topical allusions to Oxford's biography in the plays themselves, no "framework provided by well-known older plays" existed into which the real story could be "conveniently fitted." The patrons of the three steps had to create their own legend, or cover story, out of thin air. This they did with the story of Shakspeare's authorship, told through the altered portraits, the monument in Trinity Church and the prefatory material in the Folio, taking care to make the cover story no stronger than was needed to get the works published.

What factors would have blocked Oxford's family from making a straightforward attribution of Oxford's authorship?

One factor sometimes suggested is the so-called "stigma of print"—the idea that members of Oxford's social class were prohibited from publishing their literary works. I don't find this argument persuasive. That social prohibition

had applied to courtiers publishing their own works during their lifetimes. However, by 1623 the precedent of courtiers' literary works being published after their deaths, with open attribution to them had long been established. The works of Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser and Christopher Marlowe—published either anonymously or not at all during their lifetimes—had been published with attribution to them after their deaths. Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* was published in 1590 and 1593, after his death in 1586, and his *Astrophel and Stella* was published in 1591. Among works by members of lower social classes, Marlowe's *Tamberlane* was published anonymously during his lifetime, but republished after his death with his name on the title page. The same presumably could have been done with Oxford's poetry with no loss of status.

A more substantive reason is that Oxford, a senior member of the nobility, had written plays performed on the disreputable public stage, and had, perhaps, even acted in them. This goes far beyond writing poems that could be published in his name after his demise. The theatrical aspects to his literary career had, perhaps, given his name a brand that his family in that class-conscious age wanted to purge. While more credible, I do not find this reason substantive enough to conceal his authorship in 1623, as it had already been 19 years since his passing, and the weight of that objection decreased with each passing year.

Some scholars have proposed that the sensitivities and political concerns of fellow courtiers and the nobility blocked attribution to Oxford. Characters in some of the plays had been based, in part, on powerful members of the court and government known to Oxford. They and their families would not be pleased to see themselves or prominent members of their families portrayed, often in unflattering ways, on the public stage. Whatever validity this theory might have had in the 1590s, when publication of Shakespeare's plays began, I do not find it compelling in 1623 because, by then, practically all those ridiculed in the plays had also passed on. Robert Cecil, Secretary of State and Privy Council member, had died in 1612, more than a decade before the Folio was published.

It is all too easy for scholars today to consider only literary reasons for the family's desire to conceal Oxford's authorship either permanently or temporarily. But the issue of Shakespearean authorship in itself was only a side show during the final years of Elizabeth's long reign and throughout that of James I. Political developments of great importance affected so many aspects of English history of the time that surely the issue of Shakespearean authorship was among them. It is to those political events we must look for weightier explanations of the steps taken in 1623.

Earlier I noted Peter W. Dickson's observation that England was wracked by the Spanish Marriage Crisis at the time the Folio was being prepared, in

which efforts were underway to marry King James's son, Prince Charles, to a Spanish princess. Drawing further on Dickson's theory raises the possibility that the political events which gave rise to the desire to enhance feelings of English nationalism through publication of the plays in the Folio also gave rise to political pressures opposed to public recognition of Oxford's authorship. As Gabriel Ready notes, "The Dickson hypothesis focuses on England's political environment of the 1620s [in which]...Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford,...Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, and the Herbert brothers William and Philip lead a faction opposed to the marriage negotiations between England and Spain" (Ready, 2021, 50). Ready notes that Henry de Vere "was imprisoned in the Tower of London from April 1622 to December 1623, which aligns with the dates of production of the First Folio almost exactly, February 1622 or later to November or December 1623." He notes further that "Dickson linked a rush to assemble the collection with two potential dangers, the destruction of the plays and the death of the author's son" (51). Perhaps the most that could be done in those dangerous political times was publishing the works but withholding attribution to Oxford.

Going a step further, the Irish scholar H. K. Kennedy-Skipton sensed back in 1932 that there was something to be uncovered in Shakespeare's works which modern scholars were overlooking. He made a penetrating observation about what Shakespeare's plays, if properly understood, might reveal about real-life events.

If we accept the life of de Vere and his relation to the times as told in the plays, we may find they form a historical foreground, and will in fact be a criterion of the truth of the background. There can be no doubt that the plays and the life of Edward De Vere conceal facts of vital historical import, compared with which the mystery of the authorship is of minor consequence. How otherwise can one explain the erasure of the name of such an important person from the pages of our history? (Kennedy-Skipton, 1932, 32)

Kennedy-Skipton did not know what those hidden facts were, but suspected them to be of such "vital historical import" that the authorship mystery itself is of only "minor consequence" in comparison. This was a compelling statement because it raised, first, the question of "literary evidence"—whether it is legitimate to cite events portrayed in works of literature as evidence of historical events—and, second, it brought to the fore the still unexplained fact that Edward de Vere had indeed been virtually erased from "the pages of our history." What events could possibly be of such import that they would require such an erasure of a courtier who had once been described as "the Queen's favourite?"

Four elements related to Oxford and the Shakespeare plays require explanation if we are to understand why the three steps taken around 1623 were executed in such an ambiguous way. They are:

- Why Oxford's authorship could not be openly acknowledged;
- Why Oxford himself was nearly erased from history.

Bénézet, echoing Kennedy-Skipton, notes that as a result of the "extraordinary job of falsifying literary history...engineered in 1623 by a group of English nobles,...Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, one of the most versatile geniuses of all time, remains practically unknown today" (Bénézet, 1947).
- Why so much evidence related to authorship of the plays—Oxford's or Shakspeare's—has vanished.

Charlton Ogburn, Jr. concluded that "a nearly clean sweep was made of contemporary documentation touching on the authorship.... The fact is that every contemporary document that might have related authorship of Shakespeare's plays and poems to an identifiable human being subsequently disappeared. Every last scrap of paper that would have told who Shakespeare was—whether the Stratford man or any other—simply vanished.... To me there can be but one explanation for the empty-handedness of generations of scholars after lifelong quests. Someone saw to it that those quests would be fruitless" (Ogburn, 1992, 198, 183).
- How hiding so much evidence and eliminating Oxford from history could have been accomplished.

Ogburn explained that "all testimony as to the actual authorship and all testimony as to the surrogate's ineligibility would have to be forestalled and where it was committed to paper the incriminating documents would have to be gathered up and destroyed" (Ogburn, 1992, 198). He characterized such a far-reaching effort as "highly implausible" and believed that "its implausibility is what has chiefly blocked a more general acceptance of 'Shakespeare' as having been a pseudonym."

Only one explanation answers all four questions: the Sonnets Dynastic Succession Theory, sometimes referred to as the Southampton Theory, the Tudor Heir Theory, the Tudor Rose Theory and the Prince Tudor Theory. The theory has at its core the idea that Queen Elizabeth bore a child in the middle of 1574 fathered by Edward de Vere, a son who became known as the 3rd Earl of Southampton. Because any son born to Elizabeth, legitimate or not, would have been regarded as having some claim to the throne of England,⁵ and because she apparently decided, around 1593, the year in which she turned 60, not to acknowledge Southampton as her son and

heir, his true parentage had to be kept secret to avoid complicating the succession to the throne after her death.⁶ Later, after James VI of Scotland had become King James I of Great Britain, the need for secrecy was even greater, as the existence of an illegitimate child born to Elizabeth posed a threat to the legitimacy of James's reign because he, being only Elizabeth's half-nephew, was less directly descended from her than Southampton (if he was indeed her son), and because English law barred non-English claimants from being crowned.

In this explanation, because Oxford had inserted veiled references to Southampton's true parentage into his plays and poems, a way had to be found to separate him from his works to make it less likely that those not already in the know would decipher the veiled references. The way found was to attribute the works to someone from the countryside who wasn't even in London much of the time, thereby cutting the connection between the works and Oxford, and between them and the court. Largely eliminating Oxford from the historical record contributed to the same end: the less that was known of his prominence in Elizabeth's court in the 1570s, the less likely it would be that anyone would connect him to any children born to Elizabeth, if any had been. This effort had to continue even in 1623 to protect not just the legitimacy of the reign of James I, but also that of the Stuart Dynasty. That's why the Shakespeare name was maintained even after Oxford died in 1604 and why it was maintained in the Folio of 1623 and beyond.

The Dynastic Succession Theory also explains how the campaign to destroy evidence of Oxford's authorship and of Shakspeare's non-authorship described by Ogburn could have succeeded: it must have been orchestrated by those who controlled State power. Only they would have had access to documents such as the records of the Privy Council and the Office of the Revels, which are missing for just those years likely to have mentioned the Earl of Oxford's theatrical activities.⁷ Only State officers would have had the power to seize private papers of important officials and letters in private hands, as well as other items such as attendance records of the Stratford grammar school, which are complete except for the decade during which William Shakspeare would have been of age to attend. Only Robert Cecil, they claim—as Privy Council member since 1593, Secretary of State since 1596, leader of the Council since 1597, Lord Treasurer since 1608—had sufficient control over the reins of State power to have accomplished all this. The more extensive the use of State power, the greater the chances that it was used for reasons of State. And no use of such power would be more legitimate in their eyes than protecting the reign of the Stuart dynasty from challenges to its legitimacy. Such an effort to destroy evidence that would interfere with the cover story of Shakspeare's authorship was, as noted, supplemented by the creation of misleading evidence in the form of the prefatory material in the Folio, the oddities in Trinity Church, and the alterations to the portraits.

The theory fits well with either option posed regarding attribution of the plays. It explains why Oxford's family might have wanted his authorship hidden forever, and it explains why his family would have found it difficult to make an explicit statement of his authorship in 1623 had they wanted to do so. It explains why they created a cover story as flimsy as the one that was ultimately created.

Conclusions

Which of these two scenarios took place? Were Oxford's relatives determined to conceal his authorship forever but were prevented from doing so definitively in 1623? Or did they want to announce his authorship openly but were prohibited from doing so at the time, which led to executing a weak cover story that could later be discarded?

I conclude the latter took place. Oxford's family intended to attribute the Shakespeare works to him but was prevented from doing so by the political forces in place at that time. I hold that they intended to identify Oxford as the real author at some point in the future, and that the weak cover story presented in 1623 was designed to set the stage for that happening. The principal reason for my conclusion is the portraits of Oxford that were altered to hide his identity. Not only were they altered to make the sitter more closely resemble the Droeshout engraving and to cover over or alter inscriptions indicating his true identity, they were labeled as portraits of "Shakespeare." New portraits of Shakspeare could easily and quickly have been prepared, yet Oxford's family chose to alter and rename half a dozen portraits of him—not portraits of anyone else, but of Oxford specifically—thereby tying him and no one else to the Shakespeare name.

I believe their intent was to bring the portraits forward later and publicly announce Oxford's authorship at a less politically sensitive moment. That did not happen, obviously, because of developments in English history that could not have been foreseen, principally the English Civil War and the Puritan Revolution that closed the theaters for 20 years. Later the effigy in the monument was changed to resemble the Droeshout engraving, and the sack of grain was refurbished to become a pillow. Oxford's descendants could not have predicted the degree to which scholars would allow themselves to be deceived by the official cover story, and, in many cases, to create, invent, distort, and forge evidence in support of it. Throughout it all the portraits—the Ashbourne of greatest importance among them—remained in the possession of Oxford's descendants, listed in family inventory records as being of "Shakespeare," as fabrications from the past that would unravel in the 20th Century.

Endnotes

1. See, for instance, Peter Dickson's *Bardgate: Shake-Speare and the Royalists Who Stole the Bard* (2011).
2. See also J.T. Looney's "*Shakespeare*" *Identified* (1920), 221–22.
3. See, for instance, Richard F. Whalen, "The Stratford Bust: A Monumental Fraud," *The Oxfordian*, vol. 8 (2005) 7–24; reprinted in *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial* (136–151), edited by John M. Sha-han and Alexander Waugh for The Shakespeare Authorship Coalition.
4. See also Whalen's "'Look Not on this Picture:' Ambiguity in the Shake-speare First Folio," in *The 1623 Shakespeare First Folio: A Minority Report* (a special issue of *Brief Chronicles* edited by Roger Stritmatter, 2016), 47–59; and Katherine Chiljan's "First Folio Fraud," 69–87 in the same publication.
5. In the first of two articles, British scholar John M. Rollett presented evidence "which shows, or appears to show, that in the 1590s South-ampton was indeed thought by many people to be the Queen's son." "Was Southampton Regarded as the Son of the Queen? Part 1." *De Vere Society Newsletter* (January 2000): 8. In a second article on the same subject, he presented additional findings showing that "From purely literary evidence, the dynastic sonnets, it was deduced fifty years ago that Southampton was the son of Oxford and the Queen. However unlikely that deduction may have seemed, it is now apparently confirmed by documentary evidence from 1592 and '93, where one publication actu-ally styles him 'Dynasta,' a Prince, one of a line of hereditary princes or rulers." "Was Southampton Regarded as the Son of the Queen? Part 2". *De Vere Society Newsletter* (July 2000): 26.
6. Although it is true that a monarch's illegitimate children were prohibited by law from succeeding to the throne, political considerations of the moment, not words printed on a parchment, were paramount. In two of the three successions to the throne of England during Edward de Vere's lifetime, the person who became monarch had been forbidden by law from succeeding. Elizabeth Tudor became Elizabeth I in 1559 even though she had been declared illegitimate and forbidden from succeeding by Henry VIII's Will, and King of Scotland James VI became James I

of England in 1603 even though English law prohibited any but natural born Englishmen from rising to the crown. Again, political considerations, not formal laws, determined who would replace a deceased monarch.

7. On this point see Stephanie Hopkins Hughes's "Oxford's Worst Enemy: Robert Cecil, First Earl of Salisbury," posted May 6, 2019 at <https://politicworm.com>, accessed May 20, 2022. "To me it seems obvious that this is the reason why so many paper trails from that period disappear just where one would expect to see some mention of the truth, in particular the otherwise inexplicable absence of Privy Council minutes relating to policy discussions around the phenomenal rise of the London Stage as a powerful new industry and the "Fourth Estate" of government. Someone had to have done this, and only Robert Cecil had the power, the opportunity, and the personal reasons."

Works Cited

- Allen, Percy. "The Oxford-Shakespeare Case Corroborated." *Notes and Queries*, Volume 160, March 28, 1931, 230–231.
- . *The Case for Edward de Vere as "Shakespeare."* London: Cecil Palmer, 1930.
- . *Anne Cecil, Elizabeth and Oxford: A Study of Relations Between These Three.* London: Denis Archer, 1934.
- . "Topicalities in Shakespeare." *Theatre and Stage*, April 1934, 585.
- Anderson, Mark. *"Shakespeare" by Another Name: The Life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man Who was Shakespeare.* New York: Gotham Books, 2005.
- Barrell, Charles W. "Identifying 'Shakespeare.'" *Scientific American*, Volume 162, January 1940, 4–8, 43+.
- Bénézet, Louis P. "The Frauds and Stealths of Injurious Imposters." *Shakespeare Fellowship Quarterly*, 5:1, January 1944, 2–6.
- . "The Shakespeare Hoax: An Improbable Narrative." *Dartmouth Alumni Quarterly*, November 1947.
- . "A Hoax Three Centuries Old." *American Bar Association Journal*, 46:5 (May 1960) 519–522.
- Burris, Barbara, "A Golden Book, Bound Richly Up." *Shakespeare Matters*, 1:1 (Fall 2001) 1, 12–16.
- . "Ashbourne Story III: Close Review of the Painting's Restoration Reveals a History of Deception and Destruction." *Shakespeare Matters*, 1:3 (Spring 2002) 1, 10–22.
- Chiljan, Katherine. "First Folio Fraud." In *The 1623 Shakespeare First Folio: A Minority Report: a special issue of Brief Chronicles* edited by Roger Stritmatter, 68–87. Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, 2016.
- Danner, Bruce. "The Anonymous Shakespeare: Heresy, Authorship, and the Anxiety of Orthodoxy." In *Anonymity in Early Modern England*, edited by Janet W. Starnier and Barbara H. Traister, 143–158, New York: Routledge, 2011.

A Contrarian View of the First Folio: Why Was It Published?

Dickson, Peter W. *Bardgate: Shake-Speare and the Royalists Who Stole the Bard*. Mount Vernon, OH: Printing Arts Press, 2011.

Douglas, Col. Montagu W. "An Omitted Speech in the First Folio." *Hackney Spectator*, Number 2021, June 20, 1924, 11.

Hughes, Stephanie Hopkins. "Oxford's Worst Enemy: Robert Cecil, First Earl of Salisbury." Posted May 6, 2019 at <https://politicworm.com>, accessed May 20, 2022.

Kennedy-Skipton, H.K. "The Tragic Story of 'Shakespeare.'" *Shakespeare Pictorial*, Number 54, August 1932, 32.

Looney, J. Thomas. *"Shakespeare" Identified*. London: Cecil Palmer, 1920.

———. "'Shakespeare's' Identity." *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 15, 1921, 12.

———. "Lord Oxford and the Shrew Plays, I." *Shakespeare Pictorial*, Number 93, November 1935, 176.

Malim, Richard. "Shaksper the Nonentity." *De Vere Society Newsletter*, 22:1, January 2015, 13–18.

Mumpsimum. "Who Was Shakespeare." *Washington Post*, August 8, 1948, B4.

Ogburn, Charlton, Jr. *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth & the Reality*. McLean, VA: EPM Publications, Inc., 1992.

Pointon, A.J. *The Man Who was Never Shakespeare*. Turnbridge Wells, Kent: Parapress, 2011.

Ready, Gabriel. "The Production of the First Folio Reconsidered." *The Oxfordian*, Volume 23, 2021, 49–76.

Rollett, John. "Was Southampton Regarded as the Son of the Queen? Part 1." *De Vere Society Newsletter*, January 2000, 8–12.

———. "Was Southampton Regarded as the Son of the Queen? Part 2." *De Vere Society Newsletter*, July 2000, 19–27.

Simpson, H.B. "Shakespeare's Sonnets." *Shakespeare Pictorial*, Number 84, February 1935, 32.

Stritmatter, Roger (ed). *The 1623 Shakespeare First Folio: A Minority Report*. A special issue of *Brief Chronicles*, 2016.

- Ward, Col. Bernard R. "The Shakespeare Fellowship." *Hackney Spectator*, Number 2004, February 9, 1923, 7.
- Wells, Stanley. "Allusions to Shakespeare to 1642." In *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy*, 73–87, edited by Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Whalen, Richard F. "The Ambiguous Ben Jonson: Implications for Assessing the Validity of the First Folio Testimony." In *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?: Exposing an Industry in Denial*, 126–135, edited by John M. Shahan and Alexander Waugh for The Shakespeare Authorship Coalition. Tamarac, FL: Llumina Press, 2013.
- . "'Look Not on This Picture:' Ambiguity in the Shakespeare First Folio." In *The 1623 Shakespeare First Folio: A Minority Report*. A special issue of *Brief Chronicles* edited by Roger Stritmatter, 47–59, 2016.



A Companion for a King: "Shakespeare...THOU HADST BIN [An Earl]"

by Matt Hutchinson

The epigram "To Our English Terence" by John Davies of Hereford is well known in Shakespeare studies. Less well known is the transparent reference to the most famous legal tract of the time contained within (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Portrait of John Davies of Hereford. Fontispiece to *The Writing Schoolemaster* 2nd ed. (1636), distributed under a CC-BY 2.0 license (Wikimedia).

A Companion for a King: “Shakespeare...THOU HADST BIN [An Earl]”

The epigram reads:

To our English Terence Mr. Will:
Shake-speare.
Some say (good Will) which I, in sport do sing,
Had'st thou not plaid some Kingly parts in sport,
Thou hadst bin a companion for a King;
And, beene a King among the meaner sort.
Some others raile: raile as they thinke fit,
Thou hast no rayling, but, a rainging Wit.
And honesty thou sow'st, which they do reape;
So, to increase their Stocke which they do keepe.

Terence was known as a playwright in Ancient Rome (c. 195/185–159? CE) but also labeled a front for aristocratic writers in other works available in Elizabethan England (Price 62). Comparing Shakespeare to Terence can therefore be seen as ambiguous: both a complimentary and negative interpretation is possible.

The line “a companion for a king” is usually taken by traditional scholars to mean that Shakspeare was a member of the acting troupe, The King's Men. However, it could also mean that he was a member of the King's court (Detobel, 2011).

Yet to anyone conversant with contemporary English Law, “a companion for a King” would have been recognized as an obvious and specific allusion to an Earl, as the term was written into English law in the 13th Century. Cleric and jurist Henry de Bracton (c. 1210–c. 1268), wrote:

THE KING'S COMPANIONS

Various persons are established under the king, namely, earls, who take the name ‘comites’ from ‘comitatus’.

Henry de Bracton, *De Legibus Et Consuetudinibus Angliae* [On the Laws and Customs of England] 1235 (De Bracton, II, 32).

As historian Andrew Spencer notes,

The sentiment expressed in *Bracton* that the earls were, by their very names, the king's natural companions was a commonplace in thirteenth and fourteenth-century political discourse. The author of the *Vita Edwardi Decundi* described the nobility as ‘the king's chief member, without which the king cannot attempt to accomplish anything of

importance'. The *Mirror of Justices*, dated to Edward I's reign, further elaborated on the meaning of comes as 'companion': 'it was agreed as law that the king should have companions...these companions are now called counts, from the Latin *comites*' (Spencer 36–37). (Figure 2)



Figure 2. Earls' royal process to Parliament at Westminster, 4 February 1512. Source: 17th century copy in British Library (Add. MS 22306) of *Parliament Procession Roll of 1512*, Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, distributed under a CC-BY 2.0 license (Wikimedia).

Further, historian Marc Morris writes,

Bracton had more to say on the subject of earls. They are called comites (the plural of comes), he said, because they are the king's companions. Etymologically speaking, he was quite right: originally comes had simply meant 'companion'; it was first used as an official title in the fourth century for the courtiers of the Roman emperors. Having reasserted this idea, Bracton expanded on it: the king's associates helped him to govern the people, he said, and the swords with which they were girded signified the defence of the kingdom. (Morris 54)

The Germanic "Earl" soon replaced the anglicized "Count" due to the latter's closeness to the vulgar word for "vagina," although no feminine counterpart of "Countess" was ever adopted.

A Companion for a King: “Shakespeare...THOU HADST BIN [An Earl]”

The line “Thou hadst bin a companion for a King” can therefore be read as “Thou hadst bin (an Earl)” (Figure 3).



Figure 3. *Elizabeth I, Procession Portrait*, including numerous Earls. Painting by George Vertue (1684-1756), distributed under a CC-BY 2.0 license (Wikimedia).

The Shakespearean Authorship Trust lists two Earls among its candidates, Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby. Both cases are not mutually exclusive—Derby became Oxford’s son-in-law in 1595 and was soon reported to be “busy penning plays for the common players” (Daugherty, Location 117). However, Richard Broome in 1638 makes an interesting comment in his play *The Antipodes*:

I tell thee, These lads can act the Emperors lives all over,
And Shakespeares Chronicled histories, to boot,
And were that Caesar, or that English Earle,
That lov’d a Play and Player so well now living,
I would not be out-vyed [outdone] in my delights.

Derby was still alive at the time the play was published. Oxford had died in 1604 and was referred to as “our English Caesar” as early as 1580 by Anthony Munday.

Works Cited

- Daugherty, Leo. *William Shakespeare, Richard Barnfield and the Sixth Earl of Derby* (Kindle Edition), Cambria Press, 2010.
- De Bracton, Henry. *Legibus Et Consuetudinibus Angliæ*, Thorne, S.E. (ed. and trans.), Vol 2. Harvard University Press, 1968.
- Detobel, Robert. “Ten Lines that Shake the World,” 2011. www.shakespeare-today.de/front_content.php?idart=465.
- Morris, M. “The King’s Companions,” *History Today*, 55:12 (December 2005), 50–56.
- Price, Diana. *Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of An Authorship Problem*, Shakespeare-Authorship.com, 2013.
- Spencer, A.M. *Nobility and Kingship in Medieval England: The Earls and Edward I, 1272–1307* (Ebook), Cambridge University Press, 2017.

A Companion for a King: “Shakespeare...THOU HADST BIN [An Earl]”



"Sogliardo" and Greene's Upstart Crow

by Matt Hutchinson

The character Insulso Sogliardo in Ben Jonson's 1599 play *Every Man Out of His Humour* has long been seen by many Shakespeare scholars as being a lampoon of William Shakspeare. Richard Malim writes that *Every Man* "contains the most direct and complete refutation of the pretensions of William Shakespeare as author" (Malim 200). Less recognized is Jonson's association of Sogliardo with a member of the corvid (crow) family (Figure 1).

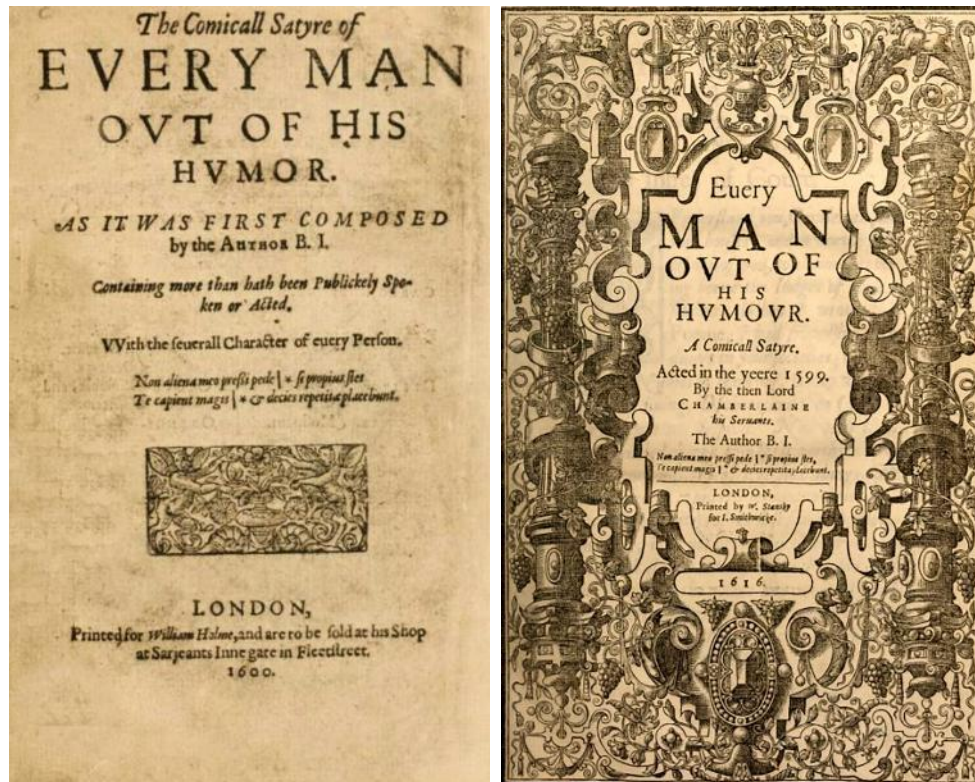


Figure 1. The 1600 quarto & 1616 Folio title pages of *Every Man Out of his Humour*.

The play begins with the Grex., or onstage commentators, entering. Their opening exchange includes

Asper: This may be truly said to be a Humor,
But that a **Rooke in wearing a pied feather**,
The cable hatband, or the three-pild ruffe,
A yard of shoe-tie, or the Switzers knot
On his French garters, should affect a Humour,
O, ’tis more than most ridiculous.

Jonson seems to play on the word rooke here; “a Rooke in wearing a pied feather” would likely evoke an image of the member of the crow family, although it can also mean fool. There is a saying, “a crow in a crowd is a rook and a rook on its own is a crow,” which demonstrates the general rule of thumb that to tell the similar subspecies apart, rooks tend to be more sociable. Yet the saying illustrates the difficulty many have in identifying one from the other.



Figure 2. A rook (left) and a crow (right), images distributed under a CC-BY 2.0 license (Wikimedia).

The beginning of Act I, Scene I sees Macilente enter. Addressing the audience, his opening speech includes “To sing: *My mind to me a Kingdom is*.”

Professor Steven May has written an authoritative article on why the attribution of the poem “My Mind to me a Kingdom Is” in the mid-19th Century to Edward Dyer is incorrect, and that its true author was Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford (May 386).

Matt Hutchinson is a doctoral candidate in the Humanities at the University of New England. He previously appeared in the 2021 volume of *The Oxfordian* with his monograph, “*The Slippery Slope of Shakspeare’s ‘Signatures’*”.

If there is still any doubt, Jonson also includes the line in his play *The Case is Altered*, printed three times after the publication of the *Sonnets* in 1609 but believed to have been composed around 1597-8 as a precursor to *Every Man Out*. The play opens on a character who is singing snippets from not one but three of Oxford's poems, "The Forsaken Man," "Care and Disappointment" and "My Mind to me a Kingdom Is." The final line is "my mind to me a kingdom is truly." Another character replies, "Truly a very good saying," both seemingly punning on the Oxfordian motto, *Vero Nihil Verius*, or Nothing Truer than Truth.

Returning to *Every Man Out*, Macilente then hides as he observes Sogliardo enter with Carlo Buffone. The Grex., observing the entrance of Sogliardo and Buffone, states:

Cor. Signior, note this Gallant, I pray you.
Mit. What is he?
Cor. **A tame Rook**, you'll take him presently: list.

They are clearly talking about Sogliardo, as they had met and been introduced to Buffone in the preceding prologue. The primary definition of "tame" is a domesticated animal, such as a bird. Sogliardo then takes center stage:

Sog. Nay, look you Carlo: this is my humour now!
 I have Land and Mony, my Friends left me well,
 and I will be a Gentleman whatsoever it cost me.

Sogliardo carries on like this a little more, in lines that seem to mock Shakspere. Macilente, observing Sogliardo with the Grex., bemoans to the audience:

Maci. Why, why should such a prick-ear'd HineHind as
 this, Be rich? ha? a Fool? such a transparent Gull
 That may be seen through? wherefore should he have
 Land, Houses, and Lordships? O, I could eat my Intrails,
 And sink my Soul into the Earth with sorrow.

Is Jonson drawing a link between a character spouting Oxford's poetry and his dismay toward the rise of the character representing Shakspere, just after the name William Shakespeare was attached to the Shakespeare plays for the first time in 1598?

Sogliardo reappears in a scene that alludes to the Shakspere coat of arms, and a "rampant boar," i.e., a boar on its hind legs, such as that found on the Oxford crest, and the line "not without mustard," alluding to Nashe's novel,

Pierce Penniless, the central character of which Mark Anderson has shown to be a conflation of Nashe and Oxford (Anderson 270-71). (Figure 3)

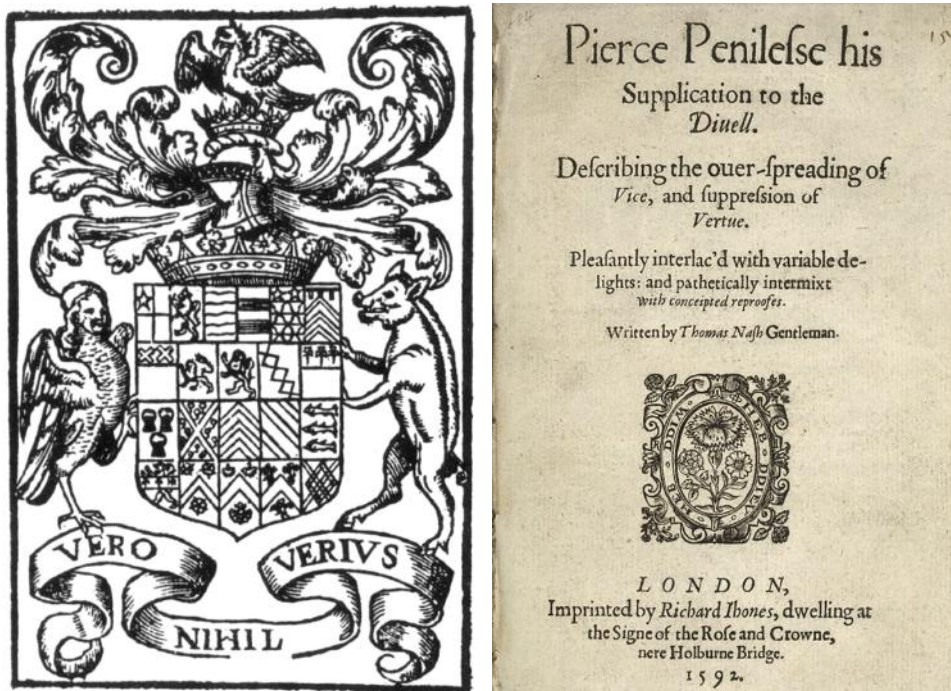


Figure 3. Rampant boar of de Vere arms; title page of Nashe’s *Pierce Penniless*.

The word *rooke* occurs three times in *Every Man Out*—the first saying it will affect a humor, the second linking it with Sogliardo, and the third, spoken by Macilente regarding a relation of Sogliardo: “why yond Fool Should wear a Suit of Sattin? he? that **Rook? That painted Jay**, with such a deal of outside?” (my emphasis).

A jay is another member of the crow family, while the “satin suit” reminds one of a passage from *Return from Parnassus* bemoaning actors in “satin suits” rising above their station. Here, the context of “rook” clearly alludes to the bird of the crow family.

A few months later, the Reverend Samuel Nicholson clearly identifies Shakespeare with the “upstart crow” line in print in his 1600 publication, *Acolastus*

(see figure below). These are just a very small selection of the borrowings from the works of Shakespeare (Figure 4):

SAMUEL NICHOLSON, 1600.	
PARALLEL PASSAGES.	
<i>Acolastus.</i>	<i>Shakespeare.</i>
Or wher's the soules Attorney, when the hart.	the heart's attorney. (<i>Ven. and Ad.</i> l. 335.)
Being once corrupted, takes the worsor part? (p. 12, l. 185.)	But with a pure appeal seeks to the heart Which once corrupted takes the worsor part (<i>Lucrece</i> , l. 293).
O woolvish heart wrapt in a womans hyde (p. 16, l. 265).	O tigers heart wrapt in a woman's hide (3 <i>Henry VI</i> , I. iv).
Thus all askaunce thou holdst me in thine eye (l. 300).	For all askaunce he holds her in his eye (<i>Ven. and Ad.</i> l. 342).
Hence idle words, servants to shallow braines, Unfruitfull sounds, wind-wasting arbitrators,	Out idle words, servants to shallow fools, Unprofitable sounds, weak arbi- trators ! Busy yourselves in skill-contending schools :
Your endles prattle lessens not my paines His suite is cold, that makes you mediators (l. 559).	Debate where leisure serves with dull debaters : To trembling clients be you medi- ators (<i>Lucrece</i> , l. 1016).
Witnes faire heauens she, she, 'tis onely she, That guides this hand to give this wound to me (l. 647).	She utters this : ' He, he, fair lords, 'tis he, That guides this hand to give this wound to me (<i>Lucrece</i> , l. 1721).
A prettie while this prettie creature stoode Before the engin of her thoughts began (l. 853).	A pretty while these pretty creatures stand (<i>Lucrece</i> , l. 1233). Once more the engine of her thoughts began (<i>Ven. and Ad.</i> l. 367).

Figure 4. Courtesy of the Shakspeare Allusion book (1909) 74.

Yet Nicholson does seem to allude to Oxford’s poetry:

I am a King...enriched with Content, My minde to me is as a
walled Towne.

(Nicholson, lines 739–741)

Which seems to evoke two of Oxford’s poems, “If I were a King I would command content” and “My minde to me a Kingdom is.” A “walled towne” seems like a synonym for kingdom and the OED bears this out: kingdom can be defined as “a domain,” which in turn can be defined as “a region contained within certain limits.”

Nicholson’s book is renowned for having the greatest number of Shakespeare “borrowings” in a single work during Shakespeare’s lifetime. Nowhere are the works of Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, or any other proposed author of the “upstart crow” line mentioned. Nicholson is clearly identifying the line with Shakespeare in 1600.

So, within 18 months of the name “Shakespeare” appearing in plays for the first time, an Elizabethan has clearly linked the upstart crow allusion to Shakespeare, and also alluded to Oxford’s poetry, while Ben Jonson, regarded by many as the key witness in the authorship question, has linked Sogliardo with a crow, and Oxford with a character devastated at the crow’s rise.

Works Cited

Anderson, Mark. “Shakespeare” by Another Name: *The Life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man who was Shakespeare*. Gotham Books, 2005.

Ingleby, C.M., Furnival, F.J., Smith, L.T. (eds.) *The Shakespeare Allusion Book: A Collection Of Allusions To Shakespeare From 1591 To 1700, Vol. 1*. Chatto & Windus Duffield & Co., 1909.

Malim, Richard. *The Earl of Oxford and The Making of “Shakespeare.”* McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, London, 2012.

May, S.W. “The Authorship of ‘My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is,’” *The Review of English Studies*, New Series 26: 104 (Nov. 1975) 385-394.

Nicholson, Samuel. *Accolastus*. London, 1600.

Some Autobiographical Aspects of Timon of Athens

by Warren Thomas Hope

‘Tis honor with most lands to be at odds. (3.5.124)

Timon of Athens has for a long time been considered a “problem play” or, as Coppelia Kahn has more recently put it, a “curious play.” In a way, the main problem with the play is its bitterness—its irony, misanthropy, and misogyny. These are often expressed in sadistic, sensual terms, making the play’s tone reveal an uncharacteristic opposite that dominates what is thought of as Shakespeare’s early plays. This is especially true with regard to comedies. As a result, *Timon* is thought to slide in with *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida* among Shakespeare’s comedies and with *King Lear* and *Coriolanus* among the tragedies.

The play’s darkness is thought to indicate it is a late work and scholars generally date it from about 1600 to 1605. In addition, some scholars argue that the play is unfinished or the result of a collaboration, perhaps with Thomas Middleton. These problems rise in part because of the pseudoscience of Stratfordianism that traditional Shakespeare scholars feel bound by. At least some of these problems or curiosities can be removed by J. Thomas Looney’s circumstantial but scientific case for Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, as the actual man behind the pen name “William Shakespeare.”

It is a truism to say that all of Shakespeare’s characters come from him. If Hamlet, Falstaff, and Lear are mere words printed in ink on pages, they are nonetheless still alive in a way that their author no longer is. No one word compares Timon and Alcibiades, the two main characters in *Timon of Athens*,

the heroes of both the play's plot and subplot, with Shakespeare's most memorable and lasting characters, but they nonetheless come directly out of their author's life. They are both presented as single men with no female love interest, who exist as idealized versions of a nobleman and a military hero, respectively. Timon, the nobleman, is depicted as a "giver"—a patron of the arts, a purchaser of jewels, a giver of gifts, and exceedingly hospitable host, someone who seems convinced that his wealth is inexhaustible and is to be generously spread among those he sees as his friends and associates. His attitudes toward wealth and friendship serve to define what he thinks a nobleman should be. He argues that a "giver" cannot, or at least should not, be a "receiver," so he puts up the money to free a friend imprisoned for debt but refuses repayment—treating the money as a gift rather than a loan. This overt opposition to usury, to moneylending, is another of Timon's traits. Unfortunately, his extreme indifference to wealth and its value means that he runs out of it, having sold his lands and gone into debt to such an extent that he is ruined. He then asks his friends for money, and they all refuse despite having benefited for some time from his generosity. Embittered by this ingratitude, he exiles himself from Athens and takes a new name, turning himself from Timon into Misanthropos, a hater of mankind.

Alcibiades, on the other hand, has been of service to Athens primarily through his skill as a military man. He too is a kind of ideal because of his skill, dedication, and successful service. But if Timon expects or looks for no reward for his generosity, Alcibiades expects his fellow citizens or their governors to show appreciation for his service. He makes a case that a friend and fellow soldier of his should be forgiven by the Senate of Athens for a crime because of the friend's own service to the city. When this argument fails, Alcibiades argues that his request should be granted as a recognition of his own service. The Senate not only rejects this argument but banishes Alcibiades.

Two things join Timon and Alcibiades so that they represent two aspects of Oxford's career as a courtier. First, they both become disillusioned with their homeland, Athens—in this case, an historical Athens that seems a Romanized Elizabethan court with nobles and a Senate rather than the Periclean Democracy that would better suit to the time of the play. Both Timon and Alcibiades become enemies of Athens after having served it well. Second,

Warren Thomas Hope graduated from Temple University with a PhD in British Literature and later taught English at Temple and the University of the Sciences. He served as editor of the Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter and also co-authored *The Shakespeare Controversy (1992 and 2009)* with Kim Holston. Later he published his poetry in *Adam's Thoughts* in Winter 1970–2000. Throughout his involvement with the Oxfordian movement, he published literally dozens of articles, notes and book reviews in *The Elizabethan Review*, *The Oxfordian* and *SOS Newsletter*.



*Act V, Scene 1:
“You are an alchemist, make gold of that:—Out, rascal dogs!”*

this change takes place in both cases through an extreme reaction to ingratitude—the lack of gratitude from Timon’s friends who benefited from his generosity and the lack of gratitude of the Senate for Alcibiades’ military service.

As I see it, Oxford in this play looks back on two alternate versions of careers he might have had. He was for a time most like Timon, famous for his generosity, his patronage of writers, players, musicians, and other friends and associates, even early in his career. When Flavius, Timon’s steward, finally convinces his master that his coffers are empty and he is in debt, Timon characteristically responds, “Let all my land be sold,” a direct echo of Oxford’s expressed view when he wished to continue his continental travels and he wrote Lord Burghley, his father-in-law and the Lord Treasurer, on how to raise money. Of course, in Timon’s case all his land had already been sold, so he had no way of repairing his situation or repaying his debts. I think of Oxford at two stages in his life, when he was more or less single, as being the basis for this reflection on one element of his career: on his return from the continent in 1576 when he separated from his wife at the age of 26; and in 1591 after Anne Cecil, his Countess, had died, and his three daughters were being raised by his former father-in-law, and he found himself basically broke and in debt. At both times he clearly experienced and felt ingratitude.

Even though Timon’s primary friends are given names, they are not highly distinguished and are at times referred to as “flattering Lords” or simply friends. My guess is it is not too far-fetched that they are three in number at least in part as a reminder of Oxford’s “friends” who became traitors he felt

compelled to denounce—Lord Henry Howard, Charles Arundel, and Francis Southwell. Oxford seems to have been moved to take on a pen name because of his extreme financial situation in 1591. Timon's taking Misanthropos as his name can be seen as a fictional equivalent of Oxford's masking himself with a name. He also must have felt ingratitude again in 1591. He'd devoted his wealth to the glory of Elizabeth's court by in effect financing, to a large extent, the English Renaissance, and the result should have been something far better than poverty and the need to remove himself from court, much as Timon took himself into exile, going outside the walls of Athens to live in the woods.

Oxford desired and contemplated a life as a military man throughout much of his life. He repeatedly expressed his frustration and disappointment in not being given opportunities to test himself on the field of battle. Eventually he was briefly given a command in the Low Countries in 1585, but was then soon replaced by his rival, the Earl of Leicester. Worse, a result of this change was for Leicester's nephew, Sir Philip Sidney, to take command of the Dutch city of Flushing. It is unclear how or why Oxford was replaced in this sudden and insulting way, but it seems clear he would have felt that it once again represented ingratitude. In his analysis of *Othello*, Dr. Bronson Feldman describes the play as Oxford's "farewell to arms" and dates it from about 1588. This experience and the giving up of the hope for a military career certainly could have contributed to the formation of the character of Alcibiades and the subplot of his going from the hero of Athens to the city's enemy, eventually retaking the city through his military prowess—a plot twist clearly related to Coriolanus turning against Rome and the looking to France, England's traditional enemy, for salvation, in *King Lear*.

It will be recalled that late in life Oxford apparently tried to influence the English succession by plotting, admittedly in an ineffectual way, to place a member of the Hastings family on the throne. It is characteristic of him that he would have preferred a member of the old English nobility to a Scot despite the wishes of Sir Robert Cecil and others.

The point should be made that there is a clear link in the play between Timon and Alcibiades so that it is justifiable to think of them as two versions of Oxford. It becomes clear that Timon was also of service to Athens as a soldier and his reputation was such that Senators come to visit him in exile to ask him to become a military leader and defend Athens from Alcibiades. Timon not only refuses this offer but gives money to Alcibiades to support his campaign against Athens. The transformation of two devoted servants of the state into enemies of it serves to suggest a critique of the nature of the Elizabethan state. The nature of this critique becomes openly expressed when Apemantus visits Timon in exile and says to him, "The commonwealth of Athens is become a forest of beasts."

Triumphal Numbers and the “Stigma of Print”: Michael Drayton’s *Encomium to Shakespeare in Agincourt*

by Roger A. Stritmatter, PhD

The article explores the application of Jacobean aesthetic doctrines associated with the idea of “triumphal forms” to Michael Drayton’s 202-line friendship poem, originally printed in Drayton’s 1627 *The Battaile of Agincourt* under the title:

To my most dearely-loued friend
HENERY REYNOLDS Esquire, of *Poets & Poesie*

Judging by the evidence of this poem as well as other surviving testimony, the shared passions of Drayton and Reynolds included not only literature and good cheer, good food and drink by the fire, but—much more specifically, and perhaps, unexpectedly—the role of “number” and its power to convey secrets across time and space. Reynolds was, in fact, a leading advocate for using *number* to express secret knowledge. Since Drayton’s poem to Reynolds is the only surviving document in which Drayton, a Warwickshire native, mentions the name “Shakespeare,” the article poses and attempts to answer a simple but fundamental question about Drayton’s poem: in what ways might the study of Reynolds’ doctrines of numerical form and esoteric purpose inform our understanding of Drayton’s design, or even reveal previously undetected aspects of his testimony about “Shakespeare?”

There is no better way to pursue an inquest into the Shakespeare question than a candid consideration of the vexed relationship between Shakspere

(1564–1616) and his fellow Warwickshire poet and playwright Michael Drayton (1563–1631). In one recent assessment, Meghan C. Andrews unambiguously classifies Drayton as “Our *closest parallel* for Shakespeare” (my emphasis) (275). Noting that Drayton’s biographical circumstance “more closely resembles Shakespeare’s than does the life of any other early modern writer” (273), Andrews further observes that Drayton “throughout the 1590s” pursued a “systematic imitation of Shakespeare” (284), adapting a “consistent patterning of himself on Shakespeare” and becoming “not just Shakespeare’s shadow,” but his “first literary reader” (306).

By all credible evidence, then, the comparison between Drayton and Shakespeare should be a fruitful one:

- Both poet-playwrights were born in Warwickshire, less than one year apart;
- Both were among the most prolific and influential playwright/poets of their generation;¹
- Both were from small town yeoman stock;
- According to John Aubrey, they were both butcher’s sons (Newdigate 4);
- They shared a common early interest and education in Ovid (Newdigate 20).

Drayton’s biographer Bernard H. Newdigate even claims that the careers of the two men “ran so nearly parallel...as to show how weak is the major premise advanced by those who argue that the son of John Shakespeare could never have written the plays that bear his name” (141).

But the closer we look, the more dubious this claim sounds and the more serious the discrepancies in the traditional narrative of Shakespeare as Drayton’s boon companion will appear. If the impression of affinity between the two writers is supported by the profound influence of Shakespeare in Drayton’s writing, this relationship is also unidirectional, evidently a sign of literary influence rather than personal association. While Andrews finds that no fewer than six of Drayton’s 25 known plays are either direct responses to or distinctly

Roger A. Stritmatter, PhD is a Professor of Humanities and Literature at Coppin State University and a member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society since 1990. He was a founding member of the Shakespeare Fellowship in 2000. With Gary Goldstein in 2009 he established *Brief Chronicles: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Authorship Studies*, serving as general editor from 2009 to 2016. He has published in orthodox academic journals including *The Shakespeare Yearbook*, *Review of English Studies*, *Notes and Queries*, and *the Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review*. He is the author, with Lynne Kositsky, of *On the Date, Sources, and Design of Shakespeare’s The Tempest* (McFarland 2013).

influenced by Shakespeare's works (274), the opposite is not true. Shakespeare never mentions Drayton and seems far less attentive to Drayton's work than Drayton is to his. In fact, the biographical parallels and copious literary influences of Shakespeare on Drayton fail to find support in any historical paper trail documenting an active association between the two men. The only real documentary connection consists of Drayton's admiring imitation of Shakespeare and his one explicit reference in the 1627 poem to Reynolds.

Based on this evidentiary lacuna, Newdigate cautions that "It has been generally but *too readily assumed* by biographers of Jonson and Shakespeare that Drayton was on terms of friendship and even of close intimacy with both those his fellow poets" (136; emphasis supplied). Yet even this conflation of Jonson and Shakespeare is misleading. Jonson's active friendship with Drayton is documented for posterity in his dedicatory encomium to *Agin-court*, which begins

It hath been question'd, Michael, if I be,
A friend at all, or if at all, to thee.

And concludes:

I call the world, that envies mee, to see
If I can be a Friend, and Friend to thee.

Jonson's mythopoeticizing encomium in the 1623 Shakespeare First folio, the only comparable link between Shakespeare and either of the other two poets, is both posthumous and evasive, not at all like Jonson's *bonhomie* with Drayton. Surely Newdigate is right to warn that "on such scanty evidence as we have, we must not assume that Drayton was in any sense the friend of Shakespeare" (142).

Drayton and Shakespeare in Fuller

This epistemological muddle is already foreshadowed in the very earliest prose account of Shakespeare's life, Thomas Fuller's biographical entry in his 1662 *Worthies of England*, a compendium of the lives of the distinguished men and women of England and inventory of the country's natural and cultural resources, organized by county. Here the account of Shakespeare's life appears in the chapter on Warwickshire alongside a corresponding yet remarkably divergent synopsis of Drayton. Fuller is a sophisticated lexicographer attuned to medieval and Renaissance commonplace traditions, a chronicler practicing a style of "fancy" that was by the 1660s already being superseded by rising Neo-classicism and the first waves of what would become enlightenment rationalism. Lawrence C. Wroth calls him "a master of the language and tactics of controversy" (2/7) with "an eye for color, an ear for delicate and ingenious phrasing," "sympathy for the whimsical" (4/7); and

“a good punster, one who punned etymologically and with a reason” (6–7). If to Coleridge Fuller remained in the 19th Century “incomparably the most sensible, the least prejudiced man of an age that boasted a galaxy of great men” (cited in Wroth, 2/7), the emerging dominance of practical, plain prose in the decades immediately following Fuller’s death, led to an early rejection of him as “a man of fancy...affecting an odd way of writing” (Patterson 335). This “commonplace book” mentality is evident in the engraving of Fuller prefixed to the first edition of *Worthies*, in which is inscribed Fuller’s Latin motto “method is the mother of memory” (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Fuller engraving from 1662 edition of *Worthies*: “METHODUS MATER MEMORIAE/ Method is the Mother of Memory.”

In the commonplace tradition under the influence of Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*, it would be natural to read Fuller’s paired “parallel lives” of Drayton and

Shakespeare as coordinated for some larger literary or psychological effect. In fact, Fuller's two entries are so discordant in their construction and ethos as to already raise questions for any conscientious reader about Fuller's intent (table):

Fuller's Entries on Shakespeare and Drayton Compared	
Fuller on Shakespeare (284)	Fuller on Drayton (285)
<p>WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE was born at Stratford on Avon in this County, in whom three eminent Poets may seem in some sort to be compounded,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Martial</i> in the <i>warlike</i> sound of his Sur-name, (whence some may conjecture him of a <i>military extraction</i>.) <i>Hasti-vibrans</i> or <i>Shake-speare</i>. 2. <i>Ovid</i>, the most <i>naturall</i> and <i>witty</i> of all Poets, and hence it was that Queen Elizabeth coming into a Grammar-School made this extemporary verse, <i>Persius a Crab-staffe, Bandy Martial, Ovid a fine Wag.</i> 3. <i>Plautus</i>, who was an exact Comaedian, yet never any Scholar, as our <i>Shake-speare</i> (if alive) would confess himself. Add to all these, that though his genius generally was jocular, and inclining him to festivity, yet he could (when so disposed) be so solemn and serious, as appears by his tragedies; so that Heraclitus himself (I mean if secret and unseen) might afford to smile at his comedies, they were so merry; and Democritus scarce forbear to sigh at his tragedies, they were so mournful. <p>He was an imminent instance of the truth of that rule, <i>Poeta non fit sed nascitur</i> ("one is not made but born a poet"). Indeed his learning was very little; so that, as Cornish diamonds are not polished by any lapidary, but are pointed and smoothed even as they were taken out of the earther, so Nature itself was all the art which was used upon him.</p> <p>Many were the wit-combats betwixt him and Ben Jonson; which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war; master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning; solid, but slow, in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention. He died anno Domini ____ and was buried at Stratford-Upon-Avon, the town of his nativity.</p>	<p>MICHAEL DRAYTON, born in this county at Atherstone, as appeareth in his poetical address thereunto:</p> <p>My native country, If there be virtue yet remaining in the earth, Or any good of thine thou breath'st into my birth, Accept it as thine own, whilst now I sing of thee, Of all thy later brood the unworthiest though I be.</p> <p>He was a pious poet, his conscience having always the command of his fancy; very temperate in his life, slow of speech, and inoffensive in company. He changed his laurel for a crown of glory, anno 1631; and is buried in Westminster Abbey, near the south door, with this epitaph:</p> <p>Do, pious marble, let thy readers know, What they and what their children owe To Drayton's name, whose sacred dust We recommend unto thy trust. Protect his memory, and preserve his story, Remain a lasting monument of his glory: And when they ruins shall disclaim To be the treasurer of his name: His name that cannot fade, shall be An everlasting monument to thee.</p> <p>He was born within a few miles of William Shakespeare, his countryman and fellow poet; and buried within fewer paces of Jeffrey Chaucer and Edmund Spenser.</p>

While both entries begin by stating a “fact” of Warwickshire birth, after that they diverge wildly. Drayton is the earthy son of Warwickshire, “a pious poet, his conscience having always the command of his fancy” (II: 285), one whose verses on his “native country” can readily be quoted as testimony to his Midlands roots. By contrast, “Shakespeare” emerges in Fuller’s account as a Pythagorean abstraction, an intellectual concoction “in whom three eminent poets may seem in some sort to be compounded” from the transmigrated souls of Martial, Ovid, and Plautus.²

The “fanciful” character of Fuller’s anecdotal biography is intelligible only in light of his methodological caveats. Fuller prefaces his *Worthies* with a lengthy and detailed account of his method, in which he minces no words in declaring those things to be “vainly believed” that are “believed without knowledge of the original thereof,” and accuses those indulging in such beliefs of engaging in “an easy, lazy, supine credulity” (I: 89). These caveats anticipate the obvious contrast between the self-reporting “original” of Drayton’s biography, a life documented in the poet’s own quoted own words, and that of Shakespeare, which commences with a fanciful etymological meditation on the surname and proceeds to chronicle “wit combats” with Ben Jonson.

Chapter 17 of Fuller’s methodology section, “Of the Often Altering of Surnames,” continues by noting that “the surnames of families have been frequently altered.” Fuller attributes such “altering” to the motives of social advancement or “concealment, in time of civil wars,” reporting that, “A name is a kind of face whereby one is known; wherefore taking a false name is a vizard whereby men disguise themselves, and that lawfully enough, when not fraudulently done to deceive others,”³ and subsequently declares that “however such diversity appeareth in the eyes of others, I dare profess that I am delighted with the prospect thereof” (I: 70). Most provocatively of all, under his “General Rules for the Author’s and the Reader’s Ease,” Fuller further declares that “if...in this account a mean man take place of a mighty lord, the latter (as being dead) I am sure will not, and the living reader should not, be offended therat” (I: 81). Such evasive qualifications already distinguish Fuller’s 1662 anecdotal “biography” of Shakespeare and are only made more conspicuous in comparison to his contrasting account of Drayton.

If Fuller’s ambiguous oracle looks backward to the ambiguities of Drayton’s own relationship with Shakespeare, it also looks forward to the contradictions and perplexities of today’s Shakespeare scholarship. Given Drayton’s prolific, multi-generic writing career, theatrical ties, and local Warwickshire roots, it is not surprising that Shakespeare scholars have often followed in Fuller’s footsteps to attempt to divine a closer nexus between the two poets or that they have been forced by the paucity of evidence to either indulge in specious conjecture or reflexive dogma. Less easy to understand is how these same scholars have so often trumpeted a purely hypothetical relationship, including legends of drinking parties, while consistently avoiding or evading

Drayton's *only* direct testimony on Shakespeare. This allusion occurs in Drayton's "Friendship" poem, first published in Drayton's 1627 collection of poems in various genres, *Agincourt* (Figure 2):



Figure 2: Drayton's *Agincourt* (1627) contains the only reference to Shakespeare in Drayton's surviving work. In this book, for the first and only time, Drayton writes of Shakespeare: "Shakespeare thou hadst as smooth a Comicke vaine..."

Scholars who ignore this document and allusion include Halliwell-Phillipps (1907), Chambers (1930), Lewis (1941), Vickers (1974), Schoenbaum (1975), and Cooper (2006), all standard reference works on Jacobean literary references to Shakespeare—those, indeed, on which many others depend on as authoritative accounts of the earliest Shakespeare allusions. Collectively they illustrate a remarkable series of ellipses in the record, effectively turning Shakespeare studies into the highbrow version of a police properties office in which essential evidence routinely and predictably goes missing.

The invaluable 1941 Oxford University Press Hebel-Tillotson collected works of Drayton contains further evidence for the difficulty this allusion has had in gaining traction in the critical literature, for while the editors devote five pages of critical apparatus to this poem (V: 214–218), they do not say even one word about these four lines to Shakespeare. Bernard

Newdigate’s biographical companion to the Oxford edition, *Michael Drayton and His Circle*, does quote from Drayton’s poem, only to dismiss the four lines on Shakespeare as “faint praise.” More provocatively, perhaps, than he may have intended, Newdigate also draws a sharp contrast between Drayton’s “cold” appreciation of Shakespeare and the “glowing terms in which Drayton writes of his particular friends, Alexander of Menstrie, Drummond of Hawthornden, the two Beaumonts and William Brown” (142). Perhaps most striking of all, Meghan C. Andrews’ 2014 *Shakespeare Quarterly* study of the textual influence of Shakespeare on Drayton also ignores this poem.

These omissions jar, especially given Newdigate’s jovial assurance that “we may be sure, at any rate, that Shakespeare and Drayton were *known to one another*” (141, my emphasis). The pattern of avoidance of genuine original literary documents in favor of dubiously reliable third or fourth-hand oral legend or appeals to obligatory assumptions like “we may be sure that” suggests an underlying anxiety about the original document; with closer inspection, the reasons for the widespread, pervasive, and endemic *avoidance* pattern in the critical literature will become obvious.

If Drayton’s lines about Shakespeare have been ignored by most Shakespeare scholars and actively avoided by others, a few scattered remarks in the critical tradition may help to contextualize the passage and explore some of the possible implications. Disraeli (1841, 406) considers Drayton’s lines “parsimonious” because they praise Shakespeare only for comedy and not tragedy. At least since 1874, another critical source that has included a small part of Drayton’s poem while ignoring its implications, in successive editions over many decades, are the *Shakespeare Allusion Books* (Ingleby et al.),⁴ which reproduce Drayton’s four lines about Shakespeare and make no attempt to contextualize them. Indeed, beyond reprinting this four-line excerpt with the note about the date of the poem’s composition, Ingleby et al. offer virtually nothing else of consequence about the allusion. Gibson (1965) credits the passage as showing “that in his own day Shakespeare was considered as little more than an ordinary competent dramatist, certainly not as one who towered head and shoulders above his contemporaries” (261, but fails to offer any detailed reading of the poem or explain its curious structure and language. Shapiro (2010) brings our literature review up to the 21st Century in the characteristic hypothetical voice of the modern bardolator, by insisting that of Shakespeare’s poetic contemporaries Drayton “*may have known Shakespeare longer than most,*” before proceeding to celebrate this posthumous verse as evidence of Drayton’s unproblematically “warm praise” of Shakespeare (238, my emphasis)—all without considering or even summarizing the context in which Drayton’s lines appear or examining them as poetry.

This 202-line “friendship” poem contains the names of 34 contemporary poets and playwrights, arranged in a “equipage” or triumphal schema.

Located at the precise numeric center of this list and in the context of fondly recalling his friendship with his former tutor Reynolds is—the name “Shakespeare”:

Shakespeare thou hadst as smooth a Comicke vaine,
Fitting the socke, and in thy natural braine,
As strong conception, and as Cleere a rage,
As any one that trafiqu'd with the stage.

As recently as 1941, the OUP editors of Drayton's works were uncertain about the identity of the poem's dedicatee; however, Reynolds is now known to have been the literary theorist, tutor, and author of *Mythomystes* (1632), a neo-Platonic, neo-Pythagorean treatise on allegory, esotericism, and the “art of number.” In the book, Reynolds argues that “High and Mystically matters should by riddles and enigmatical knots be kept inuolate from the prophane Multitude” (Reynolds 1632, 29–30), and that the “Art of Numbers” should be employed to “vnlocke and explaine....Mysticall meanings” (37). Reynolds is also the author of the unpublished Latin treatise *Macrolexis*, which Mary Hobbs summarizes as a treatise on the theory of “secret methods of communication at a distance” (414). A Pythagorean elitist,⁵ Reynolds in this work “exhorts poets to steep themselves in the cabala and in the lore of Pythagoras the Master of Silence” (Fowler, 9). Pythagoras was the “master of silence” not only on account of the esoteric character of his teachings and the role of silence as a practice in his school, but because number itself constitutes a universal language that technically requires no verbal explanation or justification, instead signifying through mathematical symbols and expressions.

As a theorist and advocate of concealed discourse in the arts, and advocate of the application of mathematical principles of design both as *épistémè* and compositional praxis, Reynolds insists that the virtue of ancient writers was their belief in number as the original and constitutive element of creation. Thus, Drayton's ornate dedicatory title becomes the first clue that readers are being let in on a conversation between Drayton and a beloved mentor and elder, who believes that a prime function of poetry is to embody and communicate secrets at a distance, and that “number” plays an essential key in this process of transmission.

A literature review confirms that Reynolds' “elitist” esotericism—the idea that every text should have dual registers of meaning, one for popular appeal or avoidance of controversy and another dedicated to the transmission of controversial truths for learned and careful readers—was familiar to many 17th Century readers. Arthur Melzer's seminal 2014 University of Chicago study, *Philosophy Between the Lines*, shows how writers of all kinds up until and including Diderot (1713–1783), followed esoteric precepts. The book

conclusively demonstrates that “most philosophers of the past routinely hid some of their most important ideas beneath a surface of conventional opinions” (xiii) and that “if we do not read [early modern writers] esoterically, we will necessarily misunderstand them” (18). Melzer approaches the problem of “writing between the lines” from philosophical, linguistic, sociological and political points of view, but another aspect of the history of secrecy is the science of concealed messages, the history of which includes the Torah, Herodotus, and Pindar among many other ancient sources of doctrine and anecdote.

For over 2,500 years, literature and literary forms have co-evolved not only with the hermetic traditions of philosophers but also with the more well-known and well-documented secret writing methods of diplomats and states that belong to the history and practice of cryptography. Theories of secret writing drew special impetus during the Renaissance from the transcription of hieroglyphics, interacting richly in the emblem book tradition, which would produce the first image of a polyalphabetic cypher wheel, already known in Venice before 1612, several hundred years before the device was supposedly invented (Figure 3):



Figure 3: Henry Peacham's 1612 image of a polyalphabetic cipher wheel (180). The motto, “Sorte et Labore,” means “By lot or by labor.”

In one of the earliest and most influential books on secret writing, *Steganographia* (1499), the Catholic mystic and founding father of cryptography Johannes Trithemius imagines transmitting secret messages across space using two magnetized needles, each set within a circular frame bordered by an alphabet: by linking one needle to the other magnetically a message spelled out with one disk would transmit to the other. Gaspar Schott in his *Schola Steganographica* (1655) replied that the method could never work since it was impossible to link the magnetism of one needle to the magnetism of the other, especially at a distance. Two centuries later the principle, if not the exact mechanism of Trithemius's vision, would be embodied in the telegraph.

In the absence of electricity or Morse code, poets like Drayton used what methods they had to convey messages across distances of time and space. Perhaps their chief—and certainly the most overlooked—tool was *number*, a common factor shared by all early modern poetry and cryptography. One of cryptography's most fundamental operations, inherited from the Judaic tradition of gematria, makes numbers interchangeable with letters. Katherine Ellison notes in the 2014 special issue of the *Journal of the Northern Renaissance*, in an article on “Numbers in Early Modern Writing,” that numbers and systems of numeration are ideal for simple encryption systems: “language as articulated through arithmetic provides attractive textual solutions to eavesdropping because it can circulate freely in the public yet hide thoughts that at least two people want to keep between themselves” (12–13).

Analyzing Drayton's Poem

The 202-line poem in which Drayton's sole allusion to Shakespeare by name occurs was first published in Drayton's 1627 *The battaile of Agincourt Fought by Henry the fift of that name, King of England, against the whole power of the French* (Figure 2). In 1627 any literate reader encountering this title would inevitably have recalled the Shakespearean play *Henry V* (1600), which had made the patriotic topos of Agincourt far more widely accessible than any other account of the battle, including Holinshed.

Drayton's poem has long suffered from critical neglect, partly because it belongs to a defunct genre of public narrative poetry celebrating friendship between men of letters. Other examples of the genre of the literary epistle include Jonson's previously mentioned 94-line poem, “THE VISION OF BEN JONSON, ON THE MUSES OF HIS FRIEND, M. DRAYTON,” also published in Drayton's 1627 *Agincourt* volume (A-A2). Drayton begins with a classical proem or framing introduction, implicating his dedicatee Reynolds in a shared memory and placing the general reader in the position of vicariously eavesdropping on a close literary friendship: the scene is one

of comfort, conviviality—good food, wine, fun, and fire:

My dearly loued friend how oft haue we,
In winter evenings (meaning to be free,)
To some well-chosen place vs'd to retire;
And there with moderate meate, and wine, and fire,
Haue past the howres contentedly with chat,
Now talk of this, and then discours'd of that,
Spoke our owne verses 'twixt our selves, if not
Other mens lines, which we by chance had got,
Or some Stage pieces famous long before,
Of which your happy memory had store. (ll. 1–10)

The genre of the “public friendship” poetry to which this poem belongs characteristically involves the conscientious juxtaposition of private and “mixed” audiences; to facilitate these distinctions among readers, Drayton makes careful use in this poem of the complexities of early modern pronouns. The first line directly addresses Reynolds to establish a plural first person voice: “how oft have *we*.” This initial pronominal usage emphasizes the shared experience of “winter evenings” before the fire, while Reynolds and Drayton “spoke our own verses ’twixt ourselves” (7) or sometimes delivered “other men’s lines” or even read from “stage pieces famous long before” (9).

Given the title of Drayton’s entire volume, *Agincourt*, the “stage pieces famous long before” seems a probable allusion to a shared experience with plays like *Henry V* or even *The Famous Victories of Henry V* (published 1600), both “famous” long before 1627. Certainly, the passage introduces a theme of shared theatrical memory of plays that were in their first vintage in Drayton’s youth in the 1590s.⁶ Indeed, Drayton’s title recalls the British public relations success that Henry V scored in his 1415 victory over the French in a showdown between over-armored knights on horseback and the English longbowmen. Drayton is exploiting the patriotic topos, long before treated by Shakespeare, and perhaps suggesting that both writer and recipient might be counted among Henry V’s “we few, we happy few” who participated in the historic battle now passing into legend.

Early modern “friendship” poems, including Drayton’s to Henry Reynolds, oscillate around the ambiguities of their own genre: in a world still privileging the oral and laboring under the “stigma of print,” in which even John Donne looked forward to the prospect of publishing his private reflections in his poetry only “under an unescapable necessity,” fearing that “I shall suffer from many [mis]interpretations” (as cited in Traister 1990, 75). Wasn’t *publishing* friendship *cheapening* it? Responding to this circumstance, these poems are characterized by exoteric, public praise of the dedicatee embedded in layers of esoteric implication which readers, listening in on a privileged, private communication, are challenged to apprehend.

Triumphal Numbers and Privileged Centers

Given the avoidance behaviors of orthodox scholars, Henry Reynolds' brand of mystical Neoplatonism may have potent justification. As Fowler remarks, even though the application of numerical design was "common to the best medieval and renaissance poets and almost universal in the period 1580–1680," numerological study has remained "practically a virgin province of the critical continent," and modern scholars have been trained "to despise the notion that literature is spatial in character" since "number symbolism is not quite respectable: we associate it with cranks or lunatics, not with great authors and serious scholars" (Fowler 2). Given this context, a poem by Michael Drayton about Shakespeare, directed to the special attention of the mathematical theorist and master of neo-Pythagorean poetics Henry Reynolds, the deviser of schemes to "communicate secrets at a distance," cries out to be avoided by any scholar whose chief concern is to remain "respectable."

In their posthumous tributes, Ben Jonson's followers praised him as "the prince of *numbers*," who "mightst in *numbers* lie" (my emphasis) (Mayne, 29). The repeated word, *numbers*, used here and elsewhere as a synonym for poetry, illustrates the strong association between poetics and numeration in early modern thinking. To "write in numbers" was to write poetry, as distinct from prose, and early modern readers were far more closely attuned to numerical dimensions of poetry—as Alastair Fowler, John MacQueen and others have shown—than we. Although mathematics was an arcane and taboo subject (still not being included, for example, in the standard pedagogies of the 16th or 17th Centuries), number theory had long remained a prominent topic of *sub rosa* speculation and inquiry. According to Paulinus of Nola (c. 354–431), articulating a widely shared metaphysics, all things in creation had been disposed "ut numerus cum re conveniret/so that number should agree with matter."⁷

Drayton's poetry itself contains many clear signs of adherence to these customary early modern doctrines of the privileged structural role that number could play in the design of complex communication. His 1619 *Idea. In Sixtie Three Sonnets*. is a densely numerological treatise in verse, in which the content of each sonnet represents Drayton's fanciful exploration of the ideas represented in that number, with "63" of course being the "grand climacteric."⁸ In his equipage to Reynolds Drayton assigns Chaucer the ultimate praise, among the English poets, for being the "first [who] spake/In weighty *numbers*?" (my emphasis) (50–51), and calls William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, "that most ingenious knight" not only on account of "the loue that was twixt vs," but also for "his *numbers* which were braue and hie" (my emphasis) (ll. 169–170).

These overt allusions to the idea of number as a structural principle occur in a poem whose genre has an ancient and unambiguous association to spatial

doctrines of art that employed mathematics to envision forms embodying a rich ceremonial symbolism: the Triumph. In his *Triumphal Forms*, Fowler’s classic study reveals that “numerical organization in works of literature, especially English poetry of the Elizabethan period” was characteristic of the age, an art involving the “composition of substantive and formal elements into special patterns” and “all art was thought of spatially” (ix). Originally based on the Roman Triumph so feared by Cleopatra, the *triumph* in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance had become not only a sociological festival and display of power and domination by the victor, but a model for the arts, a subject for painting, for poetry, and for drama as well as a common *topos* for expressing various triumphalist ideals.

The first lesson regarding Drayton’s reference to Shakespeare, then, is that it occurs in Drayton’s *triumph* of literary writers; that is, in a literary genre strongly associated with detailed and elaborate patterns of numerological or concentric design and a privileged center. The idea of the “Triumph” in European arts of the Renaissance represents a special application of generic ring-structures that Mary Douglas has discovered in texts as various as the Bible and Greek epic. The “triumph” is a type of ring structure, as inflected through the traditions of the Roman triumph and the rites and forms of the European monarchies, reproduced in card games and other popular festive forms, in which a monarch or a royal family represents the center of the social universe and the cosmos. In a *triumph*, the triumphator is in the center, and

an outstanding feature of triumphal motifs is their emphasis of the centre. This position once carried a generally recognized iconological significance: it was the place, if not for an image of sovereignty, at least for a “central feature.” (Fowler 23)

Drayton’s own poem, it turns out, will illustrate Fowler’s description nicely.

Number and Center in Drayton’s Poem

After establishing his intimacy with the dedicatee (and therefore, by proxy, with the reader), Drayton proceeds to record his educational influences, starting when he was about 10 years old and reasonably well versed in Latin, when he asked his Tutor to “make me a poet” (29). Reynolds was a well-known and widely respected tutor to Charles I, so both Drayton and his dedicatee shared an interest in pedagogical theory. In Drayton’s account, the tutor agrees to the challenge, and begins by reading him Mantuan.

Blending the readings assigned by his tutor with his own poetic influences as they developed over the years, up to and including many Jacobean contemporaries, whom he respects and sometimes warmly recommends as friends,

Drayton fills the ensuing verses with praise of more than 30 poets in the equipage. The list of names begins with Mantuan (1447–1516) and Virgil (70–19 BC), who were early school aids in the Latin curriculum, and proceeds forward through Chaucer (1340–1400), Surrey (1516–1547), and the early Elizabethans, before Nashe and Shakespeare, but then including Seneca, Plautus, Homer, and Hesiod before concluding with such contemporaries of Drayton as Alexander, Drummond, Browne, and “two Beaumonts.”

The complete list of poets, numbered in the order in which Drayton describes them, are as follows:

- | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Mantuan | 10. Churchyard | 18. Daniel | 27. Bartas |
| 2. Virgil | 11. Spenser | 19. Jonson | 28. Sands |
| 3. Elderton | 12. Sidney | 20. Seneca | 29. Ovid |
| 4. Chaucer | 13. Lyly | 21. Plautus | 30. Alexander |
| 5. Gower | 14. Warner | 22. Chapman | 31. Drummond |
| 6. Surrey | 15. Marlowe | 23. Musaeus | 32. One of the “two Beaumonts” |
| 7. Wyatt | 16. Nashe | 24. Homer | 33. Other of the “two Beaumonts” |
| 8. Bryan | 17. Shakespeare | 25. Hesiod | 34. Browne |
| 9. Gascoigne | | 26. Sylvester | |

Of the 34 poets in the list, two (32–33) have the same name, Beaumont. Drayton places Shakespeare exactly in the middle of the equipage in the 17th position, making him, in Fowler’s terms, a “central feature” of the entire poem. Given the well-documented importance of the ceremonial center in early modern poetics, it seems unlikely that this placement is a coincidence: “Among Elizabethan poets attempting a neo-classical closeness of construction, numerological emphasis of the centre became a regular convention” (Fowler 67). Fowler devotes an entire chapter to discussing the interrelatedness of the concept of the sacred center with various other arithmetic modes of symmetry and design, but the concept of the privileged center is unquestionably foundational: not only did “sovereignty of the centre found its most splendid expression in royal entries and other triumphal pageants” (Fowler 27), but in poetry the triumphal array should be “symmetrical, with the Triumphator at, or next to, the captor” (Fowler 39).

A well-designed version of Drayton’s argument, however, also requires a key, and it is the presence of the key, as much as the literary triumphalism that begins with the title and the dedication of the poem to Reynolds, that confirms Drayton’s premeditated emphasis on numeration and the idea of a “central feature.” The anomalous listing in line 176 of “the two Beaumonts” (32 & 33) in place of one to fill out the numbers is Drayton’s key,⁹ for it immediately signals, directly and unambiguously, the logical possibility that

one name can refer to more than one person. As we shall see, this possibility is a necessary condition for the fulfillment of the poem’s design. Remember Drayton’s poem is dedicated to a contemporary theorist of esoteric knowledge who wrote books on how to transmit secret messages at a distance.

Pronominal Usage

Another method Drayton uses in his poem which exemplifies Reynold’s concept of “secret methods of communication at a distance” is pronominal usage. Early modern writers were not only well-versed in the applications of numbers to verses, but were also especially well-attuned to the complex social implications of the second person pronoun, and had available a double system, including the formal (and originally only plural) *you*, and the more intimate *thee* (dative) or *thou* (nominative, vocative), the use of which varied by social circumstance, but also could be employed in poetry as words with definite social, and therefore literary, implications. Having established a “we” with Reynolds (ln. 1), Drayton’s speaker then switches to calling him, in the poem’s first usage (ln. 11), *you* (“and I remember *you* much pleased were/ of those who lived long ago to hear”). Later he will apply *you* to the reader, but here it unambiguously refers to the direct object of his address, Henry Reynolds.

The second person pronoun turns out to not only be a significant structural feature of the design of Drayton’s poem, but also an expression of his pedagogic theme. The distribution of uses is as follows:

- Speaker of Reynolds — 5 times (ll. 11, 17, 28, 29, 30)
- Reported speech of Reynolds to speaker — 3 times (ll. 32, 33, 34)
- Speaker to the reader — 1 times (l 181).¹⁰

In line 181, for the first and only time, the pronoun refers to the reader of Drayton’s poem: “but if *you* shall/Say in your knowledge...”. To follow the logic of Drayton’s finely architectonic poem, it is important to grasp this rhetorical structure. This is a poem about transmitting the secrets that Drayton and Reynolds shared in the pleasurable moments recalled in the poem’s exordium to the reader, transforming the “you” of line 11 into the “you” of line 181.

Between these uses, of course, lies Drayton’s equipage, including the four lines about Shakespeare. The poem’s artful construction is further indicated by the fact that the triumphalist logic of the privileged center is reinforced by Drayton’s pronominal distribution. Uniquely in the poem Drayton employs the intimate singular pronoun *thou* in reference to Shakespeare in the “*Shakespeare, thou*” of line 119. Drayton’s use of the formal second person pronoun, *you*, as we have seen, establishes the epistemic norm of the poem. It is used

to express Drayton's theme of the transmission of knowledge through education and careful observation of the features of documents by and about Shakespeare.

Drayton frequently expresses his warm collegiality with poets in his equipage whom he has personally known, like "my deare Drummond," or the two Beaumonts and Browne, whom he terms "my dear companions"—but not even these intimates are ever invoked in direct address or the use of the second person pronoun. That privilege is reserved for only three parties: Drayton's dedicatee and beloved tutor, the reader, and *Shakespeare*. Of these, only Shakespeare is referred to using the form "thou."

The distinction between *you* and *thou* is not only consequential in early 17th Century rhetoric, but also diagnostic of key relationships articulated in Drayton's poem. Although *thou* had by 1700 almost entirely disappeared, in 1627 and throughout the 17th Century, the *you/thou* distinction was used in several clearly identified ways to classify the speaker's relationship to a listener, as Charles Barber has enumerated (1976, 152–157): Originally the distinction was only one of number, with *you* expressing a plural, and *thou*, singular,¹¹ although *thou* could also be used to address one regarded as a social inferior. Later the rules of these pronouns varied by circumstance according to various speech codes related to class among other factors. Thus, it would be customary for someone of lower status to address a social superior with the formal—polite, but also distancing—*you*, but prefer *thou* in speaking to a social equal or in a more intimate context.

Beyond this general pattern, Barber identifies three additional uses of *thou* that he terms emotional: 1) to express negative emotion against a stranger of equal or greater rank; 2) to convey *intimacy*, *affection*, or *tenderness*, or 3) in apostrophes to "supernatural beings...inanimate objects, and abstractions" (Barber 154). As this poem begins with a powerful image and symbol of intimacy between two friends, the second example—that the word implies an inward intimacy between literary peers—would be consistent with the poem's entire tone and scope, yet the idea that Drayton's "Shakespeare" is a deified abstraction would also be consistent with the available evidence.

That Drayton had both meanings in his mind might be supported from a close reading of the four lines about Shakespeare in their original context as preceded by Drayton's commentary on Thomas Nashe:

And surely <i>Nashe</i> , though he a Proser were	111
A branch of Lawrell yet deserues to beare,	
Sharply <i>Satirick</i> was he, and that way	
He went, since that his being, to this day	
Few haue attempted, and I surely thinke	115

Those wordes shall hardly be set downe with inke;
 Shall scorch and blast, so as his could, where he,
 Would inflict vengeance, and be it said of thee,
Shakespeare, thou hadst as smooth a Comicke vaine,
 Fitting the socke, and in thy naturall braine, 120
 As strong conception, and as Cleere a rage,
 As any one that trafiqu’d with the stage. 122

The violent lines about Nashe using his writing to “scorch and blast” in order to “inflict vengeance” are not only unique in Drayton’s otherwise smoothly politiqué poem, but they are also artfully enjambed with and contrasted to Shakespeare’s “smooth” and “Comicke vaine.” (ln. 118), invoking a theme of violent comedy, or comedic tragedy, genre at war with genre. The perception of a problem in the text is confirmed in the tension between Drayton’s refusal to name Shakespeare as a writer of tragedies and his corresponding use of the word “rage” to describe the tone of Shakespeare’s comedies; in his “Epistle of Shores wife to King Edward the fourth” Drayton associates the word more plausibly with tragedy:

Or passionate tragedian in his rage,
 Acting a love-sick passion on the stage
 (Drayton 1598, 12^v).

A Shakespeare thus introduced in conflict remains in conflict over the successive lines, as further indicated in the contrast between the intimate “thou” of 119 and the commercial implications of “any one that *trafiqu’d* with the stage” (my emphasis) (123). While “thou” implies a kind of *gemeinschaft*, a privately shared commonality like the one modelled by Drayton earlier in expressing his personal fondness for Reynolds, “Trafiqu’d” is unmistakably vulgar by implication, emphasizing the commercialization of the public theatrical world that was especially taboo for members of the Elizabethan aristocracy. As a noun *traffic* was probably already long a synonym for prostitution in 1591, when *OED* first records its definite use with that meaning; it could also mean “worthless stuff, rubbish, or trash,” a meaning that approaches the ironic use of the “trifles” for a literary work in the tradition established by Horace. One common and early meaning of the verb is I.2.b “to have dealings of an illicit or secret character; to deal, intrigue, or conspire”; in any usage, the word was strongly tinged with the ideals of commercial advantage that characterized the emergence of the Elizabethan “new men,” disrupting the more medieval values of the aristocracy. “Trafficking” with the stage was not something an aristocrat, especially, did. In the precedent of Ecclesiasticus 13.1, it was to “touch pitch and be defiled.”

This contrast between the aristocratic, medieval ethos of the courtier and the commercial values of the expanding bourgeois sphere, including the

commercial theatre, will resurface later in the poem, when we begin to see the full scope of Drayton's design. For now, this much is obvious: paradoxically, as if to echo and embody Jonson's "not for an age but for all time," Drayton has given to Shakespeare the honored place of the ceremonial center of his equipage, and has underscored his singularity with the pronoun *thou*, indicating feelings of *intimacy* and/or *awe* towards an object of ceremonial reverence. Why has this not been noticed before? And how will Drayton now qualify this celebration of Shakespeare as literary triumphator?

The tenth and final instance of the word *you* in Drayton's poem, we have already noticed, refers to Drayton's biggest and most comprehensive "as if": having heard the recitation of Drayton's literary mentors and his enduring relationship with the "master of the esoteric" Henry Reynolds, and now knowing to whom Drayton is speaking, the reader in effect exchanges places with the tutor, before the fire, and is inducted into the literary cognoscenti. Surprisingly, given this narrative circumstance, Drayton imagines a reader who is about to challenge the *completeness* of his equipage, as if to accuse him of having failed to transmit a comprehensive or fully transparent message, of having omitted one or more significant names from the list:

[...] but if you shall	182
Say in your knowledge, <i>that these be not all</i>	
<i>Have writ in numbers</i> , be inform'd that I	
Only my self, to these few men doe tye,	185
Whose workes oft printed, set on euery post,	
To publike censure subiect have bin most;	
<i>For such whose poems</i> , be they nere so rare,	
In <i>prinate chambers</i> , that <i>incloistered are</i> ,	
And <i>by transcription</i> daintly must goe,	190
As though the world <i>vnworthy were to know</i>	
There rich composures, let those men that keepe	
These wonderous reliques in their iudgement deepe,	
And cry them up so, let such Peecees bee	
<i>Spoke of by those that shall come after me</i> ,	185
I passe not for them [...]	
(emphases supplied)	

Thus, Drayton draws his poem to a conclusion by admitting that his equipage may be imperfect or incomplete, acknowledging that his reader may have "knowledge" of some other, who is not named, but who has also "writ in numbers" (ln.184) and deserves inclusion in his list. Since the word "numbers" was a synonym for poetry, the passage actively confirms the existence of the pattern used above in reading the triplication of the pronoun, *you*, and the allusion to Shakespeare as a being placed in the ceremonial center of the array. Number and ceremonial triumph are essential parts of Drayton's design.

Just as importantly, in this passage Drayton harnesses the reader’s doubt to explore the customary circumstance of the “stigma of print” or “stigma of the stage,”¹² that separated those “wondrous reliques” and “rich composures” held in manuscript transcriptions “incloistered” in “private chambers,” from “workes oft printed, set on euery post,”—that is, he distinguishes productions “traffiqued” in public from those passed around in manuscript among a few noble patrons and coterie readers.

The gap between the private study and the public audience is here filled by the transcription of works by an amanuensis, so that “*by transcription*” the work “daintily must goe,” from private study to the public stage. The process contrasts “daintily” with “traffiq’d,” reflecting the juxtaposition of the aristocratic and commercial worlds that is discussed at length by Debotel (2009) as a primary factor in the enduring “stigma of print.” Well into the 17th Century, to avoid the deadly taint of commercialization, the literary production of aristocrats could only enter the public sphere under a mask, or pass by some other indirection, including *transcription*, from the study to the stage. A somewhat analogous process of manuscript transmission is dramatized in *Hamlet* through the device of Hamlet’s authorship of the “dozen or sixteen lines” that he proposes to insert into the “Murder of Gonzago,” a play otherwise “extant” in “choice Italian.”

This migration of the manuscript from study to printing press under explicit conventions of the “stigma of print” is treated in forensic first-person detail in Shake-Speare Sonnet 48: “how careful was I, when I took my way,/each *trifle* under truest bars to thrust/that to my use, it might unused stay,/from hands of falsehood/in sure wards of trust” (my emphasis) (48/1–4). *Trifle* is the customary English translation of *nuga*, the word Horace with ironic self-deprecation applied to his lyric poems. It is applied to describe the Shakespeare plays, no less than three times by First Folio editors in the address to Pembroke and Montgomery. The curious expression of Sonnet 48, “that *to my use*, it might *unused* stay,” where “use” implies the suppressed practice of borrowing or lending of money at interest, invoking the aristocratic ethos of avoidance of the “mercenary” implications of engaging in art for profit’s sake.

Ultimately, Drayton confirms his unwillingness to speak thoroughly or directly on matters of contemporary stage controversy. He relies instead on referring the case to the reader, so that the “encloistered” texts that “by transcription daintily must go” must be “Spoke of by *those that shall come after me*” (my emphasis) (ln. 185). Why, we must ask, is Michael Drayton’s only reference to his alleged Warwickshire neighbor and fellow dramatist “Shakespeare” fraught with ambiguities such as these?

Drayton’s “Shakespeare allusion” has been systematically ignored in the critical literature because it does not easily lend itself to our usual professional

assumptions about Shakespeare and instead calls attention to the “stigma of print” that led many aristocrats, among other avoidance gambits, to “suffer” their works “to be published without their own name to it,” as the *Anonymous Arte of English Poesie* describes it in 1589.

Conclusions

Drayton’s emphasis on texts that escape manuscript culture into print *by transcription* is the *direct result* of Drayton’s own imagined doubt—carefully attributed by Drayton’s method to the *reader*—about the completeness or accuracy of Drayton’s equipage of poets; the concept of “stigma of print” is therefore implicit in the problem of the reader’s doubt. We cannot understand the full implications of the equipage without taking into consideration the possibility of concealment resulting from “transcription” under conditions of the “stigma of print.”

The ambiguous, liminal status of a transcribed manuscript facilitates the culture of pseudonymous production. Once a manuscript leaves the author’s desk, the journey of the text’s alienation has begun, and between the giving hands of the author and the publication of the work many factors may intervene, either by intent or accident. Barring the interesting possibility of collusion between an author and a printer, in early modern law before 1710 the author lost control—over how, when, and by whom the manuscript would be published—as soon as he or she transferred it to a third party. As Jerome—the 4th Century Bible scholar and founder of critical method in textual studies—concluded, “nothing is easier than to place any name you want on front of a book” (75).

At the same time, the otherwise aberrant phrase, “the two Beaumonts” (176) drives home the point that one name can describe two men. What is Drayton doing? Why this dramatic *mis-en-scene*, like a puppet show inserted into a play, of manuscript transmission by amanuensis? Does he have a point? Given that he has placed Shakespeare in a position of honor at the center of the equipage and invoked a reverential tone towards him with the pronoun “thou,” and compared him favorably to all the others who have “trafficked” with the stage in the public theatre, it is obvious that this summary of the problem of the “stigma of print” must be applicable to the figure named in the poem’s “central feature.” Even if we had no other reason to think so, that is the logic of the poem.

As Robert Detobel has noted (2009), the prescribed social role of the Elizabethan aristocrat was to uphold tradition and prepare for the common defense. An aristocrat could patronize the creative labors of professional writers, or underwrite a theater company, but to be seen as a writer—let alone an actor or an author of plays—was to invite status-destroying scandal.

Theatre was by far the most dubious literary genre, according to the religious Puritans who by 1640 would succeed in stamping it out as a form of public entertainment for more than 20 years.

In her recent *Shakespeare Quarterly* study of the intense literary conversation that existed between Drayton and Shakespeare, Meghan Andrews refers to Drayton as existing in an “empty space” (276). To her the evidentiary problem of Shakespearean biography seems to lie in the disappearance of many of Drayton’s “coauthor plays.” If “more [of these] had survived, we would probably have a much greater understanding of [Drayton’s] personal and professional connections to Shakespeare” (276). The actual evidence of social network theory, however, tells a very different story. The documentary record shows Michael Drayton surrounded by numerous friends and literary colleagues, a poet among poets, honoring his literary colleagues in many contexts, including his public exchange of letters of friendship with Ben Jonson, and in his equipage his poem to Reynolds. The discrepancy is manifest of all the Elizabethan writers mentioned in Francis Meres’s *Palladis tamia* in 1598.

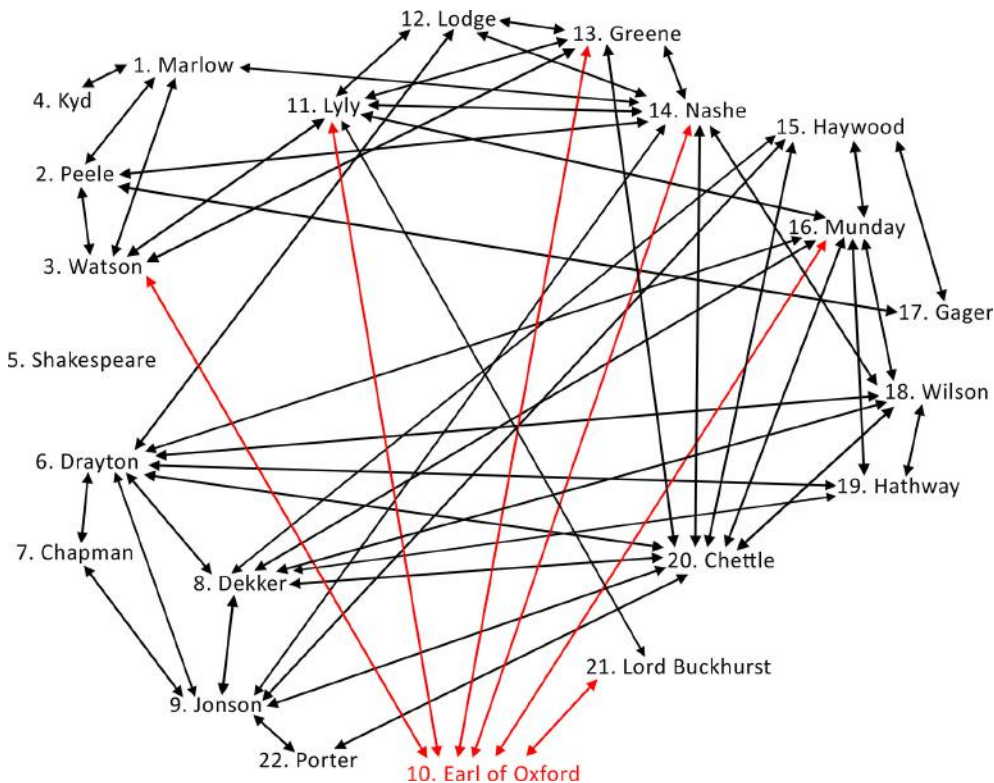


Figure 4: While Drayton is surrounded by contemporary writers, Shakespeare inhabits the “empty space” that Andrews attributes to Drayton. Diagram prepared by Alexander Waugh and Lucinda Foulke.¹⁴

As startling as this graphic is, it understates the magnitude of the evidentiary challenge that the comparison between Drayton and Shakespeare poses for orthodox belief. Between 1597 and 1599 alone Drayton published dedicatory epistles to 13 different individuals.¹³ Newdigate's *Drayton and His Circle* (1941) reproduces Drayton's correspondence or communication with the Gooderes of Polesworth; Lucy, Countess of Bedford; William Henslowe; Thomas Lodge; Walter Aston, and many others (70-86). From the 1590s into the Jacobean years Drayton is reaching out in conversation with multiple other writers, friends, and patrons. Indeed, by the latter half of his career, Drayton had become among the most well-contextualized of Jacobean authors, exchanging public poems with Jonson as well as being in regular conversation with his patron the Earl of Dorset. Drayton is talking in print to Jonson as well as Reynolds, and Jonson is talking to Drayton as well as being a friend of Reynolds. Shakespeare, meanwhile, is nowhere to be found.

Uniquely, Shakespeare has no documented connection to any other writer in Meres. It is Shakespeare, not Drayton, who exists in an "empty space," as a man cut off and disassociated from the networks of literary exchange in which so many others, including Drayton, Jonson, and Reynolds, may easily be identified as active and knowing participants. Even in Fuller, we have seen, "Shakespeare" hovers like a fanciful composite of state secret and religious mystery. He is not a man like Holland, who left behind his magic pen, or, like Drayton, who lived a life in transparent relation to his bred-in-the-bone Warwickshire roots. Demonstrating Shakespeare's literary influence on an impressionable but also well-contextualized contemporary such as Drayton does not alter this problem; literary influence does not prove the existence of a personal relationship, and may instead merely reflect one writer's familiarity with the work of another in print or manuscript.

These interpretative difficulties have resulted in the virtual banishment of Drayton's words about Shakespeare from major sourcebooks of critical history. Drayton's poem pays great homage to "Shakespeare" by placing him centrally in the equipage; it underlines this specialness with the vocative, *thou*, signifying intimacy or reverence or both, yet at the same time surrounds the name with language of violent conflict and commercial pollution. Drayton's Shakespeare is distinguished by the fact that his "conception" and clarity of "rage" make him the equal of the other playwrights of his age. "Even though you're slumming it with the rest of us poets and actors," Drayton seems to say, "we accept and honor you as one of us, I will prove that honor by giving you the central position in the equipage."

With transcription and manuscript transmission, the use of pseudonyms and the employment of literary fronts was a common method for aristocrats to circumvent the "stigma of print." As Marcy North verifies, the English

literary renaissance during which Shakespeare and Drayton both lived, was a golden age of pseudonymous publication. North also suggested, in a book now 19 years in print, that

despite the new critical emphasis on the process of authoring, recent scholars of early modern culture have generally supported the model in which anonymity serves as a relic of the medieval author's indifference—if not explicitly, then in their continued reliance on the author's name as a focal point. Anonymity's importance as a Renaissance convention, its contributions to Renaissance print and manuscript culture, its popularity, the frequency of its use, and especially its cultural meanings remain critically undervalued. (2–3)

The chief witness to traditional attribution of the Shakespearean works—the 1623 folio—had appeared in print only four years before Drayton's *Agincourt*. This book is, in the words of Leah Marcus, designed to “set readers off on a treasure hunt for the author” and invite our complicity in the troublesome and tabooed question: “where is the ‘real’ Shakespeare to be found?” (1988, 19). The question is not new and seems unlikely to go away on account of the personal attacks of a diminishing *status quo ante* in Shakespeare studies. It emerges, fundamentally, from the long-known discordance between the “biographical” and the “literary”—a discordance already evident in Fuller by 1662—in the case of “William Shakespeare.” As William H. Furness, the father of W.W. Furness, the great variorum editor of the 19th Century, remarked in 1866:

I am one of the many who has never been able to bring the life of William Shakespeare within planetary space of the plays. Are there any two things in the world more incongruous? (cited in Reed, 9)

This essay has been a study in revaluing the role of anonymity—and with it, the use of language as subversive discourse carefully designed to outwit the forces of censorship while communicating across time and distance to readers “with ears to hear.” In his “To my most dearly-loued friend,” Drayton supplies a testament to his love for the same kind of “Shakespeare” that Katherine Chiljan has found in the documentary record many years before Drayton's poem appeared in print in 1627:

Years before the First Folio created the myth of the Stratford Man as Shakespeare, literary contemporaries were describing the great author as a very different person: a nobleman who wrote plays and poetry anonymously or with a pseudonym; a supreme poet who could not be

publicly recognized or acknowledged by his actual name, or even by his pen name in some cases; a patron of writers who idolized him. He wrote as a pastime, not as a work. (Chiljan 2011, 266)

By 2022 the “empty space” of Shakespeare in the early modern record has become the black hole of early modern studies, exerting an overwhelming gravitational force powerful enough to bend the fabric of literary studies, curve our preconceptions and perceptions of both evidence and reason, and support editorial and scholarly practices otherwise without precedent or reasoned justification.

Drayton’s 1627 Poem to Henry Reynolds

To my most dearly-loued friend
HENERY REYNOLDS Esquire, of Poets & Poesie

<p>To my most dearly-loued friend HENERY REYNOLDS Esquire, of <i>Poets & Poesie</i></p>		
My dearly loued friend how oft haue we, In winter evenings (meaning to be free,) To some well-chosen place vs’d to retire; And there with moderate meate, and wine, and fire, Haue past the howres contentedly with chat,	5	And was the first of ours, that euer brake, Into the <i>Muses</i> treasure, and first spake
Now talk of this, and then discours’d of that, Spoke our owne verses ‘twixt our selves, if not Other mens lines, which we by chance had got, Or some Stage pieces famous long before, Of which your happy memory had store;	10	Of perfect knowledge, which he could refine, And coyne for currant, and as much as then The <i>English</i> language could expresse to men, He made it doe; and by his wondrous skill, Gauē vs much light from his abundant quill.
And I remember you much pleased were, Of those who liued long agoe to heare, As well as of those, of these latter times, Who haue inricht our language with their rimes, And in succession, how still vp they grew, Which is the subiect, that I now pursue; For from my cradle, (you must know that) I, Was still inclin’d to noble Poesie, And when that once <i>Pueriles</i> I had read, And newly had my <i>Cato</i> construed, In my small selfe I greatly marueil’d then, Amonst all other, what strange kinde of men These Poets were; And pleased with the name, To my milde Tutor merrily I came, (For I was then a proper goodly page, Much like a Pigmy, scarce ten yeares of age) Clasping my slender armes about his thigh. O my deare master! cannot you (quoth I) Make me a Poet, doe it if you can, And you shall see, Ile quickly bee a man, Who me thus answered smiling, boy quoth he, If you’le not play the wag, but I may see You ply your learning, I will shortly read Some Poets to you; <i>Phoebus</i> be my speed, Too’t hard went I, when shortly he began, And first read to me honest <i>Mantuan</i> , Then <i>Virgils Eglogues</i> , being entred thus, Me thought I straight had mounted <i>Pegasus</i> , And in his full Careere could make him stop, And bound vpon <i>Parnassus</i> ’ by-clift top. I scordn your ballet then though it were done And had for Finis, <i>William Elderton</i> . But soft, in sporting with this childish iest, I from my subiect haue too long digrest, Then to the matter that we tooke in hand, <i>Ioue</i> and <i>Apollo</i> for the <i>Muses</i> stand.	15	And honest <i>Gower</i> , who in respect of him, Had only sipt at <i>Aganippas</i> brimme, And though in yeares this last was him before, Yet fell he far short of the others store.
Then noble <i>Chaucer</i> , in those former times, The first inrich’d our <i>English</i> with his rimes,	20	When after those, foure ages very neare, They with the <i>Muses</i> which conuersed, were That Princely <i>Surrey</i> , early in the time Of the Eight <i>Henry</i> , who was then the prime Of <i>Englands</i> noble youth; with him there came <i>Wyat</i> ; with reuerence whom we still doe name
	25	Amongst our Poets, <i>Brian</i> had a share With the two former, which accompted are That times best makers, and the authors were Of those small poems, which the title beare, Of songs and sonnets, wherein oft they hit On many dainty passages of wit.
	30	<i>Gascoine</i> and <i>Churchyard</i> after them againe In the beginning of <i>Eliza</i> ’s raine, Accompted were great Meterers many a day, But not inspired with braue fier, had they Liu’d but a little longer, they had seene, Their works before them to have buried beene.
	35	Graue morrall <i>Spencer</i> after these came on Then whom I am perswaded there was none Since the blind <i>Bard</i> his <i>Iliads</i> vp did make, Fitter a taske like that to vndertake, To set downe boldly, brauely to inuent, In all high knowledge, surely excellent.
	40	The noble <i>Sidney</i> with this last arose, That <i>Heroe</i> for numbers, and for Prose. That throughly pac’d our language as to show, The plenteous <i>English</i> hand in hand might goe With <i>Greek</i> or <i>Latine</i> , and did first reduce Our tongue from <i>Lillies</i> writing then in vse;
	45	Talking of Stones, Stars, Plants, of fishes, Flyes, Playing with words, and idle Similies, As th’ <i>English</i> , Apes and very Zanies be, Of euery thing, that they doe heare and see, So imitating his ridiculous tricks, They spake and writ, all like meere lunatiques.
		Then <i>Warner</i> though his lines were not so trim’d, Nor yet his Poem so exactly lim’d And neatly ioyned, but the Criticke may Easily reprooue him, yet thus let me say;

Drayton's 1627 Poem (continued)

For my old friend, some passages there be
 In him, which I protest haue taken me,
 With almost wonder, so fine, cleere, and new
 As yet they haue bin equalled by few.

Neat *Marlow* bathed in the *Thespian* springs 105
 Had in him those braue translunary things,
 That the first Poets had, his raptures were,
 All ayre, and fire, which made his verses cleere,
 For that fine madnes still he did retaine,
 Which rightly should possesse a Poets braine. 110

And surely *Nashe*, though he a Proser were
 A branch of *Lawrell* yet deserues to beare,
 Sharply *Satirick* was he, and that way
 He went, since that his being, to this day
 Few haue attempted, and I surely thinke 115
 Those wordes shall hardly be set downe with inke;
 Shall scorch and blast, so as his could, where he,
 Would inflict vengeance, and be it said of thee,
Shakespeare, thou hadst as smooth a *Comicke* vaine,
 Fitting the socke, and in thy naturall braine, 120
 As strong conception, and as *Cleere* a rage,
 As any one that trafiqu'd with the stage.

Amongst these *Samuel Daniel*, whom if I
 May spake of, but to sensure doe denie,
 Onely haue heard some wisemen him rehearse, 125
 To be too much *Historian* in verse;
 His rimes were smooth, his meeters well did close
 But yet his maner better fitted prose:
 Next these, learn'd *Johnson*, in this List I bring,
 Who had drunke deepe of the *Pierian* spring, 130
 Whose knowledge did him worthily prefer,
 And long was Lord here of the Theater,
 Who in opinion made our learn't to sticke,
 Whether in Poems rightly dramatique,
 Strong *Seneca* or *Plautus*, he or they, 135
 Should beare the Buskin, or the Socke away.
 Others againe here liued in my dayes,
 That haue of vs deserued no lesse praise
 For their translations, then the daintiest wit
 That on *Parnassus* thinks, he highest doth sit, 140
 And for a chaire may mongst the Muses call,
 As the most curious maker of them all;
 As reuerent *Chapman*, who hath brought to vs,
Musaeus, *Homer* and *Hesiodus*
 Out of the Greeke; and by his skill hath reard 145
 Them to that height, and to our tongue endear'd,
 That were those Poets at this day aliue,
 To see their bookes thus with vs to suruiue,
 They would think, hauing neglected them so long,
 They had bin written in the *English* tongue. 150

And *Siluester* who from the *French* more weake,
 Made *Bartas* of his sixe dayes labour speake

In naturall *English*, who, had he there stayd,
 He had done well, and neuer had bewraid
 His owne inuention, to haue bin so poore 155
 Who still wrote lesse, in striuing to write more.

Then dainty *Sands* that hath to *English* done,
 Smooth sliding *Ouid*, and hath made him run
 With so much sweetnesse and vnusuall grace,
 As though the neatnesse of the *English* pace, 160
 Should tell the letting *Lattine* that it came
 But slowly after, as though stiff and lame.

So *Scotland* sent vs hither, for our owne
 That man, whose name I euer would haue knowne,
 To stand by mine, that most ingenious knight, 165
 My *Alexander*, to whom in his right,
 I want extreemely, yet in speaking thus
 I doe but shew the loue, that was twixt vs,
 And not his numbers which were braue and hie,
 So like his mind, was his clear Poesie, 170
 And my deare *Drummond* to whom much I owe
 For his much loue, and proud I was to know,
 His poesie, for which two worthy men,
 I *Menstry* still shall loue, and *Hauthorne-den*.
 Then the two *Beamounts* and my *Browne* arose, 175
 My deare companions whom I freely chose
 My bosome friends; and in their seuerall wayes,
 Rightly borne Poets, and in these last dayes,
 Men of much note, and no lesse nobler parts,
 Such as haue freely tould to me their hearts, 180
 As I have mine to them; but if you shall
 Say in your knowledge, that these be not all
 Haue writ in numbers, be inform'd that I
 Only my selfe, to these few men doe tye,
 Whose works oft printed, set on euery post, 185
 To publique censure subiect haue bin most;
 For such whose poems, be they nere so rare,
 In priuate chambers, that incloistered are,
 And by transcription daintly must goe;
 As though the world vnworthy were to know, 190
 Their rich composures, let those men that keepe
 These wonderous reliques in their iudgement deepe;
 And cry them vp so, let such Peeces bee
 Spoke of by those that shall come after me,
 I passe not for them: nor doe meane to run, 195
 In quest of these, that them applause haue wonne,
 Vpon our Stages in these latter dayes,
 That are so many, let them haue their bayes
 That doe deserue it; let those wits that haunt
 Those publique circuits, let them freely chaunt 200
 Their fine Composures, and their praise pursue
 And so my deare friend, for this time adue.

Endnotes

1. Although known especially for his chorographical magnum opus, *Poly-Olbion* (1613), the ESTC attributes 21 surviving works to Drayton during the period 1593-1630, but he also wrote or collaborated on as many as 25 plays, almost all of them now lost.
2. Fuller’s fanciful entry on Philemon Holland, the famous Coventry translator of Pliny and other classic works, furnishes a further instance of his insistence of the value of primary evidence. Apparently with a straight face, Fuller records this of Holland:

Many of these his books he wrote with one pen, whereupon he himself thus pleasantly versified:

With one sole pen I writ this book,
Made of a gray goose quill;
A pen it was when it I took,
And a pen I leave it still. (II: 287)

This pen, moreover, was an object of special local devotion in Warwickshire: “This monumental pen he solemnly kept, and shewed to my reverend tutor Doctor Samuel Ward,” continues Fuller with obvious tongue-in-cheek: “It seems he leaned very lightly on the nib thereof, though weightily enough in another sense, performing not slightly but solidly what he undertook” (II: 287). This account exemplifies the “fancy” to which even Fuller’s earliest readers soon found mystifying, but which to Fuller represented the fulfillment of his fourth primary objective in writing the book, to “entertain the reader with delight” (I:1). How much literal faith Fuller put into his account of Holland’s literary relic, and how much the episode is intended as a joke, is perhaps less relevant than the fact that Fuller has seized on the account for its symbolic value in forming a vivid contrast between Holland and Drayton on the one hand, and Shakespeare on the other. Pens also feature in Fuller’s anecdote of Henry de Vere: “Once he came into the court with a great milk-white feather about his hat, which then was somewhat unusual, save that a person of his merit might make a fashion. The reader may guess the lord who said unto him in some jeer, ‘my lord, you wear a very fair feather.’ ‘It is true,’ said the Earl, “and, if you mark it, there’s ne’er a taint in it.’ Indeed, his family was ever loyal to the crown, deserving their motto, VERO NIHIL VERIUS [nothing truer than the truth]” (II: 515). Likewise, in his account of Aubrey de Vere, Fuller includes the saying of a “witty gentleman” that “nobleman have seldom anything in print save their clothes” (II: 517).

3. In affirming the legality of false names so long as there is no intent to defraud, Fuller follows Camden, who in his *Remains* (1605) states that “men were not forbidden to change name or surname, by the rescript of Diocletian...so be that it were ‘*Sine aliqua fraude jure licito*’ (‘unless for the purpose of some fraud, the law allows it’)” (150); “the Romans of the better sort had three names” (139); and later, “I have observed that the change of names hath most commonly proceeded from a desire to avoid the opinion of baseness” (176), and “I may say nothing of such as for well acting on the stage have carried away the names of the Persons which they acted [i.e., become known under the names of their characters], and have lost their names among the people” (177).
4. Originally published in 1874 by New Shakspeare Society President Clement Ingleby (1823-1886), but including revised and updated reprints in 1879 with Lucy Toulmin Smith, in 1909 with James Munro, and in 1932 with E.K. Chambers.
5. While the term is apt, it should be noted for the record that Pythagorean doctrine is both elitist and universally accessible, to the extent that it is based on principles of design that are so fundamental that they should be, and could be, known to an inquiring mind of any background.
6. *The Famous Victories of Henry V* (f. p. 1600), a precursor to the Shakespearean *Henry V*, had belonged to the repertoire of the Queen’s Men as early as 1583-87.
7. A frequent objection to numerical analysis of Renaissance literary works is the absence of any explicit discussion, either in ancient or renaissance arts theory, of the application of number theory to literature. More generically, as John MacQueen attests, despite impressive witness that “numbers, ratios, and geometric figures link the arts generally, by way of the microcosm, to the macrocosm” (MacQueen 2), numerical analysis of literary works has historically been inhibited by the fact that “the principles underlying the applications of numbers to composition tend to remain assumed rather than expressed” (MacQueen 5). In other words, evidence for numerical structure is largely implicit, concealed in the numeric and proportional aspects of the works themselves rather than articulated in explicit doctrine.
8. Greek κλιμακτηρικὸς or “turning point” in a biography as astrologically determined. The years 21, 42, 56, and 63 were all regarded as biographical pivot points, with 63 being the “grand climacteric.”

9. As he does not otherwise mention Francis Beaumont’s close collaborator John Fletcher, Drayton (who knew Beaumont well), could be referring to Fletcher as the “second Beaumont”. Certainly, this was his reputation in other sources when, for example, we read in Wither, *q.v.* Ap. 3, “Beaumont and Fletcher *make one poet*, they /Single, dare not adventure on a Play.” (my emphasis). More literally, the phrase likely contains allusion to Francis Beaumont’s brother Sir John Beaumont of Grace Dieu (1582–1627), also a poet, who in 1602 at age nineteen had already dedicated his *Metamorphosis of Tabacco* [sic] to “My Loving Freind, Master Michael Drayton” (Newdigate et al. V: 60).
10. In addition, the possessive form “your” occurs four times, twice applied to Reynolds (10, 41), once by Reynolds to Drayton (33), and once to the reader (182).
11. Barber states that “it has never been possible to use thou as a plural” (153).
12. On the stigma of print, see especially, Saunders (1951), Traister (1990), and Price (2016), the latter reproducing a current and more complete bibliography.
13. Newdigate, 72–86. The dedications are to Lucie Harrington, Countess of Bedford; Lord Mounteagle; Anne Harrington; Edward, Earl of Bedford; Lord Henrie Howard; Sir John Swinerton; Elizabeth Tanfelde; Thomas Mounson; Henrie Goodere; Frauncis Goodere; Henry Lucas; James Huish; and Walter Aston. Based on extant documentary evidence, Newdigate further identifies among Drayton’s close associates William Camden (93); William Lambarde (94); Ben Jonson, Sir John Beaumont, Sir William Alexander, George Chapman, John Selden, Sir Edward Coke, Hugh Holland, Sir. Edmund Scory, and John Wiliams (95); Francis Meres (96); Nicholas Ling (97); John Weever (98); and Edward Alleyn (101–111). The contrast to Shakespeare could not be more evident; it is Shakespeare, not Drayton, who exists in an “empty space.”

14. The following notes provide evidence of one recorded association between each of the playwrights connected by a single line, although in many cases more than one documented connection can be found. By joining the lower number to the higher number at each end of the connecting line (e.g. 7–10), a note explaining the documented association between the two playwrights at either end may be sourced below:

1–2 (Marlowe-Peele): Peele published a tribute to Marlowe, dated, 26 June 1593, “Honour of the Garter” in the month following Marlowe’s death.

1–3 (Marlowe-Watson): Marlowe and Watson arrested together for the murder of William Bradley in Hog Lane (September 1589).

1–4 (Marlowe-Kyd): Kyd discusses his relationship with Marlowe in two letters to Sir John Puckering (1594).

1–14 (Marlowe-Nashe): Nashe writes of Marlowe and is listed as co-author with him of *Dido Queen of Carthage*.

2–3 (Peele-Watson): Peele publishes poem in praise of Watson in the latter’s *Hekatompathia* (1582).

2–17 (Peele-Gager): Gager writes two Latin poems in praise of Peele’s *Iphigenia* (c. 1577).

3–10 (Watson-Oxford): Watson dedicates *Hekatompathia* (1582) to Oxford while in his service.

3–11 (Watson-Lyly): Lyly describes Watson as “my good friend” in his epistle to *Hekatompathia* (1582).

3–13 (Watson-Greene): Watson contributes commendatory verses to Greene’s *Ciceronis Amor* (1589).

6–7 (Drayton-Chapman): Drayton calls Chapman “my worthy friend” in Chapman’s *Hesiod* (1618).

6–8 (Drayton-Dekker): Henslowe’s Diary (1598) lists Drayton and Dekker (with Chettle) as co-authors of *Henry I*.

6–9 (Drayton-Jonson): Drayton praises “Learned Johnson, who long was Lord here of the Theater” *Of Poets* (1627).

6–12 (Drayton-Lodge): Lodge praises Drayton as “diligent and formal” in *Wit’s Misery* (1596).

Endnote #14 continues:

- 6–16 (Drayton-Mundy): Henslowe’s Diary lists Drayton and Mundy as co-authors on three plays (1599–1601).
- 6–18 (Drayton-Wilson): Henslowe’s Diary lists Drayton and Wilson as collaborators on three plays (1598–99).
- 6–19 (Drayton-Hathway): Henslowe’s Diary lists these playwrights as co-authors of *Fayre Constance of Rome* (1600).
- 6–20 (Drayton-Chettle): Henslowe’s Diary lists Drayton and Chettle as collaborators on two plays (1598).
- 7–9 (Chapman-Jonson): They collaborate on *Eastward Ho!* (1605) Jonson calls Chapman “my worthy & honoured friend” in Chapman’s *Hesiod* (1618).
- 8–9 (Dekker-Jonson): Jonson and Dekker co-wrote *Page of Plymouth* and *Robert King of Scots* (1599).
- 8–15 (Dekker-Heywood): Henslowe’s Diary lists the two playwrights as co-authors of *Lady Jane* (1602).
- 8–16 (Dekker-Mundy): Henslowe’s Diary lists the two playwrights as co-authors of *Fayre Constance of Rome* (1600).
- 8–18 (Dekker-Wilson): Henslowe’s Diary lists the two playwrights as co-authors of *Black Batman of the North* (1598).
- 8–19 (Dekker-Hathway): Henslowe’s Diary lists the two playwrights as co-authors of *Fayre Constance of Rome* (1600).
- 8–20 (Dekker-Chettle): Henslowe’s Diary lists the two playwrights as co-authors of *Robert King of Scots* (1599).
- 9–14 (Jonson-Nashe): Collaborated on *Isle of Dogs* (1597)
- 9–15 (Jonson-Heywood): Heywood praises Jonson’s “learned pen, dipped in Castaly” in *The Hierarchie* (1635).
- 9–20 (Jonson-Chettle): Henslowe’s Diary lists the two playwrights as co-authors of *Robert King of Scots* (1599).
- 9–22 (Jonson-Porter): Henslowe’s Diary Jonson and Porter as co-authors on 2 plays (1598).

Endnote #14 continues:

- 10–11 (Oxford-Lyly): Lyly serves as Oxford’s secretary and theatrical manager, dedicating several works to him.
- 10–13 (Oxford-Greene): Greene dedicates *Gnydonius* (1584) to Oxford.
- 10–14 (Oxford-Nashe): Nashe serves ‘My Lord of Oxford’ with Greene in pamphlet war and dedicates ‘Strange News’ (1592) to him as ‘Apis Lapis.’
- 10–16 (Oxford-Mundy): Mundy serves as secretary to Oxford and dedicates several works to him.
- 10–21 (Oxford-Buckhurst): Co-signatories to a letter concerning the death of Elizabeth (24 March 1603).
- 11–12 (Lyly-Lodge): Lodge praises Lyly’s “famous facility for discourse” in *Wit’s Misery* (1596).
- 11–13 (Lyly-Greene): The two authors under Oxford’s roof launch a pamphlet war and are attacked by Harvey.
- 11–14 (Lyly-Nashe): Lyly is mentioned by name over 30 times in the works of Nashe.
- 11–16 (Lyly-Mundy): Mundy coyly describes himself as Lyly’s friend in *Zelauto* (1580).
- 11–21 (Lyly-Buckhurst): Giordano Bruno reports that Buckhurst was translating Lyly’s *Euphues* (c. 1584) .
- 12–13 (Lodge-Greene): Co-authors of *A Looking Glass for London* (c. 1589).
- 12–14 (Lodge-Nashe): Lodge praises Nashe as “*Tb. Nash*, true English Aretine” in *Wit’s Misery* (1596).
- 13–14 (Greene-Nashe): Greene says that he “writ a comedie” with Nashe in *Groatworth* (1592); Nashe gives frequent references to Greene in his works.

Works Cited

- Andrews, Meghan C. “Michael Drayton, Shakespeare’s Shadow,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 65:3 (Fall 2014), 273–306.
- Barber, Charles. *Early Modern English*, Edinburgh University Press (1976).
- Bush, Douglas. “Two Poems by Henry Reynolds,” *Modern Language Notes*, 41: 8 (Dec., 1926), 510–513.
- Camden, William. *Remaines of a greater worke, concerning Britaine, the inhabitants thereof, their languages, names, surnames, empreses, wise speeches, poëties, and epitaphs*, published by Simon Waterson, London (1605). 1974 reprint edited by Leslie Dunkling.
- Chambers, E. K. *William Shakespeare: Facts and Problems*. Two Volumes. Oxford: The Clarendon Press (1930).
- Chiljan, Katherine V. *Book Dedications to the Earl of Oxford* (1994).
- . *Shakespeare Suppressed: The Uncensored Truth about Shakespeare and His Works*. San Francisco: Faire Editions (2011).
- Cinquemani, A.M. “Henry Reynolde’s ‘Mythomystes’ and the Continuity of Ancient Modes of *Allegoresis* in Seventeenth Century England,” *PMLA*, 85:5 (Oct., 1970), 1041–1049.
- Cohen, M.J. “The Worthy Doctor Fuller,” *History Today*. December, 2008. 58: 12, 50–55.
- Colie, Rosalie L. “Triumphal Forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry,” *Modern Philology*, 71:1 (Aug., 1973), 76–79.
- Cooper, Tarnya. *Searching for Shakespeare*. Yale University Press (2006).
- Curtius, Ernst Robert. *European Literature and the Middle Ages*. Princeton: University Press Bollingen Series, 1990 reprint of 1953.
- Degl’Innocenti, Luca, and Brian F. Richardson and Chiara Sbordoni (eds). *Interactions Between Orality and Writing in Early Modern Italian Culture*. Routledge (2016).
- Detobel, Robert. “Shakespeare: the Courtier” (2009), *Robert Detobel’s Collected Essays*. anonymous-shakespeare.com.

- Disraeli, Isaac. *Amenities of Literature* (1841).
- Doelman, James. Review of W. B. Patterson's *Thomas Fuller: Discovering England's Religious Past, Church History*. March 2019, 236–238.
- Douglas, Mary. *Thinking In Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition*. New Haven: Yale University Press (2010).
- Drayton, Michael. *Endimion and Phoebe: Ideas Latmus. Phoebus erit nostra princeps et carminis author*. At London: Printed by Iames Roberts, for Iohn Busbie, [1595].
- . *Englands heroicall epistles. By Michaell Drayton*. At London: printed by J. R[oberts] for N. Ling, and are to be sold at his shop at the vvest doore of Poules, 1598.
- . *The battaile of Agincourt Fought by Henry the fift of that name, King of England, against the whole power of the French: vnder the raigne of their Charles the sixt, anno Dom. 1415. The miseries of Queene Margarite, the infortunate wife, of that most infortunate King Henry the sixt. Nymphidia, the court of Fayrie. The quest of Cinthia. The shepheards Sirena. The moone calfe. Elegies vpon sundry occasions. By Michaell Drayton, Esquire*. London: printed by A[ugustine]. M[athewes]. for William Lee, and are to be sold at the Turkes Head in Fleete-Streete, next to the Miter and Phaenix [1627].
- Elton, Oliver. “‘Introduction’ to Michael Drayton, Spenser and the Tradition,” Spenserians.cath.vt.edu.
- Engel, William E. “Mnemonic Criticism and Renaissance Literature: A Manifesto”, *Connotations* 1 (1991), 12–33.
- Fowler, Alastair. *Triumphal Forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry*. Cambridge: At the University Press (1970).
- Fuller, see Nuttall.
- Gayley, Charles Milles. *Beaumont, the Dramatist: a Portrait With Some Account of his Circle, Elizabethan and Jacobean, and of his Association with John Fletcher*. New York: Russell & Russell (1914).
- Gibson, H. N. *The Shakespeare Claimants* (1965).
- Halliwell-Phillipps, R.O. *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*. London: Longman, Green & Co. 11th edition (1907), Two Volumes.
- Hebel, William J. “Drayton and Shakespeare”, *Modern Language Notes*, 41:4 (Apr 1926), 248–250.

- . *The Works of Michael Drayton. Edited by the late J. William Hebel. In five volumes. Introductions, Notes, Variant Readings, edited by Kathleen Tillotson and Bernard H. Newdigate.* Oxford: Printed at the Shakespeare Head Press St. Aldgate's and published for the Press by Basil Blackwell (1941).
- Herford, C.H., Percy Simpson & Evelyn Simpson. *Ben Jonson.* Eleven Volumes. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press (1954).
- Hobbs, Mary. “Drayton’s ‘Most Dearely-Loved’ Friend Henery Reynolds Esq.,” *Review of English Studies*, XXIV: 96 (1973), 414–428.
- Ingleby, C. M. *Shakspeare Allusion Books.* The New Shakspeare Society. London: N. Trubner & Co. (1874).
- Ingleby, C. M. and Lucy Toulmin Smith. *Shakespeare’s Centurie of Praise: Being Materials for a History of Opinion and Shakespeare and his Works, 1591–1693* New Shakspeare Society. London: Alexander Moring, The De La More Press (1879).
- . *The Shakspeare allusion-book: a collection of allusions to Shakespeare from 1591 to 1700/originally compiled by C.M. Ingleby, Miss L. Toulmin Smith and Dr. F.J. Furnivall; with the assistance of the New Shakespeare Society; and now re-edited, revised, and re-arranged with an introduction by John Munro.* London: Chatto & Windus, (1909).
- . *The Shakspeare Allusion-Book: A Collection of Allusions to Shakespeare from 1591–1700. Originally Compiled by C.M. Ingleby, Miss L. Toulmin Smith, and By Dr. F. J. Furnivall, with the Assistance of the New Shakespeare Society: Re-edited, revised, and Rearranged, with an introduction, but John Munro (1909), and Now Reissued with a Preface by Sir Edmund Chambers.* 1932. Books for Libraries Press edition reprinted 1970.
- Jerome, St. *Patristic Scholarship. The Edition of St. Jerome*, ed., trans. and annotated by James Brady and John C. Olin. Vol. LXI of *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Toronto: University Press, 1972.
- Jiménez, Ramon. “Shakspeare in Stratford and London: Ten Eyewitnesses Who Saw Nothing” in *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing and Industry in Denial* (John M. Shahan & Alexander Waugh, eds.). Shakespeare Authorship Coalition (2013).
- Lewis, Roland M. *The Shakespeare Documents: Facsimiles, Transliterations, Translations and Commentary.* Humphrey Milord: Oxford University Press (1941). Two volumes.
- Lodge, Thomas *A fig for Momus containing pleasant varietie, included in satyres, eclogues, and epistles, by T.L. of Lincolnes Inne Gent.* At London: Printed

by [T. Orwin] for Clement Knight, and are to bee solde at his shop at the little north-doore of Paules Church, 1595.

Lyle, Raphael. *Memory and Intertextuality in Renaissance Literature*. Cambridge: The University Press (2016).

MacQueen, John. *Numerology: Theory and Outline History of a Literary Mode*. Edinburgh: The University Press (1985).

Marrapodi, Michele. *Shakespeare, Italy, and Intertextuality*. Manchester University Press (2004).

———. *Shakespeare and Renaissance Literary Theories: Anglo-Italian Transactions*. Ashgate (2011).

May, Steven. “Tudor Aristocrats and the Mythical ‘Stigma of Print’” in *Renaissance Papers* (1980) 11–18.

Mayne, Jasper. “To the Memory of Ben. Johnson.”, *Jonsonus Virbius: or The memorie of Ben: Johnson revived by the friends of the Muses*. London 1638.

Melzer, Arthur M. *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing*. Chicago: The University Press (2014).

Miola, Robert S. “Seven Types of Intertextuality,” in *Shakespeare and Intertextuality. The Transition of Culture between Italy and England in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Michele Marrapoid (Rome: Bulzoni (2000).

Newdigate, Bernard H. *Michael Drayton and his Circle*. Oxford: Printed at the Shakespeare Head Press St. Aldates and published for the Press by Basil Blackwell (1941).

North, Marcy L. *The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor-Stuart England*. Chicago: University Press (2003).

Nuttall, P. Austin. *Dr. Fuller’s Worthies of England. In three Vols.* New York: AMS Press, 1965. After the 1840 edition printed in London.

Ogburn, Charlton, Jr. *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth & the Reality*. McLean, VA: EPM (1992).

Patterson, W.B. *Thomas Fuller: Discovering England’s Religious Past* New York: Oxford University Press (2018).

Peterson, R.G. “Critical Calculations: Measure and Symmetry in Literature,” *PMLA*, 91:3 (May, 1976): 367–75.

Pigman, George W. III, “Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 33 (1980), 1–32.

Triumphal Numbers and the “Stigma of Print”

- Price, Diana. “The Mythical ‘Myth’ of the Stigma of Print,” <https://www.shakespeare-authorship.com/?page=stigma>.
- Reed, Edwin. *Noteworthy Opinions, Pro and Con. Bacon vs. Shakespeare. Boston: Coburn Publishing* (1905).
- R.[eynoldes], H.[enry]. *Mythomystes wherein a short suruay is taken of the nature and value of true poesy and depth of the ancients above our moderne poets. To which is annexed the tale of Narcissus briefly mythologized*. London: Printed [by George Purslowe] for Henry Seyle, at the Tigers-head in St. Pauls Church-yard, [1632].
- Røstvig, Maren-Sofie “Renaissance Numerology: Acrostics or Criticism.” *Essays in Criticism* 16 (1966), 6–21.
- Saunders, J.W. “The stigma of print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry” in *Essays in Criticism* 1 (1951) 139–164.
- . *The Profession of English Letters*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (1964).
- Schoenbaum, Samuel. *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life*. Oxford: The University Press (1975)
- Shapiro, James. *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* NY: Simon and Schuster, 2010.
- Spingarn, Joel E. *Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*. New York: Harbinger (1963).
- Stritmatter, Roger (ed.). *The 1623 Shakespeare First Folio: A Minority Report. A Special Issue of Brief Chronicles*. Baltimore, MD (2016).
- Traister, Daniel. “Reluctant Virgins: The Stigma of Print Revisited,” *Colby Quarterly* 26: 2 (June 1990), 75–86.
- Vickers, Brian. *Shakespeare: the Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (1974).
- Wagh, Alexander and Roger Stritmatter. *The New Shakespeare Allusion Book*. Forthcoming (2017).
- Wroth, Lawrence C. “Thomas Fuller and his ‘Worthies,’” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 11 (January–Oct., 1912), n.p.

Employing Mathematics to Identify the Real Shakespeare

by Paul Chambers, PhD

Alternative authorship theories for the identity of William Shakespeare are dismissed by all but a few professors and Shakespeare scholars, who accept the traditional attribution to William Shakspere of Stratford (Niederkorn). This view is epitomized by William Hunt, a Harvard Scholar who wrote his dissertation on Elizabethan England: “No, absolutely no competent student of the period, historical or literary, has ever taken this theory seriously. First of all, the founding premise is false—there is nothing especially mysterious about William Shakespeare, who is as well documented as one could expect of a man of his time. None of his contemporaries or associates expressed any doubt about the authorship of his poems and plays” (Blakemore).

The contentious debate has continued unabated since the 19th Century. In the 21st Century, however, extraordinary new tools have emerged to resolve complex issues across a wide range of disciplines. With the advent of fast and powerful computers, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning have revolutionized many fields and are currently actively employed in areas as diverse as the financial sphere to determine fraud and investment strategies, in the business world to evaluate product potential and marketing, and in the health care sector to predict the progress of diseases and the probabilities of patient hospitalization. These powerful technologies have been brought to bear to resolve the Shakespeare authorship question.

The Dartmouth Study of 2007

One area where Machine Learning has proven useful is the field of text analytics. With the advent of social media, efforts to categorize and analyze textual material using artificial intelligence have become an active area of Data Science. Text analytics is highly effective as a means of supplementing and extending human abilities, adding speed and accuracy for a quantitative, as opposed to a qualitative, assessment of text data (Sabo).

An attempt to apply text analytics to resolve the issue of the Shakespeare authorship using modern computer science was conducted by three students at Dartmouth College. In 2007, they wrote a paper addressing the authorship question using analytics (Seletsky et al). They chose three candidates for evaluation: Sir Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, and Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. They employed a series of analytical language metrics to distinguish among the authors, including character usage, word lengths, and the ratio of unique words. What they found surprised them.

For a comparison to Shakespeare's work, they used the following plays of Christopher Marlowe: *Dido, Queen of Carthage*; *Tamburlaine part 1*; *Tamburlaine part 2*; *The Jew of Malta*; and *Edward II*. For Francis Bacon, they used the prose works *The Great Instauration*, *Preparative toward a Natural and Experimental History*, and *New Atlantis*. Since no known plays are attributable to Edward de Vere, they compared his poetry to the poetry of William Shakespeare.

The first analytical test they conducted was a comparison of character distributions. This meant evaluating the frequency of appearance of individual letters in the works. For Marlowe they found a significant difference between the usage of his letters: Marlowe tended to use the vowel "e" far more often than Shakespeare. The overall differences were so large in this case that the authors concluded with high statistical certainty that the works of Shakespeare and Marlowe originated from different sources.

Sir Francis Bacon fared no better in this test. Bacon seemed to use longer words than Shakespeare and had significantly more usage of the letters "t," "i," and "e." They also found a significant difference between Bacon's work and Shakespeare's so as to make it unlikely that they came from the same

Paul Chambers holds a doctorate in engineering from the University of Maryland at College Park. He has performed data analytics as a contractor for the EEOC in Washington DC where he developed algorithms to detect statistical demographic pay disparities and for the Center for Medicare Services in Baltimore where he performed statistical modeling for the care and treatment of dialysis patients. He has also served as a Senior Data Scientist in the private sector for Hitachi Consulting.

source—although the smaller number of characters made it more difficult to reach a conclusion with confidence. While Oxford also seemed to have a different frequency of letter usage from Shakespeare, the small corpus of his work caused this result to be the least reliable. However, his match, based on statistical tests, was far closer than the other two candidates for this metric.

The second test employed was word length analysis, which compared the distributions of words and their lengths used in the corpus of papers. The first thing the scholars noticed was that Shakespeare used significantly more four-letter words than three-letter words while Marlowe used more three-letter words than any other size. Although there were clearly differences, this metric was unable to definitively distinguish between the works of Shakespeare and Marlowe with confidence.

Francis Bacon was another matter. The word length distributions of Bacon and Shakespeare were so statistically different that the authors concluded it was extremely unlikely that Bacon ever wrote under the name of Shakespeare. Applying this same metric to Edward de Vere, however, the authors were surprised to find that based on word length analysis, the works of Shakespeare and Oxford were virtually indistinguishable with high statistical confidence, based on a p-value, a measure of statistical confidence, of $p = 0.4$ (with a maximum possible value of 1.0, $p = 0.05$ is usually considered the cut off point for hypothesis testing). Stated statistically, based on this metric, the hypothesis that the plays of Bacon and the plays of Shakespeare were written by the same author was rejected, while the hypothesis that the poems of Shakespeare and the poems of Oxford were written by the same author was not rejected. While this doesn't mean necessarily that Oxford wrote the works of Shakespeare, the statistical match for this metric was so close that the authors concluded that "the two may have written under the same name" from this test alone.

The last metric employed was the proportion of unique words. This is a novel analytic that calculates the proportion of words that appear just once compared to total words in a corpus. The five plays of Marlowe showed an average ratio of 0.207 with a very small variance (a statistical measure of the overall degree of disparity between each ratio and the average) of 0.0005. Francis Bacon showed a similar result. His average ratio was 0.204, very similar to Marlowe's, again with a small variance of 0.0012. Shakespeare's corpus showed an average ratio of 0.16 with a variance of only 0.0002. Because the margins of error were so small and the ratios were so consistent and precise for each author, it was clear that both Marlowe and Bacon exhibited statistically significant differences from Shakespeare. Based on this metric, the hypothesis that the plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare were written by the same author was rejected, and the hypothesis that the plays of Bacon and Shakespeare was written by the same author was also rejected, a compelling indication that neither man wrote under the pseudonym "William Shakespeare."

The most significant discovery came when they compared the unique word ratios of Edward de Vere's poetry to Shakespeare's poems. De Vere's works had a ratio of 0.31 while Shakespeare had a ratio of 0.30. This was an almost exact match. It lent further confirmation to the results from the word length ratios, essentially that the works of the Earl of Oxford were analytically indistinguishable from Shakespeare's, leading them to suggest that "perhaps de Vere was Shakespeare" and that the "Oxfordian camp may have some veracity" (Seletsky 4). After considering the personal connections and autobiographical elements of de Vere's life in the works, these authors ultimately concluded that they were "very doubtful that Shakespeare did in fact write his plays."

An Independent Study Using Text Analytics

This result was intriguing enough to warrant further analysis. Toward this end, I recently applied modern text mining analysis to the problem. My approach differs from the Dartmouth group because I employ an unsupervised learning methodology. In this analysis I only seek similarities among the works using a technique called text mining. Text mining analytics is currently used in such diverse applications as spam filtering, business intelligence, and fraud detection (Williams).

For comparison, I chose nine contemporary authors for affinity to Shakespeare together with two authors from the 19th and 20th Centuries as a sanity check. For analysis from Shakespeare's era, in addition to Oxford, I chose the poets and playwrights John Donne, Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, John Webster, John Fletcher, Thomas Dekker, Ben Jonson, and Francis Beaumont; I also included the modern American poets Walt Whitman and Ogden Nash for contrast. While some authors, such as Marlowe and Spenser, were writing during the same time as Oxford, other authors such as Donne, Beaumont, Fletcher and Webster, were writing later than early Shakespeare and Oxford. Because Shakespeare's early poems were very popular and printed numerous times, these later authors may have been influenced by his work. This therefore provides an acid test for de Vere as it compares his work to authors who would have had access to Shakespeare's poetry and may, in turn, have been influenced by it.

Text mining involves creating a term document matrix from a corpus of works. The works of each author were assembled into a single document for each. Stop words like "the" and "and" together with punctuation were removed from each corpus. Modern spellings were used where possible. The terms used by each author were then automatically counted and placed in a table that shows word occurrence together with the number of appearances of each word by author. An example is shown in figure 1. This term document matrix was created with the R package TM (text mining) and has frequencies for more than 10,000 different words.

Because the total body of de Vere’s extant publications is so small—fewer than 4,000 words—to get a meaningful comparison I broke up longer works into fragments to get comparable document sizes. I separated the *Sonnets* and the *Rape of Lucrece* into three pieces and *Venus and Adonis* into two parts. There are other ways of comparing documents of disparate sizes but breaking the longer works into smaller parts has advantages.

	abate	abide	abjure	able	abound	about	abridg- ment	absence	abusd	aby	accent	accidents
1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
3	1	0	0	1	0	3	1	0	1	0	2	1
4	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
5	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	0	1	2
7	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
8	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
9	0	1	0	2	1	2	0	5	1	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0

Figure 1: First portion of term document matrix showing word frequencies for a series of contemporary authors to Shakespeare.

The next step is determining the degree of similarity between the works of each author. This is accomplished by means of a distance metric. Because a number is assigned to each word in the corpus, it represents a point in a multi-dimensional space. Figure 2 illustrates this for two documents A and B. Only three words appear in each document, say “five,” “plus,” and “six,” but their frequencies vary. In A, the first word appears twice, the second once, and the third not at all, yielding the point (2,1,0). In B, each word appears exactly once for (1,1,1). The distance between the two points is calculated from the simple formula for distance metric provided in figure 2.

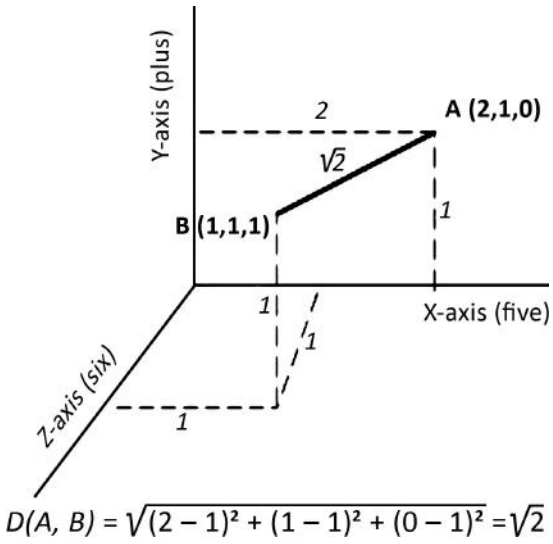


Figure 2: Example of two points in a term document matrix using only three words together with the distance metric formula.

The difference for the term document matrix in this case is that the corpus of words is much larger. The same operations to calculate the distance between each point in space, each corpus, are used except that it is in a much higher dimensional space, in this case over 10,000 dimensions. Once the distances between each document are calculated, the results are grouped together using a process called agglomerative clustering. In this method, each document is assigned first to its own cluster. Then the algorithm finds pairs of clusters that are closest to each other and merges them. The pair of documents in each new cluster can be represented by a tree-like structure called a dendrogram. Then the distances are computed between the new clusters and the closest clusters are linked together in a higher level tree-like structure. This process is continued until a complete tree structure is produced showing the documents, their groupings, and their nearest interrelationships based on the distance metric.

The result is a hierarchical clustering Dendrogram that shows the closest connections and inter-relatedness between the documents based on their word frequencies. This Dendrogram was calculated from the term document matrix using the *hclust()* command (“average” method) from the “stats” package in R and is shown in figure 3.

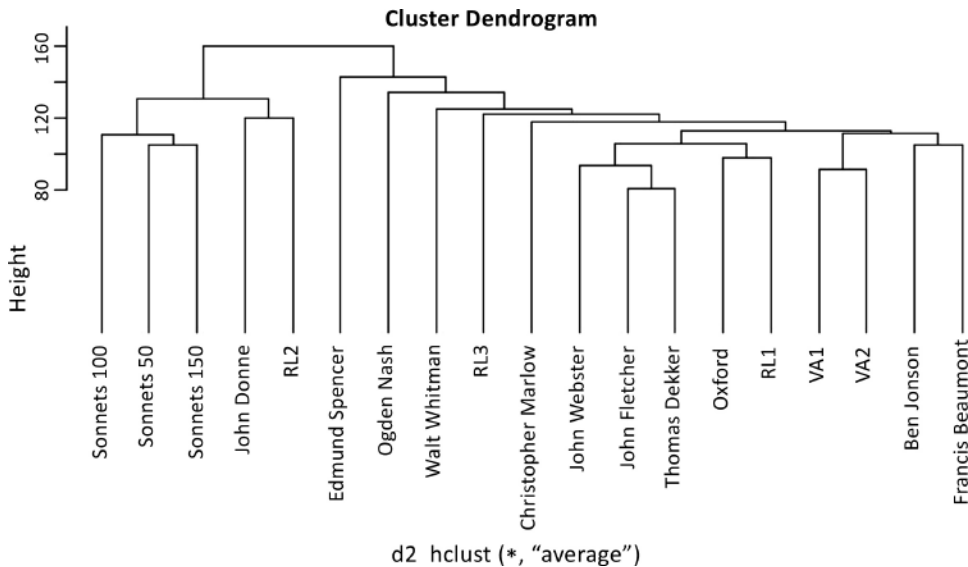


Figure 3: Cluster Dendrogram comparing a series of authors to Shakespeare’s works.

Although this technique may deny poetry its rhyming scheme, flow, sounds, even its human and dramatical elements, it does allow for strictly mathematical and analytical comparisons. What emerges from this Dendrogram is that the *Sonnets* all cluster together even though they were broken into smaller pieces and assigned their own document in the matrix. The two parts of *Venus and Adonis* also cluster next to each other. The American poets Ogden

Nash and Walt Whitman cluster adjacently, a reasonable result since they are both from later centuries than the other poems that were compared. Of further interest is that Francis Beaumont clusters next to Ben Jonson. This is significant in that Beaumont was Jonson's student. Even though it transforms poetry into mathematics, this analysis yields remarkably consistent results and thereby shows merit.

The most striking aspect of the Dendrogram is that Oxford clusters directly with the first part of *Rape of Lucrece* and adjacent to both parts of *Venus and Adonis*. Of the contemporary authors considered, his work is clearly closest to the earliest poems of Shakespeare. What makes this exciting is that Oxford's works stop appearing in print just when Shakespeare's poems begin to appear in the same year, 1593 (Leubering). The fact that De Vere's poems cluster next to Shakespeare's early work seems to be too much of a coincidence. This has all the earmarks of an author writing under a new name and is consistent with the Oxfordian theory of authorship. That Oxford's early poems do not cluster near the *Sonnets* is not surprising, as his later work likely matured and exhibits disparate word frequency usage. John Donne died in 1631, and his poems were published posthumously in 1633. It should not be surprising that Donne's poetry may have been strongly influenced by Shakespeare's work and potentially explains why his material clusters near the *Sonnets*, published in 1609.

While this result is thought-provoking, it is not by itself definitive. It doesn't prove that Edward de Vere was the true author of Shakespeare's works. However, it does constitute an important piece to the authorship puzzle. As it turns out, there is a systematic mathematical way to assemble the pieces: Bayesian Analysis.

Bayesian analytics is based on 'Thomas Bayes' theorem and considers the probability of an event happening given that a prior event has already occurred. It is given by a simple formula which relates the probability of hypothesis H before getting the evidence, to the probability of the hypothesis after obtaining the evidence. Used analytically, it provides a systematic framework for ascertaining the likelihood of belief in a hypothesis based on probabilities and probability distributions. While Bayesian analysis has been criticized by classical statisticians as being subjective, it does provide a way of making the subjectivity explicit (Britannica "Bayesian analysis"). Bayesian analysis has found application in statistical decision theory to make better decisions as well in bioinformatics to calculate the probability of an individual having a specific genotype. For instance, to determine the chances of being affected by a genetic disease or the likelihood of being a carrier for a recessive gene of interest, Bayesian analysis is performed using family history or genetic testing to predict whether an individual will develop a disease or pass one on to their children (Kraft 790–97).

Bayes' theorem relates the probability of belief in a hypothesis to a prior belief based on the acquisition of new evidence (Equation 1).

Here $P(H|E)$ is the probability of hypothesis H occurring given that event E has already occurred. This is directly proportional to the probability of event E given hypothesis H times the initial probability of H divided by the probability of event E given by $P(E)$.

$$P(H|E) = \frac{P(E|H) P(H)}{P(E)}$$

As an example, consider a deck of playing cards. If a face card is drawn from the deck, what is the probability that the card is a King? Since there are 13 possible cards in the deck, one for each of the four suits, the probability that any card drawn is a King would be $P(\text{King}) = 1/13$. Since every King is a face card, the probability of a King being a face card is 100%, $P(\text{Face}|\text{King}) = 1$. Each suit has three face cards (Jack, Queen, King), so the probability of drawing a face card is $P(\text{Face}) = 3/13$. Using Bayes' theorem to determine the probability that the card is a King given that a face card is drawn would be $P(\text{King}|\text{Face}) = (1/13) / (3/13) = 1/3$. This result is accurate: since there are only three possible face cards the probability that a drawn face card is a King must be exactly $1/3$.

In this case, it seemed that Bayes' theorem was a complicated way to get a simple result, but there are situations where the theorem has advantages. Consider a legal case where the guilt or innocence of a criminal defendant is at issue. This can be determined from a modified version of Bayes' theorem based on the law of total probability (Fienberg 771–88) (Equation 2):

$$P(G|(E_n \text{ and } H)) = \frac{P(G|H)P(E_n |(G \text{ and } H))}{P(G|H) P(E_n |(G \text{ and } H)) + P(NG|H) P(E_n |(NG \text{ and } H))}$$

Where $P(G|H)$ = probability of Guilt given events H (a summation of prior events), $P(NG|H)$ = probability of Not Guilty given events H and E_n represents the current event under analysis. The denominator reflects the total probability of the event E_n , given the two possibilities, in this case guilt or innocence, under consideration.

While this equation looks formidable, it basically allows for the calculation of the probability of a defendant's guilt based on a summation of prior evidentiary events. The equation is used in an iterative fashion to incorporate new knowledge as it becomes available. The probability in the belief of guilt is derived from prior belief in guilt G or innocence NG considering the new evidence E_n for each iteration.

As an example, consider the hypothetical criminal defendant. Since a defendant is entitled to a presumption of innocence in the American system of

justice, he can reasonably be assigned an initial probability of guilt of say just 10%. Bayesian analysis requires a non-zero starting point and there must be some finite probability of guilt for a defendant to be accused or arrested.

Belief in the defendant's innocence, NG, is therefore $P(NG) = .90$, while belief in his guilt is just $P(G) = 0.10$ starting out. A blood sample is found at the scene with Type O, a match for the defendant's blood type. But, type O blood is found in 45% of the population, so if the defendant is innocent there is still a 45% chance that his blood would match by chance, $P(E_1|NG) = .45$. If the suspect is guilty, however, then there is a 100% chance that his blood will be a match to the crime scene serum, $P(E_1|G) = 1$. Applying these proportions into the Bayesian formula for analysis, the probability of innocence now dips slightly to ~80% while belief in the guilt of the defendant increases to ~20%. For the first iteration (Equation 3):

$$P(G|(E_1)) = \frac{P(G)P(E_1|(G))}{P(G)P(E_1|(G)) + P(NG)P(E_1|(NG))} = \frac{(0.1)(1)}{(0.1)(1) + (0.9)(0.45)} = 0.198$$

A partial fingerprint is found at the scene. It matches the defendant's reasonably well, but there is a 21% chance that the match could occur randomly. The next iteration of analysis incorporates this probability building on the results from the prior evidence, where now $P(E_2|NG) = 0.21$ and $P(E_2|G) = 1$. The second iteration uses the values for guilt and innocence calculated in the first iteration, $P(G) = 0.198$ and $P(NG) = .802$. This new evidence raises belief in the suspect's guilt to 54% (Equation 4):

$$P(G|(E_1 + E_2)) = \frac{P(G)P(E_2|(G))}{P(G)P(E_2|(G)) + P(NG)P(E_2|(NG))} = \frac{(0.198)(1)}{(0.198)(1) + (0.802)(0.21)} = 0.54$$

Finally, DNA is extracted from the dried blood sample. The DNA is a match for the defendant's with only a 1.7% chance of error. The low likelihood of this evidentiary result occurring randomly if the suspect is innocent seriously lowers his odds of being not guilty, $P(E_3|NG) = 0.017$, thereby increasing the probability of his overall guilt significantly. Incorporating this final evidence into the analysis raises belief in the defendant's guilt to an overwhelming $P(G|H) = 98.6\%$ while belief in his innocence falls to an abysmal $P(NG|H) = 1.4\%$ (Equation 5):

$$P(G|(E_3 + H)) = \frac{P(G)P(E_3|(G))}{P(G)P(E_3|(G)) + P(NG)P(E_3|(NG))} = \frac{(0.54)(1)}{(0.54)(1) + (0.46)(0.017)} = 0.986$$

Stated another way, the defendant is almost 70 times more likely to be guilty than innocent. This result would easily meet a "beyond reasonable doubt" standard and would be enough to convict the suspect of the crime.

Applying Bayesian Mathematics

Since the above equation relates to a binary outcome, in this case guilt or innocence, it is equally applicable to the Shakespeare authorship question. It can be used to provide a likelihood of Oxfordian authorship of the works of William Shakespeare compared to William Shakspeare from Stratford upon Avon, designated as Shakspeare for this analysis. Application of Bayesian analyses to the authorship question has been realized previously in a book-length work that considered a wide range of factors (Sturrock). The example analysis that follows considers only a small number of select factors, specifically temporal correlations and the text-based analytical results presented above. The focus here is on relevant substantive events and results, and not carefully chosen trivia or arcana.

To apply the full Bayesian analytical framework to the case for Oxford's authorship first requires a starting point. This involves comparing what is known of the two most popular candidates: Edward de Vere and William Shakspeare from Stratford. The choice of a starting point is subjective; the best that can be hoped for is a reasonable estimate that can be fairly justified based on the known historical and literary evidence.

The evidence in favor of Oxford's authorship candidacy is compelling by any sensible standard (Bethell 45–61). Oxford wrote some of his poetry in iambic pentameter, a style invented by his uncle, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and used by Shakespeare. Many of Shakespeare's plays such as *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, and *All's Well That Ends Well* inexplicably feature numerous events from Oxford's personal life. Indeed, Shakespeare's masterpiece *Hamlet* seems to be a virtual biography of Edward de Vere (Londre). Multiple contemporary authors list Oxford as the best playwright of the Elizabethan Court, especially for comedy (Francis Meres in 1598), yet, surprisingly, none of his plays have survived—even though numerous letters and correspondence are extant including 23 early poems.

Contemporary author George Puttenham wrote in the *Art of English Poetrie* (1589), “And in her Majesties time that now is are sprong up an other crew of Courtly makers Noble men and Gentlemen of her Majesties owne servauntes, who have written excellently well as it would appeare if their doings could be found out and made publicke with the rest, of which number is first that noble Gentleman Edward Earle of Oxford” (Nelson 386) In 1622, Henry Peacham published *The Compleat Gentleman*, which not only ranked Oxford as the best poet of the Elizabethan age but failed to even mention William Shakespeare, a telling omission (Anderson, Epilogue).

In the time of our late Queene Elizabeth, which was truly a golden Age (for such a world of refined wits, and excellent spirits it produced, whose like are hardly to be hoped for, in any succeeding Age)

above all others, who honoured Poesie with their pennes and practise (to omit her Majestie, who had a singular gift herein) were Edward Earle of Oxford, the Lord Buckhurst, Henry Lord Paget; our Phoenix, the noble Sir Philip Sidney, M. Edward Dyer, M. Edmund Spenser, M. Samuel Daniel, with sundry others;

Oxford had access to the best education the age could provide, first with private tutors, then at St. John's College at Cambridge University. He studied law at Gray's Inn. He had direct access to the vast libraries of Sir Thomas Smith and Sir William Cecil while growing up in their homes, an important point given that public libraries did not exist in Elizabethan England. He became fluent in French, Italian and Latin. He traveled to France, Germany and Italy for 16 months and spent time in the courts of France and Italy, where 10 of Shakespeare's plays are set. He could write convincingly about the nobility because he was the senior Earl of the Elizabethan Court. Equally important, de Vere had a theatrical background, serving as patron of two theatrical troupes, Oxford's Men and Oxford's Boys. *Shakespeare's Sonnets* complain of the maladies of old age, lameness, and the loss of his good name, all which Oxford had to endure. Although subjective, the weight of literary and historical evidence in Oxford's favor suggests a substantive starting point for his candidacy.

Shakspeare, by contrast, had no known formal education and never travelled outside of England. According to the archival records, he was a successful businessman, real estate investor and actor in the Lord Chamberlain's Men. He was relatively young when the *Sonnets* were written and was not known to have been lame or to have suffered a tarnished reputation. Given the disparities in education, access to libraries, the literary world and worldliness, it would not be inappropriate to start both men out at an equal 50/50 probability of Shakespearean authorship despite the near consensus of scholarly opinion to the contrary.

However, bowing to the weight of academic scholarship and giving Shakspeare the benefit of the doubt, for the sample analysis that follows, Oxford will start at a 5% probability of authorship with Shakspeare at 95%, $P(\text{Oxford/Author}) = P(\text{OA}) = 0.05$, $P(\text{Oxford/Not Author}) = P(\text{ONA}) = 0.95$. A higher starting point could be justified, and a lower one could be taken as well. However, 5% is not unreasonable based on the literary, historical, and biographical evidence in Oxford's favor and his popularity among non-Stratfordians as the leading alternative authorship candidate. The choice of a starting probability, however, is subjective and the reader is invited to choose a starting point that seems most reasonable and appropriate for the analysis.

Once a starting point is selected, the first key piece of evidence available to input into the Bayesian analysis is the start of Shakespearean publication.

The first publication ascribed to William Shakespeare appeared in 1593 as the long poem *Venus and Adonis*, the same year that Oxford ceases publication. “Oxford’s 23 acknowledged poems were written in youth, and, because he was born in 1550, Looney proposed that they were the prelude to his mature work and that this began in 1593 with *Venus and Adonis*. This theory is supported by the coincidence that Oxford’s poems apparently ceased just before Shakespeare’s work began to appear” (Leubering). This timing is crucial to the Oxfordian theory of authorship. For the Bayesian analysis, the first event E_1 is the concatenation of two actions: the first is that Shakespeare’s works begin to appear in print and that Oxford’s works cease appearing in print in the very same year, 1593. The probability of both instances occurring in that same year is the probability of E_1 occurring, $P(E_1)$, given that Shakespeare first starts publishing in 1593.

The first poetry attributable to Oxford was published in 1573. He died in 1604. If Oxford is the author writing under a pen name for a specific reason, such as a desire to distance himself from the political and satirical nature of the works, it is not surprising that his published poetry would cease as Shakespeare’s begins to appear. Assuming this is the case, the probability of E_1 given that Oxford is the author could be as high as 1, $P(E_1 | OA) = 1$.

But if Oxford is not the true author writing under a pseudonym, there is only about a 1 in 30 chance of these two instances being coincident by pure chance in the same year, 1593, $P(E_1 | ONA) = 0.0333$, treating E_1 as a random event. In the absence of a specific and relevant historical reason why Oxford should permanently cease publishing precisely in 1593 at the age of 43 (i.e., he departs England never to return or the Queen issues an edict banning his poetry, etc.), the mathematical probability must account for the unlikely event that he should decide to completely stop publishing in the same year that Shakespeare begins to do so, given the 31-year period from the start of Oxford’s publishing career to his death (1573–1604). To assume these occurrences are uncorrelated presents a steep probabilistic hurdle for event E_1 .

However, Oxford’s departure from publishing at the age of 43 could be treated as a form of early retirement. In a recent meta-analysis, the factors considered affecting early retirement were family obligations, organizational pressures, workplace time for retirement, job stress, job satisfaction, income, financial security, physical health, and mental health (Topa et al). Even if these factors could be appropriately evaluated in the case of Edward de Vere, it is not clear that modern statistical retirement models would apply to him. Alternatively, aggregating the ages of final publication for a series of poets who were Oxford’s contemporaries yields an average age of last publication of 47.3, with a standard deviation of 10.6. Based on these statistics and assuming an underlying Gaussian distribution the probability of

retirement from publishing at age 43 for the Earl of Oxford would be 6.9%, $P(E_1 | \text{ONA}) = 0.069$ (Probability Calculator).

Incorporating the above probabilities of this timing evidence into the Bayesian inference calculation, the first iteration raises belief in Oxfordian authorship to a 43% probability, while Shakspeare falls from 95% probability of authorship to $1 - 0.433 = .567$ or $\sim 57\%$. (Equation 6)

$$P(\text{OA} | (E_1)) = \frac{P(\text{OA})P(E_1 | (\text{OA}))}{P(\text{OA})P(E_1 | (\text{OA})) + P(\text{ONA})P(E_1 | (\text{ONA}))} = \frac{(0.05)(1)}{(0.05)(1) + (0.95)(0.069)} = 0.433$$

The first timing event is significant and substantially affects belief in these two authorship candidates, placing them on nearly equal footing. However, significant assumptions have gone into calculation of the E_1 probabilities. The reader is invited to make his or her own assumptions and calculate probabilities for this event that seems most logical and reasonable.

The second piece to the Bayesian framework involves the multi-year gap in the publication record of the plays occurring in 1604, contemporaneously with the death of Oxford, an event designated as E_2 for this analysis, consisting of the concatenation of the break in publication *and* the death of Oxford the same year. Oxford's recent biographer, Mark Anderson (2005), notes that from 1593 through 1603 the publication of new plays appeared at the rate of two per year and whenever an inferior or pirated text was published it was typically followed by a genuine text described on the title page as "newly augmented" or "corrected." After the publication of the Q1 and Q2 *Hamlet* in 1603 and 1604, no new plays were published until 1608. Anderson observes that, "After 1604, the 'newly correct[ing]' and 'augment[ing]' stops. Once again, the Shakespeare enterprise appears to have shut down" (Bethell 45–61).

To incorporate this result mathematically in the alternative that Oxford is not the author, note that Shakespeare's poems and plays were published over a 17-year period from 1593 to 1609. The odds that an extended multi-year gap, assuming one occurs at all, should randomly start in the record would be only about 1/15 to occur in any specific year. In the absence of some significant event in Shakspeare's life that should shut down his production, such as chronic debilitating illness or leaving England altogether, the probability for this event must be assigned randomly over the period of Shakespeare's publishing career. If Oxford is not the true author of the works, then his death should be irrelevant to the gap in Shakespeare's publication record and there should be no correlation between the two events. The odds of this happening by chance in the same year of his death would

be about $P(E_2|ONA) = 0.06666$. I know of no other way to reasonably calculate this probability, although the reader is invited to assign a probability to this event that seems most rational.

If Oxford is the real author, however, a disruption in publication would be expected upon his death and $P(E_2|OA) = 1$. Integrating this result into the analysis and iterating yields only an 8% probability that Shakspere is the true author of the works, while belief in Oxford's authorship rises to 92% (Equation 7):

$$P(OA|(E_2+E_1)) = \frac{P(OA)P(E_2|(OA))}{P(OA)P(E_2|(OA)) + P(ONA)P(E_2|(ONA))} = \frac{(0.433)(1)}{(0.433)(1) + (0.567)(0.0666)} = 0.92$$

The probabilities of belief in the traditional authorship have now been reversed from the initial starting point.

Even if we assume that contemporary references to the author "Shakespeare" are intended to refer to Shakspere, a dubious assumption (see Chiljan, Wildenthal et al), these could still be allusions to Shakspere as a front man rather than as the true author—and is therefore not a relevant factor. Moreover, this issue is already considered in the initial probability assignment weighting the scholarly consensus in Shakspere's favor. It bears mentioning again that Henry Peacham was a contemporary of Shakespeare's who very clearly alludes to Oxfordian authorship in his book, *The Complete Gentleman*.

Now consider the analytical results. From the Dartmouth study, Oxford's poems match most closely to the work of Shakespeare among the three contemporary candidates considered. If Oxford is not the author, he would have only a 1/3 chance of matching closest statistically to the works of Shakespeare in any given metric, yet he clearly comes closest over the most popular alternative candidates Christopher Marlowe and Sir Francis Bacon in all three. The odds of this happening by chance are only 1/27 or 3.7%.

This analysis is similar to that of the controversial Monty Hall problem, which generated much debate among statisticians (Monty Hall was host of the popular TV game show Let's Make a Deal, on which contestants often participated in games of chance such as the one described here). Hall offers a contestant a choice of three doors. Behind one door is a very good prize, while the other two doors hide less desirable ones. After the contestant selects a door (but before it's opened), Hall opens one of the other two doors to reveal a lesser prize. He then asks if the contestant would like to switch his or her selection to the other unopened door. Contestants almost never choose to switch; most seem to believe that their odds of having selected the right door have now increased from 1 in 3 to 1 in 2.

However, the mathematics of probability indicates that they should always switch. The odds of selecting the best door in the first round are only 1 in 3. Put another way, the odds against choosing the best door are 2/3 so they are twice as likely to have chosen the wrong door in the first round. Once one of the lesser prizes is eliminated, switching doubles their chances of winning since they were originally 2/3 likely to have been wrong but become 2/3 likely to be right by switching to another door. Although there was considerable furor over the right strategy, the controversy was settled when Monte Carlo simulations conducted at Los Alamos confirmed that contestants who switched won 66.7 percent of the time while contestants who stuck with their first choice won only 33.3 percent of the time (Wikipedia, Monty Hall).

This is why Oxford is so unlikely to have been the closest statistical match in all three analytical categories in the event that Shakspere is the true author. As in the Monte Hall problem, his work is twice as likely not to be closest as to be closest statistically to the works of Shakespeare in any given text analytic, if none of the three candidates is the true author of Shakespeare's works. He therefore must beat long odds to match most closely in all three analytics if none of them are the author and the comparison is just random, $P(E_3 | ONA) = P(E_4 | ONA) = P(E_5 | ONA) = 0.333$. If Oxford is the true author, then he would be expected to be closest statistically in every analytic and $P(E_3 | OA) = P(E_4 | OA) = P(E_5 | OA) = 1$. Incorporating these probabilities into the Bayesian formula iteratively and performing the analysis as shown above increases belief in Oxford as the author to $P(OA) = .9968$ or 99.7%, while belief in Shakspere as the true author drops to 0.3%.

Lastly, Oxford was compared to eight of his contemporary authors in the text mining analysis and clustered closest to the earliest poems attributed to Shakespeare. There is only a 1/9 chance or a probability ~11% of this happening randomly if Oxford is not the true author of the works, $P(E_6 | ONA) = 0.111$. In this case, Oxford would be no more likely to cluster next to *Venus and Adonis* and the *Rape of Lucrece* than any other author from the period. If Oxford is the real author writing under a new pen name, then his published poetry would be expected to cluster closest to the earliest works of Shakespeare and $P(E_6 | OA) = 1$. Adding these factors into the analysis and performing the last iteration of the calculation, as demonstrated above, raises the final probability in our belief in Oxford as the true author to 99.96% while our belief in Shakspere's authorship declines to 0.04%.

Stated another way, based on the above sample analysis, the Earl of Oxford is over 2,790 times more likely to have authored the works attributed to William Shakespeare than William Shakspere of Stratford. Adding the analytical findings to the Bayesian inference calculation validates the result, as the probabilities derived from the analytical outcomes approximate those derived from the temporal correlations. A similar analysis applied to Marlowe would

fail quickly as the text analytical results rule him out even in the unlikely circumstance that he somehow faked his death in 1593 in order to publish anonymously. Bacon is even more strongly ruled out by the statistical text-based analytic results.

Likewise, there are no additional factors that can be incorporated into the analysis in Shakspeare's favor. No known letters, manuscripts, or publications under a different name are ascribed to him and therefore nothing to statistically compare. Only six signatures are known, all spelled differently, and none spelled "Shakespeare" or "Shake-speare". So little is known about his life that it is difficult to determine any valid temporal correlations with the publication of the works. For instance, he seems to have had no connection whatsoever with publication of the *Sonnets* in 1609, even though he was still alive at the time. His passing in 1616 appears to have gone by unnoticed by the literary community and his will contains no reference to plays, poetry, or manuscripts.

While the choice of a starting point for the Bayesian analysis is highly subjective, it bears mentioning again that the autobiographical nature of the plays and other literary and historical factors entitle Oxford to a non-zero starting point. Most particularly, as a contemporary, Henry Peacham's allusion in 1622 to the Earl of Oxford as the best poet of the Elizabethan Age over Edmund Spenser with no mention of Shakespeare justifies a ~5% starting point for Oxfordian authorship. The only body of work conceivably surpassing Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is the portfolio of William Shakespeare. The limited corpus of Oxford, totaling 23 poems, would hardly qualify.

The Shakespearean actor and director Orson Welles once said, "I think Oxford wrote Shakespeare. If you don't agree, there are some awful funny coincidences you have to explain away" (Tynan). Bayesian analysis provides a systematic framework to evaluate these coincidences and other factors mathematically. The prime advantage of the framework is its flexibility. Factors can be added, subtracted or modified as desired or as new information becomes available. For instance, if a 1% starting point for Oxford's candidacy is used in the above example analysis, the end probability for belief in Oxfordian authorship would be 99.8% or 546 times more likely that Oxford is the true author of the works of Shakespeare than Shakspeare. While even statisticians may sometimes disagree on the calculation of probabilities, the reader is encouraged to choose his or her own starting point, factors, and probabilities based on facts and assumptions that seem most reasonable to apply to the analysis of the authorship question.

Conclusions

This analysis does not rely on autobiographical parallels in the plays, educational backgrounds, or hypotheses. It depends only on the historical timing of events and text mining analytics. The only historical information is used to assign a starting point of belief in the two leading alternatives of authorship, a starting point weighted heavily in favor of Shakspeare as the author bowing to the preponderance of scholarly opinion.

No single event or analytic proves the case for the Earl of Oxford. Rather, it is the combination of low probability events and analytics, taken in total, that leads to a final probability or likelihood for his authorship.

However, this is not all. With stunning clarity, the results of 21st Century Machine Learning and Text Mining Analytics are consistent with the views of the subject matter experts, the doubting authors of the 19th Century. In this case, historians are not subject matter experts; writers are. The opinions of each of the three great writers from the 19th Century who doubted Stratfordian authorship all agree with the analytical results from the 21st Century. Mark Twain thought the true author was a lawyer. Modern analytics are consistent with this view. Walt Whitman thought the true author of Shakespeare's canon was an Earl. The analytics are consistent with this belief. Henry James doubted that either Shakspeare or Francis Bacon wrote the plays. Text analytics are consistent with neither man being the author. Even in hindsight, the accuracy of their beliefs is astonishing. This agreement between analytics and subject matter experts represents the ultimate standard of Data Science. When the judgment of experts and the results of modern analytics converge with this level of precision, objective truth is revealed.

In the absence of an authenticated original Shakespearean manuscript it may prove impossible to determine the true creator of Shakespeare's works with a consensus of certainty. However, modern text mining and machine learning techniques can shed light on the authorship question. While the works stand on their own, uncertainty as to the true author denudes the poems and plays of historical context. As the above analysis illustrates, there is a not insignificant probability that the identity of the greatest artist of all time has been lost to our collective consciousness.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Mark. *Shakespeare By Another Name: The Biography of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, The Man Who Was Shakespeare*. Kindle Edition, 2011.
- Awati, Kailash. “A Gentle Introduction to Cluster Analysis Using R,” 2015. <https://eight2late.wordpress.com/2015/07/22/a-gentle-introduction-to-cluster-analysis-using-r/>.
- Bethell, Tom. “The Case for Oxford (and Reply)”. *Atlantic Monthly*. October 1991, 268:4, 45–61, 74–78. Retrieved December 16, 2010.
- Blakemore, Bill (October 14, 2011). “‘Anonymous’: Was Shakespeare A Fraud?”. *ABC News*. Retrieved August 26, 2012.
- Encyclopedia Britannica. Entry on Bayesian Analysis. https://www.britannica.com/science/Bayesian-analysis?utm_campaign=b-extension&utm_medium=chrome&utm_source=ebinsights&utm_content=Bayesian%20analysis.
- Fienberg, S. E., and M.J. Schervish. “The Relevance of Bayesian Inference for the Presentation of Statistical Evidence and for Legal-Decision-Making” *Boston University Law Review*, 66, 771–88, 1986.
- Kraft, Stephanie A, Devan Duenas, Benjamin S. Wilfond, and Katrina Goddard. “The evolving landscape of expanded carrier screening: challenges and opportunities”. *Genetics in Medicine*. 21 (4): 790–797. doi:10.1038/s41436-018-0273-4. PMC 6752283. PMID 30245516.
- Leubering, J.E. Entry on “Edward De Vere, 17th Earle of Oxford,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, current online edition.
- Londré, Felicia. “Hamlet as Autobiography,” *Bulletin of the Faculty of Letters*, Hosei University (Tokyo, Japan), No. 39 (1993). Republished on the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship website.
- Nelson, Alan H. *Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*. Liverpool University Press, 2003.
- Niederkorn, William S. “The Shakespeare Code, and Other Fanciful Ideas from the ‘Traditional Camp’”, *The New York Times*, August 30, 2005.

- Probability Calculator. <https://www.calculator.net/probability-calculator.html?val2mean=47.3&val2deviation=10.578&val2lb=42&val2rb=44&calctype=normal&x=53&y=18#probofnd>.
- Sabo, Tom. <https://blogs.sas.com/content/sascom/2018/05/29/5-remarkable-uses-for-text-analytics/>.
- Seletsky, Oleg, Tiger Huang, and William Henderson-Frost. "The Shakespeare Authorship Question," Dartmouth College, December 12, 2007, 1–13. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.123.7146&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.
- Sturrock, Peter. *Shakespeare, A Scientific Approach to the Authorship Question*. Palo Alto, CA; Exoscience Publishing, 2013. <https://shakespeare.oxfordfellowship.org/aka-shakespeare-scientific-approach-authorship-question/>.
- Topa, Gabriela, Marco Depolo, and Carlos-Maria Alcover, "Early Retirement: A Meta-Analysis of Its Antecedent and Subsequent Correlates" *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4 January 2018. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02157.
- Tynan, Kenneth. *Personna Grata*. London: Putnam, 1954.
- Wikipedia. Entry on "Monty Hall Problem" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monty_Hall_problem.
- Williams, Janet. August 6, 2018. <https://www.promptcloud.com/blog/9-best-examples-of-text-mining-analysis/>.



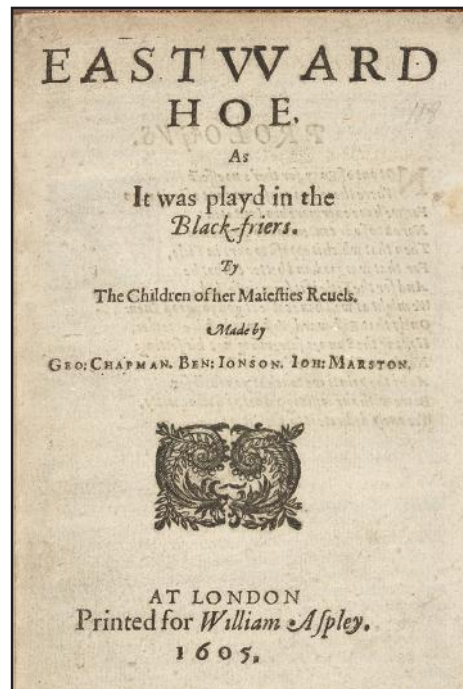
*Are the Paratexts of *Sejanus His Fall* an Homage to Edward de Vere?*

by Heidi J. Jannsch

In her 2019 *Oxfordian* article “Why was Edward de Vere Defamed on Stage—and His Death Unnoticed?” Katherine Chiljan summarizes the apparent disregard of Edward de Vere’s passing in June 1604 and discusses the attempts by Ben Jonson, John Marston and George Chapman to preserve the reputation of the Earl in their 1605 play *Eastward Ho*. Chiljan suggests that the imprisonment of Jonson and Chapman following the release of *Eastward Ho* may have in fact been a punishment for their earlier collaboration on *Love’s Martyr*, but another, more contemporary publication also featured the names of these authors and may have also been an attempt to preserve the Earl’s memory. Is it possible that led by Jonson, poets and playwrights, including Chapman, Marston and others, were acknowledging de Vere’s contributions to literature within the paratexts included in the 1605 publication of *Sejanus His Fall*? An examination of the poems preceding *Sejanus*¹ suggests that the authors were attempting to provide a documented tribute to the recently deceased Oxford despite having been directed to remain silent about his literary activities.

First performed at court in 1603, *Sejanus* was apparently well received, but later “hissed off the stage” when performed for the public at The Globe in 1604 (Jonson and Ayres 58–59). The play was entered into the Stationers’ Register in November 1604, but not printed until after the copyright changed hands to Thomas Thorpe in August 1605. Jonson later stated he was accused of “popery and treason” for *Sejanus*, but similar to the questions surrounding

the accusations from *Eastward Ho*, it is not clear exactly when the accusations were made or if they applied to the performance or the publication of the play.² Donaldson indicates that the publication of *Sejanus*, “with the elaborate annotation...vouching for the play’s historical accuracy, together with the free admission that the text ‘in all its numbers is not the same as that which was acted on the public stage’ seems to imply that troubles had already overtaken the play after its first performance...” But he also admits “given these uncertainties, it is not easy to know precisely what the fuss was about when Jonson was summoned before the Privy Council, and how exactly the charges of popery and treason were sustained” (Donaldson 190).



Eastward Ho title page, 1605.

What is known, however, is that both *Sejanus* and *Eastward Ho* were first published in the same period—between August and September of 1605. At the same time, efforts were being made to remove Oxford from the historical record. In his paper, “The Use of State Power to Hide Edward de Vere’s Authorship of the Works Attributed to ‘William Shake-speare,’” James Warren writes “those who controlled state power believed it was necessary to separate the plays from the court in the public mind, and the best way they found to do that was by cutting the connection between the plays and the author.” He goes on to describe the time frame of these efforts:

It was perhaps only after James was securely on the throne—in the final year of Oxford’s life and in the years immediately following his death—that Robert Cecil, with future generations in mind, sought to carry out the full-scale effort to airbrush Oxford from the historical record that had begun earlier (Warren 20, my italics)

Jonson, Chapman, and Marston were willing to put their names in print on *Eastward Ho* to defend de Vere even though, as Chiljan relates, “authorities

Heidi J. Jannsch holds a BA in English from The College of New Jersey, with a background in printing and religious education. She currently works in the county library system and is pursuing a graduate degree in Information and Library Science at Rutgers University. Her research has appeared in *Notes and Queries*, the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, and the *De Vere Society Newsletter*.

evidently preferred a wholesale blackout of eulogies for, or discussion about, Oxford/Shakespeare.” Might these authors have also attempted to “enlighten” the blackout at this time in the publication of *Sejanus*? An examination of the *Sejanus* paratexts indicates that this may have indeed been the case.

Interpreting the *Sejanus* Paratexts

In his article, “The Ambiguous Ben Jonson: Implications for Assessing the Validity of the First Folio Testimony,” Richard Whalen considers Jonson’s involvement in the prefatory matter of Shakespeare’s First Folio, commenting that “readers were on the alert for ambiguous passages” (Whalen 134).

Whalen notes that “deliberate ambiguity was a common literary practice in the dangerous political climate of Jonson’s day and...writers like Jonson resorted to it when expressing unwelcome truths that might offend and lead to reprisals or punishment” (Whalen 127).



Ben Jonson (c. 1617), by Abraham Blyenberch; oil on canvas painting at the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Is it possible that Jonson used his talent for ambiguity to challenge the “wholesale blackout of eulogies” and attempted to honor Oxford in 1605? If this were his intention, the paratexts of *Sejanus* would have been a good place to make this attempt. In *Censorship and Interpretation: the Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*, Annabel Patterson states:

In general, late modern criticism has not paid enough attention to the interpretive status of introductory materials in early modern texts. All too often given over to the province of bibliographers, or even omitted from standard editions, dedications, engraved title pages, commendatory poems and epigraphs are lost to sight. *Yet often their function is to alert the reader to his special responsibilities* (Patterson 48, my italics)

Because modern scholars have not traditionally paid close attention to the prefatory materials of Elizabethan texts, they may have overlooked these alerts. However, Patterson notes the “provocative semantics of the pre-text was recognized by law, when in the Printing Act of 1662 required that all ‘Titles, Epistles, Prefaces, Proems, Preambles, Introductions, Tables, Dedications,’ be brought to the licenser for scrutiny along with the main body of the text” (Patterson 48). Prior to this act, then, writers like Jonson must have known that their paratexts might not be as closely examined as the works themselves and may have employed them to convey provocative information to readers, hence making the requirement in the 1662 Act necessary.

Jonson's Epistle and the Second Pen

Jonson states in his *Sejanus* epistle "To the Readers" that the subject matter of the play is in no way a statement on any current events or people and provides his sources for the abundant marginal notes included throughout the play to reinforce this fact.³

He goes on to state that he has removed all the contributions of a "second Pen" whom he describes as "so happy a Genius." Although this unnamed writer originally had a "good share" of the play, Jonson tells readers he removed this share and replaced it with his own, inferior material:

Lastly I would informe you, that this Booke, in all numbers, is not the same with that which was acted on the publick Stage, wherein a second Pen had good share: in place of which I haue rather chosen, to put weaker (and no doubt less pleasing) of mine own, then to defraud so happy a *Genius* of his right, by my loathed usurpation.

It has been suggested that "the second Pen" was either William Shakespeare or George Chapman (Chambers, III, 368). Jonson tells readers he has removed all the sections written by the other author, however, so there is no way to make a definite identification based on the text.

Of course, this may have been the point. Jonson's mention of the "second Pen" implies there is another author he wants us to be aware of without mentioning the name of the author or leaving any trace of the author's work in this publication. If the play is all Jonson's, why mention another author at all? William W.E. Slights, in *Ben Jonson and the Art of Secrecy*, calls his insistence that he has removed the contributions "...curious—and more than a bit suspicious..." (Slights 6). Chapman and Marston added their names to *Eastward Ho*—so if the co-author of *Sejanus* was one of them, or anyone else for that matter, why not give them credit for the collaboration?

In her examination of Jonson's work, Patterson notes that, "Disclaimers of topical intention are not to be trusted, and are more likely to be entry codes to precisely that kind of reading they protest against" (Patterson 57). So, Jonson's mention of the removal of all contributions of the "second Pen" might be primarily intended

Lastly I would informe you, that this Booke, in all numbers, is not the same with that which was acted on the publick Stage, wherein a second Pen had good share: in place of which I haue rather chosen, to put weaker (and no doubt less pleasing) of mine own, then to defraud so happy a *Genius* of his right, by my loathed usurpation.

Fare you well. And if you read farther of me, and like, I shall not be afraid of it though you praise me out.

Neque enim mihi cornes fibra est.

But that I should plant my felicity, in your generall saying *Good*, or *Well*, &c. were a weaknesse which the better sort of you might worthily couteenme, if not absolutely hate me for.

BEN. IONSON. and no such.

Quem Palma negata mactum, denata reducis opimum.

From Jonson's "To the Readers" in *Sejanus His Fall* 1605.

to bring attention to this second Pen's contributions, serving as a "disclaimer not to be trusted." If there was an attempt to "airbrush" this author out of the historical record—as Warren and Chiljan suggest was happening with Oxford at this time—mentioning a second author without providing his name would make sense if Jonson's collaborator was Oxford.

Jonson then signs this letter in a unique way, as "BEN.JONSON. and no such." The next line is a quote in Latin from Horace "Quem palma negata macrum, donate reducit opimum.", which translates as: '[whom] denial of the palm sends...home lean, its bestowal plump' (Jonson and Ayres 52).⁴

Jonson's signature is followed by "and no such". This phrase could indicate that he meant to be self-deprecating here, as if signing his work, "Ben Jonson, not one to be affected by the weight of the palms (your praises) anyway, since I am already such an weighty writer." Modern reprints of the letter sometimes change the period after "such" to a comma to accomplish this interpretation, but with Jonson's reputation for overseeing the printings of his publications, the punctuation most likely appeared as he intended in the 1605 edition. Philip Ayres indicates that in this edition of *Sejanus*.

Very few errors were made, even in Jonson's copious marginal notes, and most of those were put right in proof, a testimony to the care of Eld and of Jonson, who not only presented his printer with scrupulously prepared fair copy but *clearly supervised the printing process itself, altering in proof tiny details that to a printer could hardly seem to need changing*" (Jonson and Ayres 2, my italics)

Since Jonson had a reputation for ensuring that his works were printed with accuracy, it is reasonable to believe that the arrangement and punctuation in *To the Readers* were as he intended. If Jonson wanted readers to be aware of his co-author—which he seems to have intended by mentioning the "second Pen" to begin with—his signature can also be understood to include a cosignatory. The phrase "no such" has the same meaning as "nonesuch" defined as "something which is unparalleled, incomparable, or unrivalled," as used by Robert Greene in *Menaphon*:

"This paragon, this nonesuch..."⁵

"BEN.JONSON. and no such." does not appear to have been used by Jonson in any other prefatory letters,⁶ so it could be intended here as a reminder that the work was a collaboration with an unparalleled "Genius" writer whose own work made Jonson's appear "weaker" by comparison. Could Jonson be indicating that he doesn't really want us to exclude the second Pen/ happy Genius/ paragon writer from our thoughts just yet? Examining the rest of the paratexts with an eye for the "second Pen" reveals several additional anomalies.

George Chapman's Cyrrhan Poet

In commentaries on *Sejanus*, George Chapman is sometimes suggested as a candidate for the title of “second Pen.”⁷ One reason for this suggestion is Chapman's commendatory poem “*In SELANUM BEN IONSONI Et Musis, et sibi in Deliciis*,” translated by Philip Ayres as “On Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*—his own and the muses' favorite” (Jonson and Ayres 53).

When considering whether these authors were intending to acknowledge de Vere without naming him, this translation is quite interesting. Attributing the authorship of *Sejanus* as Ben Jonson's “own and the muses' favorite” blurs the attribution: it can be read as meaning two authors, one Ben Jonson, and the other, a favorite of the muses. In Edmund Spenser's dedication to Oxford in *Fairie Queene* (1590) de Vere is described as being one “most dear” to the muses (the Heliconian imps).

And also for the love, which thou doest beare
To th' Heliconian ymps, and they to thee,
They unto thee, and thou to them most deare....

While John Soowthern in *Pandora* (1584) also wrote of de Vere being respected by the muses:

De Vere merits a silver Pen
Eternally to write his honour.
A man so honoured as thee,
And both of the Muses and me.

Chapman referring to Oxford as “the muses' favorite” would be consistent with these descriptions. A later compliment indicated that he held Oxford in high esteem. In *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*, Chapman would write admiringly about Oxford, stating

...He was beside of spirit passing great,
Valiant, and learn'd, and liberall as the Sunne,
Spoke and writ sweetly, or of learned subjects,
Or of the discipline of public weals;
And 'twas the Earle of Oxford...⁸

The phrase “liberall as the Sunne” used by Chapman is acknowledging Oxford's patronage to writers by associating him with Apollo, the patron of the arts. In his video presentation “John Gerard Knew...,” Alexander Waugh notes several writers in addition to Chapman who associated de Vere with Apollo including Gabriel Harvey, John Soowthern, Thomas Nashe, Thomas Watson, Angel Day, Lucas de Heere, Henry Lok, Francis Meres, John Weever, Thomas Edwards, and Francis Davison.⁹

In his *Sejanus* poem, Chapman provides almost six pages of poetry that has been described as "... convoluted and cloudily metaphoric..." (Barton 92). But in line 17 of the fourth page of his poem, Chapman first mentions Apollo, calling him "the great Cyrrhan Poet" and launches into a rant about Poet-haters being hurled into darkness and describes how he, himself, is guarding the "Poetique Name."

A reference to "the great CYRRHAN Poet" on the fourth page of Chapman's Poem in Sejanus His Fall—1605.

*What, what shall we elect in these extreames?
Now by the Shafts of the great CYRRHAN Poet,
That beare all light, that is, about the world;
I would haue all dull Poet-Haters know it,
They shall be soule-bound, and in darknesse hurld,
At thousand yeares, (as Sathan was, their Syre)
Ere Any worthy, the Poetique Name,
(Might I, that warme but, at the Muses fire,
Presume to guard it) should let Deathlesse Fame
Light halfe a beame of all her hundred Eyes,
At his dimme Taper, in their memories.
Flie, flie, you are too neare; so odorous Flowers
being held too neere the Sensor of our Sense,
Render not pure, nor so sincere their powers,
As being held a little distance thence;
Because much troubled Earthy parts improue them:
Which mixed with the Odors we exhall,
Dovitiuate what we drawe in. But remooue them
A little space, the Earthy parts do fall,*

A few lines later, Chapman refers to "Our Phoebus" followed by a listing of members of the Privy Council. This second Apollo reference seems to mean King James, a distinction from the Cyrrhan Poet section where Chapman is referring to Apollo in the artistic sense. Interestingly, Ayres attributes "Our Phoebus" to King James, but he doesn't attempt to associate the aforementioned "great Cyrrhan Poet" as meaning anyone other than the god Apollo (Jonson and Ayres 58–9).

Apart from distinguishing one incarnation of Apollo from the other (one as the patron of the arts and one as the divine ruler) would there be any significance to using the cognomen "Cyrrhan Poet" to imply the recently deceased Oxford? A connection with Cyrrha as a final resting place for poets is presented in a poem by Giovanni Quartario lamenting the death of Petrarch: *Carmen Funereum de Morte Petrarce* (*Funereal song on the death of Petrarch.*) In "Placing Petrarch's Legacy," David Lummus provides a translation of the portion where Quartario comments on where Petrarch should be buried:

Therefore, let us perform his funeral with divine honor. Let us bury the most excellent of the poets on the high summit of Cyrrha. Let a

sculpted pyramid standing forth from the air on three columns truly bear witness as his eternal tomb. And let engraved golden words teach about the man lying inside. And let Apollo, residing there, confirm the splendor of his work. But may Nyssa not envy the gift given to Cyrrha. The Muses have approved. Their grieving sighs have instructed.

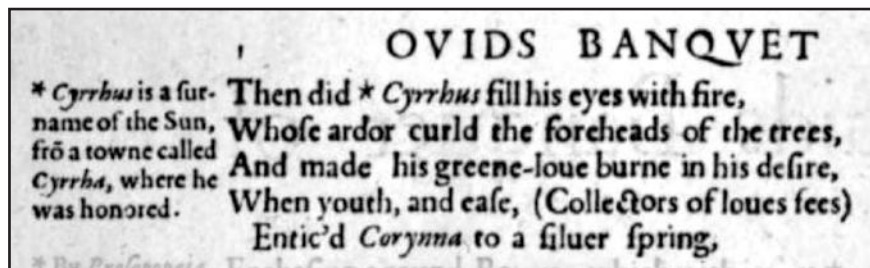
Later in his career Chapman did translate “Petrarch’s Seven Penitential Psalms” but there is no way to know if he was familiar with Quartario’s laments about the poet or if he intended readers to make the association between Petrarch’s and Oxford’s deaths. It can be seen, however, that Chapman references Cyrrha in terms similar to those he used for Oxford. In the 1595 *Ovid’s Banquet of Sence* Chapman had written:

Then did Cyrrhus fill his eyes with fire,
Whose ardor curld the foreheads of the trees,
And made his greene-loue burne in his desire,
When youth, and ease, (Collectors of loues fees)
Entic’d *Corynna* to a siluer spring...

Chapman includes a marginal note for readers:

Cyrrhus is a surname of the Sun, from a towne called *Cyrrha*, where he was honored.

Chapman using the title “Cyrrhan Poet” when he had previously defined Cyrrhus as a “surname of the Sun” would support the theory he was referring to Oxford, whom he later described as “liberall as the sunne.” If he did intend to refer to de Vere, his placing the title “CYRRHAN Poet” in large capital letters in the 17th line of the page would have been an appropriate place to suggest the 17th Earl, using an allusion to the patron of the arts in language similar to his later comments about the man.



Chapman’s marginal note from Ovid’s Banquet of Sence.

Years later, in *The Times Displayed in Six Sestiyads*, Samuel Sheppard would mention Apollo in regard to *Sejanus*, insinuating that Apollo had dictated the work to Jonson. This would seem to make Apollo the “second Pen” Jonson

was referring to in the epistle. Sheppard's mention of *Sejanus* in the stanza praising Ben Jonson follows stanzas about Shake-speare that have been decrypted by Stritmatter and Waugh and connect the name Shake-speare to an aristocratic writer.¹⁰ Sheppard's allusion to *Sejanus* immediately following his own cryptography may indicate he was aware of the attempts to covertly commemorate de Vere's work in the *Sejanus* commendatory poems.

While the section in Sheppard's poem lauding Shake-speare begins "*Apollo rageth that the noble bay/ Is worn by those that do not merit it...*" Chapman's own mention of guarding the Poetique Name and Poet-Haters being hurled into darkness could be metaphors for the ignorance that would result from the removal of de Vere's name from his literary accomplishments. Chapman seems to acknowledge the danger of mentioning this topic and retreats from it with "flie, flie, you are too neare..."¹¹

After Chapman concludes this poem, it is followed by another one he wrote without a title. A clue to the intended addressee of this second poem may be in the form of the poem itself, however, as it is a Shakespearean sonnet. In fact, several of the other commendatory poems in *Sejanus* are also in sonnet form, but, sonnet or not, the remaining poems have one interesting similarity: none of them is actually addressed to Jonson.

The Sejanus Commendatory Poem Titles

At the very beginning of his epistle *To the Readers*, Jonson draws attention to the commendatory poems that follow by stating "the voluntary Labours of my Friends prefix to my Booke, have relieved me in much, whereat (without them) I should necessarily have touched..."

Although the poems included in the 1605 publication of *Sejanus* do not provide any information that specifies they are addressed to Oxford, they do appear to be a concerted effort to acknowledge an author without using his name.¹² Of the nine poems, only the first one by Chapman names Jonson in the title. Chapman then offers an untitled sonnet, and this and the remaining poems do not mention Jonson in the titles or the text. The ambiguously addressed titles include the following:

For his worthy Friend, the Author
 To the Deserving Author
 To his learned, and beloved Friend, upon his aequall worke.
 Amicis, amici nostril dignissimi, dignissimis, Epigramma
 (Tranlation—
 To the most worthy friends of our most worthy friend)
 Upon Sejanus
 To him that hath so excell'd on this excellent subject
 To the most understanding Poet

Are the Paratexts of *Sejanus His Fall* an Homage to Edward de Vere?

This list might not seem extraordinary at first glance, since commendatory poems of the time utilized a variety of addresses and forms, but when compared to the poems included in the paratexts of Jonson's *Volpone*, printed just two years later, a striking contrast can be seen. As shown in the table below, Jonson's name is all but absent from the *Sejanus* poems while he is consistently named in all but one of the *Volpone* poems, in the title, the text or (in some cases) both.

Thomas Roe and George Chapman contributed poems to both *Sejanus* and *Volpone*. As noted above, in *Sejanus*, Chapman's first poem's title can be interpreted as including a second author, while his second poem lacks a title. In his contribution to *Volpone*, Chapman is specific about to whom he is referring: "*To his deare Friend, Beniamin Ionson.*" Thomas Roe has one ambiguously addressed poem in *Sejanus* "*To his learned, and beloved Friend, upon his aequall worke*" while one of his two contributions in *Volpone* is much more direct: "*To my friend Mr. Jonson. Epigramme.*"¹³

Commendatory Poem Titles Comparison, indicating whether Jonson is named in title OR text			
<i>Sejanus His Fall</i> ; Commendatory Poem Title *indicates sonnet form		<i>Volpone</i> Commendatory Poem Title	
<i>In SELANUM BEN IONSONI Et Musis, et sibi in Deliciis.</i> (On Ben Jonson's <i>Sejanus</i> —his own and the muses' favorite.)	Yes	<i>AD UTRAMQUE ACADEMIAM, De BENLAMIN JONSONION</i> (To each University, concerning Ben Jonson)	Yes
(Untitled)*	No	<i>Amicissimo & meritissimo BEN: IONSON.</i> (To the most friendly and deserving Ben Jonson)	Yes
<i>For his worthy Friend, the Author*</i>	No	<i>To my friend Mr. Jonson. Epigramme.</i>	Yes
<i>To the Deserving Author*</i>	No	<i>To the Reader. Upon the Work</i>	No
<i>To his learned, and beloved Friend, upon his aequall worke.</i>	No	<i>To my deare friend, Mr. Beniamin Ionson, upon his FOXE</i>	Yes
<i>Amicis, amici nostril dignissimi, dignissimis, Epigramma</i> (To the most worthy friends of our most worthy friend)	No	<i>To my good friend, Mr. Ionson</i>	Yes
<i>Upon Sejanus*</i>	No	<i>To the Ingenious Poet</i>	Yes
<i>To him that bath so excell'd on this excellent subject*</i>	No	<i>To his deare Friend, Beniamin Ionson</i>	Yes
<i>To the most understanding Poet*</i>	No	<i>To my worthily-esteemed Mr. Ben: Ionson.</i>	Yes
		<i>To the true Mr. in his Art, B. Ionson.</i>	Yes

Both publications also include one poem by an author with unidentified initials (Jonson and Ayres 69; Jonson and Parker 76), but *Sejanus* includes two by authors using pseudonyms, CYGNVS and ΦΙΛΟΣ.¹⁴ If the intention of the poets was to acknowledge the great pseudonymous writer, William Shake-speare, then including two poems by authors using pen names to sign their sonnets may have been meant as another clue as to the true addressee.

In addition to his reputation for overseeing the printing of his works, Jonson also had a reputation for disliking sonnets. While none of the poems in *Volpone* are in this form, six of the *Sejanus* poems are written in various sonnet forms. Jonson composed only six sonnets during his entire thirty-year writing career,¹⁵ so it seems strange that many of his fellow writers would choose this form to commend *him*. Edward de Vere, on the other hand, was a nephew of Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, who “created the rhyming meter and quatrain divisions of the Elizabethan or Shakespearean form of sonnet” (Whittemore 37). Although *Shake-speare’s Sonnets* was not published until four years after *Sejanus*, sonnets had been publicly associated with Shake-speare by 1598 when Francis Meres commented in *Palladis Tamia: Wit’s Treasury*:

The witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous & honey-tongued Shake-speare, witness his Venus and Adonis, his Lucrece, his sugared sonnets among his private friends, &c.

Sejanus Ever After

If Edward de Vere had been the co-author of *Sejanus*, presumably those who had seen the production at court would have known this fact and may have seen the nod to the Earl in the mention of the “second Pen,” the Apollo references, the sonnet forms, and absence of an author’s name in the indirect poem titles. Perhaps these attempts at a commemoration were let go since the general public would not have understood the references. Or perhaps not. As noted above, it is unclear to what the *Sejanus* “popery and treason” charges actually applied, so perhaps part of the punishment of Jonson and Chapman during this time was for this attempted homage to de Vere.

Sejanus was not published in quarto again but Jonson’s 1616 folio *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson* does include the play. The 1616 edition, however, contains only two of the commendatory poems from the 1605 publication: Hugh Holland’s sonnet “For his worthy friend, the Author” and an edited version of Chapman’s first poem with the alternate title “Upon Sejanus.” This edit served to remove Jonson’s name from the only poem in which it had been included in the first printing. There is no mention of the “second Pen” in the 1616 dedication letter addressed to Esme Stuart, and the extensive marginal notes within the 1605 text of the play were not included in the folio edition.

These alterations seem to indicate that Jonson's objectives in the publication of *Sejanus* at this point were drastically different from what they had been in 1605. However, Jonson does maintain the connection with our "second Pen" candidate in his folio by including the name Will. Shake-speare in the list of "principall Tragoedians" who acted in the play at court in 1603. Doing this ensured that *Sejanus* would continue to be associated with William Shake-speare by future readers and ultimately inspired this revealing Oxfordian examination of the 1605 edition.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express her appreciation to Roger Stritmatter and Shelly Maycock for their scholarship and support.

Endnotes

1. *Sejanus* is used throughout to indicate the play *Sejanus His Fall*.
2. In the letters written by Jonson and Chapman during their imprisonment, the two authors ask for assistance from various aristocrats but “neither Chapman nor Jonson ever explicitly mentions the printing of *Eastward Ho!* in these letters” (Brunmuller, 453). Van Fossen asks of *Eastward Ho!*: “Was it the production of the play or its publication that brought about the imprisonment of the authors? No final answer is possible on the basis of the evidence at hand” (5). A similar uncertainty is expressed by Ian Donaldson about the accusations concerning *Sejanus*.
3. Jonson describes the need for him to provide these annotations in order to defend himself from those who are casting “hilles upon Vertue.” The OED conveniently provides a denotation used by Oxford’s uncle, Arthur Golding.
 Hill, v.1—transitive. To cover, cover up; protect. Now dialect.1565
 A. Golding tr. Ovid *Fyrst Fower Bks. Metamorphosis* i. f. 6 Go hylle
 your heades.
 Casting “hilles upon Ver[tue]” would be an apt phrase to describe
 the covering of Vere’s literary opus that was happening at this time
 (see Warren).
4. Ayres cites this translation from “H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb ed. London, 1961. 413” (Jonson and Ayres 52).
5. The OED Online entry for “such” equates “no such” with “none such” and “nonsuch.” Definitions in these entries also include “none of the kind,” “A person who has no equal; a person to whom no other can be compared, a paragon,” and “the most eminent person or thing of a specified class, kind, or place.”
6. See Berger, Massai, Demetriou.
7. R.P. Corballis asserts the “second Pen” is Chapman. Referring to Corballis’ assessment, Brennan (46) denies the possibility that the term “our hearde” used in Chapman’s first poem alludes to Chapman’s troubles collaborating with Jonson on *Eastward Ho!* He is “not so convinced” and is “disinclined to corroborate Corballis’ suggestion regarding “our Hearde.” Barton is also dubious, “Chapman’s celebration of Sejanus prefixed to the 1605 quarto, is so convoluted and cloudily metaphoric that it

is impossible to be certain whether or not the poem contains a reference to the collaborative nature of the acting text. At no point, however, does he seem to intimate any involvement of his own greater than that of admiring observer” (92).

8. See Alexander and Wright.
9. Waugh, “John Gerard Knew...” 14.00.
10. See Waugh, “Samuel Sheppard Knew...”
11. A capitalized E and O in *Earthly and Odors* appearing diagonally near the end of the section may just be a happy coincidence with the initials used by de Vere on some of his early poetry. Then again, Chapman is using the metaphor of the overwhelming smell experienced when standing too close to flowers and needing to move away from them. If the E-O in the words “*Earthly*” and “*Odors*” is meant to indicate the Earl of Oxford—the very subject he needed “*flie, flie*” away from—maybe the capitalization was intentional. Seventy lines of Chapman’s poem, including the ones enabling this E-O configuration, were removed from the Folio version of 1616. The title of the poem was also changed in 1616 to read simply “*Upon Sejanus*.”
12. See Jonson, *Seianus His Fall* for the original poems and Jonson and Ayres for modernized versions.
13. Roe’s other poem addressed “*To the Reader*” is the one *Volpone* poem that does not mention Jonson by name, but epistles addressed to readers wouldn’t be expected to include the author’s name.
14. Coincidentally, the pen names CYGNVS (Latin for ‘Swan’) and ΦΙΛΟΣ (or ‘Philos’—Greek for ‘friend’ or ‘beloved’) in a covert memorial to de Vere could provide a new meaning to Jonson’s phrase used in his encomium to Shakespeare in the First Folio: “and though thou hadst small Latin and lesse Greeke from thence to honour thee I would not seeke for names...”
15. See Riddel, 193 quoting Drummond: “he cursed Petrarch for redacting Verses to Sonnets, which he said were like that Tirrants bed, wher some who were too short were racked, others too long cut short” [ll 60–63.]

Works Cited

- Alexander, Mark and Wright, Daniel. "A Few Curiosities Regarding Edward de Vere and the Writer Who Called Himself Shake-speare." http://www.authorshipstudies.org/articles/oxford_shakespeare.cfm Accessed 12 November 2020.
- Ayres, Philip J. "Jonson, Northampton, and the 'Treason' in 'Sejanus'." *Modern Philology*. 80.4 (1983): 356–363.
- Barton, Anne. *Ben Jonson, Dramatist. "Sejanus and Volpone"* Cambridge University Press. 1984.
- Berger, Thomas L, Sonia Massai, and Tania Demetriou. *Paratexts in English Printed Drama to 1642: Vol. 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Braunmuller, A.R. *A Seventeenth-Century Letter-Book*, Associated University Press, 1983.
- Brennan, Nicholas D. "The Second Pen." CUNY Academic Works, 2017.
- Chambers, E K. *The Elizabethan Stage: Volumes 1–4*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951.
- Chapman, George, Ben Jonson, and John Marston. *Eastward Ho*. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2006 (Fossen R. W. Van, ed.).
- Chapman, George. *Ouids Banquet of Sence A Coronet for His Mistresse Philosophie, and His Amorous Zodiacke. VVith a Translation of a Latine Coppie, Written by a Fryer, Anno Dom. 1400*. London, Printed by Iames Roberts for Richard Smith, 1595.
- . *The Reuenge of Bussy D'Ambois A Tragedie. as it Hath Beene often Presented at the Priuate Play-House in the White-Fryers*. VVritten by George Chapman, Gentleman. London, Printed by T[homas] S[nodham] and are to be solde by Iohn Helme, at his shop in S. Dunstones Church-yard, in Fleetstreet, 1613.
- Chiljan, Katherine. "Why was Edward de Vere Defamed on Stage—and His Death Unnoticed?" *The Oxfordian*. Volume 21, 2019. 35–64.

Are the Paratexts of *Sejanus His Fall* an Homage to Edward de Vere?

Corballis, R.P. “The ‘Second Pen’ in the Stage Version of ‘*Sejanus*.’ ” *Modern Philology*, 76: 3 (1979), 273–277. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/437318. Accessed 13 November 2020.

Donaldson, Ian. *Ben Jonson: A Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Dutton, A. Richard. “The Sources, Text, and Readers of ‘*Sejanus*’: Jonson’s ‘Integrity in the Story.’ ” *Studies in Philology*, 75: 2, 1978, 181–198. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4173966. Accessed 16 November 2020.

Herford, C.H, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn M. Simpson. *Ben Jonson: Vol.9*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967. Print. 585–632.

“hill, v.1.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/86992. Accessed 16 January 2021.

Jonson, Ben. *Seianus his fall. VVritten by ben: Ionson* London, Printed by G. Elld, for Thomas Thorpe, 1605. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2248517112?accountid=163371>

———. *Sejanus His Fall*. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1999 (Philip J. Ayres, ed.).

———. *Ben: Ionson His Volpone Or the Foxe*. London, Printed by George Eld for Thomas Thorppe, 1607.

———. *The Workes of Beniamin Ionson*. London, Printed by W: Stansby, and are to be sold by Rich: Meighen, 1616.

———. *Volpone* (Brian Parker, ed.). Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.

Lummus, David. “Placing Petrarch’s Legacy: The Politics of Petrarch’s Tomb and Boccaccio’s Last Letter.” *Renaissance Quarterly*, 70: 2, University of Chicago Press (2017), 435–473, doi:10.1086/693178. Accessed 16 March 2021.

Meres, Francis. *Palladis tamia wits treasury being the second part of wits common wealth. by francis meres maister of artes of both vniuersities* London, Printed by P. Short, for Cuthbert Burbie, and are to be solde at his shop at the Royall Exchange, 1598.

“nonsuch, n. and adj.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/128123. Accessed 16 January 2021.

- Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: the Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.
- Riddell, James A. "Cunning Pieces Wrought Perspective: Ben Jonson's Sonnets." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 87: 2, (1988), 193–212. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/27709991. Accessed 11 January 2021.
- Sheppard, S. *The Times Displayed in Six Sestyads: The First [Brace] a Presbyter, an IndePendent. the Second [Brace] an Anabaptist and a Brownist. the Third [Brace] an Antinomian and a Familist. the Fourth [Brace] a Libertine and an Arminian. the Fift [Brace] a Protestant and Eke a Papist. all these Dispute in Severall Tracts, and be Divulgers, as of Truth, so Fallacie. the Sixt [Brace] Apollo, Grieves to See the Times so Pester'd with Mechanicks Slavish Rimes*. London, Printed and are to be sold by J.P. at his shop neer the Sessions house in the Old Bayly, 1646.
- Slights, William W.E. *Ben Jonson and the Art of Secrecy*, University of Toronto Press, 2014.
- Soowthern, John. *Pandora, the Musyque of the Beautie, of His Mistresse Diana. Composed by Iohn Soowthern Gentleman, and Dedicated to the Right Honorable, Edward Deuer, Earle of Oxenford, &c. 1584. Iune. 20*. London, By John Charlewood] for Thomas Hackette, and are to be solde at his shoppe in Lumbert streete, vnder the Popes head, 1584.
- Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene Disposed into Twelue Books, Fashioning XII. Morall Vertues*. London, Printed for William Ponsonbie, 1590.
- "such, adj. and pron." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2021, www.oed.com/view/Entry/193400. Accessed 15 January 2022.
- Warren, James. "The Use of State Power to Hide Edward de Vere's Authorship of the Works Attributed to 'William Shake-speare.'" *Brief Chronicles*. VI (2015), 59–81.
- Waugh, Alexander. "John Gerard Knew..." *YouTube*, commentary by Alexander Waugh, Feb 16, 2019, <https://youtu.be/TKsTO0pB9mM>. Accessed 16 January 2021.
- . "Samuel Sheppard Knew..." *YouTube*, commentary by Alexander Waugh, Oct 27, 2020, https://youtu.be/2phnqQSM_0c. Accessed 18 January 2021.

Are the Paratexts of *Sejanus His Fall* an Homage to Edward de Vere?

Whalen, Richard. "The Ambiguous Ben Jonson: Implications for Assessing the Validity of the First Folio Testimony," *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?: Exposing an Industry in Denial*. (John M. Shahan & Alexander Waugh, eds.). Shakespeare Authorship Coalition, 2013.

Whittemore, Hank. *100 Reasons Shake-speare was the Earl of Oxford*. Forever Press, 2016.

Shake-speare's Sonnets:

Their Dates, their History, and the Story They Tell

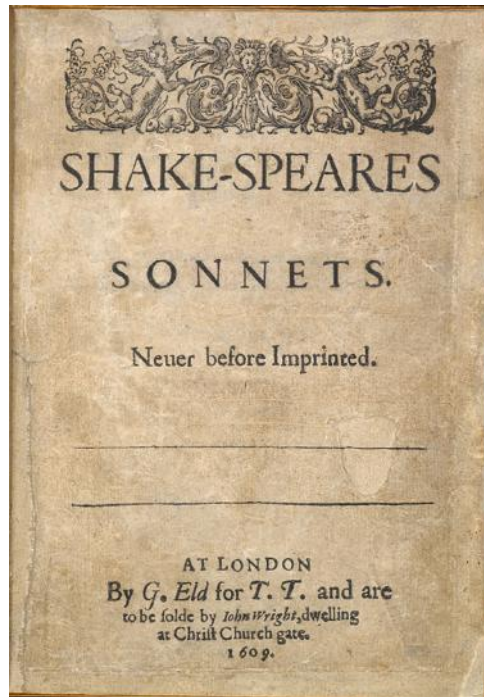
by Stephanie Hopkins Hughes

Shake-speare's Sonnets is the sole document still in existence in which the great poet divulges anything specific about his own life. Unfortunately for those who seek to place it in context with his life, it is his feelings alone that he reveals, no facts. Generations of scholars, led astray by the Stratford biography, have added layers of confusion to the questions that readers from his own time must have had as they attempted to identify the three personalities in the story. Dubbed by critics the Fair Youth, the Dark Lady, and the Rival Poet, these have remained objects of the most intense argument for centuries as the Poet himself, misidentified as William of Stratford, contributed nothing but confusion.

Locating them by means of topical events has been difficult, even impossible, because the author is just as vague about the wheres and whens as he is about the whos. External events appear through his emotional responses, too dimly to be connected to historical events with any certainty, but this has not stopped a great many from trying. A bibliography from 1979 gives 1,580 titles of books on *Shake-speare's Sonnets* alone (Hayashi). These have produced a variety of scenarios, not only for the story they tell, but for how it may have been edited by its publishers, why it wasn't published for at least a decade after it was first mentioned in print, who was responsible for having it published, the identity of the "Mr. W. H." to whom it was dedicated, and dozens of other questions demanding solutions. Much has become clear over the centuries, but questions still remain.

Due to the lack of evidence, it has become the fashion for Shakespeare scholars to refuse to comment. Some opine that it's simply impossible to know the truth, others that the Youth, the Lady and the Rival are no more than figments of Shakespeare's imagination. But for Oxfordians battling the Stratford mystique the truth about *Shake-speare's Sonnets* is crucial to proving not only who he was, but how and why his identity got lost.

The story itself is simple enough; told in two coincident sequences, the first, to the Fair Youth, the second, to the Dark Lady. The Poet, apparently no longer young, appears to have fallen in love with an attractive young aristocrat at the same time that he's sleeping with another man's mistress, a woman of dark complexion, volatile temperament, musical talent, and irresistible sex appeal. In sonnets 40–42, the Lady seduces the youth not long after she's been introduced to him, apparently by the Poet. Sonnets 133 and 134 in the sequence to the Lady refer to what we must assume is the same triangle. In other words, for some weeks or months it appears that the Poet was writing in romantic/sexual terms to or about both the Youth and the Lady at the same time. Sonnets 78–86 refer to a second poet who threatens to come between himself and the Fair Youth.



The Sonnet Tradition

When in doubt, begin with what is certain, here the history of sonneteering. According to history, the originator of the 16th-century version of the sonnet cycle was the Italian Petrarch (1304–1374), premiere poet of the European Renaissance, whose formula—14 lines divided into octet and sestet; the first a statement, the second a response—set the standard for the decade that English poets would use it to express an unrequited love. Petrarch's sonnets

Stephanie Hopkins Hughes served as editor of *The Oxfordian* for ten years, from 1998 to 2008. This paper was given at an annual conference of the *Shakespeare Oxford Society*. Her current book is *Educating Shakespeare: What He Knew and How and Where He Learned It*.

to Laura, as with Dante's canzoni to Beatrice, are addressed to women with whom they have fallen in love but who will not or cannot respond because they belong to someone else.

The English were similarly inspired by the sonnet cycles of later Italians, Tasso, Michelangelo (yes, the great sculptor) and Ariosto, and by the French Ronsard, Desportes, Du Bellay, and La Primaudaye. Although there are variations, most follow the standard format: a series of poems, sequential in time, addressed to a greatly desired but unattainable female. While earlier Petrarchan formulae had fallen by the 1590s into the stilted artificiality of what C. S. Lewis dubbed "the drab era," the English sonnet cycles of the decade reveal a fresh new appetite for spontaneity.¹

Astrophil and Stella

This trend was apparently sparked by the posthumous publication of Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, a cycle of 108 sonnets, seemingly written on a regular basis over a period of months some time before 1585 when Sidney died from wounds suffered in the Lowlands war. These express his yearning for *Stella* (Latin for *Star*); *Astrophil* (Latin for *Starlover*) gradually comes to accept that he is not going to have his moment of bliss.

Following their publication in 1590 by his sister, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, Philip's cycle was soon followed by the publication of cycles of varying lengths by poets Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, Richard Barnes, Edmund Spenser, Sir Walter Raleigh, George Gascoigne, Thomas Lodge and Henry Lok, and at least a dozen others. While it's generally been assumed that Shakespeare's came later, that may be only because it took so long for his to get published.

Because in matters of form Shakespeare followed the Petrarchan tradition, we can assume with some confidence that, apart from the division into two sequences, they were published in the order in which they were written and in which they were meant to be read; and that the first 126 were to only the one youth and the subsequent 26 to just the one Lady.

Those who claim to see other scenarios for their composition than a chronological response to real feelings about two real individuals may suggest a multitude of possibilities, but because the story told by *Shakespeare's Sonnets* is sufficiently coherent in the order in which they were published, and because it was traditional for a sonnet cycle to be written or presented as a sequence in time, we can assume, not only that they were written to real persons, but also that (with perhaps one or two exceptions) they were published in the order in which they were written. As publisher Robert Giroux, author of one of the most comprehensive and intelligent books on the subject, puts it: "Unless one accepts the order as given, chaos is come again" (177).²

As for the purpose of *Shake-speare's Sonnets*, the tradition was for the poet to express a real emotional experience with what artistry he was capable of while preserving the privacy of the one addressed. As with Sidney's *Stella*, most sonnet cycles were addressed to some *Delia* or *Phyllis*, cover names for the real object of their devotion, usually a married woman or one whose family would have been far from honored had her identity been revealed.³ Some, like Spenser's *Amoretti*, remain nameless, as do Shakespeare's. What is immediately evident to a reader is that the first 126 poems, many expressing the utmost in passionate love, many suffused with sexual imagery, were written, not to a woman, but to a youth in his teens, a fact first made known in 1778 when the great Shakespeare editor Edmund Malone reinstated both the original order, which had been scrambled, and the original pronoun, changed by prudish editors from *he* to *she*.

Him or Her?

The revelation that the greatest love poems in English had been written from one male to another so distressed the homophobic Victorians that they almost didn't recover. Having just been awakened to Shakespeare's genius, busy with turning him into a sort of literary St. George, so alarmed were they by Malone's revelation⁴ that, according to Giroux, we came within an ace of losing them altogether. The suggestion that the great Shakespeare was gay was simply intolerable. Surely this is one of the main reasons why the 19th-century authorities, tempest-tossed by the Authorship Question, lost interest in anyone but William of Stratford, about whom nothing was known, bad or good.

Although Shakespeare's contemporaries were not so easily shocked as the Victorians,⁵ the prevalence of sexual imagery may have something to do with the fact that the first edition of *Shake-speare's Sonnets* wasn't published until the sonnet craze had been over for more than a decade, why very few copies of it have turned up since, and why, when a second edition of his collected works was published in 1640, the sex of the pronoun was changed; this history that lends weight to the theory, still widely advocated, that it reflects a sexual relationship, that both men were gay (to use the present term).⁶

Yet this may well be nothing but an overreaction to the imagery, for there is nothing in *Shake-speare's Sonnets* that makes it a certainty that the Poet and the Youth had sex. Although Shakespeare makes it clear enough that both had sex at different times with the Dark Lady, there is nothing whatsoever to confirm that the Poet "made love" to the Youth in any other way than by bombarding him with poems.

Sex in the Sixteenth Century

One of the problems we face in understanding *Shake-speare's Sonnets* is the great difference between the role played by sex in the lives of the Elizabethans, their ancestors and centuries of descendants, and the role it plays in our lives today. For many centuries the governments of all nations were based on sex, that is, the results of a King having sex with his legally wed Queen, in hopes that it would lead to the birth of male heirs, who, if they survived into adulthood (a big *if* in those days) their family would continue to rule the nation. All the drama that in a democracy we associate with electing candidates they associated with the monarch's sex life. Youthful heirs to the great aristocratic titles came under the same pressure to marry and produce heirs as soon as they were physically capable.

What is Shakespeare asking during the first seventeen sonnets? He's pressuring the Youth to marry, and produce heirs, exactly what someone who was in a position to guide a young earl would have done at that time. The real question should be, why did Shakespeare base his argument, not on this practical aspect, but on replicating the Youth's beauty?

Shakespeare's Dilemma

Surely we can see that when it came to publishing *Shake-speare's Sonnets*, the Bard was between the proverbial rock and a hard place. His primary purpose, stated repeatedly from sonnet 18 until sonnet 126, was to render the Youth immortal—a sort of human Adonis—by means of his poetry, something that would not be possible unless it got published. However, even if published, how could it immortalize someone who could not be identified? This does not make sense, but neither do a great many other issues from that time.

Also, consider Francis Meres' claims in "Wit's Treasury" (*Palladis Tamia*), that by 1598, when his book was published, Shakespeare's "sugar'd" sonnets were already being "shared among his private friends"—so such questions had been around for at least a decade before the question arose in 1609 for those readers who were not "among his private friends."

Think about this for a minute. Try to see the problem in all its reach and complexity, for this is certainly a major factor in the mystification of Shakespeare's identity, not only as author of *Shake-speare's Sonnets*, but of everything by Shakespeare published before or after, an issue that is primary for Oxfordians seeking to understand how the author's identity got lost. In such a well-defined and unchanging world, were the Youth's identity to be revealed, Shakespeare's identity would also have been revealed. (Were Shakespeare actually William of Stratford, this would not have been an issue.)

It is this that makes *Shake-speare's Sonnets* publication so important: why it was published at the particular time that it was published, who published it, the mysterious dedication⁷ that has caused so much argument over the years, and, not least, that it was probably suppressed (withdrawn from sale by order of the authorities) shortly after it appeared in the bookstalls.⁸ The story of the publication of *Shake-speares Sonnets* has everything to do with this problem, as much of a problem for the publisher as it was for the author and perhaps also for his 17th-Century literary executors.

The Story Told by *Shake-speare's Sonnets*

Apart from the identity and publishing issues, the story itself may seem a little weird to us in the 21st century, but it isn't hard to follow. The poet begins by urging the young man—"my lovely boy"—to have children so that his beauty will be replicated in his son. At sonnet 18 he drops this approach, shifting abruptly to assuring the Fair Youth that with his sublime poetry he will render him immortal.⁹ From #18 on, the tone shifts from that of a counselor to that of a lover, with praise of his beauty the overriding theme.

Over the course of a hundred more sonnets, they have good times and bad, the Poet alternately praises the Youth for his goodness and berates him for his behavior; there are misunderstandings; a woman of dark complexion threatens to come between them; a second poet appears to rival him in the Youth's affections; the Youth betrays the Poet in some way; later the Poet betrays the Youth; they part, meet again, and so forth. As the elder, the Poet takes a harsh tone from time to time, warning the Youth to watch his behavior, lest "thou dost common grow" (#69). After one last declaration of eternal devotion (#123), he returns to the issue of the Youth's beauty with the warning that it won't last forever.¹⁰

All in all, it seems a fairly straightforward account of a romance—or at the very least an extremely affectionate friendship—between two males of the same class but different ages. Off-topic digressions, flights of fancy, philosophy and soul-searching are natural adjuncts to any intimate relationship, for, after all, lovers, mates and close friends do occasionally exchange thoughts on something other than their feelings for each other.

Nor do such relationships in real life generally proceed in a straight line from passion to coldness, but go in circles from high to low and back to high again, or almost as high, returning again and again in an effort to reach the original feeling¹¹ until, as Feste puts it in *Twelfth Night*, "the whirligig of time brings in his revenges." This the Poet refuses to accept, claiming again and again that his love for the Youth will last forever: "No! Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change...I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee" (123).¹² But Time, of course, does bring it to an end—just three sonnets later.

The Major Themes

Much of the beauty of *Shake-speare's Sonnets* comes from the interweaving of their many themes and subtexts. I haven't the space here to deal as fully with this aspect as it deserves, but I must at least mention the four major themes, the first being the prevalence of sexual imagery. Without ever being in the slightest bit crude or obvious, the poet garnished his poems with layers of sexual innuendo and imagery. Those who wish to read them without taking any notice of this can do so, so great is the craft of the artist, but there can be no denying its existence. This is not my judgement alone, it is that of almost every authoritative author whose works I explored while preparing this essay. You will find scarcely one who denies that *Shake-speare's Sonnets* are lavish with sexual nuance.

The upbeat sonnets are an uninhibited verbal romp among the salacious puns and every other kind of resonance offered by the English language in a sort of locker room atmosphere of one guy to another, yet in such good taste that unless you've had it pointed out to you, or have enough experience with the language of the period to hear it for yourself, you might read them all without ever noticing the sexy subtext (Martin Green). Nevertheless, Shakespeare is not nearly so enthusiastic about the sex act itself. In *Sonnet 129* he calls it "an expense of spirit in a waste of shame...perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame, enjoyed no sooner but despised straight." It's *desire* he supports, not the sex act.

The second theme is what Edward Hubler calls Shakespeare's evocation of the medieval "doctrine of plenitude" (70), acquired in large part, he holds, from Chaucer's translation of Jean le Meun's thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose*, a ground-breaking work in its time, filled with subtle, lyrical sexual imagery from the Courtly Love tradition of the Middle Ages.

Although Shakespeare's love of bawdy puns and images blends easily with this theme, the theme itself is found, not in wordplay, but in images exploring the fecundity of Nature, the force that fertilizes, creates, heals and restores all living things. This he expresses through images of ripeness, fullness, and fertility, the perfumed and colorful flowers of spring as opposed to the "yellow leaf" of autumn and the barrenness, decay and death of winter. The juxtaposition of these two themes, fecundity and sexuality, suggests that the two are one, separated only by viewpoint—the bawdy wordplay a product of Christian embarrassment, the Rose metaphors the prehistoric tribal view of sexual desire as the sacred force that creates and maintains all living things.¹³

To the prehistoric tribal Europeans and even the Irish bards and singers, poets were magicians who could drive events through the powers inherent

in language (Graves 18–22). These sexual and nature's bounty themes can be seen as a form of sympathetic magic invoked by the Bard who, as tribal shaman, seeks to initiate the youth he loves into the realities of adult sexuality and procreation. The first seventeen sonnets —known as the “the marriage sonnets”—should be termed “the procreation sonnets,” since he never actually uses the word *marriage*. What is clear is that he is urging the Youth towards the kind of sexual relations that can create progeny—not quite the same thing.

A third and rather different sub-text woven throughout *Shake-speare's Sonnets* is the continual reference to human events in legal terms, specifically the terminology of Contract Law. Whenever Shakespeare reaches for a metaphor in *Shake-speare's Sonnets* it's just as apt to be a legal reference as one from sex or nature. In a series of passionate love poems, this is another oddity demanding an explanation.

Finally, throughout, there throbs the constant awareness of Time, how it gives only to take away, a theme that rarely occurs to poets under forty.

Identifying the Principals

Southampton vs. Pembroke

The English novelist Samuel Butler, writing in 1899, reports that Dr. Nathan Drake in 1817 was the first to suggest in print that the Fair Youth was the young Earl of Southampton, chiefly because the dedication to *The Rape of Lucrece* is so similar to the wording of *Sonnet 26*: “Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage thy merit hath my duty strongly knit.” Two years later one Heywood Bright suggested William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke. For a good 100 years the major contest for the identity of the Youth was between these two. Both were in their late teens, considered good-looking, got themselves in trouble with women at Court, and both have been described as irresponsible and spoiled, as Shakespeare (occasionally) describes the Youth.¹⁴

In one of the earliest sonnets (#3) he states, “Thou art thy mother's glass and she in thee calls back the lovely April of her prime.” The mothers of both Southampton and Pembroke were alive when their sons were in their teens and early twenties, and both were known for their beauty as girls. In exhorting the youth to marry, the poet states “You had a father, let your son say so.” The use of the past tense indicates that the father of the Fair Youth is dead, as was Southampton's (from age eight), while Pembroke lost his father in 1601 at age twenty—rather late, but still defensible.

Pembroke was in the lead for a long while, partly because his initials, W. H. (William Herbert) were the same as those in the infamous 1609 Dedication, and also because he didn't have Southampton's problem with the Stratford

biography—his age—Southampton was only nine years younger than William of Stratford—too small a spread to make sense of the Poet’s fatherly tone and his frequent references to their great age difference. Pembroke was in his teens when William was in his forties, a much more acceptable age difference. In seeking to explain the Dark Lady, Pembroke advocates came up with one Mary Fitton, a Queen’s Maid of Honor whom he had seduced and abandoned.

Alas for theories, someone eventually discovered a portrait of Mary Fitton who, as it turned out, unlike the Dark Lady of *Shake-speare’s Sonnets*, had a fair complexion, blue eyes and auburn hair. This proved too damaging to the Pembroke theory for it to survive (Rowse *Forman* 234). In fact, not one of the necessary characteristics of the Dark Lady fit Mary Fitton; far from the passionate, musically talented and loose-moraled mistress of *Shake-speare’s Sonnets*, she was the well-bred daughter of a reputable courtier.



Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, circa 1594, from a miniature in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.

The Pembroke theory was finished for good when *Shake-speare’s Sonnets* finally acquired their present dates of composition, dates that place them much too early for the Earl of Pembroke to have been the Fair Youth.¹⁵ These dates, roughly 1589 to 1596—now generally accepted by all who study the subject—establish their composition at a time when the teenaged Southampton was the right age for the Fair Youth.

Finally, and most solidly, Southampton is the only candidate who can claim a real-life connection to the Poet since it was to “Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton” that both of Shakespeare’s long narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, were dedicated during the same period that we can now be certain that the early sonnets were written, thanks to two Shakespeare scholars whose works have finally established reliable dates for *Shake-speare’s Sonnets*.

Isaac and Davis

For a good 300 years the dates of *Shake-speare’s Sonnets* were as problematic as the dates of the plays. While orthodox scholars have generally adhered to a chronology based either on dates of publication or entry in the Stationers’

Register—where plays were concerned, their actual dates of composition could well have occurred many years before they were registered or published.¹⁶

The first scholar to come up with the dates now commonly accepted for the composition of *Shake-speare's Sonnets* was a German, Hermann Isaac, who published his findings in 1884 in the German *Jahrbuch* (176–264 as cited in Rollins 2.63). Isaac examined *Shake-speares Sonnets*, his two book-length narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and all the plays—seeking similarities of language, theme and imagery. His results show that *Shake-speare's Sonnets* display just such similarities to both of the long poems and to two of the earliest plays, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love's Labour's Lost*. Then in 1916, Shakespeare scholar Hyder Edward Rollins published some tests made by an American, Conrad Davis, that showed results almost identical to Isaac's (cited in R.M. Alden's *Sonnets* 447 ff). It seems that Davis made his tests before he learned of Isaac's work. Since then, a handful of scholars have verified the findings of these two. The results of their comparisons vary, but only slightly.

While we can't pinpoint the exact date when anything by Shakespeare was first written, we can date with some precision when the narrative poems reached the public, due to the fact that they were published shortly after they were registered with the Stationers Company (their dates in the Register conform with the dates on their title pages). *Venus and Adonis* was registered with the Stationers on April 19, 1593, *Lucrece* a year later on May 9, 1594. Close ties of language, theme and imagery indicate that most of the sonnets were written during the same period that he was writing these poems, and that all three were written at around the same time that the First Folio versions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love's Labors Lost* were written.¹⁷ There are also close ties to *Edward III* (Schaar 117).¹⁸

Giving the Poet time to create *Venus and Adonis* and polish it to his satisfaction—three to six months should suffice—puts its composition in the latter half of 1592. Even this would be late for the earliest sonnets, since the narrative poems were probably circulated in manuscript within Shakespeare's literary coterie for some period before they were published (a consideration that university philologists with no feeling for poetry are inclined to ignore).

As for how long it took to write the entire series, luckily one of the few solid facts to be gleaned from them is stated in #104: "Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned, since first I saw you fresh which yet are green."¹⁹ If we take any time between 1590 and 1593 as the date he began them, and if we accept his word that there were three years between the first twenty or so sonnets and sonnet 104, we find ourselves somewhere between 1591 and

1596 for three-quarters of the Fair Youth sequence.²⁰ This is also a believable time span for the kind of intense relationship that the sonnets describe; much longer and he would seem to be suffering from an unhealthy obsession.

If we agree with the mainstream that the final twenty-six sonnets, those composed to or about the Dark Lady, were written at approximately the same time that *Sonnets 40–42* were written for the Fair Youth, that leaves us with only twenty-four, 104–126, that fall outside this date range. However, since tests done by these scholars searching links between *Shake-speare's Sonnets* and the two long poems have turned up similar links with the later sonnets as well (Shaar 194), scholars feel safe in assuming that—possibly apart from one or two that may have been added or inserted at a later date (possibly the strangely anomalous #103)—the entire cycle was completed sometime between 1595 and 1596.²¹

Since it is simply not possible to eliminate the human element entirely from a phenomenon that is so entirely human as is the composition of love poetry, these studies in literary forensics come as close as is possible under the circumstances to the certainties of “hard” science. The impact of these results, now accepted by those mainstream Shakespeareans who have ventured to comment,²² comes in part from the fact that they have been replicated more than once by scholars from very different viewpoints and backgrounds, and in part from the fact that they tie in so well with the known facts about the Earl of Southampton.

Well in keeping with the procreation theme of the first seventeen sonnets is the fact that the young earl’s family and advisors were urging him to marry during this same period: 1590–1595 (Akrigg 32). Early marriage was regarded by the young peer’s family as of utmost importance, so that a son and heir (or two) might be produced before the ever-present danger of his early death robs the family of their precious title.

Identifying the Dark Lady

Where Shakespeare may be overly subtle with sexual imagery relevant to the Fair Youth, he is anything but subtle with the Lady. She puts in an appearance in the earlier sequence in sonnets 40–42 where she wreaks emotional havoc by seducing the Youth; it is a more direct and doubtless more effective lesson in how to go about producing heirs than 126 sonnets.

Although it’s been her sex life and her coloring that have animated most latter-day discussions of the Lady and her identity, we must keep in mind that it was her musical talent that won the great Poet’s heart.

How oft when thou, my music, music play’st,
Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds

With thy sweet fingers when thou gently sway'st
The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap,
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
Whilst my poor lips which should that harvest reap,
At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!
To be so tickled, they would change their state
And situation with those dancing chips,
O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,
Making dead wood more bless'd than living lips.
Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss. (Sonnet 128)

As for her coloring, note that over 200 years of commentary, sometimes misguided but generally quite intelligent thinkers have never doubted that when Shakespeare called her *dark* or *black*, he was referring to her coloring. True, he did have fun with secondary meanings of *black* and *dark* as *troubled* and *wicked*, but his treatment of women with a similar coloring in his plays (in particular *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act IV Scene 3) should make it clear that he was describing her looks.

However we may interpret it today, back then *black* was the standard Elizabethan adjective for Caucasians with dark brown hair, more recently described as *brunettes*. The "black Irish" had hair of a darker brown than the Celtic medium or light brown. Spaniards and Italians were *black*, while those with brown hair and medium complexions were *brown*, as in "The Nut-brown Maid" of the old ballad. Persons of African descent that today we term *black* were labelled *blackamoors* or *Ethiopians*; none of them feature in his plays (Othello was a Turk, not an Ethiopian). The Lady's "mournful" eyes and "dun" colored skin confirm a woman with the classic "olive" Mediterranean coloring.

In 1974, historian A. L. Rowse published his identification of the Dark Lady as Emilia Bassano Lanier, mistress of Henry Hunsdon, the Queen's Lord Chamberlain, patron and creator of The Lord Chamberlain's Men, the company that, from 1594 until the theaters were closed in 1640, remained the sole known producer of Shakespeare's plays.

Emilia Bassano

That Emilia was an accomplished musician should be no surprise. As the daughter of Baptista Bassano, a Court musician on the Queen's payroll, she belonged to the largest and most important of the musical families who provided concerts and background music for dinners, plays, and various other entertainments enjoyed by the Court. The important Recorder Consort

consisted solely of Emilia's cousins and other male members of the Bassano family (Lasocki 143).

Born in 1569, Emilia was in her early twenties during the period when the early sonnets were being written, exactly the right age for the Dark Lady, who was young enough that the Poet felt himself old by comparison, but old enough to be another man's mistress, and also old enough to be seen as the one doing the seducing where the Youth was concerned.

In 1995, music historians David Lasocki and Roger Prior backed up the Rowse claim with additional information on the Bassanos. Long known to historians of Renaissance music as Court musicians and composers as well as makers and menders of musical instruments, Baptista's father, Alvise Bassano, and four of his brothers had come originally from Venice to the Court of Henry VIII during the period that the King was lavish with his courtship of Anne Boleyn. Commonly accepted as Protestants—they would have made the legally mandated annual appearance at Easter Communion—it may be that they had embraced Protestantism, or its culture at least, after serving for several generations at the Catholic Courts of the Venetian Doges—but it may also be that their forefathers were Sephardic Jews among those forced by Ferdinand and Isabella to leave Spain in 1492 (92–7).

In any case, born into the highly educated liberal class that entertained the Courts of Venice, in 1535 their patriarch, Jeronimo Bassano, had been invited in 1535 to live and entertain at Henry's Court. Once in London, he and his family established themselves in a large messuage on Mark Lane in East London, near the Tower. As their fellow Court entertainer, fluent in Italian and fond of the Mediterranean lifestyle, Oxford would certainly have been as familiar with the Bassanos as he was with anyone else at Elizabeth's Court.

As the youngest of the five Bassano brothers, Baptista was the first to leave the East End, moving with his common-law wife, the daughter of one of the English Court musicians, to the northern suburb of Norton Folgate, not far from where the great public Theatre would be built in 1576, the year of Baptista's



Illustration of Elizabethan musicians, circa 1600.

death. His wife and her three children were doubtless still living there four years later when Oxford and his crew moved across the road into Fisher's Folly. Two of Emilia's cousins, Andrew and Edward Bassano, members of the Recorder Consort, were also living in Norton Folgate at that time (37–42).

At some point following her father's death, little Emilia was taken into the household of Susan Bertie, Countess of Kent, the sister of Sir Peregrine Bertie, Oxford's brother-in-law and friend (he was married to Oxford's sister Mary). By her late teens she was living with Lady Margaret Clifford and her daughter, Anne Clifford, later the second wife of the Earl of Montgomery, patron of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, whose first wife had been Susan Vere, Oxford's youngest daughter. Highly educated by these female patrons, Emilia revealed her literary skills in the book that has made her famous as Amelia Lanier.²³



Nicholas Hilliard miniature in the V&A's collection (museum no. P.134-1910) has been suggested as a portrait of Amelia or Emilia Bassano, married to Alphonso Lanier.

She became the mistress of Henry Carey, first Baron Hunsdon and Lord Chamberlain. We know from the diary of Simon Forman that Hunsdon kept her in royal style until 1592 when she became pregnant, whereupon he arranged her marriage to her cousin, Court musician Alphonse Lanier. From Lanier she acquired the name by which she is known today, for apart from her role as Shakespeare's "unjust" mistress, it is as Emilia Lanier that she has been acclaimed as one of the most important female writers in the history of the English language. Published in 1611, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* appears to be the first book of original poetry, or original writing of any kind, by an English woman to be published. Its exceedingly outspoken feminist introduction is another first in English literary history.²⁴

Although we have (as yet) no certain portrait of Emilia, her heritage fits well her appellation of the "Dark Lady," for although her mother had an English name, it would not be surprising if from the Spanish/Italian/Jewish? heritage of her father's family she inherited something of the wavy black hair and olive complexion universal among the peoples of the lands that lie along the northern shores of the Mediterranean. That her uncles had such coloring is born out by contemporary documents and references to the Bassanos as "black."

Her family's status as court musicians also makes it more than likely that she was an accomplished musician herself, as required by *Sonnet 128*. As the Lord Chamberlain's mistress it would have been their "bed vow" that she and the Poet broke, as he claims in *Sonnet 152*.

Without a doubt, Emilia Bassano would have been perceived by her contemporaries as a courtesan, precisely as the Dark Lady is described by Shakespeare. And as he claims in sonnets 127, 131 and 132, she was probably not considered beautiful by the Court community, who prized—formally at least—snow white skin and golden hair. But they would certainly have been aware that, if not classically beautiful, she had tremendous sex appeal, as confirmed by the diary of astrologer and physician Simon Forman, which is where A. L. Rowse discovered her in 1974 (xi). Forman himself was so attracted to her that he drew up several horoscopes ahead of their future meetings to see if there was any chance of establishing a more intimate relationship, which, it is clear, did not occur. Emilia's question for Forman was whether Alphonse would be successful in raising his rank during that expedition.

For four years, Emilia and Alphonse²⁵ lived in relative comfort on Hunsdon's continued benefactions, which were intended in part to provide for the boy born in 1593 that everyone must have regarded as Hunsdon's son. That the baby was named Henry—Hunsdon's given name—encourages this, but Henry was also the Fair Youth's given name, and her pregnancy in 1592 fits the time frame when most agree *Shakespeare's Sonnets* were being written and the Dark Lady was involved with the Fair Youth.

To make matters even more interesting, Oxford, like Emilia, was married that year to someone more appropriate to his rank, Elizabeth Trentham, one of the Queen's ladies in waiting, an heiress who could support him in the style in which, as a peer of the realm, he was supposed to live. Oxford's new Countess soon gave birth to a son that was also named Henry. That's a lot of Henrys.

Although apart from *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, there's no hard evidence of a connection between Southampton and Emilia, there is a connection between Southampton and Alphonse. It was under Southampton's command that Alphonse Lanier fought in the Islands Campaign of 1597; Emilia's hope for good results from this voyage was the reason for her first visit to Forman. In 1604, Southampton asked Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, to see that Alphonse be given a monopoly on the weighing of hay and straw (Lasocki 108). This would have brought a modest but dependable income to the Lanier household, something to replace the financial support they lost when Hunsdon died (Rowse 33). While Salisbury (understandably) never got around to it, as soon as he died, the monopoly was approved by the Privy Council, to which Oxford's last and greatest patron, the 3rd Earl of Pembroke, had just been appointed by King James.

Rowse points out that Emilia's book was published roughly a year-and-a-half after the publication of *Shake-speare's Sonnets* in 1609. He feels that she wrote and published her book—together with its scorching introduction—as an angry response to the humiliation of how she had been portrayed in *Sonnets* 127–152. Rowse believes she wished to show the world of the liberal nobility—a world in which she claimed to have some standing—that there was more to her, and to women like her: brilliant, talented, educated women, than their sex appeal.

Like *Shake-speare's Sonnets*, her book was suppressed soon after publication, as there was but one edition and of that no more than four copies have turned up (one of these, bound in leather, was found in Prince Henry's library) making it one of the rarest extant books from that time. That it was stopped suggests that Rowse is correct about its origins, since, apart from its feminist tone, there's nothing about the contents—a straightforward statement of Christian theology—that would cause the authorities to take exception to it.

The most likely agent for the suppression of both books would be the Earl of Southampton, who, as a member of the Privy Council by then, respectably married and the father of sons, was doing everything he could to overcome the stain of his conviction as a traitor for his part in the Essex Rebellion. The adult Southampton would have been quick to use his authority to suppress anything that might recall the embarrassing peccadillos of his youth.

Three Problems

With these dates settled and the identities of the Fair Youth and the Dark Lady determined, three major problems remain: 1) the age of the Poet vis a vis the age of the Fair Youth, 2) the condescending tone used by the Poet to a member of the ruling class, and 3) the sexual overtones of the sonnets to the Fair Youth. These remain, that is, for the orthodox Shakespeare scholars. The first two present no difficulties for Oxfordians. With Oxford turning forty the year Southampton turned seventeen (1590), the problem of the difference in their ages vanishes. And with both Poet and Youth members of the same social class, the condescending tone of some of the sonnets makes sense as that of an elder admonishing a youth of his own class.

As for the third issue, why the Poet would think it appropriate to write such sexually-charged poetry to the teen-aged 3rd Earl of Southampton, certain difficulties remain. The answer to these lies in the situation that Oxford was in when he wrote *Shake-speare's Sonnets*. That will be explored in a follow-up article.

Endnotes

1. The 1590s should be regarded as the first “Romantic Era” in English poetry; the one launched at the turn of the nineteenth century by Byron, Keats and Shelley should be seen as the second.
2. Robert Giroux of the publishing firm Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.
3. Some of the sonnet cycles appear to have had the Queen in mind as the unapproachable beloved, as clued by the cover names *Cynthia* or *Diana*, the names of Greek goddesses used by poets hoping to find favor with the aging Vestal.
4. In 1854, the Victorian critic Henry Hallam wrote: “Notwithstanding the frequent beauties of these sonnets...it is impossible not to wish that Shakespeare had never [written] them. There is a weakness and folly in all excessive and misplaced affection, which is not redeemed by the touches of nobler sentiments...” (qtd in Butler 156). Hallam’s attitude is interesting because in his own “lovely” youth he had been the object of a similar passion from Alfred Lord Tennyson.
5. It seems the Elizabethans *had no term* for a permanent sexual bias; the term *homosexual* with its Latin aura of a failure of nature (like an idiot or an albino) wasn’t invented until the late nineteenth century when scientism was labelling everything under the sun with Latin terms and the English were in the grip of a century of homophobia of terrifying dimensions (Crompton, Smith). The term used until then was *sodomite*, which, like the term *alcoholic*, carried no further discrimination. Only since 1533 was sodomy a crime (Crompton 14), but the law was enforced no more than twice during Elizabeth’s reign, and that not for consenting adults but for teachers who molested the boys in their care.

In short, adult same-sex relations were frowned upon but tolerated by the Elizabethans, an attitude in no way comparable to that of the Victorians when men who had merely been *accused* of being gay could be locked for hours on end in a public pillory where they were subjected to screaming mobs, actively encouraged to throw everything from rotten vegetables to stones and bricks at them, leaving them dead or maimed for life (13–62). Like Oscar Wilde, men of importance and social standing were threatened with prison and the loss of all their titles and worldly goods, causing some, like Lord Byron, to flee to the continent. That it was during this period of homophobic hysteria that the question of Shakespeare’s identity was first made public has a great deal to do with the Academy’s refusal to look further than the prudent William.

6. Leading proponents of the theory that *Shake-speare's Sonnets* describe a sexual relationship include Samuel Butler, Gore Vidal, Joseph Pequigney, Martin Green, Joseph Sobran, and other Oxfordians and academics. Dover Wilson holds the preferred Victorian view, that of "platonic passion." Southampton's biographer, G. P. V. Akrigg, whose Bard was the Stratford William, describes it (in passing) as a normal developmental phase between two young friends.
7. Giroux calls the dedication "weird" (12). In our view its mystery was solved by authorship scholar John Rollett in his 1999 article in *The Oxfordian*: "Secrets of the Dedication."
8. Most agree that the reason the first edition was so fleeting was that it was suppressed. If so, the most logical reason was that the primary subject of the poems was someone whose reputation mattered. Who would have cared whether or not an anonymous poet yearned for a Willy Hughes (*per* Oscar Wilde) or the Prince of Purpoole (*per* Leslie Hotson).
9. A classic trope, far from original with Shakespeare.
10. Kenneth Muir states it succinctly: "However much we shuffle the pack, we have the same basic facts: that the poet loved a younger man, probably of aristocratic birth; that he urged him to marry and then claimed that he would immortalize him in his verse; that other poets shared his friend's patronage and favor; that at some time the poet's dark-haired mistress seduced the friend; that the young man's character had serious faults, as the poet was reluctantly forced to acknowledge" (6–7).
11. W. H. Auden speaks for those who question the order of *Shake-speare's Sonnets* because the sentiment seems frequently to revert back to an earlier stage of the relationship, but this is a purely literary criticism. In real life love relationships are far more circular than linear. These fluctuations of feeling add to the sense that they are genuine and not merely a clever convention.
12. Those who seek to refute the homosexual theory by proposing that the Youth was in fact Shakespeare's own son must ignore such declarations. What father would ever feel it necessary to swear eternal devotion to his own son?
13. Claes Schaar notes that of the sonnet themes of the period, the procreation argument is peculiar to Shakespeare. He finds it nowhere else in the hundreds of sonnets of the period (16). Muir agrees (35).
14. Northrop Frye points out that despite the Poet's promises to make the Youth immortal, he tells us nothing *about* him beyond the fact that he is

“beautiful and sometimes true and kind, if not over-virtuous. [Ultimately] we are forced to conclude that Shakespeare has lavished a century of the greatest sonnets in the language on an unresponsive oaf as stupid as a doorknob and as selfish as a weasel.” Frye also sees in him the “sulky urchin” of *Venus and Adonis* (27).

15. William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, would eventually play a leading role in the story of *Shake-speare's Sonnets*, but not as the Fair Youth.
16. While we have firm dates for the publication of many of Shakespeare's plays in quarto, there is absolutely no hard evidence for when any of them were first written. Yeoman work establishing workable dates has been done by both authorship and academic scholars, but they have been forced to rely on third party evidence.
17. Giroux confirms that Claes Schaar in 1962, G. P. V. Akrigg in 1968, and Roderick Eagle in 1969, in studies independent of one another, all came up with similar results. While they found different numbers and examples of parallels, both Davis and Isaac agree on the same five Shakespearean works as leading the list: *Venus and Adonis* in which Davis finds 64 parallels and Isaac 34; *Lucrece*: 60/38; *Love's Labor's Lost*: 49/36; *Romeo and Juliet*: 48/47; and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*: 35/31 (203). Schaar: “As early as 1821, Boaden in Boswell's third *Variorum* edition stated his opinion that Shakespeare's procreation sonnets [the first 17]—with nos. 18 and 19, were based on a passage in *Venus and Adonis*,”; therefore, *Shake-speare's Sonnets* ‘will be found only to expand the argument’ of [*Venus and Adonis*] 169–174.” (137)
18. The similarities between *Shake-speare's Sonnets* and *Edward III*, which was written sometime before 1595 when it was registered, were first pointed out as early as the late 1700s when George Steevens observed that the last line of sonnet 94: “—lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds—” is also found word for word in *Edward III* (2.1.451). This caused protracted debate over who borrowed from whom; the then anonymous author of *Edward III* from Shakespeare, or vice versa (Schaar 129)—an argument settled by the acceptance of the play in the canon in the 1990s. That Shakespeare should repeat a line from sonnet 94 word for word in *Edward III* (or the reverse) suggests that both were written within a narrow time frame, and therefore that sonnet 94 was written sometime during or more probably well before 1595 when *Edward III* was entered with the Stationers.
19. One of the things that's become clear after thirty years of relating history to Shakespeare is not to question one of his stated facts. If he makes a point of something, in this case the passage of three years, we should take him at his word.

20. Schaar: "I should like particularly to stress the possibility that forty-six sonnets date before or around 1592...the vast majority of the sonnets we have examined seem thus to have been written between 1591–92 and 1594–95" (185).
21. Note that, unlike the dates offered by traditional Shakespeare scholars for the plays, studies by Isaac, Davis et al that place *Shake-speare's Sonnets* in the early 1590s were *not* influenced by a need to conform to the Stratford biography. If anything, Stratford theorists must be embarrassed by them since they are forced to defend the notion that the great poet obsessively mourned his wrinkles at the age of thirty!
22. Hubler (1952): "I believe they were written over a period of four or five years beginning in 1592" (1952); Muir: "Shaar claims that the vast majority of the sonnets...seem to have been written between 1591–2 and 1594–5" (1979); he accepts Schaar's dating as "the most probable" (4). Most now accept that they were written at the same time as *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love's Labors Lost*. Among those whose opinion have been published Schaar lists: Gregor Sarazin (1897), Sir Sidney Lee (1898), J.A. Fort (1929), E. K. Chambers, Dover Wilson, Joseph Quincy Adams, Tucker Brooke, and F.Y. St. Clair (1962) (192–99). With some of these their reliance on the orthodox (Chambers) chronology forces them to date them later. Baldwin, for this reason, dates them to 1593–99. Ignorant of the Isaac/Davis tests, Samuel Butler in 1899 guessed the mid-1580s, among the first things Shakespeare ever wrote (118, 132, 148). Auden, based mostly on style, guesses early rather than late. Not one suggests anything later than 1599.
23. Most of our information on Emilia Bassano Lanier comes from Lasocki and Prior, some from Suzanne Woods.
24. This is usually ascribed to Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), but Lanier's book (1611) predates hers by almost two centuries.
25. Alphonse was the brother of Clement Lanier who had a career as a composer as well as a Court musician. Among Clement's descendants are the 19th-century American poet Sidney Lanier and the 20th-century playwright Tennessee Williams, whose middle name is Lanier (Rowse *Salve* xxiv). Emilia's mother, Margaret Johnson, was the aunt of composer and lutenist Robert Johnson (1582–1633), whose settings for several of the songs in Shakespeare's plays can still be heard today .

Works Cited

Data on the authors comes from the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

- Akrigg, G. P. V. *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1968.
- Alden, R. M., ed. *The Sonnets of Shakespeare*. Variorum edition. 2 Vols. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin: 1916.
- Auden, W. H. "On the Sonnets." BBC broadcast, 1964.
- Butler, Samuel Taylor. *Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered*. London: Longmans, 1899.
- Crompton, Louis. *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th Century England*. Berkeley: UCP, 1985.
- Frye, Northrop. "How True a Twain." *The Riddle of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962.
- Giroux, Robert. *The Book Known as Q*. New York: Atheneum, 1982.
- Graves, Robert. *The White Goddess: A Poetical Grammar of Poetic Myth*. New York: Farrar, Straus, 1948.
- Green, Martin. *The Labyrinth of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. London: Skilton, 1974.
- Hayashi, Tetsumaro. *Shakespeare's Sonnets: a Record of 20th Century Criticism*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1972.
- Hotson, Leslie. *Shakespeare's Sonnets Dated and Other Essays*. Oxford: OUP, 1949.
- Hubler, Edward. *The Sense of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Princeton: PUP, 1952.
- Lasocki, David and Roger Prior. *The Bassanos: Venetian Musicians and Instrument Makers in England, 1531–1665*. London: Aldgate, 1995.
- Moore, Peter. "The Rival Poet of Shakespeare's Sonnets." *The Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*. Fall 1989: 8–12.
- Muir, Kenneth. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. London: George Allen, 1979.

Pequigney, Joseph. *Such is my Love: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Chicago: UCP, 1985.

Rollett, John. "Secrets of the Dedication to *Shakespeare's Sonnets*." *The Oxfordian*: Vol 2. (1999): 60–75.

Rollins, Hyder Edward. *Shakespeare: the Sonnets*. Vol. 1. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1944.

Rowse, A.L. *The Poems of Shakespeare's Dark Lady*. New York: Potter, 1979.

———. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Third edition (1962). London: Macmillan, 1984.

Schaar, Claes. *Elizabethan Sonnet Themes and the Dating of Shakespeare's "sonnets"*. (1962). New York: AMS Press, 1973.

Smith, Bruce R. *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England*. Chicago: UCP, 1990.

Stone, Lawrence. *Marriage, Sex and Family in England: 1500–1800*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

Woods, Suzanne, ed. *Salve Deus Rex Judeorum*. Oxford: OUP, 1993.

"Nothing is Truer than Truth" and Shakespeare¹

by Richard Waugaman, M.D.

When we seek objective truths about the world, we turn to science, but when we want truths about human experience in all its complexity, we often turn to great literature. In this essay, I will explore some of Shakespeare's insights into the vexed topic of truth by examining his play *All's Well that Ends Well*, after placing it in the context of the real Shakespeare's approach to human truths.

I define truth in several ways: truth must correspond to external reality in an objective way by using the scientific method, where applicable. At the same time, where factual truth cannot be determined, a belief is true if it is part of a coherent system of belief. In addition, there are subjective truths about each person's inner world of emotions, memories, and psychological conflicts.

Perhaps realizing the largely subjective nature of truth, Oscar Wilde wrote in *The Importance of Being Earnest* that "truth is rarely pure and never simple." In the same vein, Emily Dickinson in her poem 1129 advised, "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—". In her succinct admonition, she captured a core aspect of Shakespeare's sophisticated approach to dramatizing the truth. In her day, there was a vogue for collections of Shakespeare quotations under the premise that they offered straightforward moral advice. Editors of those anthologies mistook Shakespeare as someone who wrote transparently, mistaking superficial appearances for the disguise necessary for an Elizabethan

nobleman to speak truth to power. A lover of Shakespeare’s works (Paraic Finnerty, 2006),² Dickinson knew more about poetry than did those editors. She knew that truth can be so unsettling that our conscious mind wards off unwelcome news. It is tempting to think that her famous advice, “tell it slant,” was indebted to her more accurate understanding of Shakespeare. Other great artists also recognized that truth is central to Shakespeare’s ethos.

Dickinson’s contemporary Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote, “Whatever you seek in him [Shakespeare] you will surely discover, provided you seek truths” (Hawthorne, 1863). Yet Hawthorne recognized that Shakespeare’s words need to be interpreted, since they have “surface beneath surface, to an immeasurable depth, adapted to the plummet-line of every reader; his works present many faces of truth, each with scope enough to fill a contemplative mind” (quoted in Finnerty, 63). Delia Bacon believed Elizabethan authors used “esoteric” writing—that is, writing between the lines—to escape the pervasive censorship of their day, so their publications would speak to future generations, provided we peer deeply beneath the surface of Elizabethan literature. None of this will come as a surprise to psychoanalytic readers, who spend their workday constantly shifting between the surface and the unconscious depths of their patients’ associations.

Hawthorne helped Delia Bacon publish her 1857 work, *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspere Unfolded*, the first book to challenge the traditional Shakespeare authorship theory, replacing it with her hypothesis that a group of authors wrote the works.

Before delving into what Shakespeare has to say about truth, we first need to address the truth about who wrote Shakespeare. This proved to be such a surprisingly controversial topic that Delia Bacon was harassed mercilessly after she rejected the conventional wisdom that is still held by most Shakespeare scholars and lovers of his works. Ironically, Bacon’s theory that a group of writers wrote the Shakespeare canon has recently come into its own, with the 2016 *New Oxford Shakespeare* proposing that a dozen contemporary playwrights collaborated with William Shakspeare of Stratford. The fierce reaction against Delia Bacon in her own time may have been due

Richard M. Waugaman is Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Georgetown University. His 200 publications include some 100 works on Shakespeare. His two books are *Newly Discovered Works by “William Shake-Speare,”* a.k.a. Edward de Vere as well as *It’s Time to Re-Vere the Works of “William Shake-Speare”*: A Psychoanalyst Reads the Works of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. He previously appeared in *The Oxfordian* in 2021 with “Did Edward de Vere translate Boccaccio’s *Decameron* into English, Published in 1620?”

to misogyny and possible homophobia, as conveyed in an 1883 slur that claimed questioning Shakspeare's authorship was "a literary bee in the bonnets of certain ladies *of both sexes*" (Richard White, quoted in Finnerty, 62; emphasis added). In fact, most Shakespeare authorship skeptics in 19th Century America were women (Finnerty 66).



Delia Salter Bacon (1811–1859).

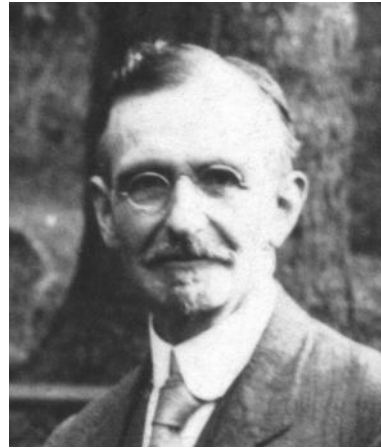
As Hawthorne noted, much was "done to assail the prejudices of the public, but far too little to gain its sympathy" for her (10). Like Ignaz Semmelweis, an obstetrician who traced maternal deaths from puerperal sepsis to his colleagues not cleansing their hands sufficiently before delivering babies, she enraged the "experts" with her new discoveries and was rewarded with so much verbal abuse that she ended up in a mental hospital. Sometimes, a prophet is not only without honor, but even becomes the victim of slander and ostracism.

Who Wrote Shakespeare?

The issue of who wrote Shakespeare should be a straightforward question of history, but it has become complicated by our intense idealization of these literary works and of their author. Since the late 1500s, there were numerous hints that many people knew that the actual author was concealing his identity. We might think this unusual since most modern writers want to be credited for what they write. However, that was not true in Shakespeare's era. In fact, many Elizabethan plays were published anonymously. With rare exceptions, the nobility did not publish literary works under their own names during their lifetimes. The courtiers' ideal was called *sprezzatura*, or cultivating the appearance of nonchalance as to one's reputation. Penn State University scholar Marcy North's *The Anonymous Renaissance* is a seminal book about the many complex motives and meanings of all forms of anonymous authorship in the Renaissance. Her broad concept of anonymity also includes the use of a pen name, or pseudonym; as well as the name of an actual person to conceal the true author (a so-called allonym). Moreover, writers who used one pen name tended to use others as well.

Steven May noted that the paucity of literary works signed by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, does not explain his exceptional contemporary reputation as a writer. In 1589, he was called one of the best courtier poets, and, in 1598, one of the best playwrights of comedies. May concluded that

many of his works must have been anonymous, although his authorship of them was known to court insiders. In the early 20th Century, an English schoolmaster named J. Thomas Looney became skeptical of the traditional theory that the questionably educated Stratford merchant William Shakspeare (how he usually spelled his name) wrote the canon. Remarkably, Looney created a sophisticated methodology for validating authorship attribution that has been employed by scholars in other fields (Ostrowski 2020), and that may be more reliable than the highly suspect computer stylometry method, whose very obscurity has led to its being idealized. With his long list of author characteristics based on the author’s literary works, Looney researched biographies of Elizabethan writers, and determined there was an exceptional fit between the authorial “profile” he discerned in the plays and poems, and the biography of the 17th Earl of Oxford (or “Oxford”). For example, it is generally assumed that Shakespeare, as a commoner himself, was primarily sympathetic to other commoners. But Looney found instead a consistent pattern of sympathy with the aristocracy, along with contempt for commoners such as Jack Cade, leader of a peasants’ rebellion in the 15th Century (see *2 Henry VI*).



J. Thomas Looney (1870–1944).

The academic backlash against Looney, Bacon, and other authorship skeptics has been relentless, and it suggests that the traditional theory has a deep psychological appeal, perhaps even an unconsciously religious quality. Ironically, traditional Shakespeare scholars have shown no interest in ascertaining the truth about this matter, as they instead direct their energies toward suppressing the authorship question within academia while slanderizing the motives of those who challenge their authority as the putative experts in this subject. The growth of the internet, however, has thwarted their efforts to enforce a taboo against the work of independent scholars.

This ferocious attack on academic freedom compels us to ponder what factors can limit our love of truth. Perhaps what we love more than objective truth is the psychic truth of a good narrative, one that reflects what we *wish* were true, such as the beloved narrative of Shakspeare’s ascent from humble beginnings to lasting worldwide fame. And this preference echoes the original meaning of “truth” as “loyalty,” going back to its oldest Germanic etymology. Unfortunately, being true to a false theory means betraying the facts. Unconsciously, traditional Shakespeare scholars engage in groupthink, starting with a premise they refuse to question, then reasoning circularly rather than objectively, and attacking rather than listening to anyone who offers

contradictory evidence. One can sympathize with them in a way, because unless they succeed in branding authorship dissidents as cranks, they will be forced to admit that their contention about who wrote Shakespeare is based more on tradition and authority than on hard evidence. Yes, groupthink exists even in academia, which we often idealize, just as we idealize Shakespeare. We cannot hope to pursue the truth unless we are mindful of the workings of our unconscious resistance to it.

In a letter to Oskar Pfister, encouraging him to continue writing, Freud noted, “the truth often has to be said many times” (October 30, 1923) (Meng and Freud). Freud also wrote, “Of the three powers which may dispute the basic position of science, religion alone is to be taken seriously as an enemy [art and philosophy are the other two]” (*New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* 160). Freud was the world’s first prominent intellectual to accept Looney’s 1920 theory that Oxford, not Shakspeare of Stratford, wrote Shakespeare’s works. And Freud was attuned to the methodological challenges of investigating the truth in this matter—“Very strict scrutiny is necessary, and one must keep one’s critical faculties alive; one must be ready to meet sharp criticism, and to work against one’s own inclinations” (November 7, 1935 letter to Percy Allen; first published in Waugaman, 2017).

Was Freud’s authority sufficient to persuade psychoanalysts that Oxford may have written Shakespeare? Hardly. This should reassure anyone who worries that analysts are submissive in their attitude toward Freud. No, analysts have been among the last to even give Freud and Looney’s theory a hearing. One respected psychoanalytic society invited me to speak on Shakespeare until someone objected, and the invitation was then revised to indicate I could not address the authorship debate. Another time, a colleague (an expert on Shakespeare’s works) and I had both given presentations at an event. Afterwards, I overheard him reassure an attendee, “It doesn’t make a bit of difference who wrote Shakespeare.” So, the truth doesn’t matter? Devotees of the traditional authorship theory can be at their most anti-intellectual when this issue arises. Contending that it’s only the plays and the poems of Shakespeare that matter violates our understanding of psychic determinism as it illuminates creativity and serves to rationalize a deep discomfort with questioning one’s tenacious attachment to the traditional author.

Truth in Shakespeare

When we search Shakespeare’s works for what he says about truth, we find the seeming tautology, “truth is truth” in one of his first plays, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (IV.i), where he also writes, enigmatically, “truer than truth itself” (IV.i). He repeats “truth is truth” in *King John* (I.i); in *Measure for Measure* (V.i), he is still more emphatic—“Truth is truth to the end of reckoning.” Historian

“Nothing is Truer than Truth” and Shakespeare

Ramon Jiménez writes that “Oxford was passionate about, if not obsessed with, the idea of truth, and used ‘true’ hundreds of times in his plays and sonnets, in at least nine different meanings. He also used it to form some twenty compound adjectives...” (16).

For example, Shakespeare actually doubts in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* whether truth can be proven through speech and suggests that deeds are more capable of demonstrating it:

Proteus: What, gone without a word?
Ay, so true love should do; it cannot speak.
For truth hath better deeds than words to grace it. (II.ii)

In this he echoes Goethe, who makes Faust respond to the Biblical, “In the beginning was the Word” with the statement, “In the beginning was the deed.”

These quotations bring me back to the related words in my title, “Nothing is truer than truth.” That phrase, also ostensibly redundant, is a rough English translation of Edward de Vere’s Latin motto: “Vero nihil verius.” “Ver” referred to the French town the family originated from, before an ancestor who served under William the Conqueror relocated to England in the 11th Century, where he was rewarded for his military service. “Vere” and “vero” are also the Latin words for “truly,” and Oxford’s motto uses Shakespearean word play with the various meanings of his family name. The motto also implies “no one is more loyal than Vere.”

As in psychoanalysis, we must distinguish between superficial and profound truths in Shakespeare. Arthur Melzer’s book, *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing*, encourages us to dig deeper in Shakespeare’s texts to find his most controversial truths. Inspired by the work of Leo Strauss, Melzer “aims to re-establish a general recognition of the several reasons for the near-universal prevalence of *esoteric* writing among the major philosophical writers of the West prior to the nineteenth century” (6; emphasis added). That is, some of the most profound thinkers—and Melzer joins Delia Bacon when he includes Shakespeare—were not free to write explicitly about their most controversial ideas but had to disguise the truth under a conventional veneer. Giovanni Boccaccio, in his 1357 *Life of Dante*, said that great poets write on two levels, so that their work “simultaneously challenges the intellect of the wise while it gives comfort to the minds of the simple” (quoted in Melzer, location 460). Think of the contrast between court versus public performances of Oxford’s plays. At court, the audience could decipher the topical allusions when Oxford spoofed powerful courtiers, but these satirical attacks were concealed from the general public due to their lack of knowledge about the court.

In 1605, Shakespeare's contemporary Francis Bacon called esoteric writing "enigmatical," in contrast with "disclosed" (i.e., overt). None other than Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his introduction to Delia Bacon's 1857 book, approvingly quoted her observation that "the great secret of the Elizabethan age [i.e., who wrote Shakespeare]...was buried in the lowest depths of the deep Elizabethan Art...in the inmost recesses of the *esoteric* Elizabethan learning" (Finnerty 9; emphasis added).

In sharp contrast with our idealized fantasy of Merrie Olde England, writers back then were jailed, tortured, and maimed for offending those in power. To cite one example, attorney John Stubbs wrote the pamphlet *The Gaping Gulf*, in which he requested that Queen Elizabeth not marry a French suitor who was Catholic. He was subsequently tried, convicted and condemned to having his right hand cut off.

Curiously, with his *Richard II*, Shakespeare was never punished for staging the deposition of an English monarch. Queen Elizabeth knew exactly what this meant, since she observed, "I am Richard II. Know ye not that?" (Orgel 1). Despite the prominence of concealment in Shakespeare's works, this deposition scene was undisguised.

Holinshed's *Chronicle*, one of Shakespeare's top four historical sources, tells us that Richard III was an able warrior, who simply had one shoulder higher than the other. His skeleton, exhumed from under an English parking lot in 2012, confirms that he had scoliotic, lateral curvature of the spine (Pappas, 2014). What of the severely hunchbacked Richard III ("an envious mountain on my back," *3 Henry VI*, III.ii) who treads the Shakespearean stage? Did he depict the truth about the historical Richard III's body? Of course not. Between the lines, though, it represented a savage attack on the hunchbacked Sir Robert Cecil, who succeeded his father, Lord Burghley, as Queen Elizabeth's principal adviser, first on the Privy Council and then as Secretary of State. Oxford was here using the disguise of an historical character to warn Queen Elizabeth that she should not trust the scheming, dishonest Robert Cecil, who happened to be the brother of Oxford's first wife Anne. Yet the soliloquy that alludes to his hunchback also allows Richard to enlist our empathy for why he feels so cheated and vindictive, because of his disability, which makes him feel that "love forswore me in my mother's womb" (*3 Henry VI*, III.ii). Oxford captures our minds and hearts because he grasps and communicates complex truths with concision.

What are the truths that lie beneath the "esoteric" surface of Shakespeare's works? Here, we must remind ourselves of the profound lesson that Hermann Rorschach taught us: an ambiguous stimulus predictably leads us to "see" things that are actually projections from our unconscious. Unless we realize this, we are at risk of false certainty that what *we* see in Shakespeare's dramatic

and poetic ink blots constitutes their sole meaning. Shakespeare not only holds up a mirror to us in his works, he also holds up Rorschach cards, inviting us to say what we see in them. So, we gaze at our own reflection in Shakespeare’s works, confronting truths about ourselves that often make us uncomfortable. Yet, as Justin Frank has noted, “pursuit of truth is as necessary to the mind as food is to the body, and without it the psyche starves” (2018, 105).

Delia Bacon was probably correct that Shakespeare was writing a powerful yet disguised critique of the corruption of the Elizabethan court. Some of her 19th Century contemporaries, such as Walt Whitman, correctly perceived beneath the mask of the commoner-playwright a profound aristocratic sympathy, and therefore condemned Shakespeare’s works as anti-democratic.

To find consoling truisms in his works is usually to misread him. Professor Helen Vendler of Harvard University observed that when a Shakespeare sonnet ends with a proverbial sounding couplet, it suggests that Shakespeare has despaired of finding a true solution to the problem described in the preceding three quatrains. Another example is the popular Shakespeare quotation, “The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers” (2 *Henry VI*, IV.ii). Did Shakespeare truly advocate that or even joke about it? Examining the play shows that he was instead mocking the common rabble during a peasant’s revolt. Conflating details from several past such revolts, he reminds us that overthrowing the established government risks anarchy. Further, like other nobles, Oxford had formal legal training, matriculating at Grey’s Inn when he was 17 years old, leading him to later incorporate into his works a plethora of legal terms and metaphors, always used correctly. We have created some fallacious “truths” about Shakespeare out of our compelling need to identify with him, and to claim him as one of us. Coming to terms with our fundamentally flawed idealization of Shakespeare of Stratford is the first step toward discovering concealed truths about the pseudonymous works of Oxford, and about him as author.

Earlier, I quoted from *Measure for Measure*: “Truth is truth to the end of reckoning.” As Paula Blank insightfully observes, this passage says a great deal about Shakespeare’s attitude toward truth and its measurement. Isabella is speaking after she has been horribly betrayed by the evil Angelo. It is in condemning Angelo that she says “Nay, it is ten times true, for truth is truth/ To the end of reckoning” (V.i.45–46). Blank comments that Shakespeare’s characters “generally maintain a belief in a truth that transcends...the reckonings of men” (39). Blank also explores Shakespeare’s deep and sophisticated interest in law, noting that “The purpose of law, in fact, is to guarantee that a single truth will apply in all determinations of equality...Shakespeare makes continual reference to the oath that Renaissance monarchs took at their coronation, to provide [equal justice], despite their personal allegiances” (174). In *All’s Well that Ends Well*, the buffoonish character Parolles (from

the French for “speech”) lies pathologically and shows that words can be a poor measure of truth. He is called a “linguist,” meaning a persuasive speaker, who is skilled in persuading people of what is untrue.

Freud said that Friedrich Nietzsche knew himself better than any man who ever lived (Waugaman, 1973). It’s true that Nietzsche anticipated Freud’s insights into our capacity for self-deception with his famous aphorism, “I did that, says my Memory. No, I could not have done that, says my Pride. And Memory yields” (Waugaman 1973, 460). However, with due respect to Nietzsche’s brilliant self-awareness, Freud surely knew that it is Shakespeare who deserves that honor, with a seemingly super-human capacity to face unwelcome truths about himself. Hamlet may be Oxford’s most autobiographical character; he is viciously self-critical in his “O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!” soliloquy (II.ii).

Paradoxically, fiction is better suited than non-fiction in presenting some of life’s most important truths, perhaps because it can speak at once to both our conscious and unconscious selves, and because it is better designed to grasp and convey complexity. The truth is often multi-layered, far more complex than we can easily describe explicitly. Shakespeare had a genius for communicating with our various conscious and unconscious states, through both explicit language and, perhaps more importantly, by activating networks of affectively charged implicit memories. He knew that language is most saliently a *spoken* language. It wasn’t just that most of his contemporaries were illiterate that led him to write plays. He used theater to communicate some of his most profound insights because hearing spoken language is far more effective than reading a text, so that multiple aspects of our identity and our conflicts become activated in a way that allows for new insights and compromise formations. Because he understands us so well, we trust Shakespeare to help guide us in our search for truth, in all its stubborn complexity.

In one of his most enigmatic poems, “The Phoenix and the Turtle” (Waugaman, 2014) Oxford wrote, as he was grieving the deaths of Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Essex. Although the conventional date of this poem is 1601, bibliographic evidence leaves open the actual date of publication.³

Truth may seem but cannot be;
Beauty brag but ‘tis not she;
Truth and beauty buried be.

Perhaps Oxford was hinting that the new political realities under King James, with Robert Cecil victorious in a struggle for power, only allowed Oxford to tell the truth in a variety of guises, “buried” between the lines.

J. Earle offers profound insights into truth in Shakespeare’s works in his 1881 essay, “The History of the Word ‘Mind.’” One way he underlined

Shakespeare’s understanding of the complexity of the human mind was by counting the number of different words and phrases that one of Shakespeare’s French translators had to use for “mind”: six major ones, as well as some 20 others, less frequently. Earle concludes that the word “serves on all occasions to express anything whatever that is of the inner sphere of human nature” (319). This reflected a shift away from an earlier era, when Soul was of paramount interest. “[W]e may say that the Soul’s approach was by the way of the Good, and that there had risen up in humanity a fresh demand that the whole province of Thought should be newly explored by way of the *True*” (320; my emphasis). The emphasis of Renaissance humanism on the individual as a central concern required a fresh examination of human capacities and limitations in ascertaining what is true independently of faith.

Sky Gilbert in *Shakespeare Beyond Science* posits that Oxford was medieval in some of his world view, which celebrated the polysemous potential of poetry to communicate complex human truths that are poorly suited to the more strictly denotative language that emerged from an incipient scientific worldview by the early 17th Century. Similarly, Gilbert notes that Shakespeare celebrates paradox, because it helps us get at complex truths that are difficult to capture in words. Gilbert believes that the literary world view was shifting in Shakespeare’s day to one that was strongly influenced by scientific views of objective truth that are less helpful in understanding the truths of our inner lives. To properly explore this concept as it appears in Shakespeare’s oeuvre, I will investigate the Shakespeare comedy *All’s Well That Ends Well* (*AWEW*).

All’s Well That Ends Well

Truth and deception permeate *All’s Well that Ends Well* (*AWEW*). In fact, “truth” is used much more often here than in any other Shakespeare play, exceeded only by how often it occurs in the *Sonnets*. In this play, Bertram has a blind spot for the dishonesty of his companion Parolles. One of the play’s funniest scenes is when other characters deceive Parolles into thinking he has been captured by the enemy. Under threat of torture, he betrays Bertram—he is anything but true in its original meaning of loyal. His exposure as a fraud is a moment of supreme shame, but Parolles’ reaction is remarkable. He undergoes an instantaneous character change, as he drops his false façade and faces the truth about himself:

Yet am I thankful: if my heart were great,
‘Twould burst at this...
...simply the thing I am
Shall make me live. Who knows himself a braggart,
Let him fear this, for it will come to pass
That every braggart shall be found an ass. (IV.iii)

Similarly, the entire plot of the comedy turns around the exposure of Bertram as a shallow snob, unable to recognize the value of his new wife Helena, merely because she is inferior to him in social rank. After Helena miraculously cures the King of a fatal illness, he rewards her by allowing her to choose Bertram as her husband. But Bertram objects:

A poor physician's daughter my wife! Disdain
Rather corrupt me ever! (II.iii)

Somewhat unconvincingly, Bertram's final words in the play are "I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly" (V.iii).

Helena herself practices deception repeatedly while exposing Bertram's dishonesty. She deceives her estranged husband Bertram into impregnating her through the famous "bed trick" when he assumes he is sleeping with Diana, a Florentine who, in league with Helena, arouses his lust. Helena also deceives most of the characters in the play into thinking she is dead, so that when she reveals herself to be alive at the play's end, it recalls the resurrection of Jesus. Such a parallel with Jesus (and with the Virgin Mary?) was earlier hinted at by her miraculous healing of the King. It leads the awestruck courtier Lafeu to exclaim, "They say miracles are past" (II.iii), as he then rejects rational explanations for such events, speaking instead of "heavenly effect in an earthly actor," and "the very hand of heaven." Since Shakespeare alludes to the Bible constantly, a biblically literate audience might think of Jesus saying "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32) and "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6; John's word for truth is ἀλήθεια from λήθεια, the root of Lethe, implying that truth is freedom from forgetfulness, or oblivion). Just as "truth" appears more often in *AWEW* than in other Shakespeare plays, that word appears in the Gospel of John far more often than in the rest of the New Testament.

The theme of truth in Shakespeare is linked with his deep interest in all forms of deceit that hide the truth. As a result, literal and figurative masks are common in his works, and the plays often warn the monarch to beware of courtiers who flatter her, since there is usually self-serving duplicity in flattery. The plot of *AWEW* involves multiple instances of lies and deception. Indeed, it is a detailed study in the use of words to evade the truth.

AWEW offers some fascinating insights into truth. Note the implication that song lyrics are one way to reveal the truth, in the first two uses of the word in the play:

Countess Wilt thou ever be a foul-mouthed and calumnious knave?
Fool A prophet I, madam, and I speak the *truth* the next way:
(*he sings*) For I the ballad will repeat

Which men full *true* will find:
Your marriage comes by destiny;
Your cuckoo sings by kind. (I.iii)

In the Elizabethan era, ballads were often written and sung to share news. The cuckoo was so named because of the repetitive mating call of the male. The OED credits Shakespeare with coining “cuckoo-bird,” and also “cuckoo-spell” for his English version of an obscure term of rhetoric (epizeuxis, meaning the immediate repetition of a word or phrase). The fool implies that it is natural sexual instincts (“kind”) that lead the cuckoo to seek a mate.

Freud famously wrote that “no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger-tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore” (Dora, *SE* VII: 78) Shakespeare was also fascinated with the way our faces, specifically, can give us away. The Countess asks Helena if she loves Bertram, but then quickly adds, “Therefore tell me *true*/But tell me then ‘tis so, for, look, thy [blushing] cheeks/Confess it th’ one to th’ other, and thine eyes/See it so grossly shown in their behaviors/That in their kind they speak it” (I.iii; my emphasis).

AWEW has been called “perhaps the most problematic of [Shakespeare’s] so-called ‘problem plays,’” principally because it “lacks unity” (Calderwood 61). Critics have overlooked the role of autobiography in the play, given their false assumption about its real author. The Oxfordian authorship hypothesis clarifies many enigmatic aspects of the plot—especially plot elements Oxford added to the play’s source in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. It is one of Oxford’s confessional plays that appears to make amends for Oxford’s mistreatment of his first wife, Anne Cecil (as do *Othello* and *The Winter’s Tale*). They had grown up together at Cecil House since Oxford was the ward of Anne’s father, Sir William Cecil—just as Bertram is the ward of the King of France, and Helena is the ward of Bertram’s mother, the Countess of Rousillon. Helena says to the Countess, “Would...that my lord your son were not [equivalent to] my brother” (I.iii.161–62). Just after marrying Helena, Bertram deserts her to leave France to participate in the war between Florence and Siena. Soon after impregnating Anne, Oxford abandoned her for 14 months, spending most of that time traveling in France and Italy. The play’s marriage is unlike other marriages in Shakespeare’s canon in that it is not between social equals, just as Anne was Oxford’s social inferior in class-conscious Elizabethan England.

Moreover, I believe Oxford was bisexual not because three contemporaries formally accused Oxford of “pederasty” in 1581, but because Oxford returned to England from Italy in 1576 with a 16-year-old choir boy—who stayed in Oxford’s home for 11 months before returning to Italy. This receives some possible “slanted” allusions in the play, such as when Bertram’s dishonest servant Parolles twice calls him “sweet heart” (both in III.iii).

This somewhat neglected play was among the 18 plays that were not published until 1623, seven years after the death of the traditional author (and no one ever claims *he* must have written plays after he died, which is one of the standard slanders against the authorship claims of Oxford). No one has successfully explained why half the plays in the First Folio were withheld from publication until such a late date. Since Oxford's son-in-law was one of the dedicatees of the 1623 First Folio, it is likely that his wife—Oxford's daughter Susan—possessed the manuscripts of his unpublished plays. One theory is that the political implications of those 18 plays were too inflammatory for their earlier publication or that they revealed too much about their hidden author.

When was the play written? In her introduction to *AWEW* in the Riverside Shakespeare, Professor Anne Barton believes it was written circa 1602, two years before Oxford's death. It was also a year before Queen Elizabeth's demise, a time when she was deeply depressed. On the other hand, an Oxfordian dating of the play places it much earlier, in 1579, according to Eva Turner Clark (124).

Belatedly confirming Delia Bacon's groundbreaking thesis, scholars now increasingly recognize that Shakespeare wrote primarily for court performance, and only secondarily for the general public (Dutton; Lake). Dutton, for example, writes, "Pleasing the aristocratic, and especially the courtly, audience was always their [the Lord Chamberlain's Men] first concern. Everything else was, by definition, secondary" (Dutton 2016, 16).

This new perspective encourages us to look at his plays for controversial truths he intended for the ears of the Queen and her Privy Council advisors. It is illuminating that the Queen was likely the most salient spectator at court performances of Oxford's plays. As a result, I think he always wrote them with her in mind. She was often compared by poets with the goddess Diana; the character Diana in this play thus may allude to her. The psychoanalyst Marvin Krimms has written eloquently, from personal experience, of how therapeutic it can be to watch Shakespeare's plays. I believe Oxford, once one of the Queen's favorite courtiers in the 1570s, knew he could lift her spirits with his theatrical entertainments, performed at court for her (Chiari & Mucciolo, 2019; Dutton, 2016; Streitberger, 2016), especially when he self-deprecatingly satirized his own notorious flaws. He helped the Queen escape her present cares by transporting her back into the 1570s, when Oxford married Anne, then escaped her by living in Italy for a year.

Ramon Jiménez, among other scholars, has documented that Shakespeare's plays were revisions of earlier, anonymous sources that were also written by Oxford. In 1579, a now lost play was staged at court that may have been an earlier version of *AWEW*. It was called *The Rape of the Second Helen*, alluding to Helen of Troy (in *AWEW*, the names Helen and Helena are used

interchangeably for the same character). Bertram resolves never to have sex with Helena, so that he can later have their marriage annulled. The crucial plot element of the bed trick, where Bertram has sex with and impregnates Helena, thinking she is Diana, not only has many sources in folklore and literature, including *Decameron*, but it also has an autobiographical source. The Essex Antiquarian Thomas Wright wrote in 1836 that Anne’s father, Lord Burghley, arranged to have Oxford sleep with Anne, while Oxford believed he was having sex with another woman. The bed trick recurs in three other Shakespeare plays. Since Burghley was mercilessly spoofed as Polonius in *Hamlet*, it seems likely that *Hamlet* was written before Burghley’s 1598 death. Following their deaths, Oxford seemed to make penance toward those he had wronged, and I suspect the addition of the “good old counselor Lafew” (Garber 622) to Boccaccio’s tale served as a fonder, reparative depiction of Burghley in *AWEW*.

Scholars agree that Shakespeare borrowed plot elements for *AWEW* from Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. That work, set in 1348 Florence at the height of a devastating plague, has special relevance for our Covid-19 pandemic. Shakespeare’s true connection with Boccaccio is even stronger, since evidence strongly suggests Oxford wrote not only Shakespeare’s works, but also translated the first full English translation of *Decameron*, appearing anonymously in 1620 (Waugaman, 2021). Isaac Jaggard published it in two lavishly illustrated folio volumes, three years before Jaggard also published the First Folio of Shakespeare’s plays. Both works were dedicated to Oxford’s son-in-law, the Earl of Montgomery, whose wife Susan likely owned her father’s unpublished manuscript of the Boccaccio translation, as well as those of the 18 plays first published in 1623.

Close reading of the 1620 *Decameron* translation shows many phrases that appear in the works of Shakespeare. For example, “There shall we heare the pretty birds sweetly singing” (loc. 251). This image is unusual for its era, but Shakespeare wrote “where late the sweet birds sang” in Sonnet 73, as well as similar phrases in *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. The Ghost in *Hamlet* tells Hamlet, “I could a tale unfold whose lightest word/Would harrow up thy soul...And [make] each particular hair to stand on end/Like quills upon the fretful porcupine” (I.v, my emphasis). That vivid trope for terror is apparently used nowhere else except in this phrase in the English version of *Decameron*: “his hair stood upright like porcupine’s quills” (loc. 7037). The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites Shakespeare as the first writer to use “over-plus” to mean excess libido, in Sonnet 135. The 1620 translation uses the phrase in just the same way (loc. 7711).

Marjorie Garber of Harvard makes the intriguing observation that *AWEW* alludes to its own title more often than do Shakespeare’s other plays. She speculates that this suggests “a certain self-consciousness about its identity as

a fiction” (619). Perhaps this was done to disguise from the general public its allusion to so many embarrassing events in Oxford’s life. Garber cites G.K. Hunter’s observation that the play “begin[s] with plans for the education of a *brash* young courtier...and address[es] the question of stepparents” (619; my emphasis). We still have the daily schedule of tutorials that Oxford’s “step-father” (that is, guardian) Burghley assigned for Oxford’s education starting at age 12. And “brash” is an understatement for Oxford’s notoriously impulsive behavior, such as killing an undercook in Cecil House with his rapier at age 17—but cleared by a court of inquiry by declaring that the cook ran himself upon Oxford’s sword. A contemporary wrote that “his perverse sense of humor was a source of grave embarrassment” to Lord Burghley (think Polonius in *Hamlet*) (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry on Oxford). He repeatedly defied the hot-tempered Queen Elizabeth as her most wayward courtier until she eventually banished him from court for two years, from 1581 to 1583.

Garber unwittingly names another autobiographical theme when she notes that there was “a quasi-incestuous relationship” (625) between Bertram and Helena since they grew up in the same household—that of Bertram’s mother, the Countess of Rossillion. When Bertram’s father dies, he succeeds him as Count, and leaves his mother to live at the court of the king as a royal ward. When Oxford was 12, his father died, leaving his son as the 17th Earl of Oxford. Queen Elizabeth then ordered him to leave his mother’s home and become her first royal ward to be raised in the home of Sir William Cecil, Master of the Court of Wards (cf. the “old and loyal lord and counselor” Lafew in *AWEW*).

In *AWEW*, Bertram initially balks at the king’s order to marry Helena, after the king promised to grant her anything she wished for healing his near fatal illness. Bertram arrogantly complains that Helena is far inferior to him in social rank. The king replies, “’Tis only title thou disdain’st in her, the which/ I can build up...If thou canst like this creature as a maid,/I can create the rest” (II.iii). Similarly, 15-year-old Anne Cecil’s marriage to the 21-year-old Oxford, like that of Bertram to Helena, was figuratively “quasi-incestuous” (Garber 625). As the daughter of a knight, Anne was far beneath Oxford in social rank. So, Queen Elizabeth elevated Anne’s father to Lord Burghley shortly before Anne married Oxford—a match ordered by Anne’s father. And this detail of the king offering to raise Helena to a higher rank is not in Boccaccio’s story of Bertrand and Gillette (she is named Juliet in Oxford’s 1620 translation). Further, like Helena, Anne was considered a lay healer by contemporaries, a skill she may have learned from her mother, a highly scholarly woman (in *AWEW*, Helena learned to heal from her physician father)—“...the noble Countess of Oxford most charitably...did many great and notable cures upon her poor neighbors” (Potter 1610).

The ninth story of the third day in Boccaccio’s *Decameron* is well known to be the primary literary source for *AWEW*. In the first complete English translation, Oxford emphasizes a parallel with his own life. The Italian version⁴ said “morto il conte e lui nelle mani del re lasciato...” [“once the Count {his father} died, he was left in the hands of the king”]. But Oxford translates this as “Old Count Isnard dying, young Bertrand fell as a *Ward* to the King...” (my emphasis), just as Oxford became the first royal ward in Elizabeth’s new wardship system at age 12, after the death of his father, the 16th Earl [“Conte” in Italian]. Later, the Italian version has the king say to Bertrand, “Beltramo, voi siete omai grande e fornito” (“Beltramo, you are henceforth great and provided”) (238). Once again, Oxford’s English translation introduces a key autobiographical word: “Noble Count, it is not unknown to us, that you are a Gentleman of great honor, and it is our royal pleasure, to discharge your *wardship*” (emphasis added; this is the only instance of “discharge your wardship” in the database *Early English Books Online* loc. 4376). It is likely that Oxford thus drew attention to a pivotal parallel with his life not only because he identified with Bertrand, but because he wished that at least some readers of his translation would recognize this parallel with his life. It would lead readers to understand, further, that Oxford identified with Bertrand’s unwillingness to marry the woman he was ordered to wed.

As I mentioned earlier, I hold that Oxford sometimes used his plays to expiate his guilt toward those he had wronged—following their deaths. One disguised truth in *AWEW* is the playwright’s confession of his culpability in ruining his marriage to Anne with his arrogance about his social superiority to her, along with his abandonment of her when she was pregnant with their first child, then with his pathological jealousy of her. Like Leontes’s wife Hermione in *The Winter’s Tale*, Bertram’s wife Helena appears to be resurrected from the dead at the play’s end. This is probably the playwright’s wishful fantasy and helps explain some of the blatant disconnects from reality in the play, as Anne Barton perceptively notes (Riverside, 536). She comments on several parallels with *Hamlet*, which is probably Oxford’s most autobiographical play (e.g., notes on lines 53, 54, and 61–70 id. at 539).

Like Hamlet, Bertram lost a father who is portrayed as an ideal, a paragon of virtue. Bertram is a supercilious snob, while his father is described as more of an egalitarian. Oxford, after losing his father at age 12, may have idealized him. Bertram becomes the ward of the King of France, as Oxford became the ward of William Cecil. There’s a subtle allusion to Lord Burghley in the mention of one “Corambus” in *AWEW*. Like “Corambis,” the earlier name of Polonius in the first quarto of *Hamlet*, this name satirizes Burghley’s motto “Cor unum, via una” (one heart, one way) in a word that implies “double-hearted,” or duplicitous. Shakespeare often doubles plot elements, for emphasis and to create a more sophisticated complexity. Here, the theme of wardship is doubled, since Helena is herself the ward of Bertram’s mother, the Countess of Rousillon.

Conclusions

Throughout the Shakespeare canon, Oxford/Shakespeare forces us to face the full complexity of truths about a wide variety of people in society and government. Our feelings, our motives, our conflicts, even our very identities are anything but straightforward and simple. I began with a famous quote from Emily Dickinson because it succinctly captures Oxford's awareness that our capacity to face the truth directly is limited. In addition, he knew that escaping Elizabethan censorship required him to be subtle in conveying his more controversial truths. I believe he was compelled to conceal his real identity from the general public since he aired secrets in the plays about high court officials, including William Cecil, the Lord High Treasurer (Polonius in *Hamlet*) and Christopher Hatton, the Lord Chancellor (Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*), among others. Yet Oxford's ultimate goal as an artist was, as described in *The Rape of Lucrece*, "To unmask falsehood, and bring truth to light" (line 991).

It is always surprising when otherwise discerning people who love Shakespeare's works claim that the truth about who wrote them does not matter. Unconsciously, they may be expressing their quasi-religious attitude, with the canon serving as holy scripture, whose human authorship is regarded as irrelevant. Oxford understood our conflicting feelings when searching for the truth about ourselves and about others. His empathy was extraordinary. Occasionally, he overwhelms us with the truth, but mostly he tells it "slant" enough to make it bearable. As Emily Dickinson concluded her poem, whose first line is "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—"

The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind—

Endnotes

1. Reprinted by kind permission of Routledge from Salman Akhtar and Andrew Klafter, *Truth*.
2. “Shakespeare was the first author she chose to read, and...she regarded him as the only necessary author” (3).
3. As I wrote earlier, “The printing of deliberately false dates of publication is not unheard of in early modern English books. Ilya Gililov, in *The Shakespeare Game: The Mystery of the Great Phoenix*, raises credible doubts about the alleged 1601 date of publication of *Love’s Martyr*. For example, the book was never entered into the Stationers Register, hinting at its subversive content. The alleged Italian poet whom Robert Chester translated in much of the book, Torquato Caeliano, apparently never existed. For that matter, Robert Chester himself has never been conclusively identified...[and] may be a pseudonym.
“Grosart had already noted that the British Library’s copy, dated 1611 on the title page, is an exact reprint of the Folger Library’s copy, dated 1601. There are the same misprints, and the same faulty type in places. Gililov made the further discovery that the paper of both copies even has the same distinctive watermark: a unicorn with crooked back legs. And Gililov found the same features in the Huntington Library’s undated copy.” (Richard Waugaman, “The 1574 *Mirour for Magistrates* is a Possible Source of ‘Feath’red King’ in Shakespeare’s ‘The Phoenix and the Turtle,’” *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 85 [Spring 2014]: 67–72.)
4. The Italian version used is Boccaccio, 1966.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Mark. *Shakespeare by Another Name: The Life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man who was Shakespeare*. New York: Gotham Books, 2005.
- Boccaccio, Giovanni. *Decameron*, in *Opere*. Milan: Mursio, 1966.
- , *Decameron: The Original English Translation of John Florio* (sic). Kindle Edition, 2013.
- Calderwood, James L. “The Mingled Yarn of ‘All’s Well.’” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 62:1, 61–76, 1963.
- Chiari, Sophie & John Mucciolo (eds.). *Performances at Court in the Age of Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Clark, Eva Turner. *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare’s Plays*. Jennings, LA: Kennikat Press, 1974.
- Dutton, Richard. *Shakespeare, Court Dramatist*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Earle, J. “The History of the Word ‘Mind’.” *Mind*, 6:23, 301–320, 1881.
- Finnerty, Paraic. *Emily Dickinson’s Shakespeare*. Amherst: University of Mass. Press, 2006.
- Frank, Justin. *Trump on the Couch*. New York: Avery, 2018.
- Freud, Sigmund. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. London: Hogarth Press, 1964.
- Gilbert, Sky. *Shakespeare Beyond Science: When Poetry Was the World*. Guernica Editions, 2020.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. “Recollections of a Gifted Woman.” *The Atlantic*, January 1863.
- Jiménez, Ramon. “*Vero Nihil Verius*—Nothing Truer than *What?*” *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* 54:1, 16–17, 2018.
- Lake, Peter. *How Shakespeare Put Politics on the Stage: Power and Succession in the History Plays*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

- Meltzer, Arthur M., *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Meng, H. and E.L. Freud (eds.) *Psychoanalysis and Faith: The Letters of Sigmund Freud to Oskar Pfister*. New York: Basic Books, 1963.
- Ogden, T.H. “On language and truth in psychoanalysis. *Psychoanal. Q.* 85:2, 411–426, 2016.
- Orgel, Stephen. “Prologue: I am Richard II.” In *Representations of Elizabeth I in Early Modern Culture*. A. Patrina et al (eds.) Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Ostrowski, Donald. *Who Wrote That? Authorship Controversies from Moses to Sholokhov*. Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2020.
- Pappas, Stephanie, “How Twisted Was King Richard III’s Spine?” *LiveScience* online, May 29, 2014 (accessed October 17, 2021).
- Potter, Edward. *A Prognostication*. Folio II, a. Book One: “A coppye of all suche Medicines wherewith the noble Countisse of Oxenford most charitably, in her owne person, did manye great and notable Cures upon her poore Neighbors.” Manuscript, 1610.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. 2nd Edition. Eds. G. Blakemore Evans and J.J.M. Tobin. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996.
- Streitberger, W.R. *The Masters of the Revels and Elizabeth I’s Court Theatre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Vendler, Helen. *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Waugaman, Richard M. “A Wanderlust Poem, Newly Attributed to Edward de Vere.” *Shakespeare Matters* 7:1, 21–23, 2007.
- . “A Snail Poem, Newly Attributed to Edward de Vere,” *Shakespeare Matters* 7:2, 6–11, 2008.
- . “*The Arte of English Poesie*: The Case for Edward de Vere’s Authorship.” *Brief Chronicles: The Interdisciplinary Journal of the Shakespeare Fellowship* 2:121–141, 2010.
- . “‘A New 1569 Poem by Arthur Golding,’ Re-attributed to Edward de Vere.” *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter* 49:1, 9–10, 2013.
- . “The 1574 Mirror for Magistrates is a Possible Source for ‘Feath’red

King' in Shakespeare's 'The Phoenix and the Turtle.'" *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 85:1, 67–72, 2014.

———. "A 1578 Poem about de Vere's Trip to Italy," *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter* 51:2, 1, 27–32, 2015.

———. "Edward de Vere Translated the 1570 *A Ritche Storehouse or Treasurie for Nobilitie and Gentlemen* by Johann Sturm." *Brief Chronicles: The Interdisciplinary Journal of the Shakespeare Fellowship* 7:131–146, 2016.

———. "Did Edward de Vere Translate Ovid's *Metamorphoses*?" *The Oxfordian* 20:1–20, 2018.

———. "Did Edward de Vere Translate Boccaccio's *Decameron* into English, Published in 1620?" *The Oxfordian* 23:243–266, 2021.

“Nothing is Truer than Truth” and Shakespeare



What is Hamlet's Book?

by Sky Gilbert

What did Shakespeare read? Well, ‘everything’—meaning anything of importance that was available to him at the time, in any language. (Queen Elizabeth herself was able to read 7 languages at the age of 11, and there is no reason to believe that Edward de Vere was not able to do the same.) Shakespeare does, however, mention certain books in his plays: Lyly’s *Grammar* and several poems by Ovid. Close examination of William Lyly and Ovid offer the opportunity to identify Shakespeare’s place in the contentious philosophical debates of his time. But speculation about a book that is read by Hamlet—but is never named—can also be rewarding.

Some have noticed resonances between Girolamo Cardano’s *De consolazione* (*Cardanus Comforte*) and Hamlet and have theorized that this is ‘Hamlet’s book.’ The purpose here is not so much to suggest that there is no relationship between Hamlet and *De consolazione*—there may very well be, as there is no doubt that Shakespeare was familiar with Cardano’s work. But previous scholarship (particularly on the part of Hardin Craig linking Hamlet and *De consolazione*) is less than convincing, and in fact Craig misinterprets Cardano’s work and his place in philosophical and scientific history. By carefully exploring Hamlet’s conversation about the book that he holds in his hand, we can get an idea of what Shakespeare was reading and perhaps thinking when he wrote *Hamlet*. And this exploration will lead us to another writer (Gorgias) who may have been the author of ‘Hamlet’s book.’

What is Hamlet's Book?

When it comes to classical sources most scholars assume Shakespeare was familiar with the books taught in Elizabethan grammar schools, but Leonard Barkan says:

Poets such as Horace, Juvenal, and Persius certainly stuck in the dramatist's mind, though they hardly seem to be foundational; the same could be said of the leading prose writers in the curriculum, such as Sallust and Cæsar. Indeed, Shakespeare's relation to the high literary canon in Latin seems so personal, so different from a replication of assigned reading, that we suppose him a dropout somewhere in his early teen years. (4)

This kind of addleheaded surmise comes from trying to reconcile the life of the man from Stratford with Shakespeare's obviously quirky, personal and highly informed literary obsessions. Shakespeare's favorite books were not his favorites because they were taught in Elizabethan grammar schools. Yes—he was undoubtedly familiar with the canon—with Cicero, Virgil and Quintilian as well as historians Plutarch and Livy, and many more. But he loved certain books more than others—why?

Lyly's *Grammar*

It seems a safe bet to include the books actually mentioned, often lovingly, in his plays. Shakespeare makes at least two direct references to the required textbook in Elizabethan grammar schools: William Lyly's *Rudimenta Grammatices*. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* an older person is instructing a younger person (ironically named William) utilizing this book. In *Titus Andronicus* Chiron casually observes "I read it in the grammar long ago" (4.2.23). In *As You Like It*, Touchstone gives a young man (also named 'William') a lecture on love that is also a lesson in rhetoric. These references to this famous grammar textbook of the time—as well as Shakespeare's general self-consciousness about language and word usage in his work—point to the primary focus of all Shakespeare's plays: rhetoric. Rhetoric, along with grammar and dialectics, constituted the main body of the early modern curriculum. And Shakespeare's plays and poems are essentially *about* rhetoric.

Sky Gilbert is a writer, director, and teacher based in Canada. A Professor of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph, Dr. Gilbert's recent book, titled *Shakespeare Beyond Science: When Poetry Was the World*, was published in 2020 by Guernica Editions. He co-founded and served as artistic director of Toronto's *Buddies in Bad Times Theatre* for 17 years. He has had more than 40 plays produced, has written seven critically acclaimed novels and published three award winning poetry collections—and has received three Dora Mavor Moore Awards (Toronto's "Tony's"). In his honor, the City of Toronto named a street after him: Sky Gilbert Lane.

When one says Shakespeare's work is 'about' anything it seems to limit the scope of his work. But it does not, especially when one considers the dominance of rhetoric in early modern pedagogy. Rhetoric was not just 'making speeches,' but included all possibilities for representation—all forms of art, including visual art and music as well as poetry and drama, physical beauty, clothing (including disguise)—really any form of artful deception. Because rhetoric is by nature deceptive, the key rhetorical question that dominates Shakespeare work is 'how do we perceive what is real and/or true?'

This dilemma dominates *The Sonnets*. The narrator inquires over and over about the direct relationship between a young man's physical beauty and his soul. It infects all the love scenes in Shakespeare; where lovers must decide if they have been fooled by the loved one's perfect exterior or have been lured into a trap by a liar. It resonates with Shakespeare's implication, in the final image in *The Winter's Tale* and in so many plays, that art (i.e. deception/rhetoric) may sometimes take the place of reality. And we see this theme echoed in the tragedies, where the heroes are so often, in one way or another, deluded, deceived, or hypnotized by dreams, ghosts, misconceptions, and fantasies.

Ovid's Oeuvre

Besides the grammarian William Lyly, Shakespeare directly references another author: Ovid. Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* reads from *Metamorphoses*. Young Lucius identifies the book when he says "Grandsire, 'tis Ovid's Metamorphoses; My mother gave it me" (4.1.43–44). Not coincidentally Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was translated by Edward de Vere's uncle and Latin tutor, Arthur Golding. Shakespeare draws his subject matter from Ovid in *Titus Andronicus*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. Lucentio and Bianca translate a passage from Ovid's *Heroides* in *Taming of the Shrew*: "*Hic ibat*, as I told you before, *Simois*, I am Lucentio, *hic est*, son unto Vincentio of Pisa, *Sigeia tellus*, disguised thus to get your love ..." (3.3. 31–33). Holofernes also refers to Ovid in *Loves Labours Lost*: "For the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy, caret, Ovidius Naso was the man" (4.2.147–148). Jonathan Bate in his *Shakespeare and Ovid* lists many other instances when Shakespeare subtly (or not so subtly) references Ovid, even if he does not mention him by name.

What about Ovid so deeply attracted Shakespeare? Cora Fox quotes Georgia Brown, who says Ovidianism "freed literature from the necessity to be didactic" (18). Ovid's work struck early modern England readers as being shockingly sexual, moreso because it lacks a clear moral imperative. Jonathan Bate says that Ben Jonson (in his play *Poetaster*) calls Ovid's work:

distinctly problematic, for there is little learning in him 'concerning either virtues manners or policy.' His *Amores* contain nothing 'but

incitation to lechery' and times spent reading him would be better employed on such authors that do minister both eloquence, and civil policy, and exhortation to virtue. (169)

Did Ovid's rejection of didacticism attract Shakespeare? Ovid's work was not without ideas, but, like Shakespeare, he utilized them in a manner that makes it difficult to deduce his intentions. Perhaps this is because Shakespeare used ideas to enhance his poetic effects rather than to proselytize. Delacey suggests Ovid uses ideas as poetic devices, and he "conceived of philosophy not as a perennial search for truth, but rather as a collection of doctrines which could be effectively used on appropriate occasions in literary work" (160).

Shakespeare's Affinity for Paradox

The fact that we don't often clearly understand the 'message' of a Shakespeare play is actually the key to understanding Shakespeare's work. Though certain Shakespearean passages may seem to endorse a specific philosophical idea, one is liable to find another idea in Shakespeare's work that contradicts the first one. This paradoxical aspect of Shakespeare's writing offers a fundamental clue to his philosophical inclinations.

The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* tells us "the Pyrrhonian skeptic has the skill of finding for every argument an equal and opposing argument, a skill whose employment will bring about suspension of judgment on any issue which is considered by the skeptic, and ultimately, tranquility" (Introduction). Shakespeare does exactly this. If Shakespeare was indeed a skeptic, he would have believed that it was important for us to ponder opposing ideas, not to find a solution but to rest tranquilly in the zone of contradiction.

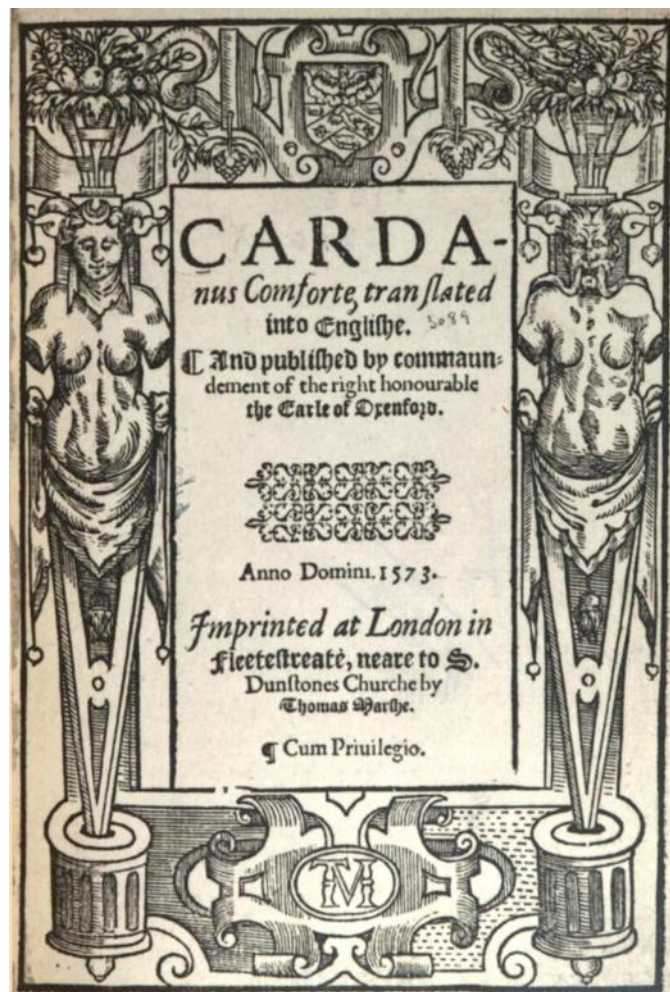
Pyrrho was all the rage in Early Modern English graduate schools. Though Shakespeare doesn't mention skepticism by name, he was undoubtedly aware of him. Ben Jonson knew of the Pyrrhonian skepticism brought to England, via the Roman philosopher Sextus Empiricus. Bronson Feldman mentions that Thomas Nashe directly refers to Sextus Empiricus: "our opinion (as Sextus Empiricus affirmeth) gives the name of good or ill to everything" (139). And Feldman also reminds us that this idea sounds remarkably like Hamlet's assertion "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so" (2.2. 268–270).

So, by examining books actually mentioned by Shakespeare—Lyly's *Grammar* and Ovid's poetry, for instance—we can get an inkling of what was on Shakespeare's mind. It follows that speculating about the title of a book that Hamlet carries is rewarding, as it requires that we articulate not only what was on Hamlet's mind when he speaks of that book in Shakespeare's play, but what was on Shakespeare's mind when he wrote *Hamlet*.

Cardanus Comforte

In an essay entitled “Hamlet’s Book” (1934) Hardin Craig suggests Hamlet is reading *Cardanus Comforte*, an English translation of Cardano’s *De consolatione*. Cardin is not the only one to suggest this; the correlation between the two had been noted previously by Francis Douce (1839) and Joseph Hunter (1845). The idea is attractive to Oxfordians, as the young Edward de Vere wrote an introduction to Thomas Bedingfield’s translation at age 23 which Bedingfield dedicated to de Vere. There is much evidence in *Hamlet*—and elsewhere in Shakespeare’s plays—that Shakespeare was familiar with Cardano. But *De consolatione* is less relevant to *Hamlet* than Craig asserts, because Craig misinterprets Cardano’s work.

When Craig says that “in the original form of the play, or tradition, Hamlet was thought of as having a book in his hand when he spoke the soliloquy” (17), he is referring to the First Quarto, considered by most scholars to



be a 'bad quarto.' This quarto is only about half the length of the Second Quarto and the First Folio and contains stage directions that seem derived from an actor's memory. For instance, the ghost of Hamlet's father appears in the queen's bedroom wearing a nightgown, and 'Ofelia' appears playing a lute. More notably Hamlet jumps into Ophelia's grave to battle Laertes. The Arden *Hamlet* calls this stage direction unlikely because it would make Hamlet's line after the sword fight: "I prithee take—thy fingers from my throat" (5.1. 249)—seem "forced and cold under the circumstances" (429 fn).

In this unreliable quarto the scenes are ordered in what seems to us to be an odd way. Hamlet's "to be or not to be" immediately follows the king's observation in Scene 7 that he is carrying a book, whereas in the Second Quarto and the First Folio it appears in a later act. The nunnery scene between Hamlet and 'Ofelia' follows directly after "to be or not to be." Then Hamlet meets Corambis/Polonius, who mentions Hamlet's book. (Since Claudius had mentioned this book for the first time three scenes earlier, Hamlet has been carrying it around for four scenes!) Unfortunately, Craig uses this odd ordering of the scenes in the unreliable First Quarto as the basis for establishing *Hamlet's* relationship to *De consolatione*. He insists on examining Cardano's work in the context of "to be or not to be," not in the context of the scene with Polonius—in which Hamlet actually discusses the book he is reading.

But even if we accept Craig's methodology, some of his arguments are questionable. Craig points to several ideas that can be found in both 'to be or not to be' and Cardano. Craig notes "Shakespeare's lines reflect Cardan's characteristic interest in dreams" (22). But many other writers and philosophers in the early modern period were also interested in dreams, including Thomas Nashe (whose work was undoubtedly familiar to Shakespeare)—who wrote an entire book about dreams called *Terrors of the Night*. Craig also notes that both Cardano and Hamlet compare death to sleep. But Shakespeare and Cardano are not the only Elizabethan writers to do so. Take for example, the lyric "Come, heavy sleep, the image of true death" a line attributed to composer John Dowland. Finally, Craig says: "the point is that Cardan, in common with Hamlet, is convinced of the reality of the ills of life" (29). But what writer worth his or her salt doesn't think that the world is a difficult place?

To his credit Craig acknowledges that Cardano had access to a wealth of classical sources, including among others, Erasmus, Seneca, Epictetus, Plutarch, Cicero and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and that it is difficult to tell whether Shakespeare read Cardano, or Cardano's sources. Thus, Craig wisely narrows his argument somewhat: "If we could find both in Hamlet and Cardan allocations of ideas peculiar to them we might arrive at some certainty that the two works are related" (19).

But the fact that Craig is set on proving that Cardano and Shakespeare were both stoics, renders his argument less convincing. When contemplating suicide in “to be or not to be” Hamlet says, “thus conscience does make cowards (of us all)” (3.1.91). What he clearly means is ‘thought’ makes us cowardly. We know this because soon afterward Hamlet says: “the native hue of resolution / Is (sicklied) o’er with the pale cast of thought” (3.1.93–4). Here Shakespeare employs the rhetorical technique called abundance, i.e. Hamlet says the same thing in two different ways. Craig, however, misinterprets this line. According to Craig “thus conscience does make cowards of us all” means “we do not commit suicide because we are cowards, and our consciences makes us feel guilty for this flaw.” Hamlet’s notion becomes not an astute observation but a moral lesson. According to Craig, both Cardano and Shakespeare “assert that this fear of death is part of man’s cowardice, for which his conscience reproves him, and both insist that lack of virtue is the reason calamity continues to assail him” (24).

Attempting to attribute noble Christian ideals to Shakespeare’s heroes is an appealing miscalculation, as what is troubling about these complex, sometimes inexplicable men is suddenly reassuring. Hamlet is no longer a flawed, neurotic, inscrutable man, but a good Christian one, with a few stoic virtues thrown in. Craig maintains that Hamlet and Cardano both believe “man must meet his trials with valiancy and fortitude” (29). Craig challenges critics who accentuate Hamlet’s “unheroical acknowledgements of cowardice” (31). According to Craig, when Hamlet praises Horatio, he “meant, not to confess his own weakness when he so delineated Horatio, but to express the ideal of his own character” (31). But the play offers no evidence for this. In addition, Craig concludes that both Shakespeare and Cardano were “steeped in the philosophy of the stoics and both drew from the same fund of classical literature” (36). Thus “Hamlet merges with the calm-minded heroes of antiquity” (31). But not only is Hamlet clearly not in any way ‘calm-minded’ but neither Cardano nor Shakespeare were stoics. On the contrary, a pointed aversion to stoicism is something they have in common.

Guido Giglioni (in “Autobiography and Self-Mastery”) states “Cardano openly distanced himself from the stoic examples” (344). He goes on: “Although the ability to transform suffering into a gift and to make one’s destiny one’s own choice may be said to be characteristic of both the Stoics and Cardano’s approach, concreteness is what distinguishes Cardano’s methodical use of prudence from the mere endurance of adversity” (348). The basic difference between Cardano and a typical stoic is that “the technique of drawing advantage from the misfortunes of life shows its difference from the Stoic consolatory method” (350). In other words, Cardano, in *De consolatione*—using his own life as an example—believes the secret of dealing with pain is not ‘endurance’ but instead, trying to, quite pragmatically, gain profit from it.

What is Hamlet's Book?

Cardano endured much personal strife which he discusses openly in his work. For example, he was abused by his father. One of his sons was beheaded for poisoning his wife, and Cardano disinherited the other for stealing his money. Cardano suffered from severe attacks of gout late in life, and, according to Giglioni, confessed—"I used to end that suffering of the body that tormented me every day by scratching my flesh raw with the nail of my thumb, and there I could perceive pleasure" (350). This distinctly *un*Christian method of drawing pleasure from pain (the bizarre passage above shocked readers at the time)—and his frank confessions about it—resonate with Shakespeare's generally amoral sensibility; Shakespeare presents even his 'heroes' unabashedly, warts and all.

Seneca and More...

It's true that Shakespeare's plays are often associated with Seneca, the Roman 'closet dramatist' whose work epitomized stoicism. It is also true that not only do Shakespeare's heroes suffer greatly, but also that Shakespeare's plays provide ample evidence that he had read Seneca. However, Patrick Gray suggests: "Seneca's tragedies are designed to illustrate the disastrous effects of unchecked emotion" (218), whereas in Shakespeare's plays: "the height of human dignity, as Shakespeare sees it, is...to give up the Senecan dream of self-mastery" (215). Shakespeare's characters do not deal with their anguish in a 'stoic' way: on the contrary, they wallow in pain. Hamlet is flagrantly consumed by melancholy, Richard II considers digging a grave with his own tears, and Titus goes on and on about the burdensome dampness of sorrow: "In summer's drought I'll drop upon thee still; / In winter with warm tears I'll melt the snow" (3.1.19–20).

So, Craig mistakenly proposes that both Cardano and Shakespeare were stoics, but does this mean the two authors don't share a similar sensibility? Giglioni summarizes Cardano's work: "It is not incorrect to say of Cardano's oeuvre that it represents a fractured stream of consciousness, made up of vacillations and discontinuities, a written record that reflects Cardano's attempts to cope with constant self-doubt" (334). This self-doubt reminds us of Hamlet, and of the narrator of *The Sonnets*. In addition, both Cardano and Shakespeare were addicted to paradox; Giglioni says Cardano was constantly "taking all the risk of exposing himself to the powers of contradiction" (362).

In addition to all this, Shakespeare and Cardano share a similar attitude to mysticism, one that is not typically Elizabethan, as both seem relatively relaxed and pragmatic when dealing with angels and demons. Barbara Mowat reminds us that in Elizabethan England, "accepting the doubts about the existence of demons was to invite the accusation of atheism" (19). But as there were two kinds of spirits—angels associated with Christian

and Jewish traditions (i.e. Neo-platonism and the Kabbala)—and evil demons associated with pagans, actual communication with spirits from the dead was fraught with danger. The dead were imagined as wishing to communicate with the living, but to complicate matters, when doing so they often appeared in disguise.

It is in the matter of demons that the confusion about Cardano begins; and this confusion is related to our misconceptions about early modern science. Many of the Renaissance men who made revolutionary scientific discoveries, discoveries that are still relevant today, were also steeped in mysticism, and were accused of being witches. Bruce Sterling quotes Hugh Trevor-Roper as saying, “Agrippa and Cardano were both frequently attacked as being themselves witches” (68, n). This is partially because both men challenged the mania for searching out and punishing innocent women, but it is also because they were sorcerers.

On the one hand, Cardano’s reputation as a mathematician is recognized by modern experts as one of the most influential of the Renaissance since he was one of the key figures in the foundation of probability, and first introduced binomial coefficients and the binomial theorem in the West. When it comes to philosophy, however, historians offer a different judgment. Trevor-Roper classifies Cardano not so much as a ‘philosopher’ as a magician: “The platonism of More and Erasmus gave way to the Hermetic, Kabbalistic, magical platonism of Reuchlin and Agrippa, Cardano, Dee and Bruno, the conjuring with demons and spirits, planets and stars. The magical platonism was not a new development...it had been forwarded by Ficino and Pico de Mirandola” (31). Often, his discoveries were linked with God’s plan and had a mystical component. He was, as Giglioni says (in “Faxion and His Demons”) “a sort of late medieval ghost hunter, who apparently spent a large part of his life investigating the life and mores of demons and other aerial creatures using all the scientific means at his disposal (optics, astrology, medicine)” (471). This means that Cardano—like Dee, Bruno and Agrippa—made use of ‘experiments’ not only to summon demons but in order to discover which were good and which were evil.

We see this kind of dilemma in Hamlet, who struggles over whether or not to trust his father’s ghost. But to be clear: none of Shakespeare’s ‘spirits’ are unequivocally good or evil; his attitude to them is ambiguous. This greatly contrasts with the attitudes of other dramatists and philosophers in the early modern period, who routinely separate good Christian spirits from bad pagan ones. For instance, the fairies in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are not purely angelic, and neither is Puck. The witches in *Macbeth* are not purely evil—if only because they speak significant truths to Macbeth that he is ill-equipped to understand. And Shakespeare’s ambivalence about Prospero in *The Tempest*, a character who was probably an amalgam of Dee, Cardano, Bruno and

What is Hamlet's Book?

Agrippa, stands in direct opposition to Christopher Marlowe's representation of another similar magician, who is clearly bound for hell: Doctor Faustus.

Shakespeare's reluctance to clearly separate good spirits from bad ones finds its apotheosis in *The Tempest*. Critics have classified Prospero as a 'good witch' because he never kills anyone with his spells, and he ultimately forgives his enemies. In contrast, Caliban is classified as a 'bad witch' because Prospero accuses him of rape and thievery (among other things), and characterizes his mother as an evil, pagan sorceress. But the moral distinctions between Caliban and Prospero are cloudy. Prospero tortures his victims quite gleefully, and Caliban is comic, often sympathetic—and endowed with eloquence. More importantly, at the end of *The Tempest*, Prospero claims Caliban as his spiritual brother, saying “‘This Thing of darkness I acknowledge mine” (5.1.275–6).

Hamlet's book may or may not be Cardano's *De consolatione*, but it is quite likely that Prospero's book was Cardano's *De subtilitate* (*The Subtlety of Things*). In his introduction to the English translation of *De subtilitate*, J. M. Forrester says “The bulk of the work can be seen as a miscellany of phenomena which Cardano sees as exposing the inability of Aristotle's neat system to account for all things” (xiv). Forrester quotes Cardano's definition of *subtilitas*: “the feature (‘ratio quaedam’) by which things that can be sensed are grasped with difficulty by the senses, and things that can be understood are grasped with difficulty by the intellect” (xv). In this book Cardano is “offering to make previously esoteric knowledge available to all” (xv). The magicians who wrote the early modern textbooks of magic (‘grimoires’) lacked Prospero's mastery—they were not always able to control the spirits they conjured. Cardano's *De subtilitate* offered early modern readers the possibility that they, like Prospero, might deal once and for all with things not dreamt of in Aristotle's philosophy.

Gorgias' *On Nature, or the Non-existent*

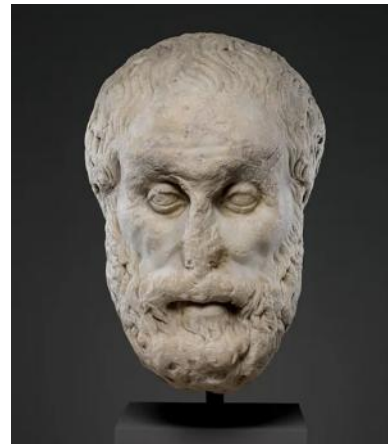
Another candidate can easily compete with *De consolatione* for the honor of being Hamlet's book: Gorgias' *On Nature, or the Non-existent*. Gorgias (483–375 B.C) was the first Sophist. He is infamous due to Plato's misrepresentation of him in *The Dialogues* as an empty persuader, a manipulative wordsmith, a master of form with a dangerous lack of concern for content. Shakespeare was undoubtedly familiar with Gorgias' work. This is evident not only because of the content of the plays but through historical links between Gorgias and Shakespeare.

The poetry and prose of John Lyly, Edward de Vere's secretary, has long been linked to Gorgias. C. S. Lewis said of Lyly: “So far as the elements are concerned, we are indeed embarrassed with too many ancestors rather than too

few: those who inquire most learnedly find themselves driven back and back till they reach Gorgias” (312–13). Furthermore Feuillerat, in his book on Lyly, speaks of the early modern influence of Gorgias on many Renaissance writers:

Among the writers I have mentioned there is one who from the first, in England, enjoyed an unusual vogue: Isocrates. The works of the Athenian rhetorician were imposed by royal decree as subjects of study in the Universities.... One could then with sufficient accuracy assign Isocrates the honor of having taught the usage of the so-called figures of Gorgias. (462–63)

Only four extant manuscripts of Gorgias’ work exist. *On Being or the Non-existent* is the most inscrutable and controversial. It takes the form of a philosophical essay on ontology, i.e., on ‘being.’ Like all ‘Gorgias’ manuscripts, this work must be read in the context of performance—as Gorgias was not only a poet but an actor—and master improviser, concerned with the art of persuasion. In each of the four extant examples of his poetry, Gorgias performs a monologue in a different rhetorical style. In his *Encomium of Helen* for instance, he portrays a lawyer defending the famous beauty Helen of Troy. In *Epitaphios*, he wears the mask of a eulogist at a funeral. And in *On Being or the Non-existent* he disguises himself as a philosopher.



Few contemporary images of Gorgias are known with certainty to have survived. This is a 1st-century CE Roman copy of a Greek statue of the 3rd century BCE. The identity of this man remains unknown.

In *On Being or the Non-existent* Gorgias satirizes the ontological theories of the eleatic philosophers Parmenides and Melissus, who laid the foundation for Aristotle and Plato. They believed, as Schiappa says, that reality was “ungenerated and unperishing, unchanging, stable, and forever” (25). *On Being or the Non-existent* makes a persuasive argument in opposition—attacking the notion of a stable, eternal reality—in quite perfect rational detail. Kerferd summarizes Gorgias’ ontology: “Nothing is. If it is, it is unknowable. If it is, and is knowable, it cannot be communicated to others,” because “neither being nor not being exist” (5–6). Gorgias’ philosophical satire presents us with an extremely reasonable treatise. In other words, he employs the syllogisms used by his fellow eleatic philosophers to come to an impossible conclusion—one the eleatics would have hated, because, paradoxically, he utilizes logic to craft an unassailable critique of reason.

Probably the most remarkable aspect of Gorgias’ poem is that for hundreds of years it has been analyzed and often detested but no one has been able to

What is Hamlet's Book?

figure out whether he meant us to take it seriously. His claim that 'nothing exists' appears on the surface to be ridiculous. But the phrase must be read in the context of Gorgias' work as poetry—that is, his persistent, scintillating and somewhat frustrating wordplay. Thus, his final conclusion *could* possibly have two meanings: 'NOTHING exists,' meaning: 'the world is nothing,' or 'Nothing EXISTS,' meaning: a thing called 'nothing' exists.

The witty, satirical tone of the scene in which Hamlet and Polonius discuss Hamlet's book is remarkably similar to the tone of Gorgias' essay. Hamlet's funny, seemingly silly jibes contain a sharp satirical point, as Polonius remarks "Though this be madness, yet there is method in't" (2.2.223–4). As in *On Being and the Non-existent*, Hamlet is hiding behind the mask of a philosopher in order to espouse nonsense, but not only does the mood of the scene between Polonius and Hamlet very much resemble Gorgias' poem; *Hamlet* and *On Being and the Non-existent* are very much alike both in implied content and intended meanings.

What happens in this scene is precisely what Gorgias says happens when we try to describe reality. Hamlet misunderstands various things that Polonius says, and ends up speaking 'truths' that are evidently falsehoods—like the idea that the sun can make a woman pregnant, or that old men don't have grey beards. This seems to echo Gorgias' line: "If it [reality] is, and is knowable, it cannot be communicated to others." Hamlet has no luck at all explaining *his* version of reality to Polonius.

The similarities between Gorgias *On Being and the Non-existent* and *Hamlet* continue. Polonius asks Hamlet what he is reading, and Hamlet answers "Words, words, words" (2.2.210). Here Hamlet devalues language, implying that the meaning of the words is not important. This is a Gorgian notion. Gorgias wished us to understand that all language is poetry; that since the poet is not the only one to manipulate us with language and that philosophers are poets too. Gorgias believes there is no difference between fact and fiction; he wants us to remember that language is merely words, i.e., words are used by philosophers and orators to mislead and confuse, hypnotize and manipulate. Nietzsche (quoted here by Consigny) said—for sophists "tropes or figures of speech are not 'occasionally added to words but constitute their most proper nature'...What is usually called language is actually all figuration" (77).

What version of reality does Hamlet propose in this scene? First, he challenges conventional notions about how babies are made:

Ham. For if the Sun breed Magots in a dead dogge, being a good kissing carrion—Have you a daughter?

Pol. I haue my Lord.

Ham. Let her not walk I' th' sun: Conception is a blessing, but not as
your daughter may conceive, friend look too't. (2.2.196–205)

Hamlet then proceeds to utter a series of 'true' statements that are patently false:

Pol. What is the matter, my Lord?

Ham. Between who?

Pol. I mean the matter you mean, my Lord.

Ham. Slanders sir: for the satirical rogue says here, that old men have gray beards; that their faces are wrinkled; their eyes purging thick amber, or plum-tree gum: and that they have a plentiful lack of wit...yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down, for yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward. (2.2. 211–222)

Why would Hamlet want to confuse an old man by framing falsehoods as true? Well, the skeptic Sextus is quoted by Schiappa as saying Gorgias "wants to 'abolish the criterion' of truth" (15). The implications of this notion are huge. Johnstone says of Gorgias: "To hold that nothing exists is to hold that nothing exists outside the sphere of human consciousness, and that all realities are the products of perception and thought" (272). In other words, "Nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so." Hamlet tries to convince Polonius of an alternative, topsy-turvy reality, one that is contrary to the facts as we know them—and he tries to create these 'alternative facts' through language.

But are Hamlet's lies completely untrue? For when he suggests that Ophelia might become impregnated by the sun, he is challenging her chastity—precisely what he does in the 'nunnery' scene. In other words, Hamlet's 'madness' (again, as Polonius observes) draws forth a grain of truth, at least about his own feelings. Similarly, after saying that old men do *not* have gray beards, Hamlet argues with himself, stating that Polonius would look very much like Hamlet if only we could go backward in time. Of course, we know that this is not possible. But Hamlet's notion of time travel contains all the yearning that we have about aging, offering the fantasy that we might grow younger, rather than older. In other words, when we are old, we are not merely decrepit, we carry regrets, and the wishes and dreams of youth.

Here, Hamlet is pointing to a deeper reality through paradox. Paradox is important to both Gorgias and Shakespeare because it represents reality more accurately than facts ever do. If we simply talk about the facts of aging—without Hamlet's fanciful paradox about moving back in time—then we don't include all of our feelings about aging, and we are not telling the whole truth about it. Similarly, if Hamlet speaks of 'pregnancy' without

mentioning Ophelia's (possibly imagined) infidelities, then he doesn't get to express his very deep and angry suspicions about her. Consigny, quoting Untersteiner, says Gorgias use of paradox "creates a simulacrum of the antithesis inherent in the nature of things thereby conveying through poetry what cannot be portrayed logically...[he is] circumventing the impossibility of rational communication of the tragic nature of things by using an antithetical style" (155).

We can also apply Craig's methodology to analyze "to be or not to be" in terms of Gorgias, for Hamlet's scene with Polonius is not the only one that echoes *On Nature or the Non-existent*. Though Hamlet's famous monologue is rightly interpreted as a man musing on the possibility of suicide, the opening question vibrates with ontological implications, and echoes Gorgias. Kerferd gives us this translation of a passage from *On Nature or the Non-existent*: "It is not possible to be or not to be. For he says, if Not-To-Be is Not-To-Be, then Not-Being would be no less than Being. For Not-Being is Not-Being and Being is Being, so things are no more are than not" (15). Here Gorgias argues that *neither* being or 'not-being' exist and as such equates them in the sense of being equally possible—or impossible—ideas. But the idea of 'not being' would be summarily dismissed by the eleatics, and such a notion would not be tolerated in Aristotelian philosophy; one needs Gorgias in order to speak of it.

What makes Gorgias' *On Nature or the Non-existent* such a striking candidate for Hamlet's book is that Gorgias' notion of reality is markedly similar to Hamlet's—and his ideas about the relationship between language and reality are singularly odd and somewhat perverse, and equally uncanny correspondences are difficult to find. On the other hand, the links between *De consolatione* and Hamlet are echoed in many early modern works. Cardano and Shakespeare share the same sensibility, both are deeply attracted to doubt and to non-Aristotelian explanations for the mysteries of life. What links Shakespeare with Cardano and Gorgias is not 'stoicism,' but a passionate attraction to notions of reality that are mysterious, befuddling and somewhat impossible.

Appendix

On Nature or the Non-existent

In the following fragment, Gorgias makes his case for non-existence and the impossibility of both comprehension and communication about anything whatsoever. The text is taken from *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Professors* edited by R.G. Bury, cross-referenced with *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* by Kathleen Freeman and *Philosophic Classics: Ancient Philosophy* by Forrest E. Baird:

- I. Nothing exists.
 - a. Not-Being does not exist.
 - b. Being does not exist.
 - i. As everlasting.
 - ii. As created.
 - iii. As both.
 - iv. As one.
 - v. As many.
 - c. A mixture of Being and Non-Being does not exist.
- II. If anything exists, it is incomprehensible.
- III. If it is comprehensible, it is incommunicable.

- I. Nothing exists. If anything exists, it must be either Being or Non-Being, or both Being and Not-Being.
 - a. It cannot be Not-Being, for Not-Being does not exist; if it did, it would be at the same time Being and Not-Being, which is impossible.
 - b. It cannot be Being, for Being does not exist. If Being exists, it must be either everlasting, or created, or both.
 - i. It cannot be everlasting; if it were, it would have no beginning, and therefore would be boundless; if it is boundless, then it has no position, for if it had position it would be contained in something, and so it would no longer be boundless, for that which contains is greater than that which is contained, and nothing is greater than the boundless. It cannot be contained by itself, for then the thing containing and the thing contained would be the same, and Being would become two things—both position and body—which is absurd. Hence, if Being is everlasting, it is boundless; if boundless, it has no position (“is nowhere”); if without position, it does not exist.

- ii. Similarly, Being cannot be created; if it were, it must come from something, either Being or Not-Being, both of which are impossible.
 - iii. Similarly, Being cannot be both everlasting and created, since they are opposite. Therefore, Being does not exist.
 - iv. Being cannot be one, because if it exists it has size, and is therefore infinitely divisible; at least it is threefold, having length, breadth, and depth.
 - v. It cannot be many, because the many is made up of additional ones, so that since the one does not exist, the many do not exist either.
 - c. A mixture of Being and Not-Being is impossible. Therefore, since Being does not exist, nothing exists.
- II. If anything exists, it is incomprehensible. If the concepts of the mind are not realities, reality cannot be thought; if the thing thought is white, then white is thought about; if the thing thought is non-existent, then non-existence is thought about; this is equivalent to saying that "existence, reality, is not thought about, cannot be thought." Many things thought about are not realities: we can conceive of a chariot running on the sea, or a winged man. Also, since things seen are the objects of sight, and things heard are the objects of hearing, and we accept as real things seen without their being heard, and vice versa; so we would have to accept things thought without their being seen or heard; but this would mean believing in things like the chariot racing on the sea. Therefore, reality is not the object of thought, and cannot be comprehended by it. Pure mind, as opposed to sense-perception, or even as an equally valid criterion, is a myth.
- III. If anything is comprehensible, it is incommunicable. The things which exist are perceptibles: the objects of sight are apprehended by sight, the objects of hearing by hearing, and there is no interchange; so that these sense-perceptions cannot communicate with one another. Further, that with which we communicate is speech, and speech is not the same thing as the things that exist, the perceptibles; so that we communicate not the things which exist, but only speech; just as that which is seen cannot become that which is heard, so our speech cannot be equated with that which exists, since it is outside us. Further, speech is composed from the percepts which we receive from without, that is, from perceptibles; so that it is not speech which communicates perceptibles, but perceptibles which create speech. Further, speech can never exactly represent perceptibles, since it is different from them, and perceptibles are apprehended each by the one kind of organ, speech by another. Hence, since the objects of sight cannot be presented to any other organ but sight, and the different sense-organs cannot give their information to one another, similarly speech cannot give any information about perceptibles. Therefore, if anything exists and is comprehended, it is incommunicable. (*Sextus Empiricus* 1.3/Freeman, 128–129, fragment 3/Baird, 45–46).

Works Cited

- Barkan, Leonard. "What Did Shakespeare Read?" *Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Margareta de Grazia and Stanley Wells, eds. Cambridge, 2006.
- Bate, Jonathan. *Shakespeare and Ovid*. Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Cardano, Girolamo. *De consolation (Cardanus Comforte)*. Amsterdam, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1969.
- . *The subtilitate of Girolamo Cardano (The Subtlety of Things)*. Forrester, John M. (ed). ACMRS Press, 2013.
- Consigny, Scott. *Gorgias: Sophist and Artist*. University of South Carolina Press, 2001.
- Craig, Hardin. "Hamlet's Book." *The Huntington Library Bulletin*, No. 6, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934.
- DeLacy, Phillip. "Philosophical Doctrine and Poetic Technique in Ovid" *The Classical Journal*. 43:3. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1947.
- Dowland, John. "Come, Heavy Sleep" *All Poetry* accessed May 30. 2022 <https://allpoetry.com/Come,-Heavy-Sleep>.
- Feldman, Bronson. *Hamlet Himself*. iUniverse, 2010.
- Feuillerat, Albert. *John Lyly: Contribution a L'Histoire de la Renaissance en Angleterre*. University Press, 1910, rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1968.
- Fox, Cora. *OVID and the Politics of Emotion in Elizabethan England*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Giglioni, Guido. "Autobiography as Self-mastery: Writing Madness and Method in Girolamo Cardano". *Bruniana & Campanelliana*. 7:2. Accademia Editoriale, 2001.
- . "Faxion and his Demons, Girolamo Cardano on the Art of Storytelling and the Science of Witnessing" *Bruniana & Campanelliana*. 16:2. Accademia Editoriale, 2010.
- Gray, Patrick. "Shakespeare vs. Seneca: Competing Visions of Human Dignity." *Brill's companion to the reception of Senecan tragedy: scholarly, theatrical and literary receptions*. Leiden, 2016.

What is Hamlet's Book?

Johnstone, Christopher Lyle. "Sophistical Wisdom: Politikê Aretê and 'Logosophia.'" *Philosophy & Rhetoric*. 39:4. Penn State University Press, 2006.

Kerferd, G.B. "Gorgias on Nature or That Which Is Not." *Phronesis*. 1:1, November 1955.

Lewis, C.S. *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama*. Vol. III of *The Oxford History of English Literature*, eds. F. P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobie, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1959.

Morrison, B. "Sextus Empiricus." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sextus-empiricus/> Accessed December 29, 2021.

Mowat, Barbara A. "Prospero's Book" *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Vol. 52, No. 1, Oxford University Press, 2001.

Nashe, Thomas. *Terrors of the Night*. London, 1594.

Schiappa, Edward. Interpreting Gorgias "Being" in "Not Being or on Nature" *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1997).

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Folger, 2012.

———. *Hamlet*. Arden, 2006.

———. *Loves Labour's Lost*. Folger, 1996.

———. *Richard II*. Folger, 1996.

———. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Arden, 2010.

———. *The Tempest*. Signet Classics, 1998.

———. *Titus Andronicus*. Folger, 2005.

Sterling, Bruce. "Enlightened skeptics during the witch-craze." *Wired*. August 9, 2018. accessed May 30, 2022. <https://www.wired.com/beyond-the-beyond/2018/08/enlightened-skeptics-witch-craze/>.

Trevor-Roper, Hugh. "The intellectual world of Sir Thomas More." *The American Scholar*, 48:1, 1979.

The 17th Earl of Oxford and the Occult

by Richard Malim

The Renaissance provoked a profound dissatisfaction with European theology and its conceptions of man and the universe; in response, contemporary philosophers thought it possible to provide a more satisfactory solution to the questions raised. They were attracted by the cosmos afforded by the works of Hermes Trismegistus, believed to have originated 3,000 years earlier with Egyptian mysticism, essentially an amalgam of Pharaonic, Mosaic, Christian and Neoplatonic thought and revelation. They were led first by Marsilio Ficino (1433–99), then by Giordano Bruno (1548–1600). In England, the principal disciple was John Dee (1527–1609).

The Hermetic tradition involved a complicated cosmos with variations, including study of the occult among the advanced class of thinkers. The question therefore arises as to the extent to which Shakespeare was influenced by these developments. The answer, according to Frances Yates¹ (1964, 269) and other modern critics, is that this influence was considerable, and they point to the practice of magic in Shakespeare's plays, especially the magus Prospero in *The Tempest*. Not everyone in Elizabethan times accepted this proposition, and in contrast to the Yates view, I believe that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford was its opponent. I believe his view was ultimately corroborated by the total refutation by Isaac Casaubon in 1614 of the Hermes Trismegistus school as a first century sub-Christian creation.

In this essay I plan to refute the idea that Oxford owed any substantial element of his thought to the Hermeticists such as Ficino and Bruno. This

contention depends on disproving two orthodox ideas. First is the belief that certain late plays by Shakespeare must be dated after 1604, the year that Oxford died. The second is the misdating the composition of *Love's Labour's Lost* because orthodox scholars have overlooked topical allusions in *LLL* and misinterpreted the Hermeticist ideas in it, the better to lend credence to their dating the Shakespeare canon from 1590 to 1612.

Giordano Bruno in Brief

In April 1583, on the recommendation of the French King Henry III, Giordano Bruno, while posing as a Catholic priest, took up residence with the French Ambassador in London for two-and-a-half years. Bruno wrote some of his works there in addition to being a spy for Sir Francis Walsingham's secret service. He also involved himself in the cultural and philosophical discussions of the day. Eventually he was caught by the Inquisition, which convicted and then burned him in Rome in 1600. He became a hero to the secular arm of the fight for Italian unity in the 19th Century, both for his martyrdom and the content of those works.² While he is widely credited with two outstanding post-Renaissance revelations, that of the infinity of the universe and of religious toleration, the route by which he reached those conclusions requires careful examination so that his role as an influence on Oxford-Shakespeare can be properly examined.

Bruno saw himself as the high point of the Hermetic Tradition, almost the founder of a new religion. The Hermetic Tradition is that body of work which the Renaissance mistakenly dated to a period pre-Moses and based in Egypt, where two works, *Asclepius* and *the Corpus Hermeticum*, surfaced sometime after 100 AD in Egypt. They were ascribed to an Egyptian priest named Hermes Trismegistus, and Renaissance philosophers believed they were a digest of the earliest pristine religious thought of the Egyptians, mixed with Classical Greek philosophy, an idea supported by early Christian saints such as Lactantius (c. 250–325) and Augustine (354–430). Lactantius saw these writings as a prophecy of the coming of Christ, but Augustine attacked those elements which are incompatible with orthodox Christianity. In the middle of the 15th Century these writings came into the hands of

Richard Malim is a retired English lawyer with over twenty-five years interest and study of the Authorship Question. In 2003 he became secretary of the De Vere Society (www.deveresociety.co.uk), and was editor of *Great Oxford: Essays on the Life and Work of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford* (2004), a collection of essays previously published in the *De Vere Society Newsletter*. In 2011 he published *The Earl of Oxford and the Making of "Shakespeare": The Literary Life of Edward de Vere in Context*, a book that seeks to place de Vere's life in the context of the history and development of English Literature. His paper, "The Politics of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford" appeared in *The Oxfordian* 21.

the Florentine philosopher and astrologer Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), who translated, wrote and lectured upon them. They became the last word in scholarship and philosophic appreciation, along with the increased interest in magic and astrology, for the next 150 years.

Some of the more outlandish magical elements were beginning to lose a wide following by 1550. Bruno, however, became a recognized authority on the philosophy, and his free-thinking attitude caused him to leave his native Italy and take refuge with the Court of the French King Henry III (1574–89). He rose in favor with the King, who was anxious not to fall too far out of favor with Queen Elizabeth, and sent him with some unspecified objective to stay with the French Ambassador in London. He lectured at Oxford University but offended his hosts by plagiarizing too much from Ficino. Yates points out that his philosophical work looks back to Ficino's pre-Copernican non-scientific approach; he is something of a retrograde figure (Yates 1964 174). He seems to dispense with much Christian thinking but preaches a form of religious Hermeticism based on good works and toleration. It is this toleration of free-thinking thought and speech for which he is justly remembered (Yates 1964, 433ff).

It was Bruno's religious views that brought him to the stake in 1600 (Yates 1964, 388ff), not his views on innumerable worlds or on the movement of the earth. It was these views rather than any scientific rigor which caused him to decide on the infinity of the cosmos. Similarly, it was not the love doctrines of Christianity which made him stand for toleration, liberty of person, opinion and speech, but his own Hermetic interpretation. Thus, by his private exploration of Hermeticism did Bruno reach his conclusions, and the divorce from divinity sealed his death.

Giordano Bruno and his modern interpreters confront scholars with particularly strong challenges, led by Frances Yates, who suggested that Shakespeare owes a considerable debt to Bruno. So that the problem can be properly analyzed, the following timeline should be noted:

- 1578–1581: Oxfordian dating of *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*³
- 1580: Oxford's exposure of Catholic plotters in open Court
- 1582: Bruno's comedy *Il Candelaio* published in Paris
- 1583, April: Bruno arrives in London
- 1583, November: Arrest and exposure of the Earl of Throckmorton
- 1584, Ash Wednesday: The Supper—*La Cena de le Ceneri*—is written
- 1584: Bruno's *La Cena de le Ceneri*, *De la Causa* and *Spaccio* are published in London
- 1585: *De Gli Eroici Furori* is published in London
- 1585, September: Bruno leaves London

Bruno's Relationship with Shakespeare's Works

To state the problem simply, the dramas of Shakespeare did not have much of a connection to those of Bruno or Bruno's works were influenced by Shakespeare—or Shakespeare rewrote his plays after their initial production in response to Bruno's novels and plays.

For our argument, it is therefore vital to establish a date for the earliest version of *Love's Labour's Lost*. While orthodoxy maintains the play was first composed in the mid-1590s and revised in 1598 with publication of the first quarto, Professor of Theater Felicia Londré has proposed a date of 1578 based on internal and external evidence.

Numerous internal references point to 1578 as the original date of composition [of *LLL*] and this is corroborated by the external evidence that *The Double Maske: The Maske of Amasones* and *A Maske of Knights* was presented at court on 11 January 1579 to honor the French envoy Simier... Described in the records of the Court Revels as 'an entertainment in imitation of a tournament between six ladies and a like number of gentlemen who surrendered to them,' *The Double Maske* may well have been the Ur-*Love's Labour's Lost*.... Of the internal evidence most compelling is the fact that Euphuism—of which *Love's Labour's Lost* is considered to be a textbook example—was a courtly fad in 1578–79, and even a year or so later the play's witticisms and in-jokes about that linguistic affectation among members of the court would have been quite stale. (5–6)

Londré further notes that, earlier in 1578, the Queen had made a progress during which Thomas Churchyard presented a pageant of Nine Worthies, apparently just as ineptly as the one we see in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Investigating the relationship between Bruno and Shakespeare, John Arthos maintains that the ideas of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Love's Labour's Lost* are closer to Neoplatonism than to Bruno's and are agreeable to Christian spirituality (97). We see in these plays a more complex use of ideas for comic purposes than in any other preceding English work or in any of the ancient comedies. Moreover, Arthos considers that only Bruno's *Il Candelaio* can match the early Shakespeare plays in this respect (50).

Arthos was constrained in his analysis by the orthodox Shakespeare dating scheme, which places composition of the early plays some 15 years later than the dates proposed by Oxfordian scholars. The logical implication of his analysis is that Bruno amplified what he found in Shakespeare further in *Il Candelaio*, but that Oxford-Shakespeare then developed a fuller conception in his later plays. When examined in light of the dating schedule above, this impression may be considerably strengthened.

While Shakespeare has a reputation for plagiarism, according to orthodox scholars, I have tried to demonstrate (Malim 2011 169) that, in fact, Elizabethan writers borrowed from him because the original composition of the plays took place 15 years before the orthodox dating scheme. Significantly, Bruno also has a well-established reputation for plagiarism. In particular, he was expelled from Oxford University for the extensive plagiarism of the Neoplatonist Ficino in his lectures at the university during the summer of 1583.

On this point, it is instructive to consult Arthos: “However revolutionary his meanings Bruno continually conceived his work as courtly entertainment, and the emblems and the dramatizing were designed with such an audience in mind. This aspect of his work seems also to have interested Shakespeare in the composition of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*” (102).

Yet it is worth noting that, unlike Oxford, at the times of their publication in Italian, Bruno had no court to entertain. I would say that it was Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost*—possibly the play with the least popular appeal as opposed to its popularity at Court for the next generation—that interested Bruno. For example, the use of the word “dialogue” in Armado’s undertaking to entertain the King: “Will you hear the dialogue the two learned men have compiled, in praise of the owl and the cuckoo?” (V.ii.873–4) illustrates the point. Bruno’s use of the term is analogous to Shakespeare’s, who uses “dialogue” on at least five other occasions, and Arthos (88) adds that the particular dialogue has elements of form as well as of substance in common with the verse dialogue that concludes the *De Gli Eroici Furori*, which might be imitation again.

Oxfordians depart from the orthodox arguments for dating by using the internal evidence of topical allusions. When Astrophil in Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* (1581) (74) asserts, “I am no pick-purse of another’s wit” he is clearly borrowing Berowne’s accusation that his fellows are “pick-purses in love” (IV.iii.207), and the sonnet sequence ends in imitation (in this and other instances) of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* in an open-ended fashion.

Recently, orthodox scholars such as Professor Richard Dutton have concluded that Shakespeare’s works likely began as Court entertainments (Dutton, *passim*), noting that, “Pleasing the aristocratic, and especially the courtly, audience was always their [Lord Chamberlain’s Men] first concern. Everything else was, by definition, secondary” (16).

One further comment from Arthos: “It is difficult, and often, I suppose, it will remain impossible to say that at such and such a point Shakespeare is at one with Bruno.... One thing is evident, that his thought is as complex and subtle as his poetry, *he is thinking for himself* [my emphasis], his conclusions are his own.” (170–1). On this basis, it is likely that Shakespeare was an original thinker and therefore open to being plagiarized.

For these reasons, it is more likely that Bruno's later works copy from Shakespeare's earlier plays than that Shakespeare's earlier works were rewritten by borrowing from Bruno.

Bruno may have read a manuscript version of *Love's Labour's Lost* prior to 1583 while he was still in France, though it is unlikely. In his other career in England he wrote in French, making mistakes appropriate to an Italian. However, Bruno was encouraged to go to England by the King of France himself and, as he sets *Cena* in London, it is reasonable to infer that he had a working knowledge of English by 1584. At the same time, there is no evidence to date that Bruno attended a public or private theatre or met with Oxford.

Bruno was resident at the French Embassy in London from 1583–85 and, in fact, was an excommunicated priest. Virulently anti-papist, he served as a spy for Sir Francis Walsingham and his revelations contributed to the uncovering of the Throckmorton Plot. As such, he was associating through the French Ambassador with the Roman Catholic elements who were later covert supporters of the Throckmorton plot, i.e. Lord Henry Howard (afterwards Earl of Northampton) and his nephew Charles Arundell.⁴ Bruno's major literary friend appears to have been Sir Philip Sidney, who was not a friend of Oxford given that he was the Earl of Leicester's nephew and a hero of the Puritan faction. Sidney's political and religious views might therefore appeal more to Bruno than those of the more liberal Oxford-Shakespeare. Sidney's great friend and supporter was Fulke Greville, the ostensible host in *Cena*.⁵

While it is possible that *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Love's Labour's Lost* were rewritten in the light of Bruno's works, unless there is supporting evidence of such rewriting, this hypothesis has no validity. As the consensus is that there was an intellectual relationship between the authors, we contend that Shakespeare is the author who influenced Bruno.

We must recognize that the orthodox consensus holds that *Love's Labour's Lost* shows a profound obligation to *Spaccio* and that it would take a seismic shift for any student of Bruno or Shakespeare to consider the reverse. Arthos is a strong supporter of Yates's view (84–100). He quotes (101) the translation of Bruno's "adaptation" (Arthos' word for plagiarization) of *Il Vendemmiatore* Stanza 5 by Tansillo (1510–68). In Bruno's works there are apparently several examples of such borrowings from Tansillo—not all acknowledged (Singer I n.13). Tansillo is also introduced as one of his characters by Bruno in *De Gli Eroici Furori* to express the reasoning of Valentine that the hero is only perfected when he is by his lady-love (*TGV*, III.I.170–184, Arthos 136). I repeat here my core belief that Shakespeare was an original thinker, and thus more likely to have been the precursor rather than the imitator.

Likewise, there is orthodox authority for suggesting that *The Phoenix and the Turtle* (not published until 1601) owes some debt to Bruno's *De Gli Eroici Furori* (1585), but there seems no reason why the latter could not be another example of Bruno borrowing from Oxford (Honigsmann 161 n.1).

It is in *Love's Labour's Lost*, with its topical references to the 1578–81 period that the practicalities of Bruno's philosophy come under scrutiny. Here I believe the writer is advancing the scientific method, mocking the Bruno school of ideal study (to which the king and three courtiers have sworn themselves) in the mouth of Berowne, the alter ego of Oxford:

As painfully to pore upon a book
 To seek the light of truth while truth the while
 Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look.
 Light, seeking light, doth light of light beguile;
 Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes.
 Study me how to please the eye indeed
 By fixing it upon a fairer eye,
 Who dazzling so, that eye shall be his deed.
 And give him light that he was blinded by. [i.e. look directly at the
 evidence]
 Study is like the heavens' glorious sun,
 That will not be searched with saucy looks.
 Small have continual plodders ever won
 Save base authority from others' books [A cut at Bruno's use of Ficino]
 These earthly godfathers of heavens' lights
 That give a name to every fixed star
 Have no more profit of their shining nights
 Than those who walk and wot not what they are.
 Too much to know is to know naught but fame,
 And every godfather can give a name. [i.e. this type of study is
 pointless in light of the science of astronomy]
 (I.i.74–93)

Yates (1964, 390–1) relies for support for the seriousness that Shakespeare plagiarized Bruno with these six lines:

For valour, is not love a Hercules,
 Still climbing trees in the Hesperides?
 Subtle as Sphinx, as sweet and musical
 As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair,
 And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods
 Make heaven drowsy with the harmony.
 (IV.iii.316–321)

I believe that Yates goes astray by taking those lines out of context. The four students have all been unmasked as madly in love with four ladies, and all in breach of their oaths. Berowne produces a splendid argument against the validity and binding nature of the original oaths, but not one which would appeal either to mainstream Christianity or to Bruno:

Consider first what you did swear unto:
To fast, to study, and to see no woman—
Flat treason 'gainst the kingly state of youth.
Say, can you fast? Your stomachs are too young,
And abstinence engenders maladies.
Oh, we have made a vow to study, lords,
And in that vow have forsworn *our books*; [my italics—see l. 328 below]
For when you my liege, or you, or you [Berowne's three fellow-students]
In leaden contemplation have found out
Such fiery numbers as the prompting eyes
Of beauty's tutors have enriched you with?
Other slow arts entirely keep the brain,
And therefore, finding barren practisers,
Scarce show a harvest of their heavy toil.
But love first learned in a lady's eyes,
Lives not alone immured in the brain
(ibid. 289–304)

Then follows the sublime passage on the power of love (including the lines Yates deploys), but then, in conclusion, derides the Bruno astro-magical deliberations:

From women's eyes this doctrine I derive.
They sparkle with the right Promethean fire.
They are the books, the arts, the academes [the contrast]
That show, contain, and nourish all the world,
Else none at all in aught proves excellent...
(ibid. 326–330)

Berowne concludes that it is religious to forswear the original oaths. By including in his explanation the passage Yates quotes, Oxford is making a mockery not only of the practice of swearing religious oaths, but also the philosophic attitudes and conclusions that Bruno wished to preach. While Oxfordians date *Love's Labour's Lost* from internal political events and references to an earlier period of 1578–81, and there was no indication that Bruno would be coming to England, Oxford likely revised the play to counter Bruno's ideas after the publication of *Cena* in 1584. While the politics in *Love's Labour's Lost* follows developments in France in the earlier

period and the relations between Henry of Navarre (afterwards Henry IV) and his wife, the philosophic element is close to the attitude of Henry III, the protector of Bruno, and his philosophic interests; they are sent up by Oxford in the play along with other contemporary literary (Euphuistic) fads.

Bruno also dedicated two of his later works to Oxford's literary opponent, Philip Sidney. This is particularly odd since the attitude of Sidney and his friends was opposed to Bruno's: they were humanists, science-based, and modern in outlook save in the adherence to grammar-based literature. Sidney had been tutored by John Dee and would have been familiar with, if unsympathetic to it

as a strict Protestant, the idea of occult religions. However, the Sidney circle was opposed to Oxford's liberal attitude to literature and especially grammar, and it was perhaps this aspect which made them more acceptable as allies for Bruno against Oxford-Torquato. Indeed, Sidney appears to have spent some time translating the Huguenot leader Philippe Du Plessis Mornay's *De la Vérité de la Religion Chrétienne* (1581), which contains a large element of Hermeticism from a Protestant perspective, but without the magical elements favored by Bruno.⁶ Fulke Greville's hagiography of Sidney does not contain any evidence of Sidney's support of Bruno's more radical ideas. Moreover, both Greville and Sidney are shown as present at *La Cena*, with Greville as the host.



Portrait of John Dee painted when Dee was 67. Currently in the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology in Oxford, England.

La Cena De Ceneri (The Ash Wednesday Supper)

With that in mind, we can consider *La Cena de le Ceneri*, and the role in it of Bruno's principal critic, Torquato. However, it is clear from the useful introduction in Gosselin and Lerner's translation of *La Cena* that Bruno was less interested in defending Copernicus than in using his vision of the universe as a basis for his own theories of the unity of Man and of Man with God—in which the idea of infinity of space (perhaps borrowed from Thomas Digges) is a component. In promoting these ideas he is dismissive of those University men, such as the one he calls Nundinio, who support the original earth-centric vision of Aristotle and Ptolemy; and of those who

support Copernicus more closely and accurately than he does himself, such as Torquato. In fact, I consider Torquato to be a caricature of the 17th Earl of Oxford.

Bruno's previous editors make no effort to identify the real-life models of either Nundinio or Torquato, who are portrayed as pedants from Oxford University. The university receives a hostile portrait from Bruno, whom it might suit to link Oxford the Earl with the university because Bruno was accused of plagiarism when he lectured there in 1583 and chased back to the shelter of the French Embassy in London.⁷

In the Third Dialogue of *La Cena*, in which Teofilo (Bruno himself) reports to his friends in the third person the conversation he has had with Nundinio, Bruno has no difficulty in disposing of the pedant's earth-centric views. In the Fourth he has more problems with Torquato.

What can we glean about Torquato from *La Cena*? For one, he speaks Latin well, and Oxford was fluent in both Latin and Italian, according to the 17-year-old Italian choirboy Orazio Cuoco, who lived with Oxford in England for 11 months during 1576–77. I note that Bruno-Teofilo and he do not converse in Italian or English, no doubt because Bruno's English (he denies he has any, but he allows one of his English friends to suggest he is faking his ignorance) and the Italian of the others present might be defective or non-existent. Torquato is a Doctor, a learned gentleman of good reputation and *qualificato* (to enter these discussions): "Well-bred, obliging and polite?"

Torquato "wore two sparkling chains of gold around his neck."⁸ "Did they (Nundinio and Torquato) seem to know Greek?" Teofilo replies "And beer." It is suggested that this is not only a reference to the Greek language but to a familiarity with Greek wines as well as beer. As his contemporary, Thomas Nashe, publicly averred in 1593, Oxford was a connoisseur of good beer.⁹ A knowledge of Greek wines at the time could only be obtained by a traveler who visited the region, as Oxford did in Italy during 1575–6. In reply to a question about their appearance, Torquato "looked like the *amostante* [an Arabian viceroy] of the Goddess of Reputation," which is either a joke or a suggestion of high birth or status.

In his Prefatory Epistle, Bruno introduces Torquato as a person "who knows neither how to dispute nor how to question to the point.... By virtue of his impudence and arrogance, he appears to the most ignorant as being more learned than Doctor Nundinio.... I truly regret the existence of this part of the dialogue [i.e. the Fourth Dialogue]." As well he might, because it cannot be concealed that in terms of astronomy, Torquato humiliates him.

Bruno expounds on the infinity of the Universe in *La Cena de le Ceneri*, Fourth Dialogue:

He [Teofilo—the Bruno figure]...made his affirmation that the universe is infinite; that it consists of an immense ethereal region; that it is like a vast sky of space in whose bosom are the heavenly bodies..., that the moon, the sun, and innumerable bodies are in this ethereal region, and the earth also...

Bruno then veers off into an exposition of his philosophical apologia, and rapidly falls out with the English doctor Oxford-Torquato. “Ad rem, ad rem” says Torquato, i.e. “Come back to the point,” because Oxford has a full grasp of contemporary advances in astronomy. In essence, Torquato wants Bruno to explain his view of Copernicus. Bruno reveals himself to be deficient in Copernicus’ theory relative to heliocentrism. Frances Yates suggested earlier influences, but the progress of Copernicus’ theory in England lies principally with the 1576 publication of Leonard (d. 1559) and Thomas Digges’s (c.1546–95) *Perfit Description*, which details their own advance from Copernicus to a physically infinite universe filled with stars like the sun. The elder Digges also invented “the perspective trunk,” apparently a rudimentary telescope.

“Domine,” (“my lord”) says Bruno-Teophilus to Oxford-Torquato (Cena Dialogue IV, 183) where they converse in Latin. In his summaries in Italian, Bruno calls him brother (187) and speaks of Oxford as an old man (188), but these Bruno speeches smack of *ex post facto* justification. Bruno opposed Oxford because Oxford was a scientist-logician: his philosophy was based on logical thought and not divine inspiration. It suited Bruno to call him a pedant for his approach and, particularly inappropriately (233), to smear him as a humanist grammarian pedant.

When Torquato is called on in the Fourth Dialogue, there is a splendid and funny caricature of him in majesty preparing to speak, which includes the significant phrase, “arranged the velvet *beretta* on his head.” The translator suggests that this was the badge of Oxford professors, though perhaps it was the high aristocrat’s little round skullcap. The English Noble looks down his nose at Bruno who was only two years older and inquires in Latin, “Then you are that father and leader of the philosophers?” Bruno replies that he is. They then launch into a discussion about the relationship of the planets and the earth, in which Torquato endeavors to make Bruno stick to the Copernican point. But Bruno is not interested because he wants to propose his new philosophy using Copernicus as his evidence, at which Torquato says, “He is sailing to Antycira,” i.e., the lunatic asylum. Bruno counters by saying it is Torquato who is mad and prepares to depart. Some at the table suggest that

it is Bruno who is being rude. As a result, Bruno, “who makes a practice of vanquishing in courtesy those who could easily surpass him in other things changed his mind,” says that he could no more hate Torquato than he could hate his younger self, which is why “I pity you and pray God that... at least he would make you aware that you are blind.” One wonders if this is not all invention: the great noble’s reaction is not recorded.

Instead Torquato says, “As if he wanted to bring forth a very noble demonstration, asked with august majesty: ‘Where is the apogee of the sun?’” Torquato had to repeat the question and, with no adequate reply, sometime after drew, first “a straight line through the middle...[of the piece of paper] from one side to the other. Then in the center he drew a circle of which the aforementioned line, passing through the center, was the diameter. Inside one semi-circle he wrote *Terra* and within the other *Sol*.” In both semicircles he then puts in seven concentric semicircles: at the top of the *Terra* semicircles he writes *Ptolemaus*, and outside the *Sol* semicircles *Copernicus*. Bruno asks him what he meant to do with something known even to children, and Torquato tells him, “See, be quiet and learn: I will teach you Ptolemy and Copernicus.” Bruno answered that when one is learning to write the alphabet, he shows bad judgment in wanting to teach grammar to someone who knows more than himself. Bruno reproduces a drawing but from the text it is clear his reproduction is not of the drawing by Torquato. Torquato drew in the earth, writing in a “beautiful hand *Terra*” and on an epicycle (i.e., a smaller circle having its center on the circumference of a larger circle) the moon.

Bruno tries to make out that the earth was drawn on the same epicycle as the moon and not with its center on the third semicircle from the sun. The translators point out that Bruno’s error arises from a poor French translation which he had clearly read, not from the Latin of Copernicus clearly read by Torquato, the 1566 edition of which was in Lord Burghley’s library and available to Oxford while he was Burghley’s ward (Malim 2004; Jolly 27). Bruno and his fictional sycophants try to make out that Torquato was in error, and Bruno tells his supper audience: “I care little about Copernicus, and little care I whether you or others understand him. I just want to tell you one thing: before you come to teach me some other time, study harder.” The other guests confirm Torquato’s interpretation, reducing Bruno to laughter by way of cover. Smitho, Bruno’s probably fictitious English colleague, says Torquato erred because he had looked at the pictures in Copernicus without reading the chapters. But even if he had read them, he did not understand them.

Their exchange shows Bruno to be incompetent as an astronomer. Astronomy, however, was not his principal interest; it was his hermetic cosmology. While as *Cena* shows Oxford and Bruno fell out over the exposition of Copernicus, their real parting was over Bruno’s philosophic approach, which

Oxford thought obvious nonsense. “He is sailing to Anticyra” i.e., “he is off to the lunatic asylum” is Oxford-Torquato’s recorded comment in *Cena*.

Nundinio and Torquato then leave, having saluted the other guests but ignoring Bruno. Bruno states that the other guests apologized for their alleged rudeness, which sounds like further face-saving on the part of Bruno.

In the commentary on the discussion with Nundinio in the Third Dialogue, Nundinio asserted that Copernicus held that the earth for practical purposes did not move, with which Bruno says Torquato agreed: “of all of Copernicus (although I can believe he had paged them through from cover to cover), he remembered only the names of the author, the book, and the printer, the place where it was printed, the year and the number of quires and pages: and because he was not ignorant of grammar he understood a certain prefatory epistle which was added by I know not what conceited and ignorant ass...” Torquato is there reported by Bruno’s colleague Frulla as losing his temper and insulting Bruno—perhaps he was contemptuous of Bruno’s philosophic position as it relied on his defective interpretation of Copernicus. Bruno is, however, the first to disclose in print the incompetence of this prefatory epistle (not written by Copernicus), but his own incompetence in answering Torquato is clearly revealed.

The man with the necklaces can thus be linked to Oxford, and with that the further references to the scholar-aristocrat (with expertise in beer). Allied to Shakespeare’s literary relationship to Bruno, Bruno’s description of Torquato is clear enough. But we can add the astronomical competence shown in the plays and the personal demeanor even where presented by Bruno, to whom he is clearly an academic adversary. He appears as an opponent who must be reduced to the status of pedant. Men such as Thomas Digges and John Dee might be suggested as the template for Torquato until the attitude of the caricature is taken into account: then the likelihood of Oxford’s identification can be shown.

Resolving Bruno’s Relationship with Shakespeare

Arthos shows that in the endings of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (say 1581) and *Eroici Furori* (1585), “there is a kind of stand-off, a truce between opposing views,” where there is “a remarkable concurrence in at least one conclusion, time and nature have it within their power to bring to fruition what humans in themselves cannot” (86). At the end of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* there are the songs of the dialogue between Hiems and Ver (Winter and Spring). Bruno follows this device with a final dialogue between Jove representing supernatural truth and Neptune nature. Oxford’s point throughout the play is the rejection of strained and labored abstractions which Bruno wants to introduce. This is why Bruno specifically labels Torquato a pedant: this is Bruno’s

term for those who deny his view: “good-for-nothings who...with prejudice to [i.e. placing too much weight on] customs and human life, offer us words and dreams” (Arthos 101; quoting translation of *Spaccio* 1584). Moreover, he equates Torquato with Manfurio, the Holofernes character in *Il Candelaio*. Equally obvious is that Oxford uses ideas for comic dramatic purposes in *Comedy of Errors*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. This practice is imitated, matched or even surpassed by Bruno in the later *Il Candelaio* 1582 (Arthos 99), as he seeks to employ the theatrical element to illuminate his views on the cosmos.

Arthos provides a detailed commentary on the use of Neoplatonism by Shakespeare and Bruno. It is clear that Oxford’s applications of scientific thought in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and elsewhere do not agree with those of Bruno. As Arthos describes it, “It is difficult, and often, I suppose, to say that at such and such a point Shakespeare is at one with Bruno.... One thing is evident, that his thought is as complex and subtle as his poetry, he is thinking for himself, his conclusions are his own” (170). One of the mysteries of Shakespeare scholarship is why and how these matters could have been studied by the teenage Shakspeare from Stratford-upon-Avon. The evidence is that Oxford had studied Neoplatonism before Bruno appeared in London.

The Influence of Dr. John Dee

The principal authority in England of philosophical thought derived from Hermes Trismegistus was John Dee (1527–1609). Although he was a brilliant mathematician, his interests also extended into studies of the occult and philosophy. He advised Queen Elizabeth and her government not only on an auspicious day for her coronation but, more particularly, on navigation and cartography, having studied with Gabriel Mercator. He produced his own Hermetic treatise in 1564 and his interest by 1580 turned exclusively to this area, specifically in the magical practice of scrying, i.e, attempting to communicate with angels to ascertain the mysteries of the cosmos.

There was a personal connection, however, between Dee and Oxford. In 1592 Dee wrote in his autobiography (*Compendious Rehearsal*) that he kept in his possession and to his credit, “The honorable Erle of Oxford his favorable letters Anno 1570” (Nelson 58). There was yet another connection: in 1584 Oxford became a shareholder in The Colleagues of the Fellowship for the Discovery of the North West Passage, along with Adrian Gilbert, John Dee and Walter Raleigh. Thus, Oxford was knowledgeable about Dee’s ideas on mathematics and cartography.

In 1582, however, Dee met the confidence man Edward Kelley. Dee was well known at Court and met Bruno after the latter’s foray to Oxford in the company of the Polish Count Albert Laski. And so, in 1583, Laski persuaded Dee

and Kelley to travel to Poland to obtain patronage. By 1589 Dee, who never claimed success at scrying, returned to England. In his absence his reputation and support at Court had suffered, but he continued his studies and became an authority in cryptography, as well as keeping in contact with his Court-based supporters (Parry 238ff). Finally, in 1595 he gained a preference and was appointed Dean of Christ's College Manchester (afterwards Manchester Cathedral). He appears to have been frequently in London at least from 1601 on. Oxford's respect for Dee seems to have been restricted to his scientific expertise in the fields of cryptography and mathematics. Certainly after 1590 there is no evidence that Oxford had any sympathy for alchemy, and his attitude, if not his approach, would be the same as Ben Jonson's in the latter's play *The Alchemist* (1610).

Indeed, Oxford portrayed occult practices in the Shakespeare plays in a negative light. In a pointed rebuke of conjuring spirits (including the devil) in Act Three, scene one, of *1 Henry IV*, we find this fiery exchange:

Glendower: I can call spirits from the vasty deep.
 Hotspur: Why, so can I, or so can any man; But will they come when you do call for them?
 Glendower: Why, I can teach you, cousin, to command the Devil.
 Hotspur: And I can teach thee, coz, to shame the Devil
 By telling truth: tell truth, and shame the Devil.
 If thou have power to raise him, bring him hither,
 And I'll be sworn I've power to shame him hence.
 O, while you live, tell truth, and shame the Devil!

Shakespeare's mockery of conjuring was followed in *King Lear* by an equally spirited attack on astrology by Edmund.

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeit of our own behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical pre-dominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whore-master man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the Dragon's Tail, and my nativity was under Ursa Major, so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Fut! I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardising. Edgar—(Edgar enters) and pat on 's cue he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy. My cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam. Oh, these eclipses do portend these divisions! Fa, sol, la, mi. (I.ii)

Evidence of Oxford's scientific mindset is confirmed by physicist Hanno Wember, who concludes that Shakespeare displays an "extensive and sophisticated knowledge of astronomy" (35) throughout the canon. Using *King Lear* as an example:

When Edmund ironically mentions the "dragon's tail" (I.ii.58), this is no malapropism of a known constellation (Draco/dragon), but the correct astronomical expression for the descending node of the lunar orbit, a decisive reference point for the occurrence of an eclipse.

The whole Edmund soliloquy is a searing critique of astrology, which is made to look ridiculous, and this at a time when famous scientists such as Cardano and Dee were still seeking to establish a scientific foundation for the field. Edmund puts different things together: A constellation—Ursa Major—and a reference point like a node. But a well informed listener will know that "Dragon's Tail" does not refer to a constellation. To put a "nativity under Ursa Major" is of course intentional nonsense, as the Great Bear is not a part of the zodiac, but it is appropriate when used ironically by Edmund. (39)

And in that most autobiographical of Shakespeare's works, *Shake-speare's Sonnets*, we find the author openly reject the occult practice of astrology and embrace the science of astronomy in Sonnet XIV.

Not from the stars do I my judgement pluck;
And yet methinks I have Astronomy,
But not to tell of good or evil luck,
Of plagues, of dearths, or seasons' quality;

To emphasize that commitment, Oxford uses the discipline of astronomy throughout the canon. In Act One, scene three of *Troilus and Cressida*, for example, we find a profound insight about natural law itself.

Ulysses: The Heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
 Observe degree, priority, and place,
 Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
 Office, and custom, in all line of order.

John Candee Dean describes this speech in scientific terms: "Shakespeare here exhibits a true sense of the orderly invariability of nature's laws, as announced about 40 years after his death by the French philosopher Descartes, who was the first to declare nature's laws to be unchangeable" (400). Descartes, of course, was not only a philosopher, but a mathematician and scientist.

According to Wember, examples from four other plays further confirm Shakespeare's superb knowledge and open support of astrophysics.

In many regards Shakespeare had a better knowledge of the relationship between the moon and the tides than his distinguished contemporary Galileo (1564–1642), who tried to explain the tides by the two motions of the earth, correlating to the day and the year. This was an erroneous explanation for ebb and flow. But while Galileo refused to acknowledge any tidal influence of the moon, Bernardo knew better, referring to the moon as "...the moist star Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands" (*Hamlet*, I.i.135).

To Prince Hal, likewise, the moon commands the tides:

The fortune of us that are moon's men doth ebb and flow like the sea,
being governed as the sea is by the moon.... Now in as low an ebb as
the foot of the ladder, and by and by in as high a flow as the ridge of
the gallows.
(*1 Henry IV*, I.ii.10)

As it does for Camillo: "...you may as well Forbid the sea for to obey the moon." (*Winter's Tale*, I.ii.497)

Shakespeare was also aware of the major difficulty of describing the precise orbit of Mars—an unsolved astronomical problem in his day:

Mars his true moving, even as in the heavens,
So in the earth, to this day is not known.
(*1 Henry VI*, I.ii.3)

It was only in 1609 that Johannes Kepler (1571–1642) solved the problem on the basis of Tycho Brahe's (1546–1601) observational data (*Astronomia Nova, Physica Coelestris, tradita commentariis de Motibus Stellae Martis*). Kepler proved "Mars true moving in the heavens" to be an elliptical path. (33–34)

The Testimony of *The Tempest*

On his return to England in 1589, Dee was likely disappointed at the lack of enthusiasm in his philosophic approach. Shortly after 1593, I believe, came the appearance of *The Tempest*, described by Yates as "the supreme example of the magical philosophy" presented by Shakespeare in those last plays. This is evidenced by date when we consider the warrant entry in the Privy Council records of a payment of £20, ostensibly for a performance of *Comedy of Errors* allegedly before the Court on December 28, 1594.¹⁰

To ascertain a more likely scenario for the entry, and see what may have actually happened, we should turn to *Gesta Grayorum*, a record of entertainments and social events pertaining to the *Christmas Revels 1594–5* of the lawyers at Gray's Inn. This was printed from the original records some 80 years later, where there is further evidence of Oxford's attitude. The young lawyers had elected for the Christmas Revels one of their number as ruler, entitled the Prince of *Purpoole* (the name of their Gray's Inn "State"). An entertainment was laid on for the Ambassador of the Emperor of *Templaria* (as the Inner Temple twin "State" was called). The most distinguished and well-connected student at Gray's Inn would be the Earl of Oxford who matriculated there in February 1567 at the age of 16, and as Puttenham's "best for Comedy," the ideal person to provide an appropriate entertainment, with his record both for writing but also for actual production. The *Gesta Grayorum* of 1594–5 is also solid evidence that *The Tempest* was written by 1594, because it contains a clear self-caricature by Oxford himself as Prospero, making out that the alterations in the hall of Gray's Inn for the production of *Comedy of Errors* were all an illusion, similar to those in *The Tempest*. Unfortunately, there was a riot and the Prince of Purpoole wanted to try the guilty progenitor. The Account proceeds:

The next Night upon this Occasion, we preferred Judgments thick and threefold, which were read publicly by the Clerk of the Crown, all being against a *Sorcerer or Conjurer* that was supposed to be the Cause of that confused Inconvenience. Therein was contained, How he caused the Stage to be built, and Scaffolds to be reared to the top of the House, to increase Expectation. Also how he had caused divers Ladies and Gentlewomen, and others of good Condition, to be invited to our Sports; also our dearest Friend, the State of *Templaria*, to be disgraced, and disappointed of their kind Entertainment, deserved and intended. Also he caused Throngs and Tumults, Crowds and Outrages, to disturb our whole Proceedings. And Lastly, that he had foisted a Company of base and common Fellows [the Lord Chamberlain's Men!], to make up Disorders with a Play of Errors and Confusions; and that Night had gained to us Discredit, and it self a Nick-name of Errors. All of which were against the Crown and Dignity of our Sovereign Lord, the Prince of *Purpoole*.

Everyone concerned was to give evidence, and:

Upon whose aforesaid Indictments, the Prisoner was arraigned at the Bar, being brought thither by the Lieutenant of the Tower (for at one time the Stocks were graced with that Name) and the Sherriff impanelled a jury of Twenty Four Gentlemen, that were to give their Verdict upon the Evidence given. The Prisoner appealed to the Prince

his Excellency for Justice and humbly desired, that it would please His Highness to understand the Truth of the Matter by his Supplication, which he had ready to be offered to the Master of Requests. The Prince gave leave to the Master of Requests, that he should read the Petition [this form of words I believe covers the actual participation of the Sorcerer]; wherein was a Disclosure of all the Knavery and Juggling of the [‘State’s’] Attorney and Sollicitor, which had brought all this Law-stuff on purpose to blind the Eyes of his Excellency, and all the honourable Court there, going about to make them think, that those things which they all saw and preceived [sic] sensibly to be in very deed done, and actually performed, were nothing else but vain Illusions, Fancies, Dreams and *Enchantments*, and to be wrought and compassed by Means of a poor harmless Wretch, that never heard of such great Matters in all his life: Whereas the very Fault was in the Negligence of the Prince’s Council, Lords and Officers of State, that had the Rule of the Roast, and by whose Advice the Commonwealth was so soundly mis-governed. To prove these things to be true, he brought divers Instances of great Absurdities committed by the greatest; and made such Allegations, as could not denied.

So, who was the unnamed *Sorcerer or Conjuror*, the alleged Cause? *Gesta Grayorum* includes a list of all the parts played by the lawyers, including The Lord High Admiral played by Richard Cecil, Burghley’s grandson. No one is listed as “the Sorcerer,” yet he must have been able to pull rank to put up the stage and grandstands, invite the Great and Good, be the cause of the “Tumults and Outrages,” and the foisting of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men on the Revels.

As the most distinguished alumnus of Gray’s Inn, he would naturally be a guest of the Prince of Purpoole, but he is not named among those who come to the Prince’s apology-masque performed later in the week. For the recorder of *Gesta Grayorum*, it would be easier and less fraught to keep the Sorcerer anonymous. He is not named among the Prince’s courtiers at the start of the written account, nor is his role mentioned, unlike those of all the other courtiers. Oxford wrote both *Comedy of Errors* and *The Tempest*.

Dee would certainly take no part in the parodying of his own ideas. However, Dee’s modern biographer Glyn Parry thought the Conjuror was John Dee. Parry states in a 2012 paper that we can “definitely identify Dee as the ‘conjurer’ associated with the fictional, atheistical ‘School of Night’ associated with Raleigh” (Parry 480).¹¹ I believe the Sorcerer to be Oxford, given the attitude of the author of *Gesta Grayorum* towards him. Why call him a Sorcerer? I suggest that his appearance was associated in the minds of those present with that of Prospero in a recent production of *The Tempest*, where

most of the action, including the actual tempest, the shipwreck and the banquet, are illusions perpetrated by the master-sorcerer Oxford-Prospero: in sum, a parody of *The Tempest* delivered by the author himself, which to have impact has to be instantly recognizable by a large section of the audience.

Indeed, I think Oxford at times was parodying his own role of dramatist as Prospero in *The Tempest*:

I perceive that these lords
At this encounter do so much admire
That they devour their reason, and scarce think
Their eyes do office of truth, these words
Are natural breath. But howso'er you have
Been jostled of your senses, know for certain
That I am Prospero
(V.155–161)

These our actors
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, thin air...
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with sleep. Sir, I am vexed.
Bear with my weakness. My old brain is troubled.
Be not disturbed with my infirmity.
(IV.148–50, 155–160)

Notwithstanding the apparent rough treatment of Dee's ideas, I think Oxford had a considerable respect for Dee's talents generally, putting aside the caricature as presented to a group of young lawyers as a Christmas entertainment.

Besides John Dee and Oxford himself, Oxford's portrayal of Prospero may be based on yet another source, this from the realm of politics: Lord Prospero Visconti of the ducal family at Milan (1543–1592).¹²

According to historian E.H. Gombrich, a Latin poem by J.M. Toscanus to Lord Prospero Visconti of Milan is "a poem about the member of a ducal family who had exchanged military power against the domain of the Muses..."

Now since the wheel of fortuna has turned, it carried—oh villainy—
their [Visconti] realm into the abyss. You, Prospero of the noble
blood of the Dukes, serve the Muses, the most noble of activities.
(185)

A contemporary account of Prospero Visconti's library described that "precious and most copious library that contained books on every science and profession, among them books in the Longobardic language written on the bark of trees or fibres" (189). This contemporary reference is precisely what Prospero says twice in *The Tempest*: "Me, poor man, my library was dukedom large enough" and "volumes that I prize about my dukedom."

Intriguingly, the poem only appeared on page 272 of an anthology of Latin poetry published in Paris in 1576. The anthology itself is dedicated to Prospero Visconti.

Conclusions

My argument is in contrast to current philosophical trends in Shakespeare studies. However, one critic writes: "But it may be noted that Renaissance commonplaces about heroic Neoplatonism are *often* [my emphasis] mocked by Shakespeare as hollow poses. Insincerity taunts vaunted intentions to pursue the 'contemplative mode' in *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Richard II* and *Measure for Measure*" (Sokol 214 n.7). This assessment is supported by Arthos: "as I see it Shakespeare always keeps the distance between the immanent and the transcendent [i.e. the divine immanent]. Bruno had failed to do this..." (229 n.8).

Books have been written in an effort to show Shakespeare's personal views. If we view him as a supreme ironist, believing in nothing in religious or philosophic terms, we can understand the cast of mind that can exclaim, "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason.... And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust?" (*Hamlet* II, ii, 306, 310), and can assert that life "...is a tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (*Macbeth* V.v.25–7).

The man with the twisted necklace, be it ribbon in the Marcus Ghaeraedts portrait or the metallic one worn in Bruno's portrait of him as Torquato, can thus be shown to be linked to Oxford, and with that the further references to the scholar-aristocrat.

Allied to Shakespeare's literary relationship to Bruno, Bruno's description of Torquato is specific, and we can add the astronomical competence shown in the plays and the demeanor, even where presented by Bruno, to whom he is clearly a most dangerous academic opponent. Men such as Thomas Digges and John Dee might be suggested as the template for Torquato until the attitude of the caricature—with the clues about him and of Bruno himself towards him—are taken into account: then the proof of Oxford's identification can be shown.

Endnotes

1. Yates 1964: 269. Much of this summary of Hermeticism and related questions is taken from Yates.
2. For Bruno's career, particularly as a spy, see Bossy. However, Bossy claims that, 124n. 57: "He (Bruno) cannot have read *Love's Labour's Lost* III, i". He provides a translation from the original *Spaccio*, "Yet (the boat) seemed to move, hurrying slowly as if it were made of lead". In *La Cena* the boat "with its festina lente seemed as heavy as lead" (Second Dialogue). The Shakespearean quotation reads, "As swift as lead" (line 52). I believe the decrepit rowers in the boat are caricatures of Henry Howard and Charles Arundell, supporters of the Catholic Throckmorton plot, and as such the enemies of the covert anti-Catholic Bruno.
3. The dating of these plays is taken from the research of Eva Turner Clark (*Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*), Felicia Londré (*Love's Labor's Lost: Critical Essays*), and Kevin Gilvary (*Dating Shakespeare's Plays*).
4. A significant topical allusion for dating *Much Ado About Nothing*. The ineptness of Arundell and Howard in libeling Oxford is dramatized in the Dogberry/Verges caricatures in Act Three, scene three.
5. The Arden Shakespeare's third edition of *LLL* glides over the French connection to the post-1576 period (Oxford visited the French Court in 1575 and 1576 on his way to and from Italy) in its attempt to establish Shakespeare's debt to Sidney, without understanding that the references demonstrate the reverse scenario: it was Sidney who borrowed from Shakespeare. The editor suggests that the principal source of the plot is a 1586 translation of Pierre de la Primaudaye's *L'Academie Française*, published in the French original in 1577. I am indebted to E.M. Jolly's essay, "Shakespeare and the French Connection" (De Vere Society Newsletter, April 2015, 13ff).
6. The translation, published in 1587, was finished by Oxford's uncle Arthur Golding, the purported producer of Oxford's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in 1565 and 1567. See Richard Waugaman, "Did Edward de Vere Translate Ovid's *Metamorphoses*?" *The Oxfordian* 2018, 7–26.
7. George Abbot, later Archbishop of Canterbury, gives an account of Bruno at Oxford (Yates 1964, 229), otherwise his stay in England attracts

very little attention other than publication of some of his works and his account in *La Cena de le Ceneri*. There is, however, one reference to Bruno in the highly commendatory preface by NW to the young Samuel Daniel's translation entitled *The Worthy Tract of Paulo Jovio, in 1585 (Imprese Militare e Amorose)*. Significantly, this was written just after the jousting at the anniversary of the Queen's accession celebrations in late 1584, where Oxford, newly restored to favor, was successful. NW writes, "You cannot forget that which Nolanus [Bruno] (that man of infinite titles among other phantasticall toys) truly noted *by chaunce* in our Scholes that with the help of translations, al Sciences had their offspring, and in my judgment it is true," and concludes, "From Oxenford this xx of November [1584] Yours NW." I emphasize the middle syllable in the spelling since that is how Oxford signed his private letters: Edward Oxenford. This is additional evidence (*phantasticall toys*) of Oxford's opinion matching that of Torquato.

8. The identification of Torquato as Oxford is supported by the Marcus Ghaeraedts portrait of the Earl, which shows Oxford with a twisted ribbon round his neck, and by the pseudonym Torquatus, given to him by his supporter, playwright John Marston. The name Torquatus was taken up by Marston in his 1599 edition of *The Scourge of Villainy Corrected*. The principal reference is in the Preface, "To those that seem judicall perusers.... For whose unseasoned pallate I wrote the first Satyre in some places too obscure, in all places mislyking me. Yet when by some scurvy chance it shall come into the late perfumed fist of judicall Torquatus.... I know he will vouchsafe it, some of his new-minted epithets when in my conscience he understands not the least part of it [understands every last part of it]. From thence proceeds his judgment." Note that Oxford presented a pair of perfumed gloves to Queen Elizabeth in 1576 upon his return from Italy. According to John Stow in his *Annales*, Queen Elizabeth was so delighted with the scent on the gloves that "for many years afterward, it was called the Earl of Oxford's perfume" (868). Also see De Vere Society Newsletter, January 2015.
9. The contemporary allusion is in Nashe's *Epistle Dedicatorie to Strange News* (1592): "I am bold, instead of new wine, to carouse to you a cup of news, which if your worship (according to your wonted Chaucerism) shall accept in good part, I'll be your daily orator to pray that that pure sanguine complexion of yours may never be famished with pot-lucke, and that you may taste till your last gasp, and live to see the confusion of your special enemies, Small Beer and Grammar rules." Three references in the plays are set out in Malim 2011, 282 n. 11.

10. See my article, *Oxford The Comedian*, in the De Vere Society Newsletter, October 2018, 15ff. Here (27) is a much better explanation for the reference to Shakespeare as one of the recipients of £20 from the Treasurer of the Court Chamber for a non-existent performance before the Queen on 27th December 1594. I suspect that it was a ruse by Oxford to help him pay for the expenses of the Gesta Grayorum entertainments.
11. Parry calls *The School of Night* “fictional” yet it is Shakespeare’s fiction (*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, IV.iii.251). Parry had clearly not read the account of the informal investigation commissioned by the Privy Council into Raleigh’s activities (“The School of Atheism”) at Sherborne Castle in Dorset, carried out at Wolfeton Hall near Cerne Abbas, where Raleigh wanted the local vicar who recorded the conversations to justify contentions as to the existence of God and the soul. The vicar summarizes them with no mention of alchemy nor any conjuror (Lloyd 254ff). Whether Raleigh and Dee had any relationship after Dee’s return to England is not confirmed: indeed, they were both in disgrace and a positive hindrance to each other for any rehabilitation (Parry 232).
12. Gombrich’s thesis has been taken up most perceptively by Katherine Chiljan—see her paper in the previous volume of *The Oxfordian*.

Works Cited

- Arthos, John. *Shakespeare: The Early Writings*. London: Bowes & Bowes, 1972.
- Bossy, John. *Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1991.
- Clark, Eva Turner. *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*. NY: Associated Faculty Pr. Inc., 1976.
- Dean, John Candee. "The Astronomy of Shakespeare." *The Scientific Monthly*, 19:4 (Oct. 1924) 400–06.
- Dutton, Richard. *Shakespeare, Court Dramatist*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016.
- Gilvary, Kevin. *Dating Shakespeare's Plays*. Suffolk, UK: Parapress, 2005.
- Gombrich, E.H. "Shakespeare's Prospero and Prospero Visconti of Milan." *England and the Continental Renaissance*. Eds. Edward Chaney and Peter Mack. Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 1990. 185–90.
- Gosselin, E.A. and L.S. Lerner (translators). *The Ash Wednesday Supper*. Toronto: Toronto UP, 1995.
- Honigmann, E.A.J. *Shakespeare: The 'Lost' Years*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988.
- Lloyd, Rachel. *Dorset Elizabethans* London: John Murray, 1967.
- Londré, Felicia. "Elizabethan Views of 'the Other': French, Spanish and Russians in *Love's Labor's Lost*." *The Elizabethan Review*. 3:1 (Spring 1995), 3–20. Rpr. *Love's Labor's Lost: Critical Essays*. Felicia Londré (Ed.). NY: Routledge, 1997.
- Malim, Richard. *The Earl of Oxford and the 'Making' of Shakespeare: The Literary Life of The Earl of Oxford in Context*. North Carolina: McFarland Publishers, 2011.
- . *Great Oxford*. Suffolk, UK: Parapress, 2005.
- Nelson, Alan. *Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*. Liverpool, Liverpool UP, 1993.

- Parry, Glyn. *The Arch Conjuror of England*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2012.
- . “Occult Philosophy and Politics: Why John Dee Wrote His *Compendious Rehearsal* in 1592.” *Studies in History*. 43:3 (September 2012), 480–88.
- Singer, D.W. *Life of Giordano Bruno*. NY: H. Schumann, 1950.
- Sokol, B.J. (ed). *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare*. London: Free Association Books, 1993.
- Stow, John. *Annales*. London, 1631.
- Woudhuysen, H. R. (ed). *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. 3rd edition. London: Arden Shakespeare, 1998.
- Yates, Frances. *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. NY: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964.
- . *Shakespeare’s Last Plays*. NY: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.

Stratfordian Epistemology and the Ethics of Belief

by Michael Dudley

“Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies.”
—Frederick Nietzsche¹

In their 2011 tract *Shakespeare Bites Back*, Paul Edmondson and Sir Stanley Wells of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust make what they call the “deeply moral point” of condemning anti-Stratfordians for their “denial of evidence”:

Fictions we might choose to tell ourselves about the past become no less valid than interpretations constructed through empirical evidence such as documents and material remains. Ultimately, this is a deeply moral point. A denial of evidence amounts to a lie about the past. People who are duped by conspiracy theories find in them something they may like to believe...It may be enticing to believe in stolen documents, secret codes, buried treasure, and illegitimate children of Elizabeth I. But the belief itself doesn’t make the fantasy true. (19)

In this passage, Edmondson and Wells imply several significant claims: that individuals can choose their beliefs; that these choices can be for non-epistemological reasons—i.e., motivated by personal passions, goals or a desire for pleasure, rather than for the pursuit of knowledge; that there is a distinction between belief and inquiry; that inquiry must always be based on an honest

interpretation of the available evidence; that one's misplaced beliefs can have a negative impact on others; and that beliefs will always be confronted by reality. Most importantly, they argue that actions taken based on unearned belief are unethical, so that criticizing such belief is a moral act.

The authors don't acknowledge it, but their arguments lie at the core of a branch of philosophy called epistemology, in discourses concerning the *Ethics of Belief*. First articulated in an 1876 lecture by English mathematician and philosopher William Kingdon Clifford, in which he declared that "it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence" (28), the Ethics of Belief are a matter of considerable controversy among philosophers, many of whom point out the sheer impossibility of questioning and seeking evidence for absolutely *every* belief that one holds (Amesbury 30). Yet Clifford's work has engendered a rich and vigorous literature that seeks to connect belief states to believers themselves—their motivations, their biases, and the impacts of their beliefs on others.

Skeptics of the traditional Shakespeare biography will strenuously object to this ethical argument being targeted at them, but are Edmondson and Wells correct in suggesting that an ethical lens is an important one through which to view the authorship debate?

The authorship question is a uniquely peculiar academic phenomenon, in that partisans on each side exhibit scholarly behaviors and practices that are quite incomparable. On the one hand, skeptics of the traditional attribution of the plays and poems to the malt merchant and theatre investor William Shakspeare have always sought to marshal their case by seeking out and synthesizing a combination of literary, historical and biographical evidence. On the other, defenders of the orthodox tradition do not consider the matter of scholarly interest at all. Instead, they treat it and skeptics themselves as a subject of ridicule, confidently repeating shibboleths

Michael Dudley is a librarian at the University of Winnipeg. His articles and book review essays regarding the Shakespeare Authorship Question have previously appeared in *The Oxfordian* and *Brief Chronicles* and may be accessed at the UW's institutional repository WinnSpace: <http://winnspace.uwinnipeg.ca/handle/10680/430>. In 2020, he published in *The Oxfordian* 22, "Was Shakespeare a Ramist?"

and shoring up the biography of the “Bard of Avon” with a host of conjectural scenarios described with copious amounts of conditional prose (Chiljan; Ogburn).

Given the nature of traditional assertions, it is worth applying this ethical lens to Stratfordians by interrogating Stratfordianism *as a belief*: that is, not in terms of its substantive *content*, but rather in terms of its *nature* as a doxastic or grounded belief state. In short: what does it mean to say that the orthodox position on Shakespeare’s authorship is a belief (*doxa*) as opposed to a search for knowledge (*episteme*), and what are the implications of that belief? To the extent that this belief has consequences for others, can it then be said to be an ethical one?

We shall consider the ethical implications of the mainstream belief that William Shakspeare of Stratford-Upon-Avon was the author of the works of Shakespeare. In light of the total lack of documentary evidence connecting William of Stratford to a writing career (Price)—which even some Stratfordians acknowledge (see Danner; Ellis; Wells 81)—and the persistent refusal by most academicians to regard this lacunae as epistemologically problematic, or to seek to remedy it through open-minded investigation integrating the scholarship of authorship skeptics, we are well-justified in questioning the ethics of such a position.

Context: Locating a Stratfordian Epistemology

So that we might examine the ethics of this belief and all that it entails, we need to first understand Stratfordian epistemology. However, Shakespearean biographers do not as a rule frame their approach to their subject in epistemological terms (although see Epstein; Holland), but instead righteously defend their scholarly credentials with obscurantist references to their “approach to the facts and historical evidence” being “complex and... informed by a deep knowledge in order to understand them” (Edmondson and Wells *S. Bites Back*, 34).

In a previous work (Dudley “Becoming an Oxfordian”) the author offered a stark comparison between the scholarly approaches taken by Stratfordians and proponents of the authorship of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, detailing their assumptions regarding what exists (*ontology*), how we know what we think we know (*epistemology*), why we should pursue research into a given question (*axiology*), and how we might test our theories and gain more knowledge (*methodology*) (3). Together these comprise a field of inquiry’s

research paradigm, which for Stratfordian biographers would look something like this:

Table 1	The Stratfordian Research Paradigm
Ontology [i.e., object of study]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Works resulting from <i>natural genius and imagination</i>• Historical person about whom <i>little is known</i>
Epistemology [i.e., sources of knowledge]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biographical documents of <i>no literary relevance</i>• The works can offer us <i>no knowledge</i> of the author’s life, social class, personality or beliefs• Heavy reliance on <i>traditions</i> found in previous biographies
Axiology [i.e., justification]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Author’s identity is a <i>sacred certainty</i> beyond questioning• Shakespeare must be defended against “<i>anti-Shakespearean</i>” <i>doubt</i>• Stratfordians are the <i>only reliable experts</i> on Shakespeare• Doubters are “<i>anti-Shakespearean</i>,” non-scholarly and <i>unworthy of engagement</i>
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biographers must use their <i>imaginations</i> owing to lack of documentary evidence, layered with literary criticism.

Establishing the nature of Stratfordian epistemology in this way clarifies the multiple layers of belief involved, and what they imply for the work of the would-be Shakespeare biographer: to write about an author whose works derive from imagination—and about whom nothing relevant can be learned from contemporary documents or the content of his works—necessitates the use of the biographer’s imagination. Therefore, it is essential that we recognize and distinguish between a primary proposition and ancillary beliefs, each with their own ethical implications and dimensions:

- 1) A **propositional belief** (*p*) that William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon was the author William Shakespeare;
- 2) a **second-order belief** about that belief—that *p* is a certainty, beyond doubt and beyond questioning;
- 3) a host of varying **explanatory beliefs** each premised on faith and justifying *p* (e.g, the “lost years”; the “miracle of genius”; key documentary evidence being “now lost”);
- 4) a **reflexive belief** that believers in *p*—themselves—are authoritative and as such cannot be questioned about *p*;
- 5) an **ethical belief** that questioning *p* is not just factually incorrect but immoral; and
- 6) a **juridical belief** that those who question *p* may justifiably be isolated, excluded and marginalized by institutions of scholarship.

My argument is that it is the mutually-reinforcing nature of all these beliefs—rather than just the contents of the authorship attribution itself—that makes Stratfordian believers so resistant to honestly examining the evidence at hand. This pattern of behavior is singularly ironic, given that many of Shakespeare's plays are deeply concerned with what Clifford (1876) referred to as the duty to inquire. Hamlet, for example, does not immediately act when the ghost of his father informs him that his uncle Claudius had committed murderous treason, being unsure if the ghost is honest or a demon from hell. Fearing that acting upon the commands of the latter would lead to his own damnation, Hamlet recognizes his duty to inquire further and has the travelling players stage a re-enactment of the murder of his father just as the ghost had described it, and Claudius' guilt is confirmed in his furious response. However, when Shakespeare's other characters fail in their duty to inquire, they ensure their own downfall: Othello, despite demanding "ocular proof" from Iago as to the unfaithfulness of Desdemona, does not inquire into Iago's trustworthiness and instead accepts the fidelity of his advisor's insinuations, and views his wife's actions accordingly, dooming her (and himself) in the process (Mitova 2018). Macbeth accepts the witches' predictions at face value, never thinking to better ascertain their meaning. And Lear hears only what he wants or expects to hear from his daughters as to the nature of their love for him. In play after play, Shakespeare repeatedly shows us that unhesitating certainty and untested assumptions are the path to ruination.

Methods

This essay shall examine orthodox belief through an ethical doxastic lens by posing the following questions: based on the standards of Ethics of Belief theory, is this belief a praiseworthy or a blameworthy one? Is it maintained and defended in a manner conducive to discovering truth? What are its consequences? Can it be asserted in an ethical manner? Our focus, however, is not on the truth or falsity of the belief itself regarding the authorship as held by Stratfordians (i.e., the facts of Shakspeare's life) but on the *nature of that belief state* and the *belief-maintenance strategies* necessary to support it.

A few caveats. The body of literature concerning the Ethics of Belief is rich, complex, and filled with controversies; therefore, no more than an introduction can be offered.

Second, we must be careful about situating the knowers in question. Shakespeare is universally loved and deeply interwoven into almost all aspects of world culture, such that virtually everyone of a certain age at least knows his name. We are therefore not concerned with authorship beliefs held by the average layperson, who may have read one of the plays in high school but has given Shakespeare little thought since. Instead, we are concerned with those *professionally obligated* to know about the life of the author: English

literature and theater professors as well as other members of the academy and intelligentsia who have made the Shakespeare canon their particular study.

Another important element is that the belief in question does not involve a condition, concept or idea, but focuses on historical evidence, meaning that the ethical questions involved are not generic in nature but historiographic: e.g., what does it mean that there is a consensus among historians regarding a particular historical event, or for a person to hold false beliefs about the past (Tucker)? This is a point repeatedly made by Stratfordians, such as Edmondson and Wells, who argue that the “immorality” of anti-Stratfordians’ theories relates to alleged abuses of historical evidence (*S. Bites Back*, 19), which then often involves invidious comparisons with Holocaust denial (Wildenthal 342–343 n56). However, historiography constitutes a different body of theory so its implications for the authorship question will need to be addressed in a future paper.

In addition, it is important to acknowledge that our analysis is limited to historiographic matters and not intended to represent a normative worldview. Empiricism and metaphysics need not be mutually exclusive: scientists of faith may see revealed in the world and stars around us the hand of the divine, and Indigenous peoples all over the world have for thousands of years integrated their empirical observations about their environment—and their place within it—with their spiritual beliefs (Turner). Nothing in this essay should be interpreted as undermining such worldviews. Similarly, while religious faith is not the focus here, the literature in question is adjacent to another vast body of literature concerning the philosophy of religious belief, so matters of faith versus reason will be addressed only briefly.

This article shall first review the literature of the Ethics of Belief starting with the writings of William Kingdon Clifford and William James before considering more recent perspectives and theories. An 11-point synthesis of these theories describing the conditions associated with ethical belief formation will then be applied to the propositional and ancillary beliefs articulated above. With this analysis, we shall then endeavor to reach conclusions regarding the praiseworthiness and ethicalness of this mainstream belief, as well as the implications for the future of the authorship question, and for the academy in general.

Theories of the Ethics of Belief

Origins: William Kingdon Clifford and William James

The nature of belief, the extent to which we have control over it, the connections and distinctions between reason and faith—as well as the moral

obligations inherent in both—have long engaged philosophers. John Locke, in his 1690 work *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* wrote,

He that believes without having any Reason for believing, may be in love with his own Fancies; but neither seeks Truth as he ought, nor pays the Obedience due to his Maker, who would have him use those discerning Faculties he has given him, to keep him out of Mistake and Errour. (575)

David Hume, in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), would further observe that:

the mind has authority over all its ideas, so that if...the mind could voluntarily join it to any fiction...it would be able to believe anything it chose to believe; and we find by daily experience that it cannot. We can in putting thoughts together join the head of a man to the body of a horse; but we can't choose to believe that such an animal has ever really existed. (24)

However, the modern inquiry into the ethics of our beliefs properly begins with the work of English mathematician and philosopher William Kingdon Clifford (1845–1879) and his 1876 speech and essay entitled, *The Ethics of Belief*. Besides creating a controversy at the time, it served to inspire generations of philosophers to develop an entire branch of epistemology around it that would debate his ideas for decades to come. In the essay, Clifford argues in absolutist terms that we have a fundamental moral imperative to question all our beliefs and to ascertain that even the seemingly most inconsequential of them are based upon sufficient evidence.

He begins by presenting the tale of a shipowner who suppresses doubts regarding the seaworthiness of his vessel and assumes without evidence that it will arrive at its destination safely. In the end it sinks with all aboard, confirming the shipowner's guilt; yet even if his misplaced belief had not resulted in fatal consequences, Clifford finds the man culpable for having believed without evidence because “[h]e had acquired his belief not by honestly earning it in patient investigation, but by stifling his doubts” (25).

For Clifford, even those beliefs for which lives do not hang in the balance are still subject to this moral imperative, due to the consequences at stake for both the individual and society:

No real belief, however trifling and fragmentary it may seem, is ever truly insignificant; it prepares us to receive more of its like, confirms those which resembled it before, and weakens others; and so gradually it lays a stealthy train in our inmost thoughts, which may some day explode into overt action, and leave its stamp upon our character for ever. (26)

Because of these grave consequences, “we have no choice but to extend our judgment to all cases of belief whatever,” a duty that excuses “no obscurity of station” nor tolerates beliefs held “for the solace and private pleasure of the believer” (27). Beliefs that are insufficiently founded on evidence but are instead held on unwarranted faith or “nourish[ed]...by suppressing doubts and avoiding investigation” (27) make fair and open inquiry impossible. This epistemological responsibility, he warns, is not just owed to our colleagues and contemporaries but is an intergenerational one, a “precious deposit and a sacred trust” to be passed to our descendants (27). Because of this view to posterity, Clifford’s epistemology is an explicitly moral one: that it is the “sacred tradition of humanity” that we not simply accept “propositions or statements... on the authority of...tradition,” or “to believe a thing true because everybody says so” (33), but that it is not just our responsibility but our moral duty to test our knowledge. He concludes,

If a man, holding a belief which he was taught in childhood or persuaded of afterwards, keeps down and pushes away any doubts which arise about it in his mind, purposely avoids the reading of books and the company of men that call in question or discuss it, and regards as impious those questions which cannot easily be asked without disturbing it—the life of that man is one long sin against mankind. (28)

He therefore finds it highly immoral—indeed a sin—for anyone to “stifle [their] own doubts, or to hamper the inquiry of others,” (34) by “suppress[ing] those things which did not suit them, while...amplify[ing] such as [do] suit them” (36); and anyone who treats evidence in this way can produce “no true historical inference...but only unsatisfactory conjecture” (36), rendering them “guilty of a sacrilege which centuries shall never be able to blot out” (34).

For all this, Clifford does grant that, under some circumstances, we are not obligated to determine for ourselves the veracity of every one of our beliefs through investigation, but instead may rely on the testimony of others, but only if we have done our due diligence to ascertain “there are good grounds for believing that some one person at least has the means of knowing what is true, and is speaking the truth so far as he knows it” (33).

Following Clifford’s publication of *The Ethics of Belief* a flurry of rejoinders was published—including pieces by Matthew Arnold and Thomas Huxley (Madigan)—but it would take another 20 years for a true companion piece to emerge in the form of William James’ *The Will to Believe*.² For James, there were several circumstances—especially and including religious faith—where belief without evidence is desirable and, in fact, necessary. As a pragmatist, James argued that the merit of a belief may be gleaned not in its provenance but in its outcomes, as some things may not even be achievable at all without first being grounded in a belief that they are indeed possible. A scientist, for

example, must at least believe enough in a hypothesis to devote months to testing it for its veracity, and a person may only be able to overcome their illness if they believe that they can. In addition, a belief that turns out to be true in the end—even one initially based on nothing more than a random guess—still constituted for James “real knowledge” (10).

In situations where evidence is ambiguous or uncertain, James allows that people may adopt beliefs without sufficient evidence, but only under specific conditions: that the hypothesis must be either “live” to a prospective believer rather than “dead,” a state based not on its inherent factual qualities but in relation to the willingness of the believer to act upon it (2). This in turn depends on whether the decision is a “forced” one (i.e., a choice one way or another is needed and waiting for more evidence is not an option) and whether the choice is not trivial but “momentous” (2). However, while he argued for the role of volition—one’s passions and personal goals—in belief-formation, he did not extend this to the exercise of the will—that is, the idea that we can simply choose to believe in something or not for non-epistemological reasons (16).³

Both Clifford and James continue to face criticism for their arguments. Madigan points out that, ironically, Clifford’s argument that insufficiently supported beliefs have dire consequences is, itself, an “overbelief” that Clifford does not bother backing up with any evidence (178), while Amesbury counters that it would be irrational to question *all* of one’s beliefs in the absence of reasonable doubts indicating otherwise. Moreover, he argues that what Clifford advocates is completely impractical and that even the acts of doubt and inquiry can only occur “against a backdrop of much for which evidence is not required” (30). For his part, James is criticized by Burger for his pragmatism, observing that “James...would rather make a bigoted and prejudiced guess than be intellectually honest and admit to himself that he does not really know.” Yet, with *The Ethics of Belief* and *The Will to Believe*, both Clifford and James helped to establish most of the major elements of the debate over ethical belief.

What is “Belief?” Do We Have Control Over It?

To speak of an *ethics* of belief presupposes that our processes of belief acquisition are at least to some extent under our control: that our dispositions, intentions, and practices must have the capacity to influence the kinds of beliefs we hold and what we do with them (Chignell; Lindner). We are tasked as individuals “to align our will with what connects our belief to truth, i.e., evidence. This suggests that we can decide to believe in response to evidence” (Wolderyohannes 124) while at the same time recognizing that “the content of the belief is true is not settled by our believing...what makes a proposition or a belief true is the proposition’s or the belief’s connection with reality” (94).

Many of our beliefs are gained through perception of the world around us while others, beyond our ability to test through first-hand experience, are learned through education and socialization: for example, most of us must accept the scientific consensus that the Earth is, on average, 92 million miles from the Sun because we do not possess the knowledge or equipment to test this fact for ourselves (Amesbury 28). As far as is practicable, however, the exercise of one's will to arrive at a true belief is therefore reasonably limited to attempting an unbiased investigation not bound to a predetermined outcome, seeking evidence from multiple perspectives, and not manipulating one's evidence pool based on motivated belief to a particular point of view (Lindner 30).

Views on the role of evidence—specifically *sufficient* evidence to support any given proposition—dominate much of the literature in the Ethics of Belief. As an evidentialist, Clifford was anticipated in the work of earlier philosophers, such as John Locke and his famous argument that the extent of our beliefs should be proportionate to the evidence before us (553). At the opposite end of the scale is *fideism*, or the willingness to accept certain things on faith, whether owing to a lack of compelling evidence either way or because the believer doesn't feel the need for evidence at all (Chignell). This is clearly the case for religious faith, for which an insistence on evidence is seen by theologians to be contrary to the entire enterprise. Of course, Clifford and James parted company on the question of faith, with Clifford, rather problematically to modern eyes, critiquing the faith of a hypothetical Muslim in the hope that his audience would apply the same principles to their own Christianity (29–30), while James wrote *The Will to Believe* as a defense of belief in our connection to the eternal, for which science can offer no means of measurement.

While only a strict Cliffordian evidentialist would argue that religious faith of any kind is an unethical belief in general, we should make the distinction between belief formation practices associated with faith and metaphysical matters on the one hand, and those necessary for historiographic empiricism on the other. In other words, one cannot hold a fideistic belief about a knowable event where evidence is known to exist, and have it considered an ethical one (Chignell).

In short, our beliefs may be epistemic or non-epistemic, and how we arrive at them can be *voluntary* to the extent that our belief-formation processes may be influenced by our motivations, intentions, and passions—and so can shape how we seek and evaluate the available evidence (Woldeyohannes). This recognition raises a key theme for belief ethicists: *doxastic agency*, or our responsibility to “form, maintain and revise our beliefs...through conscious mental activity” (McHugh 134). Our beliefs are—or should be—under self-regulation and subject to reassessment and re-evaluation; and that we are evaluating our belief regulation processes with the goal of acquiring true beliefs rather than false ones.

The question of authority is also germane to this debate: the proposition that not all believers need be held to the same intellectual obligations. To cite Amesbury's example, as an interested layperson I should not be held responsible for not knowing the exact distances between Earth and the Sun at given points in our planet's orbit over the course of the year, but I would expect such knowledge from a professor of astronomy. Peel refers to this as the *influence account* "which distinguishes between epistemic, professional, and moral intellectual obligations" (81). For some knowers (doxastic agents), then, it is reasonable to expect that their beliefs and assertions are epistemically justified or *praiseworthy*, and if they are not, that these beliefs be held to be *blameworthy*.

What Makes a Belief Praiseworthy or Blameworthy?

If we are, to some extent, in control of our belief formation, it follows that we have *doxastic responsibility* and we may be judged as commendable or culpable for our beliefs, and the actions deriving from them (Montmarquet). Recall that William James was pragmatically satisfied if a knower happened upon a true belief through mere guesswork, such that even if their information-gathering process was improper, reaching the truth was all that mattered. Most modern theorists take a more holistic view: that to be truly praiseworthy, one's beliefs should emerge from a genuine process of inquiry.

There are different ways of viewing whether one can be commended for one's beliefs. Anne Meylan posits both a *final* version—in which one is praiseworthy for acquiring a true belief when one is responsible for that acquisition—and an *instrumental* version, in which, once a belief is acquired, its value is measured in its ability to lead the knower to *other* true beliefs (141). She emphasizes these interconnections, stating that:

[i]t is definitely a desirable thing to understand propositions or to understand why a proposition *p* is true. But the reason why it is desirable is that the understanding of the truth of *p* consists in the acquisition of many true beliefs, which explain why *p* is true. To be sure, we will not say that I understand why *p* is true if my explanation appeals mainly to false beliefs. (131)

To fail in this regard is to form blameworthy beliefs, which in Meylan's view are not blameworthy just because they are false, but because they lead the knower to other false beliefs. Jessica Brown adds that one's beliefs are blameworthy to the extent that one "dogmatically continu[es] to believe a claim even after receiving evidence which undermines it" and failing to "conform one's beliefs to the evidence," (3596) although she argues, unlike Clifford, it does not necessarily follow that such failures are *moral* ones.

Nottelmann argues that beliefs may be epistemically blameworthy if they are *undesirable* in meeting the following epistemic standards: lack of formation by a truth-conducive process (it is epistemically undesirable that a belief is not formed and causally sustained by a reliable process); inadequate basing (it is epistemically undesirable that a belief is not based on good basing reasons such as adequate evidence and adequate grounds); unreasonableness (it is epistemically undesirable that an agent holding a belief does not have good rationalizing reasons such as adequate grounds and adequate evidence for holding that belief) (70).

Epistemically blameworthy beliefs derived from an unreliable process, based on inadequate evidence and unreasonably maintained, are not just the private domain of the believer, but “have consequences for others, as well as for oneself” (Amesbury 27)—but which may be unknowable (Chignell). Belief ethicists also stress that our beliefs have consequences for others, especially when we translate our beliefs into assertions. Goldberg emphasizes this social, inter-personal and moral dimension by pointing out that making an assertion is a public act and implies a social contract between the speaker and listener—that the agent making the assertion of belief has the epistemic authority to do so, and that their assertions are responsive to robust epistemic norms (177).

Synthesis: Conditions for Ethical Belief

To summarize: We propose that empirical/secular/historical beliefs (those that are non-metaphysical/non-fideistic) may be judged to be ethical to the extent they correspond to the following Ethical Belief Formation Conditions:

- **Condition 1:** Evidence that may support the belief is known by the doxastic agent to exist and is available to them;
- **Condition 2:** The agent recognizes their duty to inquire;
- **Condition 3:** The agent is intellectually obligated to form and assert the belief;
- **Condition 4:** The agent recognizes their own motivations, passions and interests and does not allow these to unduly influence their use of available evidence;
- **Condition 5:** Said beliefs are acquired through honest and open inquiry with all available evidence;
- **Condition 6:** Where evidence is incomplete, ambiguous or uncertain, speculation, theorizing and guessing are permissible and necessary, but must be asserted with appropriate caution;

- **Condition 7:** Belief formation rests on epistemic foundations that align as closely as possible to reality, and therefore leads to further true beliefs;
- **Condition 8:** Doxastic agents are open to self-regulation and reassessment;
- **Condition 9:** Assertions made by agents regarding their beliefs conform with the available evidence and are proportionate to it;
- **Condition 10:** Agents do not dogmatically maintain beliefs in the face of conflicting evidence;
- **Condition 11:** Agents are to the best of their knowledge basing their beliefs on the arguments of knowledgeable others who are known to have adhered to these principles, and
- **Condition 12:** Beliefs emerging from these conditions may only be supported by similarly acquired, non-fideistic beliefs.

The first and third conditions are ontological pre-conditions that assume the existence of both a knowing, reflexive agent as well as external evidence, while the second represents an epistemological and ethical commitment on the part of the agent towards that evidence. The fourth is attitudinal and equips the agent to meet the fifth condition, which is methodological. The sixth condition acknowledges that information is often incomplete and that to advance their inquiry, a believer may need to hypothesize beyond the evidence at hand. The seventh condition encourages the knower to confirm some correspondence between their belief and with what is already known, while the eighth condition views the agent's belief practices over time. Conditions 9 through 11 are interpersonal, social, and intergenerational: the agent must be aware of the limits to their knowledge while communicating their beliefs to others; when encountering others' ideas (particularly as regards matters of controversy); and acknowledging that their own knowledge derives from the work of doxastic agents that preceded them. In brief, all these conditions are premised on the knower's scholarly humility and the recognition of human fallibility, both in themselves and in others. Finally, condition 12 ensures that what Thomas Kuhn referred to as our "constellation of group commitments" to sets of facts (181) are all ethically commensurate with one another.⁴

With these foundations in place, let us now turn to the task of determining the ethical dimensions of belief in the Stratfordian Shakespeare, and the ancillary beliefs associated with it.

Analysis

- 1) **Propositional belief** (*p*): William Shakspere of Stratford-Upon-Avon was the author William Shakespeare.

Condition 1: Evidence that may support the belief is known by the doxastic agent to exist and is available to them.

Despite repeated declarations on the part of scholars, institutions, and major media that Shakespeare's authorship is "beyond doubt," even Sir Stanley Wells concedes that "despite the mass of evidence that the works were written by a man named William Shakespeare, there is none that explicitly and incontrovertibly identifies him with Stratford-upon-Avon" (81). In 1962, Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, Regius Professor of History at Oxford University, stated that he found the lack of evidence concerning Shakespeare's life,

exasperating and almost incredible...After all, he lived in the full daylight of the English Renaissance in the well documented reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I and...since his death has been subjected to the greatest battery of organised research that has ever been directed upon a single person. And yet the greatest of all Englishmen, after this tremendous inquisition, still remains so close to a mystery that even his identity can still be doubted. (Trevor-Roper 41)

Peter Holland—the author of the entry on "William Shakespeare" in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* no less—further observes that:

[t]rying to read what the written and printed documentary evidence shows of Shakespeare's character is...a recipe for disaster. Even the evidence of what he was doing for substantial stretches of his life can be thin...The evidence says nothing of his character...there is little that connects the surviving dots into anything approximating a sequence of interconnectedness, a narrative that might be more than momentarily coherent, indeed, anything that might pass for a narrative at all. (21)

Scholar of biographical literature William H. Epstein notes of Shakespeare that

[i]f the name 'Shakespeare' (in its various spellings) cannot function except as signifying authorship (and a much disputed function at that), then 'Shakespeare' is a sign which can be filled only with the imputed authorship of literary texts. It cannot be filled with other discursive activities conventionally associated with biographical subjects. The inability to treat 'Shakespeare' as poly-functional, that is, as engaged in more than one discursive activity, is a fatal, silencing disruption of biographical recognition. (291)

The consequences for Shakespearean biography have been centuries of doubt, for which Bruce Danner argues Shakespeare scholars are themselves to blame, owing to their inability to construct a viable life from the available evidence:

As a profession we have failed to establish a clear and convincing portrait of Shakespeare, not merely to the popular audience, but to ourselves. Until we do, or can provide clear explanations for why we cannot, authorship conspiracy theories will persist, continuing to case the “dark shadow[s]” that haunt our claims to knowledge. (157)

As may be seen, many mainstream orthodox scholars acknowledge that there is, in fact, no actual contemporary documentary evidence from the lifetime of the Stratford gentlemen connecting him to the writing of plays and poems, rendering all Shakespearean biography a highly problematic enterprise.

Condition 1 is not fulfilled, nor is ever likely to. No direct evidence for *p* is known to exist.

Condition 2: The agent recognizes their duty to inquire.

At its most basic, the Stratfordian position rests on a foundation of unshakable confidence that the evidence at hand—quarto title pages, Green’s *Groats-Worth of Wit*, the dedication to the Sonnets; the funerary monument at the Holy Trinity Church at Stratford-upon-Avon, and contemporary references and allusions to the poet-playwright Shakespeare—are all *prima facie* confirmation of Shakspeare’s authorship, and therefore do not necessitate any further investigation. This belief holds firm despite many leading Stratfordian scholars admitting that much of this evidence is “cryptic” (Ackroyd 2006, 148, 477; Callaghan 2006, 115; Wells 2013, 74, 79; Wells 2015, 19) and “thin” (Holland 21), such that the purported author himself is not just “elusive” (Ackroyd 2006, 148; Maguire & Smith 2013, 2) but actually “unknowable” (Duncan-Jones 1997, 9). It is difficult to conceive of biographical scholars concerned with a modern figure in any other field being content with such a state of affairs: surely the unsatisfactory and paltry nature of the evidence presented and the resultingly opaque portrait arising from it would swiftly occasion some basic questions as to the provenance and relevance of such evidence. All things being equal, the duty to inquire further would seem obvious. Yet in the case of Shakspeare’s partisans, if such doubts ever arise they are kept quiet; Stratfordians generally do not recognize—or in any case exercise—their duty to inquire.

Condition 3: The agent is intellectually obligated to form and assert the belief.

As belief ethicists point out, we are socially or through formal education enculturated into many of our beliefs, and this is certainly the case for most

of humanity in terms of their knowledge of Shakespeare. However, that most people in the world accept that Shakespeare was born and died in Stratford-upon-Avon does not concern us here. The doxastic agents at whom this analysis is directed are those who are *professionally obligated* to know about the life of the poet-playwright, in particular, current leading scholars who have written or spoken on the matter, such as Jonathan Bate (currently teaching at Arizona State University and the University of Oxford), Paul Edmondson and Sir Stanley Wells (both with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust), James Shapiro (Columbia University), Stephen Greenblatt (Harvard University) and Gary Taylor (Florida State University). In their many books and articles, they have not only made triumphal assertions about the life of the author, but have disparaged, belittled, and condemned anti-Stratfordians for their doubts. As well, we would include mainstream academicians who, following the lead of such scholars, have refused to admit this topic into their curricula, or to allow their students to pursue it (Dudley, “Swinish Phrase”).

Condition 3 is fulfilled: there is a substantial group of believers who are intellectually and professionally obligated to hold a belief about the authorship of the works of Shakespeare.

Condition 4: The agent recognizes their own motivations, passions and interests and does not allow these to unduly influence their use of available evidence.

Leading Stratfordian scholars are open in admitting that there is no attempt on their part at unbiased, even-handed evaluation of the evidence against their candidate and in favor of others, as even lending credence to doubt is seen as fundamentally irrational. As Samuel Schoenbaum put it in his 1970 book *Shakespeare's Lives*, doubters exhibit a “pattern of psychopathology... paranoid structures of thought...hallucinatory phenomena” which can result in a “descent, in a few cases, into actual madness” (608). By contrast, defence of the Shakespeare of tradition is eminently virtuous, with some going so far as to describe it as “championing freedom and democracy” (Edmondson and Leon 193).

Condition 4 is not fulfilled: Leading Stratfordians are admittedly motivated believers.

Condition 5: Said beliefs are acquired through honest and open inquiry with all available evidence.

Stratfordian scholars are meticulous in their avoidance of evidence that contradicts the image they have constructed of their rustic, common-born businessman genius. For example, despite ten of the plays being set in Italy (with three more taking place in ancient Rome), Shakespeare scholars assumed for generations that he filled the details of these plays with second-

hand information acquired from travelers, as there was no evidence Shakespeare of Stratford ever left England. It took until the late 20th Century for an independent researcher—Richard Paul Roe—to visit many of the key locations mentioned in the Italian plays over several decades. He concluded that the descriptions and knowledge of local customs were so accurate that they could only have come from first-hand experience, i.e., that the author (whomever he was) had to have traveled throughout Italy (Roe).

Because research such as Roe's contradicts their mythology, most Stratfordian scholars are equally meticulous in not citing anti-Stratfordian publications. Edmondson and Wells sought with their 2013 anthology *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* to refute the anti-Stratfordian position, but did not cite most of the relevant authorship scholarship of the last half-century. Similarly, Joseph Rosenblum's chapter on the authorship question in his *Definitive Shakespeare Companion* also eschewed citing any anti-Stratfordian literature from the last thirty years, but instead depended on other, equally blinkered, orthodox sources. One of the exceptions in this regard is James Shapiro's 2010 book *Contested Will*, but this was concerned only with proposing unflattering psychological motivations behind anti-Stratfordians' beliefs, rather than with their actual arguments.

Condition 5 is not fulfilled: Evidence-gathering in support of *p* is highly selective.

Condition 6: Where evidence is incomplete, ambiguous, or uncertain, then speculation, theorizing, and guessing are permissible and necessary, but must be asserted with appropriate caution.

Traditional biographies are replete with speculation, their prose littered with variations on “must have,” “it is reasonable to assume,” and “we can imagine” etc. For example, Stephen Greenblatt begins his 2004 book *Will in the World* by stating “Let us imagine...” (23), and then later writes that as a young man Shakespeare,

may have been working in the glover's shop, perhaps, *or* making a bit of money as a teacher's or a lawyer's assistant. In his spare time he *must have* continued to write poetry, practice the lute, hone his skills as a fencer—that is, work on his ability to impersonate the lifestyle of a gentleman. His northern sojourn, *assuming he had one*, was behind him. *If* in Lancashire he had begun a career as a professional player, *he must*, for the moment at least, have put it aside. And *if* he had a brush with the dark world of Catholic conspiracy, sainthood, and martyrdom—the world that took Campion to the scaffold—he *must* still more decisively have turned away from it with a shudder. (149, italics added)

With so little documentary evidence, none of which relates to a literary career, Shakespeare's biographers must resort to this sort of rampart speculation (Ellis; Gilvary *Fictional Lives*). However, this is not matched with any sort of caution, qualification, or scholarly humility—in fact the opposite: Stratfordians insist there is no question that “Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare,” that it is a mark of scholarly respectability to adhere unquestioningly to this proposition, and that not to do so is fundamentally disqualifying. For example, Rosenblum states,

On one point scholars agree: the William Shakespeare who wrote the plays and poems...was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, and died there fifty-two years later. Since the nineteenth century, various non-scholars have proposed dozens of alternative authors....(xiv)

Condition 6 is not fulfilled: The evidence for *p* is highly uncertain, but mainstream Shakespeare scholars maintain a rhetoric of absolute certainty.

Condition 7: Belief formation rests on epistemic foundations that align as closely as possible to reality, and therefore leads to further true beliefs.

Even on its own terms, the life of the traditional Shakespeare as represented in Stratfordian scholarship is comprised almost entirely of irreconcilable contradictions or wildly unlikely assertions: though uneducated, he writes with unparalleled erudition; though common-born he consistently adopts an aristocratic perspective; he emerges fully formed as a brilliant writer without any juvenilia; having never left England he writes confidently and frequently about Italy; and unique among writers of the modern era he never includes autobiographical elements in his writing. Anti-Stratfordian scholarship has also revealed him to be a glaring exception compared with other contemporary writers in leaving behind no documentary trace of a literary life (Price), while the historical contexts related to his alleged biography (his unsatisfying last will and testament) are also strikingly at odds with the historical record (Cutting). Nothing about him fits with other historical contexts, what is known of other writers of the time, or with creative people in general.

Condition 7 is not fulfilled: *p* does not comport with other known facts.

Condition 8: Doxastic agents are open to self-regulation and reassessment.

There has, to some extent, been a degree of reassessment in some quarters of the Shakespeare establishment. Bruce Danner acknowledges that Stratfordians mythmaking regarding the author is to blame for the enduring skepticism, and that they need a new approach to creating a compelling biography,

while David Ellis believes there is no point in trying to write any more biographies of Shakespeare, as no further evidence is likely to be found. Revealing an awareness of the inadequacies of their candidate, the editors of the 2017 *New Oxford Shakespeare* proposed that significant portions of the canon were not by Shakespeare at all but by his “collaborators,” and then used computer-aided stylistic analysis to detect these supposed other authors (Taylor & Egan). Yet the core lacunae arising from the possibility that centuries of scholarly and biographical attention have likely been directed at the wrong individual remains untouchable.

Condition 8 is only partially fulfilled: some leading Stratfordians are willing to concede the evidentiary weakness for their candidate, but attempt to work around it through instrumentally different approaches rather than substantively reassess their assumptions and conclusions.

Condition 9: Assertions made by agents regarding their beliefs conform with the available evidence and are proportionate to it.

In addition to the ancillary beliefs referred to in the introduction, the standard Shakespeare “biography” is permeated with a host of assumptions that are consistently asserted as fact, e.g., that Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, was Shakespeare’s “patron,” and that Shakespeare was attacked by Robert Greene as an “upstart crow.” In reality, no document has ever been found connecting Southampton to Shakspeare of Stratford (Rubinstein 55), while some scholars believe it is far more likely that bombastic actor Edward Alleyn was Greene’s target (Detobel). Despite being based entirely on inference and conjecture such as these, *p* is treated as irrefutable.

Condition 9 is not fulfilled: Assertions in support of *p* are made with an absolute certainty disproportionate to the available evidence.

Condition 10: Agents do not dogmatically maintain beliefs in the face of conflicting evidence.

For nearly 200 years, anti-Stratfordians have been drawing attention to the fact that belief in the authorship of William Shakspeare can only be maintained by ignoring a tremendous amount of readily accessible evidence which demonstrates that such a feat on his part would have been unlikely, if not impossible. To cite one example: orthodox scholars rely on dating schemes that arbitrarily arrange the plays and poems to fit the life of their preferred candidate (1564–1616) with his alleged career starting no earlier than approximately 1590. Yet Katherine Chiljan has demonstrated there are nearly 100 examples of contemporary references to Shakespeare that occur too early to refer to the man from Stratford, so are regularly overlooked by mainstream scholars as inconvenient. An unbiased examination of the textual evidence places the earliest version of many of the works decades earlier than is

traditionally asserted, in fact during Shakspeare's childhood (Gilvary, *Dating Shakespeare's Plays*). Even disregarding the possibility of other authorial candidates, evidence contradicting the case for *p* is voluminous and damning, but thoroughly and studiously ignored, excused, and denied (Chiljan; Ogburn; Price).

Condition 10 is not fulfilled: Stratfordians rarely if ever engage with evidence contradicting *p*, but dogmatically insist on the veracity of *p*.

Condition 11: Agents are to the best of their knowledge basing their beliefs on the arguments of knowledgeable others who are known to have adhered to these principles.

The tradition that William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon was Shakespeare is exactly that—a tradition—built up over centuries, with each generation of Stratfordian biographers depending unquestioningly on the work of those who preceded them, but without re-examining the foundations of their beliefs, or admitting the fallibility of their intellectual forbearers (Ogburn).

Condition 11 is not fulfilled: the practice of Shakespearean biography is not now, nor has it ever been, based on what Nottelmann calls a truth-conducive process.

Condition 12: Beliefs emerging from these conditions may only be related to or supported by similarly acquired, non-fideistic beliefs.

To determine the extent to which this condition is fulfilled, we now turn to the ancillary beliefs identified above.

2) a **second-order belief** about that belief—that *p* is a certainty, beyond doubt and beyond questioning.

As illustrated above, the absolutism with which this belief is asserted simply cannot be justified epistemically by the existing evidence.

3) a host of varying **explanatory beliefs** each premised on faith and justifying *p* (e.g., the “lost years”; the “miracle of genius”; key documentary evidence being “now lost”).

Any gaps in the evidence and the resulting gulf between the documented life of Shakspeare and the works of Shakespeare are presumed to be accounted for with three major ancillary beliefs. One, that Shakspeare must have learned the requisite knowledge during the so-called “lost years” for which we have no documented evidence but within which a host of fanciful scenarios are proposed (e.g., Honigmann). Two, that there must have been documented evidence which is “now lost” such as the wholly imagined inventory of books that must have been a part of his last will and testament (Shapiro 50). Third, it is universally held that Shakespeare was so blessed with “natural

genius” that he could simply imagine everything he wrote about (see Dudley “By Nature Fram’d”). The first two assertions are pure sophistry, while the third is entirely fideistic in that “natural” has long been secular shorthand for an expression of God’s “divine causality. . . manifested in the active powers . . . immanent in the fabric of nature” (Heimann 273). In any case, these beliefs are so conjectural and baseless that they cannot be said to epistemically justify the proposition.

- 4) a **reflexive belief** that believers in *p*—themselves—are authoritative and as such cannot be questioned about *p*.

As demonstrated above, there is no epistemic justification for this degree of declared confidence on the part of Stratfordians regarding their own epistemic praiseworthiness.

- 5) an **ethical belief** that questioning *p* is not just factually incorrect but immoral.

Given that there is no epistemic justification for the proposition that Shakespeare was Shakespeare, the belief that skeptics of this proposition are guilty of epistemic vice is patently unjust.

- 6) a **juridical belief** that those who question *p* may justifiably be isolated, excluded, and marginalized by institutions of scholarship.

Finally, this belief is fundamentally unethical as it justifies corrective rhetorical and institutional action being taken against those who question the proposition—a proposition for which no positive evidence may be found. The effect is to normalize a grave and systemic violation of academic freedom (Dudley “Swinish Phrase”).

Condition 12 is not fulfilled: what should be an empirically-obtained belief based on historical documents is instead buttressed by fideistic beliefs.

Summary

That William Shakespeare the author was born and died in Stratford-upon-Avon where he was also a successful businessman is a centuries-old, mainstream belief affirmed in books beyond counting and repeated in educational institutions around the world; yet we have here just determined that *it meets virtually none of the conditions necessary for ethical belief*. There is only one positive correspondence—the existence of a stakeholder group intellectually and professionally obligated to formulate a grounded belief on the matter—and a very partial one in the recognition by a small group of published Stratfordians that there are evidentiary problems with that belief, even if they are not willing to relinquish it.

Based on this analysis, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Stratfordians are *profoundly* blameworthy in their insistence on the truthfulness of *p*. Despite centuries of effort, they have been unable to provide sufficient epistemic justification to warrant their belief, and their biographical scholarship premised on its foundations is, as a result, not in the least conducive to truth.

Does it follow, however, that Stratfordians are *morally* blameworthy?

Discussion: Blameworthy Belief About Shakespeare and its Consequences

One might be willing to take a generously Jamesian perspective on the issue and agree that belief in Will Shakspeare as the author is very much a “live” hypothesis for Stratfordians, and that support for that belief could be justified for pragmatic (i.e., non-epistemic) reasons, first that their belief may make possible the procuring of as-yet-undiscovered confirmation of *p*. One could further argue that the belief has for centuries inspired countless artists, academics and performers to produce exquisite cultural productions and brilliant scholarship—and could conceivably continue to do so forever—helping to cement a universal love for the Shakespeare plays and poems. It surely is a momentous matter warranting some kind of a doxastic choice.

However, the belief in Shakspeare as the author does not meet James’ other essential standard when dealing with insufficient or ambiguous evidence: it is not a *forced* choice. There is no compelling reason or urgency for any believer to *have* to take a position on the identity of the author. Indeed, many anti-Stratfordians feel it is more important to articulate the nature of the authorship problem than it is to get behind any alternative authorial candidate. Therefore, the decision by leading Stratfordians to defend their malt merchant with such religiosity and to refuse to consider any counter evidence is an entirely voluntary one.

In his 1993 book *Kindly Inquisitors* Jonathan Rauch proposes two rules for reality-based knowledge production and debate: the *skeptical rule* and the *empirical rule*.⁵ The first declares that anyone can be wrong—and must accept that possibility—and that nobody has the last word; as such, all claims must be considered in principle to be falsifiable and potentially debunkable. If, on the other hand, any party refuses to admit that their claims can be questioned, then they are not reality-based and have disqualified themselves from knowledge production. The second rule insists that no claimant has special personal authority based on who they are and the nature of their credentials; their claims must still be available for testing by third parties. These same rules apply to everyone. Again, if proponents do claim special authority

and do not permit their claims to be subjected to examination, they are not reality-based and disqualify themselves from the production of knowledge. Taken together these rules set the foundations for an ongoing dialectic by ensuring that all parties engaged in any debate embrace intellectual humility, open to the possibility of correction or refutation (48–49).

As has been demonstrated above and in this author's previous work on Stratfordians' marginalizing rhetoric and scholarly practices (Dudley, "Swinish Phrase"), most mainstream Shakespeare biographers and other partisans of the Stratford case consistently and openly violate both rules by maintaining that their authority and their selected evidence are unimpeachable. Stratfordians proudly maintain their authority in the matter of the author's biography without any hint of intellectual humility and, as such, cannot be considered reality-based in Rauch's conception.

The knowledge practices identified above are fundamentally inconsistent with the conditions necessary for ethical belief. We cannot think of any other area of knowledge production in any field in the humanities and social sciences where evidentiary absence is regarded as sacred text, where inference is treated as unquestionable certainty, and doubt condemned. We are reminded of Locke's admonition that,

men's sticking to their past judgment, and adhering firmly to conclusions formerly made, is often the cause of great obstinacy in error and mistake. But the fault is not that they rely on their memories for what they have before well judged, but because they judged before they had well examined...And yet these, of all men, hold their opinions with the greatest stiffness; those being generally the most fierce and firm in their tenets, who have least examined them. (549)

What are the consequences of these belief formation practices? Given Shakespeare's ubiquity in global cultural productions and education systems it is difficult to overstate the implications of such deliberately institutionalized ignorance.

At the very least—and as Clifford suggested—one consequence of unjustified belief is that it encourages further credulity on the part of the believer. In this case, the public is asked to accept on faith that the experts in this field with their "complex...approach to the facts and historical evidence" being "informed by a deep knowledge in order to understand them" (Edmondson and Wells *S. Bites Back* 34) are beyond reproach and beyond questioning—a troublingly authoritarian way to view scholarship of any kind. It inappropriately and dangerously applies fideistic values to empirical inquiry and institutions of higher learning. To what extent does it encourage unthinking acceptance of other officially sanctioned assertions?

We also cannot begin to calculate the misallocated intellectual costs of this insufficiently supported belief. As of this writing, the WorldCat library catalogue lists 2,458 titles under the subject heading “Shakespeare, William, 1564–1616 Biography,” the vast majority of which concern the traditional view. How many unknowable millions of hours have been spent over the centuries searching for records of any kind that might connect the life of the Stratford man to this timeless literature? How many more have been spent composing these “lives?” What historical discoveries and literary interpretations have been lost to us for want of a willingness to accept that these works were published pseudonymously, and that their author was empirically discoverable? While the impacts are also manifest in the epistemic injustice and oppression experienced by anti-Stratfordians in their exclusion from mainstream academic discourse and scholarly communications, Stratfordians are also forcing themselves to operate in an unforgiving epistemological prison with no recourse to genuine inquiry (Dudley “Swinish Phrase”).

Perhaps the most tragic legacy of the tradition is pedagogical. Generation after generation of students have been taught an epistemologically unjustified myth, and it is now yielding dramatically diminishing returns. There are growing calls to de-emphasize or eliminate Shakespeare’s works from the curriculum because so many students “express disdain, dislike and hatred for [Shakespeare]...Shakespeare...mak[es] them feel stupid rather than empowered” (Powell). How much of this antipathy is owed to the fact that students are taught about a cipher, a mirage with no real identity and no personality—nobody with whom they can empathize? The cost can also be measured in redirected, curtailed, or aborted academic careers: because the academy has cordoned off the authorship question from acceptable scholarly discourse—which some Stratfordians openly acknowledge (Shapiro)—no graduate student seeking a career in English literature will feel able to pursue it.

The Stratford faith is not just an undesirable belief on its own but leads to a host of other blameworthy beliefs regarding the literary, theatrical, and political histories of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, to say nothing of the creative process in general. As Charles Beaucleark states, “if you get Shakespeare wrong, you get the Elizabethan age wrong” (16). From a theoretical perspective, Meylan affirms that,

[i]t is definitely a desirable thing to understand propositions or to understand why a proposition *p* is true. But the reason why it is desirable is that the understanding of the truth of *p* consists in the acquisition of many true beliefs, which explain why *p* is true. (131)

Such coherence cannot be obtained with the Stratford myth: its myriad absences, imaginings, and excuses do not connect convincingly with each other or with known historical contexts.

Yet the ramifications of this blameworthy mainstream belief extend beyond our misinterpretation of plays and poems or misunderstanding of centuries-old events. Unsupported and unexamined claims asserted by leading academics and institutions of higher learning can only fuel a growing mistrust in those institutions—a particularly worrying possibility given that universities in both the UK and the US face growing criticism for essentially giving up on the Enlightenment project of seeking truth (or even acknowledging its potential existence) in favor of homogenizing ideas and avoiding offence (Waiton 2020). At the same time, the political landscape across the globe is being increasingly—and dangerously—defined not by polarized political factions, but by fantasists living in fact-free “bubble” realities of their own creation in evermore violent opposition to those committed to facts, reason, shared reality, and liberal institutions. Belief without evidence—especially regarding historical events—may start as a solitary and self-flattering fantasy but can just as easily end as the violent, resentful anger of the senseless mob. With our society facing these epistemological and institutional crises, to have Shakespeare academics continuing to perpetuate an evidence-free tradition while condemning critical inquiry is not merely unscholarly but exacerbates the “post-truth” climate they claim to abhor.

The costs of this belief are, in short, incalculable, cross-sectoral, and inter-generational. Surely Clifford would not hesitate to describe it as “one long sin against mankind” (28).

Conclusions

This paper has employed an external body of theory in the form of the Ethics of Belief to assess the integrity of the nearly universally accepted proposition (*p*) that William Shakespeare, poet and playwright, was the same person as the successful businessman known in the historical record as William Shakspeare. It was not the purpose of this paper to determine if this belief is true or false, only if it is praiseworthy and ethical, or blameworthy and unethical. By the standards established in the theories as set out by William Kingdon Clifford, William James, and many other philosophers in the 20th and 21st Centuries, this belief is shown to be entirely blameworthy and unethical, having never been derived from truth-conducive processes, lacking a sufficient evidentiary foundation, and maintained through unreasonable means (Nottelmann).

Taken together, the main Stratfordian proposition and its five ancillary beliefs are, in essence, both fideistic and mythic, assuring both the secular sainthood of Shakespeare and the priestlike authority of those who defend it. What sway can historical facts have against such an interconnected and institutionalized belief system? Little, unless the belief system itself may be first recognized and undone.

To answer our original question: Edmondson and Wells are correct in asserting that an ethical perspective is a vital one for understanding the debate over the identity of Shakespeare. However, it is they and their Stratfordian colleagues who are guilty of denying historical evidence and fabricating stories about the past.

In view of these conclusions, we must ask: is an ethical belief in the traditional biography of Shakespeare still possible? A literary biography of a modern author like Shakespeare should not require an elite class of academics with, in the words of Edmondson and Wells, a “complex...approach to the facts and historical evidence...in order to understand” it (*S. Bites Back*, 34). As we have seen above, this “complex approach” consists not solely in belief in *p* but of five ancillary beliefs necessary to defend and maintain *p*, some of which are wholly fideistic. Indeed, we may now understand that belief in the Stratford Shakespeare is supported primarily by these ancillary beliefs, rather than by documentary evidence: take these away and all that remains to support this belief are inferences drawn from the similar-sounding names on title pages, the cryptic Stratford monument and *First Folio* dedicatory poems, and evidence of shareholding in theaters. Were leading Stratfordians to confine themselves *only* to these claims, and to assert them with appropriate caution and scholarly humility—admitting that their candidate was only one among others—then perhaps anti-Stratfordians could view these beliefs with more equanimity. Such is not, alas, the case.

As we’ve seen, there are some Stratfordians who are forthright in conceding the lack of documentary evidence confirming the Shakespeare of tradition; yet they appear to view this—publicly anyways—as a mere instrumental matter to be accommodated methodologically (e.g., stylometrics to identify “collaborators”). At some point, however, growing awareness of the cumulative effects of the blameworthy beliefs identified here—as well as the inability to maintain the collective self-deception necessary to defend them—may render the Stratfordian epistemology unsustainable. In the words of Australian journalist Richard Fernandez,

If the costs of the lie exceed the energy necessary to sustain the illusion it inevitably collapses.... Normally the narrative will continue as before until the apologists suffer what amounts to a loss of faith. This happens to individuals but sometimes it occurs among entire populations. A loss of faith destabilizes the entire edifice of self-deception and can push it over the tipping point.

If efforts to prove the factual baselessness of the Stratford myth have not yet conclusively persuaded the general public, then demonstrating—as we have here—that this myth is premised on a profoundly unethical foundation

for which its proponents are deeply blameworthy, may ultimately prove to be more compelling, and contribute to such a tipping point. Indeed, no liberal society could regard such a belief system as anything but hostile to—and incompatible with—reason, freedom of thought and a commitment to open inquiry and the discovery of truth.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to acknowledge Dr. Alvin Schrader of the University of Alberta and John Wright of the University of Calgary, as well as my parents Harry and Nancy Dudley, for their valuable insights and comments in the preparation of this paper.

Endnotes

1. *The Portable Nietzsche*, 46.
2. It was William James' younger brother, novelist Henry James, who famously observed that "I am 'sort of' haunted by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practiced on a patient world" (James v. 1, 424).
3. Non-epistemological justification for belief is perhaps most popularly expressed as the thought-experiment known as "Pascal's Wager": that on balance a belief in God is preferable to non-belief because if God doesn't exist, then it doesn't matter to the believer either way but, if true, the believer gets into Heaven and the non-believer condemned (Hájek).
4. For example, it would be a violation of their intellectual and professional ethics for a geologist (no matter how spiritual or pious) to assert that earthquakes are caused by the movement of tectonic plates as the result of God's will.
5. In Rauch's 2021 book *The Constitution of Knowledge* he renames the skeptical rule as the *fallibilist rule* (88).

Works Cited

- Ackroyd, P. *Shakespeare: The Biography*. Vintage, 2006.
- Amesbury, Richard. "The Virtues of Belief: Toward a Non-Evidentialist Ethics of Belief-Formation." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 63:1–3, 2008, 25–37.
- Beauclerk, Charles. *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom: The True History of Shakespeare and Elizabeth*. Grove Press, 2010.
- Brown, Jessica. "Epistemically Blameworthy Belief." *Philosophical Studies*, 177:12, 2020, 3595–3614., doi:10.1007/s11098-019-01384-z.
- Burger, A.J. "An Examination of 'The Will to Believe.'" *The Ethics of Belief: Essays by William Kingdon Clifford, William James, A.J. Burger*, edited by A.J.Burger, Rev. ed., CreateSpace, 2008.
- Callaghan, Dymna. "Confounded by Winter: Speeding Time in Shakespeare's Sonnets." *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*, edited by Michael Schoenfeldt, Blackwell Publishing, 2007, 104–18.
- Chignell, Andrew. "The Ethics of Belief." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-belief/>. Accessed 12 January 2021.
- Chiljan, Katherine. *Shakespeare Suppressed: The Uncensored Truth About Shakespeare and His Works*. Faire Editions, 2011.
- Clifford, William Kingdon. *The Scientific Basis of Morals: And Other Essays, viz.: Right and Wrong, the Ethics of Belief, the Ethics of Religion*. Fitzgerald, 1884. Internet Archive. Retrieved 12 January 2021.
- Cutting, Bonner Miller. *Necessary Mischief Exploring the Shakespeare Authorship Question*. Minos Publishing Company, 2018.
- Danner, Bruce. "The Anonymous Shakespeare: Heresy, Authorship, and the Anxiety of Orthodoxy." *Anonymity in Early Modern England: 'What's in a Name?'* edited by J. Starnes, and B. Traister. Ashgate, 2011, 143–158.
- Detobel, Robert. "Henry Chettle's Apology Revisited." *Shakespeare Matters* 12:3, 2013, 14.

- Dudley, Michael. ““By Nature Fram’d to Wear a Crown”? Decolonizing the Shakespeare Authorship Question,” *Brief Chronicles V*, 2014, 11–30.
- . “Becoming an Oxfordian: The Phenomenology of Shifting Research Paradigms in Shakespearean Biography,” *The DeVere Society Newsletter* July 2018.
- . “With Swinish Phrase Soiling Their Addition: Epistemic Injustice, Academic Freedom, and the Shakespeare Authorship Question.” *Teaching and Learning Practices for Academic Freedom* (Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning, Volume 34), edited by Patrick Blessinger and Enakshi Sengupta. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2020, 123–144.
- Duncan-Jones, Katherine. “What are Shakespeare’s Sonnets Called?” *Essays in Criticism*, 47:1 (1997) 1–13.
- Edmondson, Paul and A. J. Leon, “Changing a Culture with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: Championing Freedom and Democracy.” *Shakespeare and the Digital World: Redefining Scholarship and Practice*, edited by Christie Carson and Peter Kirwan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 193–201.
- Edmondson, P. & S. Wells, *Shakespeare Bites Back: Not so Anonymous*. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 2011. <http://bloggingshakespeare.com/shakespeare-bites-back-free-book>.
- Edmondson, Paul, and Stanley Wells, eds. *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Ellis, D. *The Truth About William Shakespeare: Fact, Fiction and Modern Biographies*. Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
- Epstein, William H. “Recognizing the Life-Text: Towards a Poetics of Biography.” *Biography* 6:4, 1983, 283–306.
- Fernandez, Richard. “What Makes the Cuomo Scandals So Damning.” PJ Media.Com, 12 Mar. 2021, pjmedia.com/richardfernandez/2021/03/11/the-illusion-of-necessity-n1431275.
- Gilvary, Kevin, ed. *Dating Shakespeare’s Plays: A Critical Review of the Evidence*. Parapress, 2010.
- . *The Fictional Lives of Shakespeare*. Routledge, 2018.
- Goldberg, Sanford. *Assertion: On the Philosophical Significance of Assertoric Speech*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. W.W. Norton, 2004.

Hájek, Alan. “Pascal’s Wager.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed 11 January 2021.

Heimann, P. M. “Voluntarism and Immanence: Conceptions of Nature in Eighteenth-Century Thought,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 39:2 (Apr.–June 1978) 271–283.

Holland, Peler. “‘A Kind of Character in thy Life’: Shakespeare and the Character of History.” *SEDERI Yearbook*. 23, 2013, 7–31.

Honigmann, E. A. J. *Shakespeare, the Lost Years*. Barnes & Noble Books, 1985.

Hume, David. *An Inquiry into Human Understanding*, An, Infomotions, Inc., 2000. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.uwinipeg.idm.oclc.org/lib/uwinipeg/detail.action?docID=3314587>.

James, Henry. *The Letters of Henry James*, edited by Percy Lubbock. 2 vols. Scribner’s, 1920.

James, William. *The Will to Believe*. Infomotions, Inc., 2000. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.uwinipeg.idm.oclc.org/lib/uwinipeg/detail.action?docID=3314528>.

Kuhn, Thomas S, and Ian Hacking. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 4th ed. University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Lindner, Martina. “Implications of the Debate on Doxastic Voluntarism for W. K. Clifford’s Ethics of Belief.” *The Ethics of Belief and Beyond: Understanding Mental Normativity*, edited by Schmidt, Sebastian, and Gerhard Ernst. Routledge, 2020, 23–46.

Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Batoche Books, 2000. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.uwinipeg.idm.oclc.org/lib/uwinipeg/detail.action?docID=3117747>.

Madigan, Tim. *W.K. Clifford and “The Ethics of Belief.”* Cambridge Scholars Pub, 2009.

Maguire, Laurie, and Emma Smith. *30 Great Myths about Shakespeare*. John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

McHugh, Conor. “Epistemic Responsibility and Doxastic Agency.” *Philosophical Issues*, 23:1, (2013) 132–157. doi:10.1111/phs.12007.

- Meylan, Anne. *Foundations of an Ethics of Belief*. Ontos Verlag, 2013.
- Mitova, Veli. "The Duty of Inquiry, or why Othello was a Fool." *The Routledge Companion to Shakespeare and Philosophy*, edited by Craig Bourne and Emily Caddick Bourne. Routledge, 2018. 311–322.
- Montmarquet, James. "Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility." *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 29:4 (Oct. 1992) 331–341.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Walter Kaufmann. *The Portable Nietzsche*. Penguin Books, 1976.
- Nottelmann, Nikolaj. *Blameworthy Belief: A Study in Epistemic Deontology*. Springer, 2007.
- Ogburn, Charlton. *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth & the Reality*. 2nd ed., EPM Publications, 1992.
- Peel, Rik. "The Social Dimension of Responsible Belief: Response to Sanford Goldberg." *Journal of Philosophical Research* 44 (2019) 79–88. doi: 10.5840/jpr20194415
- Powell, Mark. "Kill Bill: Why we Must Take Shakespeare Out of the Classroom." *Guardian* 17 (March 2014). <https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2014/mar/17/kill-bill-shakespeare-classroom-theatre>
- Price, Diana. *Shakespeare's Unauthorized Biography*. Prager, 2000.
- . *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem*. Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Rauch, Jonathan. *Kindly Inquisitors: The New Attacks on Free Thought*. University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- . *The Constitution of Knowledge: A Defense of Truth*. Brookings Institution Press, 2021.
- Roe, Richard Paul. *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy: Retracing the Bard's Unknown Travels*. 1st ed., Harper Perennial, 2011.
- Rosenblum, J. "The Authorship Questions." *The Definitive Shakespeare Companion: Overviews, Documents, and Analysis*. Vol. 1, edited by Joseph Rosenblum. Greenwood, 2017, 79–94.
- Rosenblum, J., ed. *The Definitive Shakespeare Companion: Overviews, Documents, and Analysis*. Vol. 1. Greenwood, 2017.

- Rubinstein, William D. "The Authorship Question: An Historian's Perspective." *Shakespeare and His Authors: Critical Perspectives on the Authorship Question*, edited by William Leahy. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010.
- Schoenbaum, Samuel. *Shakespeare's Lives*. Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Shapiro, James. *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* Simon & Schuster, 2010.
- Taylor, Gary, and Gabriel Egan, eds. *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*. First ed., Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh. "What's in a Name?" *Réalités*, Nov. 1962, pp. 41–43.
- Tucker, Aviezer. *Our Knowledge of the Past: A Philosophy of Historiography*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Turner, Nancy. *Ancient Pathways, Ancestral Knowledge: Ethnobotany and Ecological Wisdom of Indigenous Peoples of Northwestern North America*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014.
- Waiton, Stuart. "Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech: The Assault of Vulnerability." *Teaching and Learning Practices for Academic Freedom* (Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning, Volume 34), edited by Enakshi Sengupta and Patrick Blessinger. Emerald Publishing Limited, 2020, 71–92.
- Wells, Stanley. "Allusions to Shakespeare to 1642." *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy*, edited by Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 73–87.
- . *William Shakespeare: A Very Short Introduction*. 1st ed. Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Wildenthal, Bryan H. *Early Shakespeare Authorship Doubts*. 1st ed. Zindabad Press, 2019.
- Woldeyohannes, Tedla Gebreyesus. *Volition, Doxastic Voluntarism, and Knowledge of God*. PhD Dissertation, St. Louis University, 2016.

Book Reviews



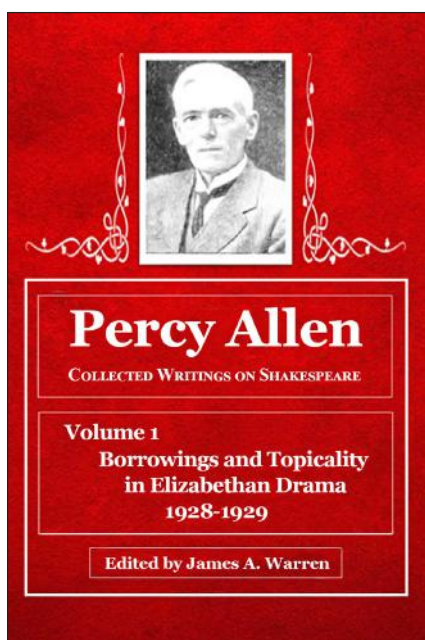
VERITAS PUBLICATIONS

Bringing Hidden Truths to Light

is pleased to announce the release of

Percy Allen's COLLECTED WRITINGS ON SHAKESPEARE

In 7 volumes. Edited by James A. Warren.



Percy Allen was the most brilliant of that intrepid band of independent-minded scholars who suddenly appeared in England in the 1920s–1930s to challenge the entrenched dogma held by professors of English that the uneducated William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon was the great playwright and poet William Shakespeare.

Building on the work of J. Thomas Looney who had recently rescued Edward de Vere from literary obscurity, and analyzing newly-uncovered evidence free from the restraints of authority and conventional wisdom, Allen showed that the principal author of Shakespeare's works couldn't possibly have been anyone other than de Vere, who was recognized in his time as the best writer in England of comedies and tragedies, an admired poet and the most active sponsor of other writers and poets during England's remarkable renaissance in language and literature during Queen Elizabeth I's reign.

This seven-volume collection of Allen's works includes nine books, five booklets and 120

shorter works on the Shakespeare Authorship question introduced and edited by Shakespeare scholar James Warren, and a Foreword by Don Rubin.

- ✦ Vol. 1: Borrowings and Topicality in Elizabethan Drama, 1928–1929
- ✦ Vol. 2: The Case for Edward de Vere as "Shakespeare," 1923, 1929–1930
- ✦ Vol. 3: The Oxford-Shakespeare Case Corroborated, 1930–1932
- ✦ Vol. 4: The Life Story of Edward de Vere as "William Shakespeare, 1932–33
- ✦ Vol. 5: The Plays of Shakespeare in Relation to French History, 1933–1936
- ✦ Vol. 6: Anne Cecil & the Dynastic Succession Theory, 1934–1943
- ✦ Vol. 7: Later Writings on Shakespeare, 1937–1953

Paperback, 6 x 9 in. 642 pages ✦ Available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com); each volume: \$18

The First Oxfordian Edition of *Twelfth Night*

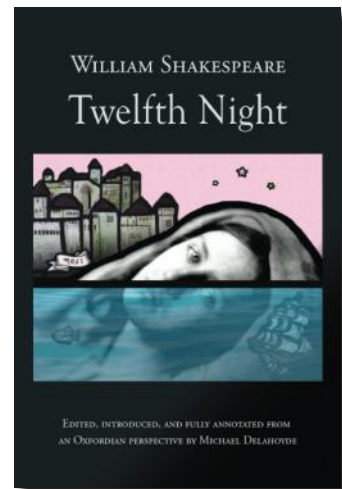
Reviewed by Felicia Londré

William Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night*, Annotated from an Oxfordian Perspective. By Michael Delahoyde. *The Oxfordian Shakespeare Series*. 2021, 184 pages, (paperback \$17).

So often does *Twelfth Night*, or *What You Will* come around in stagings of Shakespeare that we think we know it rather well. Yet Michael Delahoyde, Professor of English at Washington State University, offers fresh insights in his annotations along with bonus touches of sly humor. His edition earns a place on any scholar's shelf of various editions of the play.

A prefatory essay by Earl Showerman handles the necessary preliminary debunking of William Shakspeare's claim to authorship of Shakespeare's works. The clear and cogent presentation of salient points against the orthodox case, followed by a summary introduction to Edward de Vere, prepares readers of any background for Dr. Delahoyde's Oxfordian perspective on the play.

Michael Delahoyde's own introduction is substantial and nicely complements his annotations of the main text. He begins by surveying speculation about the enigmatic title that seems to allude to the 6th of January whereas the text itself suggests that the action occurs in May. This segues smoothly into the thematic notion of revelries coming to an end after things have gone too far. Over indulgence characterizes Orsino's performance of love for Olivia, Olivia's performance of grief for her brother, and certainly the heartless trick played on one who loves himself excessively, condoned by



one who drinks to excess. Given *G'Igannati* as a key source for *Twelfth Night* and Oxford's having been in Siena, Italy in January 1576, around the time the Italian play was traditionally performed for Twelfth Night, it seems possible that the title served as an homage to Italian hosts with recollection of a good time—although Delahoyde responsibly abstains from such excess speculation.

A survey of Oxfordian scholars' dating of the play gives possible dates ranging from 1575/76 to the early 1580s, in contrast to "the orthodox 1601 dating" (xxi). 1580 seems reasonable, although "pervasive evidence of revision" (xxiii) complicates the matter. Dr. Delahoyde lays out the telltale signs of revision with attention to the overlapping roles of Feste and Fabian.

The longest section of the introduction focuses on the characters, pinning down the quotations and allusions that are key to identifying the real-life models. *Twelfth Night* must have been a delicious *pièce à clé* for those at court who would recognize the traits being skewered. The parallels of personality, reported comments and anecdotes are abundant in tying Malvolio to Sir Christopher Hatton (Privy Councilor and Lord Chancellor) and Sir Andrew Aguecheek to Sir Philip Sidney. Other identifications include Oxford's sharp-tongued sister Mary as Maria, her husband Peregrine Bertie, Lord Willoughby (and perhaps also Thomas Sackville Lord Buckhurst) as Sir Toby Belch, Queen Elizabeth as Olivia, and Oxford himself as both Feste and Orsino.

Under the subheading "Speculations," Delahoyde explains the Prince Tudor thesis and how the play might be interpreted in the light of this possibility. It's an indication of Delahoyde's lively writing that he manages to work in references to "Viola's pushing of identity and relationship boundaries in a wild LGBTQIA+ romp" (xl) and to Queen Elizabeth as fostering "a kind of gender-fluidity in her own self-presentation" (xli).

The final section of the introduction offers a range of explanations for the meaning of "M.O.A.I." in the letter that Malvolio reads, but singles out Alan W. Green's solution, well supported by textual clues, as the most compelling. That perspective, along with hints of numerical codes and the repeated phrase, "it's all one," seem to open onto other horizons of inquiry, particularly with reference to a religious or spiritual dimension.

Felicia Hardison Londré is a Curators' Distinguished Professor Emerita of Theatre, University of Missouri-Kansas City, where she has taught theatre history for 43 years, with an annual introductory Oxfordian lecture. She is Honorary Co-Founder of Heart of America Shakespeare Festival. Her 1997 book, *Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays* (Garland Publishing), was republished by Routledge in 2000. She has identified as an Oxfordian since the late 1980s.

The heart of the book, of course, is the text of *Twelfth Night* with annotations on the facing page. With the introduction as a preview of the main indicators of Oxford's hand, the notes—without seeming redundant—connect those points to specific lines. The real strength of the book is the great proportion of notes that provide Oxfordian context as opposed to merely glossing relatively unfamiliar vocabulary. These notes frequently cross-reference other Shakespeare plays and offer interpretive (and often amusing) side comments. For example, alone among the six editions that I consulted, Delahoyde elaborates on the play's initial word "if." He further compares and contrasts the opening line to *Anthony and Cleopatra*'s "music, moody food" (2.5.1).

Again, Delahoyde is alone in annotating "violets" in Orsino's line 6; he notes the allusion to royalty in their purple color, with parallel usage in *Venus and Adonis* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*; and in connection with Viola's name as Latin for "violet," makes the leap to speculation "that in all these instances Shakespeare is alluding to the Earl of Southampton, who may as a boy have played female roles in plays such as this" (2). In occasional notes throughout Acts 3 and 4, Delahoyde demonstrates an apparently vast knowledge of Elizabethan songs.

The notes for Act 2, scene 5, the baiting of Malvolio, are especially rich. They extend the introduction's answer to the riddle of M.O.A.I., again crediting Alan W. Green (xlvi, 80). Green is listed in the bibliography for a book and a website, but no book under the listed title appears either in WorldCat or on BookFinder. Other cavils might be the occasional note in which the attempted wit fails to land the point, as in note 47 for Act 1, scene 5, about the transfer of power from Queen Elizabeth: "If the Prince Tudor theory is correct, Lady Diana had a stronger claim to the throne of England than Prince Charles" (26). Huh?

The De Vere Shakespeare Series is thus proving to be a successful undertaking. Launched in 2007 with *Macbeth*, under the general editorship of Richard F. Whalen, the series comprises *Othello* (2010), a revised and expanded *Macbeth* (2013), *Anthony and Cleopatra* (2015), *Hamlet* (2018), and now *Twelfth Night*. Presumably the format will be regularized as the series continues through the canon. Meanwhile, we now see thumbnail illustrations and classier cover designs. This edition serves the project well.

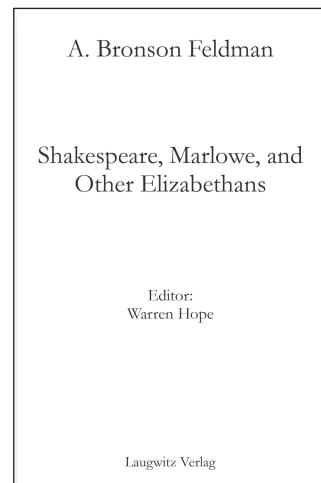


The Concluding Volume of Bronson Feldman's Trilogy on Shakespeare

Reviewed by James A. Warren

Shakespeare, Marlowe and Other Elizabethans. By A. Bronson Feldman, edited by Warren Hope. Verlag Laugwitz, Germany (2022), 358 pages. (paperback \$20)

Abraham Bronson Feldman (1914–1982) was an important figure during the period between the end of the first wave of the Oxfordian movement in 1948 and the start of the second wave in 1984 with publication of Charlton Ogburn, Jr.'s book, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. Feldman's 1952 article, "Who is Shakespeare? What is He?" (Chapter 1) was the first article to present the Oxfordian idea to readers of Louis Marder's *The Shakespeare Newsletter*. And, psychoanalyst Richard M. Waugaman has reported, Feldman's "The Confessions of William Shakespeare" (Chapter 9), which appeared in the Summer 1953 issue of *American Imago*, was, "a vitally important turning point in the history of psychoanalytic studies of Shakespeare. Appearing 14 years after Freud's death, it was the first time that another psychoanalyst endorsed in the pages of a psychoanalytic journal Freud's position on Shakespeare's identity."¹



Feldman's key role in the movement over several decades remains relatively unknown because the three books he wrote on Shakespearean authorship remained unpublished at the time of his death in 1982, and his two dozen or more articles weren't collected and republished until very recently. Although his book, *Secrets of Shakespeare: Four Chapters from a Subversive History*, had

circulated in mimeograph in 1972 and was even reviewed in *The Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter* by Gordon C. Cyr in 1976,² it was never formally published. His book *Hamlet Himself* also circulated in mimeograph, in 1977, but wasn't published until 2010.

Feldman's *Imago* articles and other pieces on Elizabethan subjects published in *The Bard*, the *Shakespeare Fellowship Quarterly*, *Notes and Queries* and other journals have now been collected in *Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Other Elizabethans*. With this collection, all of Feldman's known shorter pieces (with one exception) are now readily available.³

Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Other Elizabethans, like *Early Shakespeare* and *Hamlet Himself*, has seen the light of day only because of the determined work of the late Warren Hope, who edited Feldman's other two books and who steered all three through the publication process.

The story of Feldman's careers as a college instructor (he held a PhD in English Literature with an emphasis on Tudor Drama from the University of Pennsylvania) and as a practicing lay psychoanalyst (he trained under Theodor Reik) and of how the first career was derailed and the second hampered by his Oxfordian activities and publications, has been told elsewhere by Warren Hope and Richard M. Waugaman.⁴ They also provided accounts of Feldman's efforts to keep alive in psychoanalytic circles awareness of Freud's belief that Edward de Vere was the principal author of Shakespeare's works despite efforts by several of Freud's most prominent followers to suppress it. This review will therefore focus on other subjects, primarily on how Feldman's research in *Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Other Elizabethans* document and expand the evidence supporting Edward de Vere's use of the Shakespeare pen name.

Feldman's article, "Shakespeare's Jester: Oxford's Servant" (Chapter 2), demonstrated that Robert Armin, one of the leading comedians of the period, was a servant of the Earl of Oxford at the same time that he was a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Company, thereby establishing yet another link between the earl and Shakespeare. Sir E.K. Chambers, in *The Elizabethan Stage*, had noted that Armin "serves a master at Hackney," but hadn't bothered to determine just who that master might have been. Feldman did investigate and documented that "there was but one literary nobleman dwelling in Hackney" at the time: Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford and Lord Great Chamberlain of England" (12).

James Warren is the author of *Shakespeare Revolutionized: The First Hundred Years of J. Thomas Looney's "Shakespeare" Identified (2021)* and the creator of *An Index to Oxfordian Publications, now in its fourth edition (2017)*.

Feldman's chapter titled "Kit Sly and the Unknown Lord" (Chapter 4), focuses on the induction scene in *The Taming of the Shrew*—the scene in which an unnamed nobleman tricks a drunken peasant into believing that he is himself a nobleman who had just awoken from a dream in which he imagined himself to have been a drunken peasant. "Experts on Tudor literature," Feldman observed, "avoid seeking to identify who the unnamed nobleman might have been modeled on, just as surely as they scurry away from examining why 'the comedy was cut so as to leave forever in the dark what occurred to the drunken beggar'" (34); that is, why the other scenes with interactions between the nobleman and the drunken peasant in an earlier version of the play were omitted when a revised version was printed in the First Folio. Feldman then explained the significance for the issue of Shakespearean authorship "of a nobleman who has chosen to put the pauper in his own place, letting the rogue receive the homage and services owed his lordship" (51).

In one of the most intriguing pieces in the book, "The Making of William Shakespeare" (Chapter 5), Feldman drew on what was then a little-known fact: that a descendant of William Shakspeare's sister had, in 1818, stated that "Shakespeare owed his rise in life, and his introduction to the theatre, to his accidentally holding the horse of a gentleman at the door of the theatre, on his first arriving in London. His appearance led to inquiry and subsequent patronage" (44). Here, then, is a third instance cited by Feldman of an unknown master, nobleman or lord mentioned in connection with Shakespeare's plays for whom orthodox scholars appear to have little interest. Feldman, however, drew on allusions to what appear to have been real-life events depicted in *Shrew* and other plays to conjecture that "the unknown gentleman was Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the member of the English nobility most attracted to the theatre, himself a poet and writer of plays, plays which are said to be lost" (64–65). In Feldman's scenario, "The discovery of a sharp-witted and businesslike fellow actually named William Shakespeare must have struck the Earl of Oxford as a gift of the gods, for he needed somebody to represent his interests in the theatre directly, to avoid the vulgar scandal and commercial taint that were sure to afflict any nobleman who took an open part in the vagabonds' game of the stage" (142–143).

In two pieces on *Othello*, "Othello's Obsessions" and "Othello in Reality" (Chapters 7 and 8), Feldman first examined the play as a study in jealousy, "with a view to testing the theories of Freudian science on this disease.... Psychoanalysis will hardly find in literature a richer field for its verification than [this] drama" (83)—before turning to the biographical background to the play and offering "a series of facts which, in my judgment, account for the creation of the Moor and give us some insight into the unconscious that generated the play. These facts come entirely from the records of the life of Edward de Vere,...the poet and dramatist who for various reasons, both merry and serious, chose to hide himself behind the mask of 'William Shakespeare'" (100).

The *Othello* articles were among those Feldman published in psychoanalytic journals during the 1950s and 1960s, in which he applied psychoanalytic tools or practices in examining Shakespeare's plays. In *Othello* he found, as had other critics, that "The intensity of Iago's hate for the Moor, which is the real propeller of the play, cannot be accounted for by the mere frustration of his wish for the lieutenant's place" (87). Feldman's psychoanalytic analysis led him to conclude that "the fascination which [Othello] unconsciously exerts for [Iago] is rooted in sex. Indeed, the intensity of his hate for Othello may be described as a fury of outraged love, a love which Iago's cynical, sex-detesting ego dared not confess to itself" (87). Feldman further concluded that Othello, Cassius and Iago all suffered from homosexual desires for each other that they could not admit to themselves, and further, that "The terror of castration... runs through the entire work" (95)... The Freudian exposition of jealousy, its homosexual current, its castration complex and menace to masculinity, its paranoia tendency, is wealthily confirmed by the tragedy of *Othello*" (98).

Feldman recognized that these interpretations, "cannot, of course, be demonstrated by overt testimony. Only psychoanalysis can supply the evidence" (92). Others may find this interpretation persuasive; I see it as a misguided attempt to shoehorn Shakespeare's plays into an inapplicable mould consistent with psychoanalytic theories as they existed in the early 1950s. Feldman applied these same theories to Shakespeare's sonnets in "The Confessions of William Shakespeare" (Chapter 9), with similar results, concluding that "The psychic wound inflicted by" the death of Oxford's infant son in the spring of 1583 "would inevitably excite his castration complex" (139), an idea that seems quite bizarre to me and probably to others not steeped in psychoanalytic theories of Feldman's time.

When Feldman kept in check his tendency to impose psychoanalytic theories on Shakespeare, and instead drew on his deep historical knowledge of the Elizabethan era and applied the skills acquired in his academic training, he unearthed new information and proposed novel interpretations that advanced understanding of the authorship of literary works by Shakespeare and other dramatists during the Elizabethan and Stuart reigns. Already noted is the scenario he delineated for how Oxford and Shakspeare may have met that remained in alignment with the facts as they were and are known. In another instance, through ingenious and legitimate reasoning inferred from allusions in the plays and from Greene's *Farewell to Folly*, Feldman established that "Shakespeare's first draft of *Othello* was made not long after October 21, 1585, when [Oxford] left the Low Countries to return to London and idleness and melancholy" (125). And, drawing on topical allusions in *Shrew* and other plays, he determined that William Shakspeare came to London in 1585, that the play was written or substantially revised in 1592 (42), and that the final revision of the induction scene was made in 1600 (53). These inferences seem reasonable to me.

In his examination of Christopher Marlowe's life, career, and murder, "The Marlowe Mystery" (Chapter 10), Feldman made the case for Christopher Marlowe as the author of the anonymous *Arden of Feversham*, and in "Thomas Watson, Dramatist (Chapter 13), he presented an argument for Thomas Watson, Marlowe's friend, as the author of *The Spanish Tragedy*, a play traditionally attributed to the scrivener Thomas Kyd. In those articles Feldman cited two contemporary references to an unknown Lord who held great influence and authority in the theatrical world during the final two decades of Queen Elizabeth's reign. After noting Kyd's reference to Marlowe having "entered the service of the unknown Lord," Feldman presented his reasons for concluding that the Lord "fittest for the role of Marlowe's master and Kyd's Lord" was Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford (317). Feldman also noted that when Thomas Nashe, in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon*, warned actors to conduct themselves more modestly, he "appears to have in mind a patron or supervisor on whom the Alleyens, perhaps all the actors of England, were dependent for leadership and light as well as the favour of her Majesty, . . . [who] evidently worked as an invisible emperor of drama, [and who] chose to be unnamed and shadow-sheltered," before concluding that, "There is no aristocrat of the age whom this description fits better than Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, with his annual thousand pounds for secret enterprise" (242). All this brings to five the number of contemporary allusions to an unknown lord connected to Shakespeare's plays, and in each instance, Feldman found that that lord was Edward de Vere.

Given a century of ever-accumulating evidence in support of de Vere's authorship of "Shakespeare's" works, why is it that much of the public continues to believe in Will Shakspeare's candidacy? Why is it that most Shakespeare scholars continue to resolutely avoid examining the weaknesses in the evidence of Shakspeare's having written the works attributed to him? Feldman sees support for Shakspeare arising from the emotionally satisfying nature of the imagined story of the rise of a man from poverty to the heights of great great fame and wealth, a dream shared by many. "What inspires the popular worship," Feldman explained, "is not merely the hero's money; it is the fact of his success, the fact of his rise from virtual rags to riches. . . . One can almost hear the undertone of envy in their praise" (23).

Feldman understood that the reality of the intimate connection between a writer and his works that psychologists and literary scholars recognize for all writers other than Shakespeare is valid for him as well. Shakespeare could write such powerful tragedies, Feldman reasoned, only because he had experienced deeply felt tragedies in his own life. But much of the public and the scholarly world seemed to say, "Better not to go into all that. It spoils the myth." In his view, "Hidden beneath the carefree air of those who pretend indifference on the question of Shakespeare's personality, under the actual joy which is shown especially by college intellectuals in the lack of our

knowledge about the dramatist's character and reality, there lies a fear that dispelling this ignorance would mean curtains for the peculiar bliss they get from his plays. They suspect that into the making of each of these masterpieces flowed a stream of suffering from the dramatist's mind which they have no desire to see reflected in their own sufficiently troubled heads" (57).

It gets worse: not only did the playwright's works result from intense personal suffering, but as a nobleman of the highest rank he felt "disgraced and shamed beyond redemption...by the same fruits which eventually obtained for his art the gratitude of humanity everywhere. 'I am sham'd,' he told his beloved, 'by that which I bring forth, And so should you, to love things nothing worth'" (60).

It gets worse still for, as Feldman recognized, "The striking contradiction between the portrait [of the great dramatist and poet] painted by the esthetic analysts and that [of the man motivated by commercial interests] etched by the more erudite but less empathetic authors can be resolved if we think of their pictures as descriptions of two different men" (59). Scholars have attempted to unite them, placing on the "robust burgess's head the greatness of Shakespeare" and attempted to attach them through, in Henry James's phrasing, "the biggest and most successful fraud ever practiced on a patient world" (59–60).

The stark choice facing the academic world is that between the status quo on one hand and, on the other, changes to two foundational beliefs. One is the change in the identity of the man who wrote the works, together with the replacement of the pleasing story of one man's rise with the distressing reality of another man's fall. The fall of a wealthy man into poverty and of the most senior earl in Queen Elizabeth's court into shame, and of an unhappy marriage, banishment from court and the other painful events that generated the feelings of suffering so openly depicted in many of the plays. It's a life almost too painful to contemplate, even though it served as the material which enabled Oxford to write his greatest works. Who wouldn't prefer the happy myth of the man who achieved great success almost effortlessly, as exists in the public mind, to the painful real-life tragedy that would be its replacement?

For Feldman, though, "the intellectual comfort of the play-loving public will hardly do for a criterion in matters of justice and mental science. The question of William Shakespeare's identity is one that calls for honesty toward an unknown genius who did the world tremendous recreational good and provided psychology with some of its deepest insights into human nature" (57). That, more than anything else, appears to be the motivating force behind Feldman's willingness to pursue the truth of Shakespearean authorship even

at the cost of the loss of his first academic career and the holding back of his later psychoanalytic career. Did he find the tradeoffs between the pursuit of truth and success in his careers worth it? I believe he did. Further, I believe that the example of Feldman's intellectual integrity—even though the results of his thinking were marred at times by an over dependence on the prevailing psychoanalytic theory of the time—can serve as an inspiration for scholars today seeking to uncover the truth of Shakespeare's true identity. De Vere's authorship will eventually be widely accepted, and Feldman's work to strengthen the evidence in support of it during the most difficult decades of the movement's first century is something for which everyone interested in the question of Shakespearean authorship should be grateful.

Endnotes

1. Richard M. Waugaman, "Review of *Hamlet Himself* by Bronson Feldman," *Shakespeare Matters*, 9:3 (Fall 2010): 7–11, 30.
2. Gordon C. Cyr, "*Secrets of Shakespeare; Four Chapters from a Subversive History*. By Bronson Feldman." *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*, 12: 4 (Winter 1976): 7–8.
3. The one exception is "Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare," *Psychoanalytic Review*, vol. 53 (1966). Another dozen of Feldman's shorter pieces, although not collected, are available in Oxfordian periodicals.
4. See especially Warren Hope, "Review: Bronson Feldman, *Hamlet Himself*," *The Bard*, 2: 4 (1980): 133–136; Warren Hope, "Abraham Bronson Feldman (1914–1982)" [obituary], *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*, 18: 2 (Spring 1982): 1–3; Richard M. Waugaman, "Review of *Hamlet Himself* by Bronson Feldman," *Shakespeare Matters*, 9:3 (Fall 2010): 7–11, 30; and Richard M. Waugaman and Elisabeth P. Waugaman, "Early Shakespeare," *The Oxfordian*, vol. 21 (2019): 267–272.

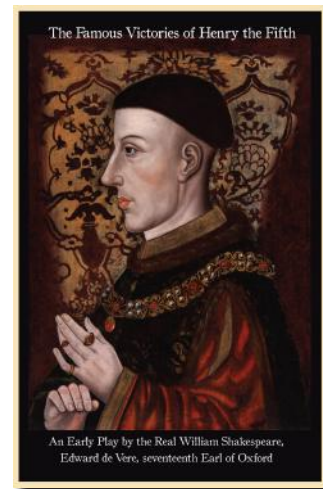
A New Oxfordian Critical Edition

Reviewed by Michael Delahoyde, PhD

The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth. By Ramon Jiménez. Independently published (2022), 184 pages (paperback \$20.00).

Ramon Jiménez is the foremost expert on what are often considered by traditional Shakespeare experts the anonymous source-plays for Shakespeare's plagiarisms, or, more politely, improvements, or maybe, thefts-with-benefits. After several articles and conference presentations on these plays, his 2018 book, *Shakespeare's Apprenticeship: Identifying the Real Playwright's Earliest Works* (McFarland), provides a thoroughly solid foundation for identifying Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, as a supremely talented Elizabethan court playwright in his formative years and ultimately as *the* Elizabethan playwright: William Shakespeare.

In addition to *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*—which Oxford revised and expanded into the *Henry IV* plays and *Henry V*—Jiménez has investigated *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third* (a draft of the canonical *Richard III*); *The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England* (revised under the less troublesome or cumbersome title, *King John*); *The Taming of A Shrew* (astoundingly different from the canonical *The Taming of The Shrew*, yet the recognizable source); and *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* (becoming *The Tragedy of King Lear* with the available anagram on “Earl”). He notes that other juvenilia such as *Edmund Ironside* and *Edward III* are convincing



suspects, but he chooses to focus on those plays for which we have the rewritten canonical versions. Jiménez is thus providing a three-dimensional picture of the Earl of Oxford's development as a playwright and his actual long-term writing processes.

I imagine that Jiménez' moment of inspiration came with the publication of this triumphal work, when he realized he would have to devote himself to the next stage of his mission in editing the much-needed scholarly editions of these plays. With *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, he has achieved the first.

One particular importance of this edition is that it presents and contextualizes the play that probably launched the young de Vere as a playwright. Even if he had been involved in *Damon and Pythias*—credited to Richard Edwardes as his only surviving play (c. 1564)—or penned now lost works, surely this “anonymous” play, *Famous Victories*, was preserved because it received resounding applause at the royal court and later on the public stage; and we can probably assume that court approval of this example of historical “edutainment” validated him in a way that motivated him to embark on a dramatic career (in both senses).

The play is a knock-about, manic, but patriotic piece of stagecraft betraying the zeal of an adolescent's hero-worship. Those skeptical of the identity of the playwright behind *Famous Victories* and the *Henry* plays will point to the chasm between them in quality: the differences in terms of maturity and sophistication are simply too vast, they will assert. There is also a darkness to the canonical histories that, though sensed, is too often soft-pedaled: the moral questions about the usurpation of the throne from Richard II, the Machiavellian manipulations of Prince Hal, the deaths of Falstaff and Bardolph, Henry V's war crimes, the ignominious end of Pistol as a hardened criminal, and the thorough political sleaziness.

The mature Shakespeare is literally ages away from the playwright responsible for *Famous Victories*. Indeed, any of us who have been oppressed with teaching writing courses are apt to dismiss the possibility that the same writer could ever have invested so much energy into revisions that seem so incredibly superior to their earlier drafts, although the vastness of that chasm can be exaggerated by those who adamantly refuse to consider the possibility that “Shakespeare” wrote drafts and then revised them. But consider what Oxford experienced in those intervening decades, then consider how exposure to and victimization

Michael Delahoyde is *Clinical Professor of English at Washington State University*. In addition to his research on Edward de Vere's travels in Italy, Professor Delahoyde has published Oxfordian editions of *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Twelfth Night*.

by political lies and hypocrisy might darken one's outlook. The perpetually misinterpreted quotation from Ben Jonson about "Shakespeare" never having blotted a line is used to support the semi-religious fantasy that the Bard simply let the ink flow perfectly out of his quill onto a page—or, as captured so gracefully in the re-crafted Stratford monument, onto a pillow—and that he never needed to revise. One of the core problems with the cult of Stratford is the absence of any evidence demonstrating Shakespeare's evolutionary trajectory as a writer. In addition, this edition of *Famous Victories* is valuable because it is foundational in our erecting the cathedral that will be Notre Homme.

With this edition, Jiménez launches what he proposes to be titled The De Vere Shakespeare series, consciously replicating the book size and other formatting features established for the Oxfordian editions that have already been published—these include *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, and soon *The Comedy of Errors*.

Many have grown weary of the expectation that they must introduce, again and again *ad nauseam*, another short-version case against Shakspeare of Stratford and then the case for Oxford as Shakespeare. Somehow, Jiménez found the inspiration to re-till that ground and has generated a thorough and, most impressively, fresh version of the essential material, first for his book *Shakespeare's Apprenticeship* and now adapted for the *Famous Victories* edition. It is currently the definitive critical edition and should be used in all future De Vere Shakespeare collections.

The Introduction to the play itself first contrasts the modern critical consensus about *Famous Victories*, which is dismal, with the contemporary popularity it actually enjoyed as indicated in the publication record. Amid other obligatory introductory components—such as a plot summary, publication history, and dating—comes a detailed examination of the relationship between *Famous Victories* and the *Henry* plays, the thoroughness of which can be confirmed by the 13 pages which comprise the Works Cited. Jiménez examines the parallels in structure (such as the same practice of alternating between main historic scenes and comic ones); the ordering of events; the renaming of essentially the same characters (particularly the evolution of Falstaff); even the skipping of the same historical materials. Although the rare literary critic may acknowledge the influence of *Famous Victories* on the canonical plays, applying the Oxfordian perspective to explain every feature of the revision from the "crude" anonymous play (36) into the canonical *Henry* plays makes this introductory article the definitive Introduction on *Famous Victories*.

Of particular fascination is the appearance and eventual excising of Richard de Vere, 11th Earl of Oxford: in *Famous Victories*, "Oxford has been placed in an entirely unhistorical role created for him by the playwright" (43). It is

more adolescent hero-worship by de Vere, in this case glorifying an ancestor and thus the family name and title, all expunged years later when Oxford was commissioned into pseudonymity in his revisions.

The pagination arrangement of left-side textual notes/right-side text was selected originally by the general editor, Richard Whalen, for Oxfordian editions, and I have heard nothing but praise and appreciation for this layout. Jiménez arranges explanatory notes in close cross-page parallel with the text too. Nevertheless, I would still recommend a few more notes for future editions of these “anonymous” plays. I understand from experience that an editor grows impatient with what seems like redundancy in an edition. But one must also recognize that many readers will skip an introduction and plunge straight into the play. So, when the 11th Earl of Oxford appears (85), or when Gads Hill is first mentioned by name (81), no matter how thoroughly explained in the Introduction, readers need to be hit with the Oxfordian relevance and importance in that moment. It might be valuable to include parallels not just to the *Henry* plays, but to show how Shakespeare wove these stylistic kernels into the Shakespeare canon at large. For example:

Ah, God! I am now much like to a bird
Which hath escaped out of a cage (*Famous Victories*: 9.1-2).

Compare with *King Lear* (5.3.9):

We two alone will sing like birds i'th' cage.
When thou dost ask me blessing,

In *Famous Victories*, we have:

Me thought his seat was like the figure of heaven
And his person like unto a god (*Famous Victories*: 9.26-27):

Anthony is said by Cleopatra and by Enobarbus to look like the god Mars (2.6.118, 2.2.6). Hamlet says his father had:

the front of Jove himself,
An eye like Mars (3.4.56-57).

Again, in *Famous Victories*:

Sirra, thou knowest...there will be cakes and drink (19.58-59).

Compare with *Twelfth Night*:

Dost thou think because thou
art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale? (2.3.100-01)

The recognizable moment years later in *Twelfth Night* should be obvious, but worth connecting with a note. Admirably, the notes in this edition do provide a microscopic intimacy with details of language, phrasing, and nuance. Jiménez cites the *Oxford English Dictionary* frequently and carefully references the critical contributions from previous editors of the play.

A personal note on Ramon's proposal of The De Vere Shakespeare. I am delighted that he has confessed to being underway with a critical edition of the next apocryphal Shakespeare source: *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*. On my end, I will soon have a critical edition of *The Comedy of Errors* ready for publication and have started work on an edition of *The Merchant of Venice*. Still, more Oxfordians need to be involved in the ambitious project of creating The Complete De Vere Shakespeare. I nevertheless want to say that doing this work takes time, focus, and the zeal that you already have if you're reading this review to make a vital, permanent contribution to Oxfordian scholarship. And a little obsessive-compulsive disorder doesn't hurt.

James Warren has recently written that Oxfordianism is a collective of independent researchers rather than a monolith that seeks its own fossilization. "The movement has always been more of a loose collection of individuals working on their own than a coordinated movement. I believe it should remain this way" (*Shakespeare Revolutionized* 530). Therefore, it is sometimes difficult for us to imagine collaborating productively. Some may bristle at the notion that their contribution will be contained in a series that includes other entries that urge Prince Tudor interpretations or doubts that Oxford really passed on June 24, 1604. But do any of us not want to see this project thriving? (The excellent Arden editions, for example, are on their third instantiation.) Ramon Jiménez is launching this project energetically and I think we both hope to enlist an enthusiastic band of editors. As Prince Henry says, "Gog's wounds...." (Actually, everyone in the play keeps saying that part.) "We will go altogether./We are all fellows" (1.92–93)!



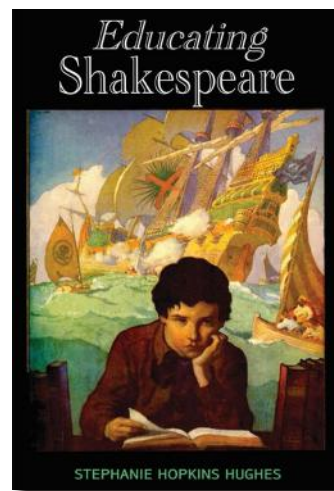
Delineating Shakespeare's Education

Reviewed by Don Rubin

Educating Shakespeare. By Stephanie Hopkins Hughes. Cary, NC: Veritas Publications, 2022. 384 pages, (paperback \$25).

For many years I taught a third-year university course called Modern Theatre and Society, which sought to connect theatrical art to the social and political constructs out of which they grew, to link plays to their historical moment in the belief that art and society were somehow tangentially connected. My students would read core excerpts from Hegel and then read Ibsen—*Peer Gynt*, *Brand*, *Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*. They would read Sigmund Freud and Charles Darwin as a prelude to absorbing Strindberg; and read Karl Marx before taking on Chekhov.

But the approaches I took in the previous century—seen by a newer generation of scholars as the Late Modern Dark Ages, a time when works of art themselves still stood supreme—have vanished from most universities and today's students are reading not the works so much as the bloodless literary and social theories that have accreted around them. They read Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, linguistic philosophers who say, among other things, that the author is dead, and that authorial intent is not to be valued, is actually incidental to what readers themselves choose to find of interest in literary works. In this setting, success most often goes to students who read



a work of art not for the pleasure of discovering what it *says* or even *how* it says it but, rather, from an academic requirement to categorize or taxonomize it, dissecting the pages with surgical precision from the viewpoint of race, class or gender. The search for authorial intent today has gone the way of outmoded cultural artifacts such as walkie-talkies and spats. Those students still interested in such curiosities receive little more than smiles from the modern academy and are then put out to intellectual pasture. In most of academia today, no one really cares about what an author may have intended or thought, or where their ideas originated, or what insights might be had by looking at their *story* through wider lenses.

For Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, the founding editor of this journal, *The Oxfordian*, this failure to teach “story” is the academic bane of our times. And, as someone who invested more than four decades in teaching “story” to enthusiastic university students, I must agree. It is a palpable loss extending across the literary spectrum and a significant one in the specific area of Shakespeare studies.

As Hughes puts it in her recently published *Educating Shakespeare*, a volume about how one learns about how the writer known as Shakespeare must have learned:

until those who should be taking seriously the task of explaining how these immensely influential works of dramatic literature came to be written leave off counting feminine endings and begin dealing with their *provable connections* to the *social and political history of the periods* when they were created....the world will continue to believe that Shakespeare's identity doesn't matter....

English departments...[have] plunged ever more deeply into the abstract, adopting ideas and terms from one science after another—while ignoring those studies that *might* have offered real perspective....There would have been nothing wrong with this flight into theory had they kept these ideas within their graduate think tanks—but when they began teaching them to undergraduates—replacing discussions of meaning, style, purpose and pleasure with arcane spinoffs from the language sciences—students began dropping out.... A large part of the reason why students who would have been eager to major in English

Don Rubin is Professor Emeritus of Theatre Studies at Toronto's York University. He is the General Editor of Routledge's six-volume World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre and Managing Editor of the online journal *Critical Stages* (critical-stages.org). President of the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition (doubtaboutwill.org), he has been a long-serving member of the Board of Trustees of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship

in the past are avoiding it today is because they were turned off by... English classes...where theory so infected the study of literature that high school teachers were teaching semiotics because that's what they themselves were taught... all pleasure having been drained out of it. (286–7; my emphases)

Wide-ranging in its approaches to identifying the story of Shakespeare's life—whoever he or she might have been—Hughes focuses on what the author of the plays and poems himself actually knew, about what must have been included in his education, about what disciplines and subjects were actually appreciated in 16th Century British provincial classrooms (religion being number one) and what subjects were avoided (poetry).

In going through these insights into traditional Tudor education, the gaps are clear between the broad education that “Shakespeare” must have had and the extraordinarily narrow education most students including the man from Stratford actually received. In this merry wandering, Hughes offers us numerous glimpses into many connected stories, including a brief history of the evolving London stage—the social media of its time—and its unique place in the dissemination of ideas, language and knowledge in Elizabethan society.

Under her fascinating gaze, Hughes launches a barrage on 21st Century academe, not hesitating to identify where academics—especially those in literature programs—went so terribly wrong. Though always focusing on the world of education, she nevertheless offers a tangential mini-history of the Elizabethan age, its Boy companies, the real meaning of Bad Quartos and even looks in on Early Modern notions of pleasure.

We also learn about John Hemmings, one of the alleged powers behind the First Folio who was the long-term business manager of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Hemmings, we are told, started his career as “an apprentice to a member of the Grocers Guild” and Hughes speculates on his possible role in getting William Shakspeare to make his own fortune by selling the family name. In another Hughes speculation, we are told that Shakspeare may have only visited London on rare occasions, and that he may have never really lived or worked there.

Hughes is quite even-handed about the authorship question in her first two chapters, so much so that Stratfordians might well consider accepting some of her ideas. She admits her own amazement, though, when it comes to certain facts: that since so many scholars in so many fields agree on Shakespeare's broadly based, in-depth knowledge, why do so few seem interested in where that often-arcane knowledge came from? Indeed, as actor Mark Rylance says in a back cover quote for this volume: “An artist can be born with genius for a certain activity but they can't be born with education or life experience.”

Clearly, that must come from somewhere; in the case of the Bard that is puzzling indeed if one insists that he was born into an illiterate provincial family in 1564. Using that time and place as the intellectual center for so complicated a personage simply doesn't hold. Which is why for today's professors and teachers of integrity, what in good conscience does one tell students about the author? For those aware of the Authorship controversy, one can, of course, simply articulate the issues and urge students to do further research. But for those deaf or vague to the Authorship question, there is little hope that they will do more than simply tell the same old story that they themselves heard and hope it hasn't changed too much.

In the end, this jewel of a book is wonderful reading—both for those knowledgeable about the authorship issue and for those who are simply curious. It is not only lucid but filled with pertinent questions, trenchant observations and tantalizing tidbits on her core subjects, many of which illustrate the tunnel vision of the academic puritans. For example:

- She asks how the puritans succeed in getting so many to join Calvin's anti-sex crusade and wonders about the reason "for the success of these brutal anti-sex, anti-female, anti-pleasure, anti-poetry, anti-laughter campaigns?" (203, 205).
- She notes that for "the mythical lovers Tristan and Isolde, the semi-historical Lancelot and Guinevere, or the real Heloise and Abelard... Christian chivalry allowed *desire* to flourish... so long as they kept their hands to themselves" (171).
- Even early English translators of the Bible, she points out, paid the ultimate price for allowing joy to enter. "Though Wycliff managed to die on his own without help from the authorities, his corpse was not so lucky. In 1428 his critics had it dug up, burnt, and thrown in the Thames" (155).
- "Preachers railed [against theatre] from the pulpit. Mayors bombarded the Privy Council with demands that the theatres be 'plucked down.' From the late 1560s on—every riot, every visitation of the plague, was blamed on the theatres, the actors, and, of course, the authors of their plays—so it should be obvious that the identity of an author of a particular play—or series of plays—would have been... a matter of concern" (196).

As for identifying the true author of the plays, she notes with just a touch of sarcasm that:

- For most students and many teachers "the Stratford Shakespeare [is] just as fictional as his plays.... [a writer drifting] "in a murky semi-historical void somewhere between St. Paul and Santa Claus" (ii).

Moreover, on the refusal of traditional scholars to even consider that anyone else might have written the plays using earlier versions as evidence, she notes that:

- Shakespeare scholars “egged each other on as they labeled one quarto after another good, bad, stolen, badly copied, misreported, poorly memorized—everything, that is, but the most obvious explanation—that it was *the author’s own early version*—his *juvenilia*. Shakespeare’s lack of juvenilia is one of the great weaknesses of the Stratford thesis. He seems to have emerged, fully matured, out of nowhere....” (271).

Of course, as with any wide-ranging volume—and sometimes Hughes is a bit too wide-ranging—there are some factual challenges to be made. At one point, she refers to the playwright Bertolt Brecht as “a German Jew” which all researchers have agreed he wasn’t. Indeed, why does Brecht even enter into this volume?

She says as well that Czech playwright Vaclav Havel was imprisoned by “Stalin’s regime.” Again, no point in bringing this up. It may have been a Stalinist-styled regime, but it was certainly not Stalin since the Russian dictator died in 1953. Havel turned 17 that year.

Also, without any necessity, she notes that in 1936, the Spanish playwright Garcia Lorca was “executed by a Nazi firing squad.” Well, the truth is that he was executed that year, but the execution took place in Granada, Spain apparently under orders by the dictator Francisco Franco, trying to root out gays and rebels in the country.

The fact is Hughes sometimes goes too far afield in the book, and when her enthusiasms take her somewhat beyond her own obvious areas of strength—Education, Early Modern theatre and the Shakespeare Authorship Question—she ends up on shakier ground. But when she focuses on the real targets, she is certainly quite wonderful and enormously insightful.

In the end, this is a book that can teach us all and, perhaps as important, challenge us all to think better and more deeply.



Oxford's Voices: What Shakespeare Wrote Before He Was Shakespeare

Reviewed by Phoebe Nir

Oxford's Voices: What Shakespeare Wrote Before He Was Shakespeare.
By Robert R. Prechter, Jr., 3,200 pages, 2021 (\$99.00, available only as an
E-book through website server at <https://oxfordsvoices.com>).

As a juvenile, Edward de Vere released an instructional booklet for a board game involving 48 pieces and advanced mathematics.

de Vere had a life-long habit of publishing hoax pamphlets claiming witness to signs of the apocalypse, such as deformed children and monstrous swine.

These insights and more await the reader of *Oxford's Voices*, Robert Prechter's *magnum opus*, filling 3,200 pages and representing the greatest leap forward in Oxfordian scholarship since 'Shakespeare' *Identified*. Twenty-four years ago, Prechter suspected that the years-long gap between Oxford's acknowledged juvenilia and the canonical **Shakespeare** plays was a bit too quiet (for the purpose of clarity, I have put the names of Oxford's various pseudonyms and allonyms proposed by Prechter in **bold**). Prechter's theory was correct. He has properly contextualized an enormous number of heretofore unrecognized publications by Edward de Vere, and boldly remapped the terrain of a brilliant life spent in almost constant literary activity.

Oxfordian scholars have previously theorized that Oxford wrote under different pseudonyms, questioning the true identity of the elusive **Robert Greene**, for example, and the attribution of various history play prototypes. At the end of the day, how many other literary voices does Prechter attribute to the Earl of Oxford? The total is a staggering 152.

I should address the reader's likely skepticism. Though one might suspect a bias towards false positives, Prechter insists that the opposite is true; he was relieved to discover that a publication was not written by Oxford, since crossing it off his interminable list would invariably save him time in conducting research. Also, Prechter acknowledges when he is unsure of one of his conclusions. He posits that *Oxford's Voices* have remained a literary secret for centuries due to de Vere's frequent use of allonyms, attributing his publications to living people that he often knew. One notable example is **John Lyly**, Oxford's secretary under whose name he published the novel *Euphues: the Anatomy of Wit* in 1578. Prechter suggests that the success of *Euphues* and its 1580 follow-up novel, *Euphues and his England*, may have drawn an uncomfortable amount of attention toward Lyly, leading Oxford to publish sequels under the different allonyms of **Barnabe Rich**, **Robert Greene**, and **Thomas Lodge**.

The effects of Prechter's arguments are cumulative, and one comes to trust his thoroughness and general caution as a reliable guide through the material. Which is not to say that he doesn't have some fun. When Prechter observes an inconsistency in the biography of **John Phillips**, an allonym employed occasionally by Oxford for the purpose of publishing elegies and devotional tracts, he delivers a Poirot-style denouement. Though **Phillips** professes himself to be an alumnus of Cambridge in 1578, six years later, he claims to be a student. "It seems he was getting younger," quips Prechter.

Prechter's methodology is similar to Looney's, employing a checklist to establish positive correlations between the works published during Oxford's lifetime and the types of material the *Voices* produced. Dedications to Oxford's friends, the presence of particular spellings, or an introduction apologizing for the poor quality of the author's writing (a practice Oxford endorses as a matter of etiquette in a writing style guide by **William Fulwood**) are all indicators that the text in question is written by a *Voice*. But Prechter's detective work is an art as well as a science. Roger Stritmatter's investigations into the multi-colored marginalia in Oxford's Geneva Bible shed fascinating light on how the man organized his thoughts. Prechter, too, uncovers Oxfordian habits, noticing how Oxford seems to have a vocabulary worksheet, seldom reusing the same word in a work, but often employing as many variations of the same word as he can—e.g., joy, joys, joyed, joying, joyfull, joyfully, and joyous.

Phoebe Nir, a 2010 Presidential Scholar of the Arts in Writing, holds a BA in Theater from Brown University and a Masters in Drama Therapy from New York University. A Licensed Creative Arts Therapist in New York, she is also a playwright and screenwriter. She will be making her directorial screen debut in 2023 with her film "Eco Village," starring Sidney Flanigan.

As Looney correctly identified the man behind the plays, Prechter has reframed the entire authorship debate, demonstrating with clarity the evolution of Oxford's writing from boyhood to old age. The **Shakespeare** canon, in Prechter's view, is situated somewhere between a capstone project and a victory lap, the most perfect versions of plots, themes, jokes, and turns of phrase that Oxford had been experimenting with for decades on the stage, as well as through prose, poetry, lyrics, and pamphlets. Take, for example, the journey of *Romeo and Juliet*, the seeds of which were planted when Oxford was a boy of twelve. **Arthur Brooke's** 1562 publication of "*The Tragical Historye of Romeus and Juliet*, written first in Italian by Bandell, and nowe in English by Ar. Br." contains the intriguing confession that its young author is still a virgin. The narrator admits, "...But Fortune such delight as theirs did never graunt me yet."

Orthodox scholars have wondered why the great William Shakespeare would have been so enamored by a somewhat uneven verse poem from the 1560s that he would need to plagiarize it. The answer, Prechter illustrates in this and so many similar cases, is that the two works were written by the same man, but decades apart. In the interim years between "Romeus" and "Romeo," *Oxford's Voices* tell various tales of star-crossed lovers and warring families, from **Robert Greene's** "Planetomachia" to **John Partidge's** "Lady Pandavola," to four different versions of "Pyramus and Thisbe." Numerous iconic elements of the play get workshopped, refined, and reappropriated on the way. Nearly identical plots motivate works such as **Barnabe Rich's** "Of Fineo and Fiamma" and **Thomas Lodge's** "Forbonius and Prisceria." The notion of Echo repeating a beloved name, such as in Juliet's declaration from Act II, scene ii—"Else I would tear the cave where Echo lies,/ And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine,/ With repetition of Romeo's name"—itself echoes through the *Voices* works; Oxford employs the "Echo Poem" device in his poem, "Ann Vavasor's Echo" as well as in **Thomas Lodge's** "Scillaes Metamorphosis," **William Smith's** "Cloris," and **Barnabe Rich's** "Don Simonides."

Prechter also demonstrates that the real-life authors from whom **William Shakespeare** has been accused of borrowing were actually themselves the borrowers, and the misdating of the plays to William Shakspeare's lifetime has made a general mess of the Shakespeare canon's chronology. Particularly useful is his claim that Oxford contributed passages to Christopher Marlowe's works, an act that has recently befuddled artificial intelligence programs into mistakenly labeling Shakespeare's works as a collaboration between Oxford and Marlowe. To those who insist that Thomas North provided the source texts for Shakespeare, Prechter offers a stern rebuke—Oxford had made his own translation of Plutarch years before.

Prechter, it must be said, does not hold many Elizabethan authors besides Oxford in high esteem. Nonetheless, Prechter's investigative skills uncover fascinating details about nearly every other major writer of the period. He claims that Oxford collaborated on several plays with Ben Jonson, including Jonson's *Every Man in his Humor*, though it appears that not all of Oxford's ideas were to Jonson's liking; after Oxford's death, Jonson republished the play, shifting the setting from Oxford's beloved Italy to Jonson's more familiar London.

One writer whom Prechter suggests has been unfairly overlooked is Gabriel Harvey, who held his own against multiple Oxfordian surrogates. Forbidden to reveal the true identity of the powerful Earl attacking him, Harvey decided to engage Oxford on his own ludicrous terms, sparring with him in a game of "yes, and" worthy of a jester. Prechter's recounting of the Harvey-Nashe pamphlet wars is quite droll and reinforces Stephanie Hopkins Hughes' argument that Harvey's reputation as a humorless scold is deserving of a reassessment.

Some of the works that Prechter disqualifies from being *Voices*' might prove as controversial as the ones that he claims. *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, published anonymously in 1573 but republished in 1575 as *The Posies of George Gascoigne, Esquire*, has long been reputed to be a prank publication of Oxford's mocking Sir Christopher Hatton. Prechter, however, insists that it is by Gascoigne; Prechter refers to this as "the single most extensive Oxmyth." And despite its later censorship, Prechter shows evidence that Gascoigne had intended to please Queen Elizabeth with his book, and had given her notice of its upcoming publication. The same goes for the scandalous *Willobie His Avis*, first published in 1594, which has been interpreted variously to represent a parable of Oxford cuckolding himself, an encounter with William Shakspeare, and evidence of a secret Prince Tudor. Prechter's explanation is far tamer, drawing convincing historical comparisons between the various suitors and top contenders for Queen Elizabeth's hand.

While Prechter avoids many controversial topics, such as Prince Tudor theories, hidden ciphers, faked deaths, sexual-orientation inferences and the interpretation of fiction as contemporary allegory, he also points out several instances in which fictional works are clearly drawn from Oxford's personal experiences. Much Oxfordian ink has been spilled comparing the plot of *Hamlet* to its writer's life; *Oxford's Voices* points to at least two other works that will yield more evidence for those seeking biographical parallels.

Consider this passage from the opening of **Robert Greene's** *Mamillia*:

This Valasco after the decease of his father was a ward of the Duke of Zamorra, who seeing him indued with great wealth and large

possessions, having the disposition of his marriage in his hands, married him to a kinswoman of his named Sylandra, a Gentlewoman neither indewed with wit nor adorned with beautie.

Or this description of the title character from the opening of **John Lyly's** *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*:

This young gallaunt of more witte then wealth, and yet of more wealth then wisdom... thought himself so apt to all thinges that he gave himselfe almost to nothing but practising of those thinges commonly which are indicent to these sharpe wittes, fine phrases, smooth quippes, merry tauntes, jesting without meane, and abusing mirth without measure.

Oxford as portrayed by Prechter comes off a bit straitlaced. A reader needn't subscribe to every aspersion cast by Alan H. Nelson's *Monstrous Adversary* to accept that Oxford possessed an artist's temperament. Gabriel Harvey wrote in his 1593 *Pierce's Supererogation* that:

...all you, that tender the preservation of your good names, were best to please **Pap-hatchet**, and see Euphues betimes: for feare less he be mooved, or some one of his Apes hired, to make a Playe of you; and then is your credit quite-undone for ever and ever; such is the publique reputation of their Playes.

At the same time Prechter is hesitant to ever admit that Oxford had serious feuds with other members of Court, or that he was parodying public officials in his plays. Prechter offers the example of Sho Yano, a child prodigy who earned a doctorate degree in molecular cell genetics and cell biology at age eighteen, as a modern-day comparison to young Oxford. But while Yano is certainly impressive, a reader might be forgiven for failing to see where the successful medical researcher is spiritually akin to a dueling Earl who squandered his fortune on the arts. Yano struck me as rather more similar to the diligent and professionally successful Prechter; perhaps a certain early Oxfordian in Vienna might have called it "projecting."

Prechter's decision to publish his work online behind a \$99.00 paywall has been criticized as inappropriate; yet I find that Prechter's work is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the man who wrote Shakespeare, and to so much more. His Herculean efforts are certain to act as a catalyst to a wave of new Oxfordian discoveries.

Oxfordians should be critical in their review of Prechter's revolutionary claims, and Prechter demonstrates a willingness to have his theories challenged and debated. He himself acknowledges that due to the breadth of this project,

there are likely some errors that will be corrected in his “Living Book” when other scholars bring them to light. To anyone reading this short review of a 3,200 page compendium, I urge you to read this work yourself. Both portable and searchable, *Oxford's Voices* is as much a digital encyclopedia as a book, and any Oxfordian researcher currently investigating other Elizabethan authors who worked during Oxford's era would be well-served by searching under their name in Prechter's glossary.

Was Shakespeare a Literary Revolutionary?

Reviewed by Gary Goldstein

Shakespeare's Revolution. By Richard Malim, Austin Macanley (2022), 466 pages. (hardcover \$36.51, paperback \$25.95, and Kindle \$4.50)

S*hakespeare's Revolution*, published earlier this summer, is the latest book by Richard Malim. A retired solicitor, Malim is author of *The Earl of Oxford and the Making of Shakespeare*, published by McFarland Publishers in 2011. Having studied the Shakespeare Authorship Question for the past 30 years (and served for 15 years as secretary of The De Vere Society), Malim provides readers of his new book a sophisticated knowledge of both the Elizabethan era and the critical literature of the authorship controversy.

Malim's method in the current book is laid out with precision: "my target is the failure of modern literary critics' biographical method, especially when they apply them unscientifically to try to justify the modern fads of collaboration and stylometrics." He emphasizes that the Oxfordian case he presents offers "superior evidence and superior logic" in validating Edward de Vere as the only authorship candidate "with the requisite education, talent, social standing and leisure opportunities, in the right place at right time" to be William Shakespeare.



He redefines the modern assessment of Shakespeare as the greatest dramatist in Western culture by judging Shakespeare's importance in history as "that of a revolutionary presiding over a revolution" in theatre and poetry in Great Britain during the period 1576-1590. To Malim, "the whole question of

Was Shakespeare a Literary Revolutionary?

‘Shakespeare’s’ identity demands a solution, so that we may correctly comprehend and appreciate this marvel of history...’

To accomplish that he has organized his book into four parts: Learning (1550–1576); the “Shakespeare” Revolution (1576–1590); Aftermath of the Revolution (1590–1604); and Post Mortem Reputation. Also provided is a lengthy appendix entitled, “William Shakespeare: an Irrelevant Life,” demonstrating how William Shakspeare’s biography and lack of education and talent undermine his candidacy. In support of his case, Malim supplies us with 90 pages of endnotes along with an extensive bibliography. There is also an index of Shakespeare plays in the text, and 16 pages of illustrations.

Part of Malim’s methodology includes delineating the large number of public events to which Shakespeare did not participate as national poet and playwright: his refusal to offer eulogies or encomiums for the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, the death of Prince Henry in 1612 and the marriage of Princess Elizabeth in 1613. Such a willful refusal to participate in national events by someone employed by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men and then The King’s Men constitutes negative evidence that Shakespeare the author was no longer alive.

One of Malim’s contentions is that 17th Earl of Oxford not only was the playwright William Shakespeare and the sponsor of two acting troupes—Oxford’s Boys and Oxford’s Men—as pointed out a century ago by Sir E.K. Chambers, he was also an actor who *regularly* performed on the Elizabethan stage, the latter activity the likely cause of Shakespeare’s confession in Sonnet 110:

Alas, ‘tis true I have gone here and there
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gor’d mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offences of affections new. (1–4)

Malim also proposes that Oxford was the translator of a small collection of Greek poetry which first appeared in 1588: *The Sixe Idylla of Theocritus*. The translator is not revealed on the book’s title page; the sole surviving copy is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. Yet C.S. Lewis highly praised the translator as both sensitive and original—“this version sounds far more like Greek poetry than anything that was to be written in English before the nineteenth century.” And, coincidentally, the translator uses the word “verie” six times in the six poems.

Occasionally, there are lapses in accuracy, as when Malim states that the publication of the anthology collection, *The Paradise of Dainty Devices*, was 1573, when the first edition actually appeared in 1576.

In sum, Malim’s updated investigation into the Oxfordian case is a needed corrective to the continuing refusal of modern academics, literary critics and historians to examine the true authorship of the Shakespeare canon.



