

## To the Editor:

I'm writing partly to applaud James Warren's fine and revelatory article, "Anne Cecil and the Crisis in Edward de Vere's 26<sup>th</sup> Year," and mostly to commend his continuing defense of the Dynastic Succession Theory. Certainly, if Oxford and Queen Elizabeth had had a child, this would be potential scandal enough to explain—in part—why the writer of the *Sonnets* complains of art being "Tongue-tied by authority," or why Oxford was never overtly named as "Shakespeare" upon his death, not freed from anonymity, contrary to the custom for other nobleman-poets.

What prods me most to write is how the discussion between Warren and John Hamill at the SOF convention in New Orleans developed. I fully respect Hamill's right to 1) advocate the Penelope-Rich-as-Dark-Lady theory; or 2) promote his belief that Oxford-Shakespeare was gay or bisexual (and state that his sexual orientation can be discerned in the poet's relations with Southampton). There is a plausible argument to be made for either of these possibilities. But I dislike the tone struck by Hamill, who (if I remember his remarks accurately) purported to believe that opposing camps can learn a lot from each other—then demonstrated his unwillingness to learn anything at all from Warren.

And there are unacknowledged weaknesses in some of Hamill's and John Shahan's arguments against what they term—the term itself has prejudicial connotations—the Secret Royal Bastard Theory (SRB), in *Oxfordian* 25. They write that the founding Oxfordian, J. Thomas Looney, "adamantly opposed SRB theories from the time they were proposed until his death." Yes, and Warren has written elsewhere about how Looney's Victorian-era reticence on sexual matters, plus his unease about airing a too-sensational subtopic, guided his distaste for the theory. Had Looney lived to hear of the bisexual theory, he might well have opposed it too. But that would have been his problem, not ours.

Moreover, a counterargument conveniently ignored indicates a possible private marriage contracted between Oxford and Queen Elizabeth, possibly at Havering-at-Bowe, with the Archbishop of Canterbury involved. Had detailed, reliable news of any such event leaked, the disaster for Elizabeth's diplomatic flirtations with various princely suitors would have been complete.

Another weakness appears in the comment that "records show that Elizabeth was active and in public view during the time she was allegedly pregnant with

Southampton.” True; but what goes unmentioned is how court women could apparently hide pregnancies for long stretches, thanks to concealing garments (the “farthingale” argument)—as may have been the case with Gentlewoman of the Queen’s Bedchamber Anne Vavasour, up almost until her actual delivery of little Edward Vere (her illegitimate son by Edward de Vere).

I am not necessarily advocating for the Dynastic Succession Theory, which I still struggle with, but—to adapt Robert Prechter’s comment in his own NOLA presentation—looking into “the quality of the arguments” pro and con. Prechter himself turned up testimony in 1606, by Elizabethan-Jacobean historian William Warner, that

...Our Queen deaceast concealed her Heire,  
I wot not for what skill...

cited by Dynastic Succession theorist Hank Whittemore. Even more impressive is the testimony, cited by Percy Allen, of historian William Camden, for Ben Jonson “my most reverend head, to whom I owe / all that I am in arts, all that I know...” Camden attests, poeticizing on a picture he published of Elizabeth’s funeral procession, that,

And since that Delia [Elizabeth] is from hence bereaven,  
We have another Sun [son] ordain’d by Heaven.

On their equivocating face, the verses could be stretched into referring to King James as well as Southampton, the designation “Sun” applying to any male monarch. That this isn’t the case is borne out by the reaction Camden’s verses provoked: a fellow poet’s rebuke alleging that the lines “did detract from a great Lady’s glory; / Wherein he was accused to have revealed / Some things which better might have been concealed / Had they been truths.” The tone of the reaction could suggest that those “things” might better “have been concealed” *because* they were true, dangerously true.

Sincerely,  
Tom Goff  
Carmichael, CA