

ROLLETT IN REVERSE

The Sonnets' Dedication Page Decryption,
Its Self-Defeating Pioneer and the Completed Proof

The lack of undeniable objective proof seems to be the Achilles' heel of the enterprise to recognize Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, as author of the Shakespeare canon. The play manuscripts likely incinerated in a mysterious fire that swept through Jonson's study shortly before the sale of the First Folio.¹ The early narratives and posthumous Sonnets were brought out in secrecy, under an obvious pseudonym, Shake-Speare, traceable to Oxford but not unequivocally established to be him. Political circumstances then and later supported the status quo position of a non-controversial authorship.

As a response to Jacobean political circumstances, Ben Jonson's introduction to the First Folio advanced what became the commonplace fable that someone

¹ Roper, David, *Proving Shakespeare in Ben Jonson's Own Words*, Orvid Publications, United Kingdom, 2008, p. 45. All quotations in this essay from SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS cite to *The Yale Shakespeare*, Yale University Press, New Haven Connecticut, 1956.

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else, allonymous to the Shake-Speare moniker, Gulielmus Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon, was the recondite author, despite Shakspere's pecuniary fixation, legal record, and litigious nature showing no evidence whatever of literary talent or production. He was considered a social climber and buffoon by the Elizabethan literary elite, most especially by Jonson himself.² The Stratford Monument, sculpturally and cryptologically a ruse,³ nevertheless continues to sanctify the legend.

When Dr. John M. Rollett published a decryption of the Sonnets Dedication page in 1997 in the *Elizabethan Review*, his solution simply, elegantly, and unmistakably linking 'SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS' to the name of the Earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere and to Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, said to be Oxford's son with Elizabeth I an opening in the evidentiary question seemed possible. If proven accurate, the cipher is original hard evidence integral to the document itself.

But Rollett questioned his discovery in *The Oxfordian*, Vol. II, 1999 and has not supported it since. After twelve years, it is time to re-evaluate the credibility of the proof. If the author rejected his solution for insufficient cause, then the proof stands independently of his or anyone's post mortems. We will review Rollett's discovery, his rejection of it, subsequent further distancing from the *Oxfordian* thesis, and then test the decryption.

I The Proof

Rollett's solution to the ungainly, ungrammatical, and nearly unreadable Dedication to the 1609 "SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS" is an intuitive detection, arrived at by counting markers [periods or space-marks], in a selective 6-2-4 pattern, based on the number of letters in Edward de Vere, so

² Ogburn, Jr., Charlton, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, EPM Publications, Inc, McLean Virginia, 2nd Edition, 1992, pp. 74-5

³ Roper, pp. 1-48; Whalen, Richard F., "The Stratford Bust: A monumental fraud", *The Oxfordian*/8, 2005, pp. 7-24; Price, Diana, "Reconsidering Shakespeare's Monument", *Review of English Studies*, v. XLVIII, No. 190, (1997), pp 169-82

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as to give precedence of meaning to the words immediately before the markers. His method parallels the Cardano Grille equidistant letter sequence counting system, according to which a consistent repeating count of letters accrues into a lettered message, except that in this case the cryptographer counts by words not letters.

TO. THE. ONLIE. BEGETTER. OF.
THESE. INSVING. SONNETS.
M. W. H. ALL. HAPPINESSE.
AND. THAT. ETERNITIE.
PROMISED.
BY,
OVR. EVER. LIVING. POET.
WISHETH.
THE. WELL. WISHING.
ADVENTVRER. IN.
SETTING.
FORTH.

T. T.

As seen in the facsimile of the 1609 Dedication page, three inverted triangles (or pyramids) contain a surface message. The first triangle has six, the second two, the third four lines. The three triangles' line-totals thus reflect the 6-2-4 letter-total in the Vere name. Rollett found the line pattern first and realized only later that EVER [Vere] was a possible author of the work.

Using the 6-2-4 key as a guide through the surface message, and completing two+ cycles, meaningful words emerge: THESE SONNETS ALL BY EVER. Since EVER is an anagram of VERE or E-VER, alleged author of the Shakespeare canon and someone famous as a writer in his time, the resulting sentence even though missing a verb can be easily understood to mean that all the sonnets contained in the book were written by Vere. This is far more pointed than anything in the surface message, which functions mainly as an armature for the hidden one while looking unobjectionable.

Cryptologists William and Elizebeth Friedman, in their book 'The Shakespearean Ciphers Examined' instructed that the plain-text solution

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must make sense; it must be grammatical; and it must mean something.⁴ The surface message in this case just barely meets the Friedman criteria, in that it is not nonsense, which would signal that a secret lurks beneath. From our vantage point, it is amazing how generations of readers and professionals have rationalized the odd verbiage into meaningfulness. 2,500 studies of the Sonnets have been written⁵ and each had to say something about the Dedication. Leslie Hotson suspected but no one discerned its covert function, until Rollett.

There are additional words below Rollett's decryption, plus two closing initials, T.T., traditionally associated with the stationer's assistant Thomas Thorpe. The T-shapes resemble the Rosicrucian Code's digamma symbol, denoting secret entry to wisdom, also referred to as the Pillars of Solomon.⁶ The periods are too frequent to be simple periods. These are telltale signs of a systematic blind, or steganography.

With Vere as the message's primary clue, the three inverted triangles (or pyramids) on the page can now be visualized as three V's, symbolic of the first letter of Vere. Vere's acrostic poem "The Absent Lover" in 'Hundredth Sundrie Flowres' (1573) is solved by reading "Edward de Vere" down then "Edward de Vere" up, also recognizable as a "V" shape.

Another acrostic containing the name Vere appears in Anthony Munday's "The Mirror of Mutability". Each letter of Edward de Vere's name occurs as first letter in the lead-words of successive verse-lines dedicating the work to him.⁷ The succeeding words in each line contrived a message around the vertically placed name. Thus there seems to be an historical background to embedding the name 'Edward de Vere' in Tudor-era poetical works.

⁴ Friedman, William F. and Elizebeth S., *The Shakespeare Cipher Examined*, University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1957, p. 20

⁵ Boyle, William, "Unveiling the Sonnets", *Discovering Shakespeare*, Daniel Wright, ed., Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre at Concordia University, Portland Oregon, 2009, note 1, p. 80

⁶ Gordon, Helen Heightsman, *The Secret Love Story in Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Xlibris, 2nd Edition, 2005, pp. 160-2

⁷ Ogburn, Charlton & Dorothy, *This Star of England*, Coward-McCann, NY, 1952, p. 369

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The clearest and perhaps most astounding proof of embedding Vere's identity in poems of the time was presented by Albert Burgstahler, who found that diagonal lines drawn between the letters v-e-r-e, with variation of w and u for v, across four consecutive lines would cumulatively describe something like a watermark over the poem. The four letters of his name would occur with such remarkable consistency and position across the four lines that the brand EO or EOX, for earl of Oxford, would show up as a result. These brands date from the 'Hundredth Sundrie Flowres', the first narrative poems, and into the Sonnets. Moreover, writers honoring Oxford, such as the example of Jonson's introduction, also incorporated the diagonal Vere alignments. This discovery ranks with Rollett's and Roper's as a reliable identification system to locate Oxford's creations. Far from there being no proof of De Vere as Shakespeare, the proof is non-random and ubiquitous.

Rollett's finding the five-word cipher in the Sonnets Dedication was not the end of his investigation. He counted the letters of the page's message and reached an even sum: 144. This divisible figure gave him suspicions of further contrivance, decodable by converting the message into a rectangular cross-hatching, one letter per square. Inductively reasoning, he searched for any clue by trying different-sided rectangles. He thus replicated the Cardano Grille system. The 8 x 18 rectangle showed a name fragment: IOSTHESLEY, along the center vertical axis. i.e., every 18th letter counted from the centrally located "e" in "onlie" was meaningful. Another squib, WR, lay in a lower corner. The two combined read WRIOTHESLEY.

The probability of such a complicated name appearing nearly whole by chance is determined to be negligibly small. Rollett's estimate was one in two billion. This is mathematical for a successful cryptogram. Rollett had solved the Sonnets' Dedication enigma. He had found the author's name embedded in the Dedication, Vere not Shakespeare, and by further inquiry the name of a nobleman closely associated with Oxford and Elizabeth I, Henry Wriothesley. Numerous scholars identify him as the "fair youth" of the Sonnets.⁸ "Fair youth" puns "Vere youth", Vere's son. Rollett also discovered the name "Henry" in a fifteen-lettered rectangle. David Roper in 'Shakespeare Proved

⁸ Stritmatter, Roger, "A Law Case in Verse: 'Venus and Adonis' and the Authorship Question", *Tennessee Law Review*, v.72:1, Fall 2004, note 34, p. 179

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in Ben Jonson's Own Words' has since found the message "To Vere His (epi) Gram WS", discernible on a 19 by 8 cross-hatched rectangle, with the TT signature in the same array.

It is to Rollett's credit he located the key without knowing it was the Tudor era's coding method. Jerome Cardan, a brilliant Italian mathematician and philosopher, invented the system, hence the name for the rectangle, Cardano Grille. The Elizabethan encryptors placed the message in a hatched rectangle, determined by the repeating number key and the starting location. Then they filled a surface message in the blank spaces around the covert one. A parallel communiqué contained the key. No decoded diplomatic messages remain for us to examine. They were probably burned as soon as delivered.

Oxford served as a trusted English diplomat, reporting to the Queen's First Secretary Lord Burghley from France and the Low Countries. That his family and Jonson used the Cardano Grille in the Sonnets Dedication is particularly poignant, because Cardan's masterwork, 'Cardanus Comforte', influenced Oxford throughout his literary and spiritual life. Cardan's discourse on dream and death unerringly prefigures Hamlet's soliloquy.⁹

We do not know who devised the Dedication "enigma", probably Jonson, whose style is evident in the surface messages of the Stratford Monument,¹⁰ the 'Troilus and Cressida' epistle, and the First Folio preface, the other contrivances associated with the identity ruse.¹¹

By his own statement in the latter document he worshipped the Master "this side of idolatry", and after Oxford died, "the Grand Possessors" must have relied on him to organize their great ancestor's work. William Herbert, Lord Pembroke, one of the "incomparable pair of brethren" was Lord Chamberlain

⁹ Barrell, Charles Wisner, "The Playwright Earl Publishes 'Hamlet's Book'", Shakespeare Fellowship Quarterly, July 1946, cited in <http://www.sourcetext.com/sourcebook/library/barrell/21-40/32cardan.htm>; Craig, Hardin, "Hamlet's Book", Huntington Library Bulletin, Vol. 6:6, 1946, pp. 17-37

¹⁰ De Vere Society Newsletter #9, February 2001

¹¹ <http://wjray.net/shakespearepapers/concealment.html>

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in charge of revels at court 1615-1625, and he increased Jonson's stipend from 100 to 200 pounds shortly before the 1623 publication of the First Folio.¹²

'Troilus and Cressida' epistle headline
is a cipher to
identify the author

A	N	e	v	e	r	W	r	i	t	e
r	,	t	o	a	n	E	v	e	r	R
e	a	d	e	r	.	N	e	w	s	.

A Never Writer, to an Ever Reader. News.
AN vere Writer, to an vEre Reader. News.

As an overlooked bit of evidence, the headlining words of 'Troilus and Cressida's epistle reveal, with the rearrangement of a few letters, the name of the author who has departed but yet brings news. 'A Never Writer, to an Ever Reader. News' becomes: 'AN ever [vere] Writer, to an Ever [vEre] Reader, News.' Put into a Cardano Grille as a three by eleven rectangle, including punctuation, this verbiage produces the author's identity two more ways, both vertical: E[arl] O[xford] Vear and simply E vere. The epistle is usually relegated to the appendices of most editions and is rarely a topic of discourse. One suspects that this continues the status quo preference for a non-controversial author of the canon, typified by Winston Churchill's saying that he didn't like to have his myths tampered with.

II Rollett's Reversal

So significant a literary discovery never got its due, in part because in the last paragraph of Rollett's essay in *The Oxfordian*, Vol. 11, 1999, p. 73, he wrote: "In conclusion, I would like to suggest (no more) that the mysterious

¹² C&D Ogburn, pp. 1208-9

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Dedication to Shake-speare's Sonnets is a masterpiece of cryptography " The "no more" belies or betrays the statement it modifies; or else he meant that once solved, the code is no longer a masterpiece. In either case it was a dubious remark, and Rollett expressed yet more reservations when the essay appeared in *Great Oxford*.¹³

There he wrote a self-defeating postscript. His first reservation was that, though the odds against failure were infinitesimally small, there was still a chance of it meaning the cipher itself could have been mere chance. Further, he felt that there isn't much difference between a 3,000-1 and a 3 million-1 chance of failure. He stated that the lack of a verb in the message brings doubt upon the cipher's validity. He followed these assertions with another, that Elizabethan cryptography wasn't capable of so complicated a key as 6-2-4 intervals between meaningful words.

It is astounding when a discoverer retracts what he has just proven and presents capricious arguments instead. We take his arguments in turn. First, denigrating high odds is an illogical bias. Heightened odds of success by a factor of 1,000 simply advances the probability. Furthermore the use of any ordinary language cipher radically reduces randomness because it requires meaningfulness on two levels. The odds of success approach certainty when the combinations produce recognizable units. This is validity that doesn't need or rely on ancillary mathematical calculations. In such a case, the mathematical terms simply provide a quantitative metaphor. By either evaluative method, specific intentionality achieved incontrovertible results.

Second, the validity of the Dedication's coded statement, "These sonnets all by Vere [Ever]", cannot be discounted for lack of a verb, because the verb is implied and thus meaningful without its use. The unmistakable meaning is: "These sonnets ARE all by Vere". Rollett appears to discount the decryption based on a post facto arbitrary rule, that all encoded communications must have a verb. Grammatical meaning usually does call for a verb, and this lies behind the Friedmans' rule, except in the case of an identity statement, where

¹³ *Great Oxford*, Richard Malim, gen. ed., Parapress Ltd., Tunbridge Wells UK, 2004, pp. 253-66

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one factor equals the other. Literalist grammar rules have no veto power over that obvious a message.

Lastly, the assertion that the code so evident in Rollett's discovery could not have existed in the era when it was written, has no basis either in logic or history. The prima facie proof for the code is the fact itself, the Dedication page of the Sonnets. The code system existed and it was applied from the diplomatic to the literary field. That we have no equivalently complex messages on record can be easily explained by the secret nature of the messages themselves. They weren't written to be preserved. This was.

The interesting question is, was the Dedication page decoded and that solution written down by anyone before Rollett? To our knowledge, it was not. This is fateful. Vere's artistic identity became a casualty of time. The chivalric tradition knew nothing of authorship as an achievement rather just the opposite and the English civil wars cared nothing for attributing literary honor to an aristocrat. After 1700, only confused rumors remained of the Oxford/Wriothesley/Shake-Speare history. "[O]f course, this [authorship] concealment has extended through the ages, proliferated over time, and become the inherited paradigm for every succeeding generation."¹⁴

III Rollett Receding from the Oxfordian Continent

Rollett continued his minor apostasy with successive articles published by the De Vere Society Newsletter (June, October 2007) to wit: "I find myself in the somewhat unenviable position of placing before members of the Society evidence which tells strongly against Oxford as the real Shakespeare."¹⁵

His first reason to doubt Oxford as Shakespeare lay, not in a counter-proof against the Sonnets' decryption he himself had made, but in the observation that the first seventeen Sonnets did not include any recommended bride. As of September 1590 Lord Burghley proposed Elizabeth de Vere, Oxford's daughter and Burghley's grand-daughter. The Sonnets didn't. The syllogism runs as follows: a father poetically proposing marriage between Southampton

¹⁴ Roper, *Great Oxford*, p.149

¹⁵ De Vere Society Newsletter, June 2007, p. 17

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and a maiden would mention her, but the Sonnets' author did not mention Elizabeth de Vere. Therefore her father Oxford did not write Shake-Speare's marriage Sonnets.

Rollett secondly questioned Sonnet 125. He concentrated on the initial rhetorical question, "Wer't ought to me I bore the canopy, / With my extern the outward honoring, / Or layd great bases for eternitie, / Which proves more short than wast or ruining?" (1609 quarto quoted by Rollett)

His interpretation saw this as a subjunctive phrase, meaning "Would it have meant anything to me if I had borne the canopy?" In addition to considering the line pure hypothesis and non-identifying, he felt that Oxford "was too high a status to carry the pole of a canopy in a [royal] procession and not being a Knight of the Garter would not have been eligible to carry the canopy over the anointing of the sovereign James I."

Further, "it is inconceivable that Oxford ever carried or would have carried or would have aspired to carry [a pole of] the canopy over Queen Elizabeth or King James on any occasion. He could therefore never have written about himself, 'Wer't ought to me I bore the canopy?' Any Oxfordian interpretation of Sonnet 125 must take this on board."

The upshot from Rollett is that the author of this Sonnet must have been a "person of middle rank, not Oxford," or that Oxford poetically licensed himself to the pretense. Rollett did not carry out the logic of this statement, which is that if Oxford didn't write Sonnet 125, neither did he write any other Sonnet in the book. They are all by the same hand. He was then in the position of finding a rationale for someone else to be writing the poems and having done so. The prospect became too much to take on and still make sense.

To explain the "suborned Informer" phrase ending Sonnet 125, for instance, Rollett hypothesized that Southampton was betrayed by his enemies, who framed him with an accomplice [the informer]. To explain Sonnet 124's "thralled discontent", again against Southampton, he suggested members of the Bye plot. "Fortune's bastard" in Sonnet 124 was tied to Robert Dudley, who had a legitimacy hearing shortly before Oxford died. Since Oxford

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couldn't have written Sonnet 124 in the two days after the hearing and before his death, therefore he was ruled out as author of this Sonnet as well.

I comment on these explanations below and try to find in them an alternative to Rollett's previous position, that Oxford wrote the Sonnets under a pseudonym.

IV The Marriage Sonnets and Elizabeth de Vere

Given that Rollett has residual credibility from his remarkable code discovery, his insupportable reasoning should not pass without comment.

Judging the first seventeen "marriage" sonnets as not Oxfordian, based on the fact that "Oxford's daughter is not in the frame", starts from a dubious assumption, that Oxford could/would/should have included his daughter in the poems, and follows on to a faulty conclusion, he didn't write them. The immediate riposte is why might NOT Oxford have wanted to mention his daughter Elizabeth in effect pimp her to tradition for the satisfaction of on-lookers far in the future?

There have been various explanations: that it was a political marriage to strengthen Southampton's succession to the monarchy; that Oxford had doubted Elizabeth de Vere's legitimacy, and poetry about her might stir controversy; that the purpose of the marriage sonnets was to encourage the heir to marry and produce heirs, not extol the bride; that general knowledge about Southampton being Oxford's son presented reason for poetic discretion.

But ignored in Rollett's argument is the assumed connection between the 'marriage' Sonnets and Burghley's marriage match between two de Vere siblings, Wriothesley and Elizabeth. This assumption fires a controversy between the two sides of the 'Prince Tudor' theory. The idea threatens to discredit Oxfordian credibility. In fact there is no evidence that Burghley's marriage plan had Oxford's co-operation—that Oxford wrote the marriage sonnets to promote a political, incestuous marriage plan which Burghley made in September 1590. Oxford wrote the seventeen poems, apropos of Wriothesley's seventeenth year, 1590, and Oxford's fortieth, as alluded to in

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Sonnet 2. They are set in Spring or Summer. No Sonnet verses support Burghley's plan or its date.

The empirical fact is Oxford didn't (mis)use Elizabeth de Vere and produced a suite of poems both fatherly and immortal, which served as the preamble to a highly complex work of history. Its purpose as a royal family chronicle has still not received widespread recognition. Hank Whittemore's *The Monument* offers the most detailed theory tying the poems to historical events. But there were ample indications in the 1590's that Southampton figured into the succession crisis as the child of Elizabeth I and Oxford. Thomas Nashe's "Choice of Valentines" captured the contemporaneous understanding of the principals:

Pardon sweet flower of matchless poetry
And fairest bud that red rose ever bore. . .
Ne blame my verse of loose unchastity
For painting forth the things that hidden are

The loaded language of wRiOtheSIey (ROSE) being the "flower" connected to "matchless poetry" (Oxford) and "fairest" (to rhyme with Verest, i.e., truest) "bud" of the Elizabethan red rose, has enough allusions to the Vere anagram, to forth/fourth (in Dutch, fourth is "deVierde") and bore (a homonym of the Vere crest animal the boar), plus the Queen's characteristic red-rose Lancaster symbolism to show there was no rumor of Southampton's lineage. It was known truth.

Southampton was the butterfly in a golden cocoon. He received inexplicable royal favor. He was discussed as a candidate in 1593 for Knight of the Garter at nineteen, unheard of outside the monarch's blood family. But both Elizabeth and Oxford had been scandalized by accusations of illegitimacy, and Southampton was reputedly born a bastard.¹⁶ This was a level of scandal sufficient to embarrass a nation permanently. The Oxford dynasty ended still borne.

¹⁶ Sears, Elisabeth, *Shakespeare and the Tudor Rose*, Meadow Geese Press, Marshfield Hills Massachusetts, 2003, p.17

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Hence any close connection between the aristocrat-writer Oxford and the national literary hero aka Shake-Speare was a consummation English governance devoutly did not wish. The anonymous narrator told the whole tale in the Sonnets, which seems to minutely parallel the aristocrat's life and loyalties.

Sonnet 33 intimates the birth of the saga: "Even so MY SUN one early morn did shine." In Latin, morn is *sub lucem*, toward light. My sun implies My royal son. 'Early' is anagramic to 'real' in the Spanish idiom, *real del Rey*, idiomatically the royal or one true King. The full line evokes the poignant message, 'Even so MY SON THE ROYAL ONE TOWARD LIGHT did shine.' A King was born. But Oxford was denied that 'sun', simultaneously his King and his own son. By what is expressed in the poem, the son would be denied his rightful Kingship as well: "Suns of the world may stain [be obscured] when heavens sun staineth' [is obscured]. At the ending couplet, Oxford left no doubt of whom he wrote: the letters for 'Wriothesley' are embedded as an anagram in the thirteenth line, signing to posterity what Time and Fortune have hidden.

Rollett's arbitrary claim that Oxford had nothing to do with the first seventeen Sonnets is a microcosm of the entire authorship dispute. In foreclosing a direction of inquiry bursting with evidence, he substantially submitted to the prevailing doctrinal denial. That position does not so much fail to reason, as refuse to reason in full. It is a conscious or unconscious aversion to pursue the truth if the truth involves uncomfortable new information. For a linguistic example, "fresh" is used sparingly in the Sonnets, but it communicates much more than adjectival inference. Fresh in Dutch is *vers*, homonymic to Vere, as is *verres*, Latin for boar; and *ver* French for worm. To find these puns in the works, one must be willing to permit the possibility of motives to make them. Avoiding an author's self-referring puns and cues amounts to avoiding the author himself.

V Sonnet 125

Were't aught to me I bore the canopy,
With my extern the outward honouring,
Or laid great bases for eternity,

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Which prove more short than waste or ruining?
Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour
Lose all and more by paying too much rent,
For compound sweet forgoing simple savour,
Pitiful thrivers, in their gazing spent?
No; let me be obsequious in thy heart,
And take thou my oblation, poor but free,
Which is not mix'd with seconds, knows no art,
But mutual render, only me for thee,
Hence, thou suborn'd informer! A true soul
When most impeach'd stands least in thy control.

Rollett's argument against Oxford as author of this Sonnet turns on the question of who did or didn't carry a pole of the canopy. Ceremonial procession in the English monarchy is not mere portage, and the word 'bear' is not limited to fardel bearing. Nevertheless Rollett delimited the meaning of the term and thus threw doubt on the extensive literature proving that Oxford was an integral, honored, hereditary fixture in any royal triumphal event of his time, a primary function of which was to participate ceremonially 'bearing' [conveying] the canopy toward the altar or throne.

Like the other nobles involved, he witnessed, he accompanied, he guarded in honor, he forwarded the procession of the canopy without and the office of majesty within. In sum, he bore the canopy onward, whether proceeding in front or to the side, indoors or out, on horseback and on foot, with or without the Sword of State.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ward, B.M., *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604*, John Murray, London, 1928 facsimile Kennikat Press, Port Washington NY, Ruth Loyd Miller, editor, p. 293 en passim; Sears p. 75 en passim; Stritmatter, Roger, *Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible*, Oxenford Press, Northampton Massachusetts, 2003, pp. 122-5; C & D Ogburn p. 779; Rendall, Gerard H., *Shakespeare Sonnets and Edward De Vere*, John Murray, London, 1930, pp. 277-9; Barrell, Charles Wisner, "Newly Discovered Oxford-Shakespeare Pictorial Evidence", *The Shakespeare Fellowship Quarterly*, April 1944 cited in <http://www.sourcetext.com/sourcebook/library/barrell/21-40/22pictorial.htm>); D'Ewes, Sir Symonds, *Complete Journal of the House of Lords and House of Commons Throughout the Whole Reign of Queen Elizabeth of Glorious Memory*, (1693) cited in Shakespeare Authorship Sourcebook, <http://www.sourcetext.com/sourcebook/library/barrell/21-40/22.htm>

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To indicate the inaccuracy of Rollett's attenuated concept concerning who bore the canopy in a royal ritual procession, here is a contemporaneous description of the November 24, 1588 solemn thanksgiving, wherein Oxford was to the left of Elizabeth's chariot and the Earl of Shrewsbury to the right, with the Sword of State borne between by Lord Marquess Earl of Winchester:

And after by two noblemen along the church was led,
With a gold canopy carried o'er her head.¹⁸

The "after" means after the ceremony was transferred from outdoors to St. Paul's. The "two noblemen" could not be just any two, but had to be the most noble. At that point:

there can be little doubt that they must have been the "two noblemen" who carried the golden Canopy over Her Majesty's head as she walked up the Nave of St. Paul's and took her seat in the Choir. Moreover, as Earl Marshall [Shrewsbury] and Lord Great Chamberlain [Oxford], they ranked as the two senior Earls in the realm; and the only holder of a title higher than that of Earl at this time was the Marquess of Winchester, who carried the Sword of State.¹⁹

Of this quite transparent description, Rollett apparently had no knowledge. He wrote, "No member of the higher nobility (Viscounts, Earls, Marquesses, Dukes) is ever recorded as carrying a canopy over Queen Elizabeth or King James in a public procession, as far as I have been able to find out."²⁰

He directly states Ward mistook the St. Paul's Nave ceremony for the outdoor ceremony, not noting that Ward's entire account is corroborated by an anonymous ballad of the occasion, partially quoted above. The procession is plain not only in Ward's, but in C & D Ogburn's, Rendall's, and Elisabeth Sears' descriptions. Since these are major studies of Oxford's history with Elizabeth, Rollett has invented a square wheel instead and it doesn't roll.

¹⁸ C & D Ogburn, p. 778

¹⁹ Ward, pp. 293-5

²⁰ De Vere Society Newsletter, June 2007, p. 18

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But catching him up on details is hardly the main point. No restricted grammatical usage of the verb 'bear', to exclude the symbolic 'bear witness' in favor of the literalist 'bearing' a canopy pole, can discount Oxford's theocratic service or remove his explicit poetic testimony regarding it. He confessed he was "a hater of ceremonies".²¹ But his alienation from court-life never affected his homage or sacraments. Sonnet 125 plainly mentions them.

The semantic confusion about Sonnet 125 begins with the difficult first line, difficult in its structure and also in its reference. We are accustomed to think that "Were't aught to me I bore the canopy, / With my extern the outward honouring," means not the rhetorical, "was it NOTHING to me I bore the canopy", but, "would it be ANYTHING to me if I bore the canopy?" The subject matter of the Sonnet becomes confusing once we fix on the latter. (Rollett's 'ought' and most editions' 'aught' were interchangeable spellings in 1600, so that isn't a factor.) Our impulse is to wonder if the author valued bearing the canopy at all if he has to ask someone else about it. However, in my view, 'aught' as 'anything' is a fundamental mis-definition of the now archaic term 'aught' that trips up understanding the very straight-forward and heart-felt poem. Once the text is clarified, the only excuse not to understand it is that it clearly includes who the Sonnets' author was.

We can benefit from Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens's advice on evaluating evidence in Shakespeare,²² to wit: Read the statute. Read the whole statute. Read it in its contemporary context. Read the legislative history [i.e., what is behind it]. Use common sense.

Applying that standard, we gain by reading the whole poem instead of isolating one line. Sonnet 125 as a unit juxtaposes chivalric honor versus courtier pretense and gain. It is a tableau of the medieval ethos vanishing in the new barbarism. The individual lines serve that theme.

²¹ *Letters and Poems of Edward, Earl of Oxford*, Katherine Chiljan, ed., privately published, SF, 1998, p. 66

²² Stevens. John Paul, "The Shakespeare Canon of Statutory Construction", U. of Pennsylvania Law Review, V. 140, No. 4, April 1992, pp.1373-87

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Another means of understanding Sonnet 125 is by way of the author's language background. Latin was the language of the educated. We get etymological insight if we seek the Latin meaning for the materiality concept implicit in the poem and then check to see if the English matches. The primary meaning for "res", denoting "thing" is "property, wealth"; and "in the plural is often scarcely distinguishable from goods, possessions."²³ "Res" is definitionally equivalent to 16th century Scottish-English "aught": "Possession; that which one possesses as his own; personal property".²⁴

Rollett asserted that the OED definition of aught / ought pointed to "anything". Its first listed meaning though is not "anything". That is the secondary meaning, abstracted over time. Its primary meaning in the OED reads: "that which one possesses as his own, personal property". Accordingly, it was also part of a compound word of the time: aught-greedy, in our idiom, money-hungry or greedy for goods.²⁵

It makes perfect sense semantically then for Oxford, so identified historically as integral to the feudal monarchy, if slurred, to have retorted, was it would it be gain and goods to me that I bore the canopy? It is a clear-cut rhetorical question that starts a litany in the eight-line argument. The answer in the six-line resolution is of course No.

Only Oxford could have written Sonnet 125's argument and resolution. The nobles about him couldn't. No commoner outside could have either without violating station and place, never mind the poetic genius involved. The Earls of Shrewsbury and Winchester weren't writers, nor the Knights of the Garter, nor the Barons of the Cinque Ports. None was privileged to offer oblations and obsequies as the writer was. All this subscribes the text of Sonnet 125, written in the first person singular by the man committed to his duties as Lord Great Chamberlain. He addressed his king and it is intentionally ambiguous who that was. The sonnet is complexly tragic since it would not be his "lovely" boy.

²³ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, A. Souter, ed., Clarendon Press at Oxford, UK, 1968, p. 1625

²⁴ *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, C.T. Onions, ed., et al., Clarendon Press, Oxford, UK, 2nd Ed., 1991, p. 87:783

²⁵ *OED*, p. 87:783

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In that context, the meaning of the line, 'Were't aught to me I bore the canopy' transforms from the aimless 'Would it be anything to me if I bore the canopy' to: 'Were it for goods and gain that I bore the canopy?' The next lines follow in the same mood: "Or laid great bases for eternity, / Which prove more short than waste or ruining?" He had bankrupted himself on explorations intended to bring wealth to England from the New World and diminished his patrimony producing plays to unite the English folk into a nation. Was that personal gain and goods?

We sense behind the argument a religious English aristocrat echoing Ecclesiastes' "All is vanity." He had gambled vast lands for the future ("laid great bases" meaning staked or wagered, not surveyed) and seen it all vanish; had seen courtiers living for place but losing their souls; had watched corrupted appetites, covetous seekers pitiful in their weakness. His No in the ninth line, echoes Sonnets 123's and 124's Noes in the first and fifth lines (a four-line spacing pattern). He affirmed his faith in a morally ordered universe. Opposing gain, he offered pure devotion, service true and generous, which if attacked by base souls was beyond their power to injure. Therefore, in the final couplet, the climax is biblical, get thee behind me, Satan: 'HENCE, thou suborn'd Informer!' whatever that power be in the new clock-driven calculating universe.

Rollett fundamentally mis-defined and misinterpreted this important Sonnet, running from its essence, that the Lord Great Chamberlain and the writer were one and the same man.

VI Sonnet 126

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power
Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle hour;
Who has by waning grown, and therein show'st
Thy lovers withering as thy sweet self grow'st;
If Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,
As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,
She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill
May time disgrace and wretched minutes kill.

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Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!
She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure:
Her audit, though delay'd, answer'd must be,
And her quietus is to render thee.

Starting from no understanding of the context of the author, namely, at this late point, even who he was and to whom and why he spoke, Rollett could not comprehend Sonnet 126 either. It has nothing to do with Southampton's son, born the year after Oxford died, or the twisting of the Sonnet to suit a theory of Nature conquering all, as proposed in the June 2007 De Vere Society Newsletter.

Rollett's Sonnet 126 interpretation relied upon R.J.C. Wait's *The Background to Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Chatto & Windus 1972). That posited a concept of Nature's cycle enclosing the "lovely boy" theoretically Southampton's own son and not Oxford's, Southampton himself whom Nature must some time claim as mortal like his father and forebears. Since Southampton's son was not born until 1605, and Rollett's interpretation dated the poem to after that point, Rollett got caught in a snare searching out an author who died between the son's birth and the printing of the Sonnets in 1609. The only poet he could ransack from history was Sir Edward Dyer, thus offering a non sequitur explanation of Shakespearean authorship capping a confused literary interpretation cluttered with inexplicably disconnected historical events.

But seen through the lens of Southampton being eclipsed as the kingdom's rightful heir, who must now reconcile himself to history's theft of his divine right, Sonnet 126 is an undaunted and loving envoi in his honor. True, he was not raised up to majesty in Time's history, but in the poem and Christ's higher kingdom, majesty shines within him. Kings are divine. By waning in history, he grows yet greater in the spiritual realm. Even if inscrutable Nature should restore his right, disgracing earthly history in the process, nevertheless Nature must also relinquish her hold on him, being herself a subject of Time:

If Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,
As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,
She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill
May time disgrace and wretched minutes kill.

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Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!
She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure:

For the historical Moment his kingship was surrendered, its divinity never. In the temporal realm Southampton is made a sacrifice, to be redeemed in Heaven. The Christ archetype and perhaps that of another sacrificial rite, the ox, lie back of this profoundly accepting religious verse. Oxford sensed that Fate had decreed the loss to Nature, which explains the otherwise inexplicable line in Sonnet 33: "Suns of the world may stain [fall into shade] when Heaven's sun staineth."

Rendall noted importantly that Sonnet 126 is not a Sonnet at all but a canzonet of six couplets, an envoi.²⁶ It memorializes the end of something--in my reading, the Henry IX monarchy; in the writer's soul perhaps, the surrender of deserved yet unbestowed Kingship. The Oxford dynasty of kings, invisible to history, became immortalized by its tragic gifted patriarch.

VII The Power of a Poetic Monument

The twelve-line Sonnet 126 presents a clue about the structure of the entire work. We can't simply call the missing two lines an aberration and stop thinking. What other Sonnets differ from the iambic pentameter fourteen-line structure and why? In contrast to the shortened Sonnet 126, Sonnet 99 has fifteen lines. Sonnet 66 truncates rhyme and # 145 shortens the count-pattern from ten to eight beats per line, or 28 dropped spaces. As 4 times 7 equals 28, the length of the lunar month, this combination suggests the sex, even the identity of the poem's subject. Elizabeth represented Diana, Cynthia, the moon itself. The stylistic irregularities signal that the book was more than a succession of imaginary thoughts, but rather a conscious aesthetic design.

Alastair Fowler wrote a revolutionary monograph on Elizabethan triumphal forms, which broadens our understanding of the Sonnets. He suggested that 99, 126, and 145 the atypical Sonnets are the left cornerstones of successively smaller pyramids from an initial base of ten Sonnets that start at

²⁶ Rendall, p. 280

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99 and lead to the peak of Sonnet 154. Sonnet 126 in particular cornerstones the last pyramid of 28 digits, 28 representing heavenly perfection.²² That symbol sits atop the pyramidal / poetic structure. (Sonnet 136, on the subject of the writer being nothing but “will”, is treated spatially as just that, a blank, so as to maintain the pyramid’s symmetry.)²⁷

Sonnet 99 adds a fifteenth line to achieve a symbolic year of 365 lines, counted from Sonnets 77 to the mid-point of #77 and #126, which is Sonnet 102, six times seventeen. Sonnet 126 is the end of the ‘Century’ that started with Sonnet 27. In turn, the twenty-four (Time’s day) sonnets preceding Sonnet 77 and succeeding Sonnet 102 are replete with images of Time.²⁸ Oxford evidently believed above these events was a transcendent history (“the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come”). His reflection of it became a royal pavane.

Sonnet 126, appropriately to a monarch’s saga, constitutes the hundredth and last Sonnet. Whittemore expounded on the ‘Century’ in *The Monument*, p. xxxiii. The hundred poems tell of Southampton’s Passion, his sacrifice, and ultimate deliverance. Sonnet 126 is the last act, the denouement, of the theocratic tragedy. The remaining twenty-six Sonnets in the book complete the Century’s side-symmetry, matching the initial twenty-six. Then there is a coda of two ending poems that commemorate Southampton’s origins.

Whittemore’s structural schema is perfectly correct. As in all medieval era triumphal forms, the king stands in the center. Fowler’s contribution was to sketch the upreaching pyramidal framework.²⁹ The Sonnets’ timeline is not just linear Time. The temporal rises upward to a peak, meeting the divine or the Millennial.

‘SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS’ didn’t come out of nothing. Thomas Watson’s ‘Hekatompathia’ contained a ‘Century’ of stanzas as the basis of its structure. Watson dedicated it to Oxford. There seems some possibility that

²⁷ Fowler, Alastair, *Triumphal forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry*, Cambridge at the University Press, London, 1970, p. 187

²⁸ Fowler, p.193-7

²⁹ Fowler, p.186-7,195

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Oxford had a hand in the writing.³⁰ The Stratfordian belief-system, incapable of biographical connection and human motive, shrugs about the Sonnets' origin and touts pure "imagination" as a fig leaf. T.S. Eliot apologized for the prevailing critical tradition when he wrote, "This autobiography is written by a foreign man in a foreign tongue, which can never be translated." On the contrary, we need not blind ourselves to the facts, biographical and otherwise, but can understand the Sonnets' depth in its historical context, the English Renaissance, with appreciation for that era's literary forms and devices. The universal aspects glow the greater when we do.

But once we accept there is an historical context to the Sonnets, we embark on a risky business, which is to admit the author of the Shakespeare canon was a genuine individual in and of his time, who had passionate motives and wrote accordingly, not *sui generis*, a demigod, whom it is revolting of us to doubt and superfluous to identify. The latter approach perpetuates a tangled lie. Voicing the hidden truth is always a revolutionary act. But it is a necessary evolutionary act.

Our discussion itself has evolved from linguistic analysis to the aesthetics of 16th century art. "In the renaissance, the enduring poetic ideal of memorability (*monumentum exegi*) may well have been taken to involve spatial or numerical disposition."³¹ Whether from the hermetic influences of John Dee, the numerology of Plato or the Bible, or simply the example of Pythagorean harmonies in the construction of the cathedrals, Number, shape, and Word embodied mystical truth to the era's artisans, especially to Oxford.

By the same token, literacy was power. Both socially and diplomatically, he used linguistic concealments. We know them now as emblazonments on the field that was his written work. But the structural aspect went far beyond anagrams. 'SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS' have survived as a device from the 16th century architectonic tradition. Lacking that perspective, hardly anyone after his time has managed to make sense of it. The inverted pyramids in the Dedication are hints of the pyramidal monument that follows. Learned

³⁰ *Shakespeare Identified in Edward De Vere and Oxfordian Vistas*, J. Thomas Looney, Ed. Ruth Loyd Miller, 3rd Edition, Vol. I, Kennikat Press, Port Washington New York, 1975, p. 509

³¹ Fowler, p. 19

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Oxford was neither the infallible Magus nor the secular god that our tradition has worshipped and yet underestimated. He was an artist who imbued meaning in every level of his work. 'SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS' was his most aesthetic most religious creation.

An obvious example of religious influence is the parable of God's net lifting 153 souls into eternal life, (John 21:11). To that hermeneutically significant number, in the Sonnets Oxford added Southampton as one more soul delivered up by grace.

The numerological explanation for the same formation is that 153 is the arithmetic sum of the numbers from one to seventeen. This would be meaningful to an attuned scholar, especially if he were the 17th Earl of Oxford. To change the geometric formation to a pyramid with three sides instead of four, each side would have 51 blocks, i.e., three times seventeen per side and 153 total. Like that formation the work contains three major parts, but divided into a 26/100/26 pattern with a two-sonnet coda.

There is persuasive evidence that the Sonnets include influences from the Gematria tradition, though primarily in Greek, not Hebrew, with each succeeding Sonnet being on a theme whose totalled Greek letter value once converted to their number equivalents invariably increased, never diminished. This is an essentially unexamined area of Sonnets scholarship. If the study indicates anything, it is that Oxford knew Greek, giving the lie to Stratfordian assertions that Jonson's cryptic statement about "lesse Greek" proves otherwise. The assertions mean to patch the gap between a marginally educated author and the Shakespeare canon. Gematria in the Sonnets would remove any reasonable basis to believe that.³²

To fully comprehend 'SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS' means seeing the work as Pythagorean, architectonic in ambition, as medieval artifice, deeply influenced by cathedralic monuments of divinity on earth. The terms monument and pyramid are equivalents in the Sonnets. Cemetery monuments were often lengthened pyramids or obelisks. Oxford's commitment to embedding Number in the Sonnets is a spiritual gesture akin to workmen

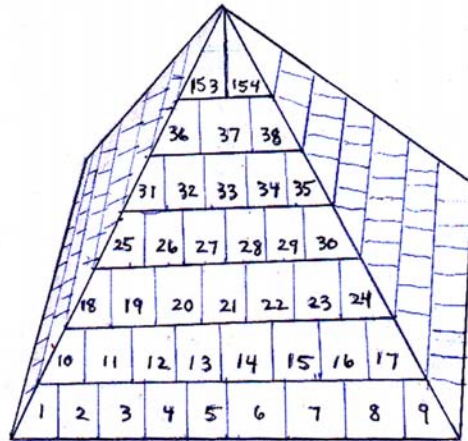
³² Gematria and the Sonnets: <http://www.masoncode.com/Shakespeare-Sonnets.htm>

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leaving their prayers carved in the heights of medieval vaults. It continued his pattern of memorializing his identity within the poems and plays.

The pyramidal character of the 154 Sonnets is quite accessible. If the reader will imagine a foundation course of blocks basing a four-sided pyramid, simply count nine blocks per side for the first row, then rows of eight, seven, six, and five per side, ascending into a top course of three per side, topped by a two-block pyramid crown, which corresponds to the work's two-part coda. The sum of each side, 38, times 4=152, and the two-block cap makes 154. The four-sign seems to be missing in the ascending rows of the pyramid. But it is inherent in the four sides. Four is the multiplier or, as Plato would put it, the quaternary, the Number connected with the realization of the idea. The whole edifice is One, a unity.

154 150
 SONNETS = PSALMS + 4
 4 = Vier
 Vier = Vere
 Vere = 4 SONNETS



Vere's Four-sided Pyramid, 38 blocks x 4 = 152
 + 2-block cap = 154 Sonnets
 (*153-154 Sonnets)

Comparing Vere's 154 Sonnets to its archetype, David's Psalms, totaling 150, we see that four times nine+eight+seven+six+five+three Sonnets and the two-part coda equal 154, four more Sonnets than Psalms. Four in German is

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“vier”, a homonym of Vere. In medieval numerology, four was considered the root principle of existence and also the “fountain of all virtue”. Nine symbolized the spirit.³³

Their product (4 times 9, virtue compounded with the spirit) equals the sum of the first eight numbers, 36. This is the total number of blocks in the base course of the Sonnets’ pyramid monument.

The classical tradition of numerology in literature peaked with the Elizabethan Renaissance, perhaps because millennial belief gradually faded after that time. Mechanical-clock time had eclipsed the power of Apocalyptic Time. The old and new remained side by side, e.g., the Jewish millennial tradition, which also sanctified the number 36. The Jewish legend said there are 36 just (virtuous) men, and if any one of them is untrue, mankind will suffocate in a single cry. Their pure devotion would sustain mankind until the Messiah forecloses historical Time.³⁴ It was the Jewish apostate, Sabbatai Zevi, who declared the “last” Millennium in 1666 when thousands made pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

I have discussed these numerological aspects of the work in part to give the context for Section X, which concentrates on the number four as a talisman of Oxford’s identity and a tenet of his belief.

VIII The Misuse of Number

The discussion of Number also brings us to the last arguments Rollett presented for doubting Oxford was Shake-Speare. In the De Vere Society Newsletter (October 2007), he stated, “I cast around for some objective way to test [the Oxford authorship] hypothesis, since that is the way scientists work, and I was trained as a scientist.” He selected the related words sith, sithence, and since, which appear in the limited extant Oxfordian works, and he compared their quantitative incidence with any such words appearing in

³³ Fowler, Alastair, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time*, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1964, p. 279, 270

³⁴ Schwarz-Bart, Andre, *The Last of the Just*, Atheneum Publishers, New York, 1961, pp. 4-5

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the Shakespeare canon. His conclusion after examining a sample of about fifty in Oxford and 260 in Shakespeare was that "Shakespeare's pattern of usage of these three words is wholly incompatible with Oxford's, indicating almost certainly that they were two different writers."

Voltaire wrote, "Doubt is not a pleasant condition but certainty is absurd."

With an extremely small sample of terms that Rollett admits are "function words", of no normative value to the writer(s), with no recognition of comparatively high usage in formal letters to Lord Burghley versus low usage in Shakespearean comic or tragic works of art, and with no explanation how these terms can fill five columns in the Oxford English Dictionary and yet be "perfect synonyms", we have too little data to support any kind of conclusion, scientific or otherwise.

The quantitative study of language has always stalled against the obstacle that human expression is not autonomic. Therefore it is not naturally conducive to mathematical prediction. Quantitative literary analysis is crude technology in search of work. On the other hand, in every writer's soul move concepts that arise irrepressibly and must be recognized as significant. But that never means the most oft-written words are the most significant, or significant at all. Only words and phrases unique to the writer become useful as identifiers. Of these there are thousands tying Oxford to the Shakespeare canon. William Plumer Fowler's 'Shakespeare Revealed in Oxford's Letters' is a good place to start counting them. Rollett made no reference to it.

The next verbalism under examination was 'earnestly desire', which appeared quite often in Oxford's applications to Lord Burghley but infrequently in the plays and poems. Rollett set the ratio of Shakespeare's word-volume to Oxford's as 40-1. Therefore he concluded, "[T]he complete absence of these particular characteristic writing habits of Oxford's from Shakespeare's works suggests strongly that Oxford was not Shakespeare, and would seem to be on its own almost sufficient to rule him out completely." He did allow the objection: "Another point made was that 'earnestly desire' is a kind of formula, which one might use frequently in writing letters, but not in real life, and therefore not in a play." I would agree with that and add that if I wrote 'earnestly desire' in a poem or play, I wouldn't expect to attain immortality.

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The numerical sample is once again so small, the conclusion so narrowly sought and arrived at, that the inquiry is not a contribution to knowledge.

This judgment applies equally to Rollett's last bit of grammar being checked as an identifying feature, the difference between *did go* and *went*. The phrase, 'I did go home' differs from "I went home". The first seems archaic because of the auxiliary verb 'did'. But in modern usage 'did' continues to serve the purpose of emphasis and utility in the questioning function. 'Did you hear me?' as opposed to 'Heard you me?' Rollett's conclusion is that Oxford's usages were more old-fashioned than Shakespeare's. This would not be surprising, as the moniker 'Shake-Speare' did not appear in print until 1593, when Oxford was forty-three years old. His earlier work would have been under someone else's name, been destroyed for political reasons, been held in secret, or kept as juvenilia. In sum, the sample phrases are far from significant, the difference between the putative authors' use of 'did' slight, and the investigation equivocal.

Rollett's limited, even picayune, quantitative inquiries in the *De Vere Society Newsletter* articles pale before his astounding, paradigm-shifting decoding of the Dedication page. His earlier discovery ipso facto eliminates the relevancy of any subsequent minor textual qualms. Ironically, on the Newsletter page after his discussion of Oxfordian/ Shakespearean word-usages, he submitted a letter celebrating that a 17th century owner of the First Folio had written, "lease for making" after the actor Shakespeare's name. The gist was the owner knew Shakespeare's reputation for writing the First Folio was a lie. Rollett wrote, "I am inclined to regard this as possibly the most important anti-Stratfordian discovery of all time." I prefer his Dedication discovery. But is it true?

IX Re-Proving the Truth

To this point, Rollett's five-word decryption has never been disproven, nor has the embedded Cardano Grille message WRIOTHESLEY. The proof appears sound and grows stronger when it is carried out in full.

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TO. THE. ONLIE. BEGETTER. OF.
THESE. INSVING. SONNETS.
M^r. W. H. ALL. HAPPINESSE.
AND. THAT. ETERNITIE.
PROMISED.

BY.
OVR. EVER-LIVING. POET.
WISHETH.
THE. WELL-WISHING.
ADVENTVRER. IN.
SETTING.
FORTH.

T. T.

THESE SONNETS ALL BY EVER [E VER/VERE] are the words that precede the 6-2-4 markers through nearly two complete count cycles. In order to decipher the second 4- count, so as to complete that 6-2-4 cycle, we count four more markers and arrive at THE. Two 6-2-4 cycles clearly do not complete an understandable message. We read only THESE SONNETS ALL BY VERE THE. Thus, another cycle begins with a third 6-count, and reaches FORTH.

This would be meaningful if we understand Vere to be the FORTH/FOURTH of something. In Dutch, de Vere's homonym "deVierde" means fourth. He was also considered the fourth in ceremonial status below the Queen after Leicester, Burghley, and Walsingham, later Burghley, Walsingham, and Hatton. He was fourth in precedence signing official documents e.g., April 8, 1603, concerning boats to London and fourth in position in Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council.³⁵

There is also a circumstantial theory that he was the mysterious "40", James' secret correspondent before the Stuart succession. However stopping at FORTH, the third -6- in the code, aborts the third cycle of the 6-2-4 cipher.

³⁵ Folger Shakespeare Library documents, quoted in Roper, p.182; Frontispiece of de Vere fourth in order of status in 1589: Sir Symonds D'Ewes, *Complete Journal*.

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Since there is more data in the surface message, we continue counting the mid-line markers, looking for a meaningful sign with the next -2-count. Two markers after FORTH identify just a T, the second of Thomas Thorpe's two initials. T is not meaningful, that is, unless we recognize it as the twentieth letter of the alphabet.

T converted from letter to number symbolism gives it a value of 20. If T equals 20, then we feel persuaded the entire T.T. initial-complex equals 40 and constitutes the message's signature, in lieu of the stationer's assistant's initials. The T's together may be interpreted the Freemason entry arch to knowledge, a subtext to the ordinary language.

The doubled T, equaling 40, numerically completes the third 6-2-4 cycle, leaving the reader the anticipated 4 after O is understood as a blank. At this point in the decryption we need not count four more markers to identify the author. We observe three inverted triangles or pyramids, three V-shapes, and three 6-2-4 cycles of cipher counts, replicating the number of letters in Vere's name, and conveying the covert message that Vere the Fourth wrote all these sonnets, (signed) 40. The decryption is understandable, unique, and unambiguous.

A stickler could protest that only the second T has relevance in the middle of a 6-2-4 keying of the markers. However at this point, with T converted to number-value 20, TT thus equaling 40, the cognate number to Vere/vier confirms the previously revealed name clue.

But it is entirely credible that the cipher continues past the T.T. signature-code. In the Winter 2007 Shakespeare Matters, Kathryn Sharpe of Seattle Washington determined the cipher meant: THESE SONNETS ALL BY EVER [VERE] THE FORTH T. She read the last three ciphers as an instruction: (find) "the fourth T". That locates the word BEGETTER, communicating Vere begat both Wriothesley the subject of the book and the book itself.

She arrived at the same word she would have by starting from T.T. and making the final --4-count of the third 6-2-4 cycle. BEGETTER, that fourth

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word, embeds another TT/4O signature. Thus VERE=vier, FORTH=fourth, TT=4O, and yet another TT=4O embedded in the word BEGETTER, comprise four Four-cognates to confirm the author's identity. The redundant confirmations establish the encryptor's intention to document Vere's producing both the Sonnets and their subject. The entire message: THESE SONNETS ALL BY [VERE] THE FORTH (signed) 4O BEGETTER. At any point beyond Vere's anagram, the decoder has sufficient information for identification.

"4O" was extensively identified with Vere politically and literarily. For an immediate literary "forty" tying Dedication and Sonnets, one could glance from the Dedication page across the binding signatures to the 2nd word of the 2nd Sonnet and find the word "forty":

"When forty [OXFOR-D] winters shall besiege thy brow " To finesse the point of who is involved in this poem and work, 'When forty winters shall...' contains all the letters for an anagram of Wriothesley.

As a contiguous Vere identifier, indicating the ubiquity of autobiographical Vere puns in 'Shake-Speare', the word 'winter' in French is *l'hiver*, a near-homonym for E. Vere.

X Vere's Talisman Made of Four

We have seen considerable evidence that the symbol Four figured significantly in Oxford's name, identity, literary work, even the identifying dedication of his posthumous poem cycle. We survey the etymological and classical background here.

The Old English spelling for four was *feower*, spoken with a soft fricative sound, a near homonym to Vere. Both *feower* and Vere are very close to the Dutch and German *vier*, also meaning four. Oxford was evidently familiar with those languages, having served in the Low Countries and visited Sturmius in Germany. *Veritas* for truth. *ver* for spring, and *verres* for boar, in Latin; *vers* for fresh in Dutch; *verde* the reverse anagram for de Vere in Spanish; *ver* for worm and *l'hiver* for winter in French; *vere* for rings and "*avere e avere*" for 'to have is to have', from the Italian these evidently held

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talismanic meaning to him, for they are all placed in the works as though badges on his shield. Here we consult the concordances on the presence of the number Four throughout his writing.

Section VII discussed the numerological importance of Four. Its incidence, otherwise inexplicable, in the Shakespeare canon goes beyond learning. There seems to have been in the Oxfordian psyche absolute kinship for four as number and banner: four throned ones; four kings; four nobles; four captains; four barons; four worthies, four citizens; four Volsces; four strangers. There are four foot; four yards; four dozen; four miles; four corners; four winds; four pasterns, four in front; four on four; four milk-white steeds; four by day; four days; four times; the stroke of four; four o'clock; four feasts; four woodcocks; four score; four score hogsheads; four rogues; four bonds; four loggerheads; four tall fellows; four negatives; four days into four nights; the canopy borne by four; four to dinner; four complexions; staying the odds by adding four; some three or four; three or four hairs; three or four houses; three or four times; three or four marches; three or four thousand; three or four languages; three or four brothers; three or four hogsheads; four years of exile; four fixed moons; and "true" has letters numbering four.

Falstaff had eight four's in a cluster of dialogue; there were four swinge-bucklers; four thrusts through the hose, four Harry 10-shillings; England divided in four; we four; all in Henry IV; four or five already at the house; four or five descents; four or five removes; four or five women that once tended him; and "my life being made of four" in Sonnets 44 and-5, totally 28 lines or, 7 times 4.

We can assume that a religious upbringing made for a multiple of fours: 40 days and 40 nights; 40 years in the desert; 40 days fasting in the wilderness; 40,000 prepared for war; there was not a sword or shield seen among 40,000 in Israel; the Syrians had 40,000 horsemen; Solomon's horse-barns had 40,000 stalls. In Shakespeare, Hamlet loved Ophelia more than 40,000 brothers and Othello exclaimed the wish a slave had 40,000 lives. The sea had 40,000 fathoms; there was a king's 40,000. There were forty moys; forty pence, forty shillings; forty pounds; forty ducals; forty marks; forty hours; forty days; forty fancies; forty paces; forty more; forty

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truncheoners; I could lead forty of them; ye shall have forty sir; and forty let it be.

OxFOR-D had seen forty winters besiege his brow and he requested and received 40 yards of crimson velvet for the King's coronation.

Four was a full number, 40 a plenitude, 40,000 a multitude.

Oxford was fourth in order of precedence below the monarch in certain state matters. The 1589 D'Ewes Queen's portrait testifies to that status. Oxford held the Sword of State on the occasion. There is another Queen's portrait, an official engraving of Elizabeth shown on a ship's deck, reproduced in *Shakespeare Matters*, Winter 2003. A sketch for that portrait, found in John Dee's papers, also depicts the Queen, Burghley, Walsingham, and Leicester, with one more figure, wearing a feathered bonnet. The date would have been earlier than September 1588 when Leicester died.

The November 1588 thanksgiving ballad (discussed in Section V) also mentions someone with a bonnet:

The noble Earl of Oxford then High Chamberlain of England
Rode right before Her Majesty his bonnet in his hand.³⁶

Very possibly he was the same personage, intimately and ceremonially close to the Queen, depicted awkwardly in the historical frame perhaps but undeniably princely. Such portraits implied what they could not say. Oxford's proximity to the monarchy continued in James' reign.

James I referred to Vere as "The Great Oxford". He admired him in life and death. It is a tantalizing mystery why the convicted traitor Southampton was ordered released even before James departed for London in April 1603 to be crowned. Southampton's titles, lands, and wealth were restored and increased. Oxford's annuity of a thousand pounds a year also continued.

³⁶ C & D Ogburn, p. 778

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Circumstantial documentation supports the conjecture that James made a good faith offering (“peace proclaims olives”) to Oxford in July 1602, on condition he co-operate with Robert Cecil in the transition to a Stuart monarchy. Southampton would be freed and restored. Since the Essex Rebellion’s failure, for participation in which Southampton was convicted, left the monarchy an empty vessel for James, and Oxford had always been utterly loyal to Elizabeth and now in his declining years had accepted James’ reign, the olive branch was the means of gaining unified support from a land-based segment of the English aristocracy. Oxford represented Protestant feudal devotion joined to patriotism based on alliances and beliefs independent of Spanish and Puritan religious fanaticism.

The mortal moon hath her eclipse endur’d,
And the sad augurs mock their own presage;
Incertainties now crown themselves assur’d,
And peace proclaims olives of endless age.

The transfer of power depended on a remarkably few individual relationships. The warm communication evident in Akrigg’s Letter 86 appears by the code numbers to have been between very high personages in 1602 Great Britain. “30” was King James VI of Scotland; “24” Elizabeth; “10” Robert Cecil, Elizabeth’s First Secretary after his father Lord Burghley died; and lower numbers for their agents.³⁷ “30’s” unknown correspondent had the highest code number, “40”. He had been recruited to the King’s service, a development mentioned in the previous letter, Letter 85.

Akrigg guessed that “40” was the Earl of Nottingham and Effingham, Admiral Charles Lord Howard. Howard was a good friend of Oxford’s.³⁸ He had purchased the wardship of Southampton for a thousand pounds. Howard had been Oxford’s proxy in the House of Lords in 1601 during the Essex executions, when Oxford was trying to save Southampton. There was no particular reason for James to communicate with Howard “concerning your office”, the Admiralty, which he had held for over fifteen years, or “your

³⁷ Akrigg, C.P.V., *Letters of King James VI & I*, UC Press, Berkeley California, 1984, p. 10

³⁸ C & D Ogburn, p. 1192

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honest and lawful affection to my service”, or any reason to promise “I am no ways to employ you beyond the bounds of your allegiance”. Above all there was no reason to issue a code-name higher than his own unto an officer in the Navy. The office or responsibility newly engaged by Letter 85 seemed personally secret if not secret diplomacy. Howard received no similar communiqué before or after. If he played any role at all, it was not major. Akrigg did not have the context by which to suspect Oxford as the correspondent or Southampton as a possible contender for the throne.

The closing promise in the July 29, 1602 letter was: “So have I for the present no other recompense to send you for your goodwill but my faithful promise that all my dealings with you shall ever be accompanied with these three qualities: honesty, secrecy, and constancy. But as I will deal with you by no other way but by the means of IO, so may ye assure yourself that your strait and steadfast conjunction with him in my service is the only way to enable you both ”³⁹

This language appears to fit a quid pro quo situation among Cecil, James, and Oxford so as to close any Essex Rebellion scars. James’ promise of secrecy is a telling remark. Such vows usually come from below. But Oxford could not have withstood Elizabeth’s finding out he had corresponded with her successor, not with Southampton still within her power.

After 400 years it is unlikely we shall find positive information identifying who “40” was. Secrecy avoids evidence. But there is before us considerable allusive evidence in the Sonnets referring to Southampton in a state crisis, the Shakespeare canon replete with manifold references to the number forty, and an historic diplomatic exchange likely involving James and Oxford which replicates that figure as a code-name.

“40” as a code-name could not have taken long, since Oxford’s name and title each counted to twelve and his ceremonial function eleven letters. The letters of “Edward de Vere Earl of Oxford Great Chamberlain” totals forty. “Earl of Oxford Lord High Chamberlain of England” also totals forty.

³⁹ Akrigg, p. 195

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Oxford's signature as "forty", e.g., "forty winters", [ox-FOR-D l'hi-VER] probably was not lost on his literarily astute admirer, James VI of Scotland. Just two years after July 1602, Oxford was dead, in 1612 his second wife as well. James honored both with commemorative 'Shakespeare' festivals. His attachment to the couple extended into the next generation. Standing in for the "Great Oxford", James gave Susan de Vere away at her 1605 wedding. Her brother in law William Herbert became James' Lord Chamberlain in charge of plays and revels. In the 1620's Herbert evidently shepherded the compilation and publication of the First Folio, Oxford's final shaking his spear "against ignorance".⁴⁰

In sum, it seems reasonable to think that "40" represented in James' diplomatic code a correspondent of the highest social order, even higher than himself, a national hero, a universal genius, and an individual fatefully joined to the English monarchy from birth. He may have been one of history's losers but King James respected his greatness.

XI The Foundation of Existence

Every author, every soul, invents himself out of heredity, experience, and the fiery ether of spirit. It is the age-old journey to embody meaning in and of oneself, the most profound creative act each of us achieves. Edward Vere very early must have identified with his name and title. Sonnet 76 says that VERE EdWARD=EVERy WORD doth almost tell my name. 'Ever' is ubiquitous in Shakespeare. Oxford reasoned in one of his first published essays that the Word was with God, therefore was fit to voice in human secular art for His glory's sake. His surname Vere meant truth and became his spiritual mission.

He identified with the titled name [Ox-FORD] as well, which in time verged into the sound of the number four, as well as being a metaphor for the murmuring voices in the mystic countryside, the musical brook. Hence Arthur Brooke, pseudonymous author of 'Romeus and Juliet'.

In his classical training, which must have been one of the greatest educational transmissions in history, the Platonic concept of soul had a four-fold nature

⁴⁰ C & D Ogburn, pp. 1243-4

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mental, perceptive, expressive, and sensate. Especially, the quaternion (four-based idea) commands the ratios of musical harmony, 1:2:4, a knowledge absorbed by Oxford the musician and poet. In the words of Hierocles, “Nothing can be said or done, unless it proceeds from the four-fold number, as from the root and foundation of all.”⁴¹

“The sacred quaternion, the fountain of perpetual nature the mysterious quadrature, was the base. This quadrature or sacred quaternion, comprehended all number, all the elements, all the powers, energies, and virtues in man: [Mind, understanding, judgment, sense perception]; Temperance, justice, fortitude, prudence; Hope, fear, joy, grief; Cold, hot, moist, dry; Fire, air, earth, water.”⁴²

Had not Sonnet 45 said, “My life, being made of four”?

Classical occult wisdom saw the four-based polygon as earth’s best approximation to God’s heavenly circle. That the pyramid occupies the same volume as its invisible but equivalent sphere is a metaphor for the marriage of spiritual heaven to material earth. Another Pythagorean metaphor is the inclusive circle, female in nature, joining to the square, male in nature, with his four straight lines. The progeny of circle and square is the pyramid, reaching between earth and heaven, representing the holy child.⁴³ Oxford imported the pyramid image, the monument, into his royal family history. The book never had a title. We call it *The Sonnets*, songs about a Son who was his father’s sun. In addition to the story of the son, it immortalizes the father, inscribing into the work a now no longer hidden name.

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The author gratefully acknowledges the thoughts and assistance of William Boyle and Hank Whitemore.

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⁴¹ Fowler, Spenser, p. 277

⁴² Fowler, *Spenser*, p. 275, thanking the author for the bracketed translation from Greek

⁴³ Anton Lignell, www.greatpyramidmath.weebly.com)

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