

**SHAKESPEARE'S ROSICRUCIAN REVELATIONS
IN THE DEDICATION TO THE SONNETS**

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Abstract

Rosicrucian and Masonic symbols provide clues to solving the riddle of the Dedication to *Shake-speare's Sonnets*, published in 1609. Assuming that "William Shakespeare" was a pseudonym, the actual author may have been Sir Francis Bacon or Edward De Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, both of whom were Rosicrucians and cryptographers. The "initials" under the triangular shapes of the dedication are not those widely presumed to be "T.T." for Thomas Thorpe, the publisher, but a pair of Greek gammas representing the Masonic symbol "G" and the Pillars of Solomon's Temple. Encrypted names and mottos in the twenty-eight-word dedication indicate that the sonnets are dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton. Evidence in the Dedication implies that Henry was the natural son of Edward De Vere, who kept their relationship secret to protect Henry's privacy and possibly his life, if his enemies suspected he had a claim to the throne of England.

Les Révélations Rosicruciennes de Shakespeare dans la Dédicace des Sonnets

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Résumé

Les symboles Rosicruciens et Masoniques fournissent des indices pour résoudre l'énigme de la dédicace des **Sonnets de *Shake-speare*** publiés en 1609. En supposant que « William Shakespeare » fut un pseudonyme, l'auteur véritable aurait pu être Sir Francis Bacon ou Edward De Vere, le 17th Comte d'Oxford, qui furent tous les deux Rosicruciens et cryptographes. Les « initiales » sous les formes triangulaires de la dédicace ne sont pas celles que l'on suppose communément être « T.T. » pour Thomas Thorpe, l'éditeur, mais une paire de gammas grecs représentant le symbole masonique « G » et les Piliers du Temple de Salomon. Des noms codés et des slogans dans la dédicace de 28 mots sont dédiés à Henry Wriothesley, Troisième Comte de Southampton. L'indication dans la Dédicace implique que Henry était le fil naturel d'Edward De Vere, qui garda leur relation secrète pour protéger l'intimité de Henry et possiblement sa vie, au cas où ses ennemies soupçonneraient qu'il pourrait prétendre au trône d'Angleterre.

Las Revelaciones Rosacruces de Shakespeare en la Dedicación a los Sonetos

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Extracto

Los símbolos Rosacruces y Masónicos proveen indicios para resolver el misterio de la Dedicación a *Los Sonetos de Shakespeare* publicados en 1609. Asumiendo que el nombre “William Shakespeare” fuese un seudónimo, el autor actual pudo haber sido Francis Bacon o Edgard De Vere, el décimo-séptimo Conde de Oxford, ambos de los cuales eran Rosacruces y criptógrafos. Las “iniciales” bajo las formas triangulares de la dedicación no son las que generalmente se presume son “T.T.” por Thomas Thorpe, el editor, sino que son un par de gammas Griegas representando el símbolo Masónico “G” y los Pilares del Templo de Salomón. Los nombres secretos y las inscripciones en la dedicación de 28 palabras indican que los sonetos están dedicados a Henry Wriothesley, el tercer Conde de Southampton. La evidencia en la dedicación da a entender que Henry era el hijo natural de Edgard De Vere, quien mantuvo en secreto el parentesco para proteger la privacidad de Henry, y posiblemente su vida, en el caso de que sus enemigos sospechasen que tuviese algún derecho al trono de Inglaterra.

Revelações Rosacruzes de Shakespeare na Dedicção aos Sonetos

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Sumário

Os símbolos Rosacruzes e maçônicos fornecem indícios que tentam resolver o enigma da Dedicção aos *Sonetos de Shakespeare* publicado em 1609. Supondo que "William Shakespeare" era um pseudônimo, o autor real pode ter sido Francis Bacon ou Edward De Vere, o décimo-sétimo conde de Oxford, sendo ambos Rosacruzes e criptógrafos. As "iniciais" sob as formas triangulares da Dedicção não são aquelas presumidas ser "T.T.", abreviaturas do publicador Thomas Thorpe, mas um par dos gamas gregos que representam o símbolo maçônico "G" e as colunas do templo de Salomão. Os nomes e os aforismos cifrados na Dedicção das 28 palavras indicam que os sonetos são dedicados à Henry Wriothesley, o terceiro conde de Southampton. A evidência na Dedicção implica que Henry era o filho natural de Edward De Vere, que manteve seu relacionamento secreto para proteger a privacidade de Henry e possivelmente também a sua vida, se seus inimigos suspeitavam que ele tinha uma reivindicação ao trono da Inglaterra.

Shakespeares rosenkreuzische Offenbarungen in den Widmungen zu den Sonetten

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Zusammenfassung

Rosenkreuzische- und Freimaurersymbole bieten den Schluessel zur Loesung des Raetsels der Widmungen zu *Shake-speare's Sonnets*, die im Jahre 1609 herauskamen. Angenommen, dass “William Shakespeare” ein Pseudonym ist, dann haetten die eigentlichen Autoren Sir Francis Bacon oder Edward De Vere, der 17. Earl of Oxford sein keonnen. Beide waren

Rosenkreuzer und Kryptographen. Die Initialen unter den dreieckigen Figuren in der Widmung sind nicht, wie allgemein angenommen, "T.T.", die des Herausgebers Thomas Thorpe, sondern zwei griechische Gammas, die das Symbol "G" der Freimaurer und die Pfeiler von Salomons Tempel bedeuten. Verschlüsselte Namen und Mottos in der 28-Wort Widmung lassen erkennen, dass die Sonetten an Henry Wriothesley, den dritten Earl von Southampton, gewidmet waren. Anhaltspunkte in der Widmung deuten an, dass Henry der uneheliche Sohn von Edward De Vere war, der die Verwandtschaft geheim hielt um Henrys Privatleben und, möglicherweise sein Leben zu beschützen, im Falle, dass seine Feinde vermuteten, dass er Anspruch auf den englischen Thron legte.

INTRODUCTION

Rosicrucians and Freemasons are fully aware that, when authorities control free expression through censorship or intimidation, the need to preserve valued knowledge may engender an "underground" movement to keep it alive until it can safely be brought to light. Such a movement requires trust among the brotherhood* to protect each other and to guard the trove of scientific or spiritual wisdom. It may require secret ways of identifying fellow members, and secret codes to convey information undetected. Since such wisdom can be lost or destroyed, there is always a question when we try to recover it: do we have all of it, or at least enough to piece together a logical and enlightening whole?

That has been the challenge presented for the past 400 years by William Shakespeare, whose plays were barred from official publication until after his death, leaving successive generations with many questions about his personality and personal affairs. The first book of his sonnets, published in 1609, contains an enigmatic dedication that has gone unsolved for centuries because Shakespeare carefully encrypted it in order to get his message past the censors and spymasters of his own time, yet make it available to future truth-seekers. He stated his hope in Sonnet 81 that the "eyes not yet created" would some day read the sonnets and award the immortality of literature to the Fair Youth:

*Your monument shall be my gentle verse
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er read,
And tongues to be your being shall inhearse
When all the breathers of this world are dead. [lines 9-12]*

I intend to show that Shakespeare used the secret code and symbols of the Rosicrucians in his famous enigmatic Dedication to *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, published in 1609. In fact, the clues Shakespeare inserted may well have been a cryptographed plea to future generations—particularly to the members of a truth-seeking brotherhood such as Masons or Rosicrucians—

* Note: The term "brotherhood" may not seem entirely appropriate for Rosicrucians, because we cannot be certain that women were excluded from Rosicrucian membership as they clearly were from Freemasonry. However, since Shakespeare used the terms "brothers" and "brotherhood" warmly and reverently in his works, it is most probable that he would have used the term "brotherhood" for both societies, considering it inclusive of both genders whenever such interpretation was warranted. It is therefore retained in that sense in this paper, when referring to Shakespeare's usage.

to recover the “Lost Word” and resurrect the “wounded name” (in Hamlet’s words) of the true author who wrote under the pseudonym of “William Shakespeare.”

THE SHAKESPEARE CONNECTION

Freemasons and Rosicrucians have long claimed William Shakespeare as one of their own, because Masonic/Rosicrucian themes and imagery pervade the Bard’s plays and poetry. For example, in his book *Shakespeare: Creator of Freemasonry*, Alfred Dodd established that Freemasonry was thriving in Elizabethan England by showing that Shakespeare employed Masonic themes in *The Tempest* and *Love’s Labor’s Lost* [Dodd 1933]. Another Freemason, Brother Robert Guffey, sees in *Macbeth* a retelling of the murder of Hiram Abiff, the core figure of Masonic ritual, and other symbolic acts [Guffey 2006, 1]. Others have found Rosicrucian themes in *As You Like It*; *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Twelfth Night*; *Winter’s Tale*; *Julius Caesar*; *Coriolanus*; *Henry V*; *Henry VI, Part 2*; *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*; and the long poem, *Venus and Adonis*. Many references to alchemy, astrology, and the occult are embedded in oft-quoted lines of the Bard—the Master Craftsman of English drama and poetry.

What are the symbolic clues Shakespeare placed in the Dedication to the Sonnets? The shape of the Dedication (three inverted pyramids) suggests the triangle, and the “V” shape of the largest one suggests the mason’s square. The all-capital-letters font, with dots after each separate word, is so unusual for a dedication that it suggests a Rosicrucian cipher. To speculative Freemasons the twenty-eight-word dedication (with 28 dots) might suggest the 28th degree and its association with the Knight of the Sun (Shakespeare was probably at a high level in the brotherhood, associated with knighthood and chivalry). The use of gamma letters indicates the pillars of Solomon’s temple, though they are often misread as the initials “T.T.” (and presumed to be the initials of Thomas Thorpe, the publisher). Themes of death and rebirth in Shakespeare’s sonnets parallel the rituals of the two secret societies popular in London and Scotland in his time. Also, the sonnets focus to a great degree on the immortality of literature as opposed to the mutability of the physical world, promising the Fair Youth (presumably Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton) that he will be immortalized through Shakespeare’s verses. Sonnet 55 expresses this thought in aptly chosen Masonic metaphors:

*Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme.
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmear’d with sluttish time;
When wasteful wars shall statues overturn
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Not Mars his sword, nor war’s quick fires shall burn
The living record of your memory. [lines 1-12]*

Let us assume that the author had a secret he wanted to reveal when the time was right for safe disclosure. The forbidden message would have to be encrypted to escape the censors and spymasters in Queen Elizabeth’s court, who were determined to obliterate any trace of the

poet's connections to the queen or her courtiers. The Rosicrucian code would serve his purpose better than the Masonic code, since the Rosicrucian code uses dots in every cubicle of the "pig pen" cipher, whereas some fields are blank in the Masonic code. Shakespeare could not write the entire dedication in a code so familiar to other Elizabethans, but the dots placed after each word, together with the oddly ungrammatical structure of the passage, strongly suggest a coded message.

Let us assume also that Shakespeare wrote his own dedication, just as he had done with his first published poems, "Venus and Adonis" in 1593, and "Rape of Lucrece" in 1594. Although it is widely believed that the publisher Thomas Thorpe wrote the dedication to the sonnets, that assumption is highly questionable. It arises from failure to recognize the Greek letter *gamma*, which somewhat resembles a "T" but more significantly resembles a mason's square. The two adjacent gammas form an image of the pillars of the Temple of Solomon, symbolic of wisdom and the pursuit of truth.

It seems logical to assume that this sonnet collection, like the narrative poems, would be dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, the Third Earl of Southampton. But the political climate had radically changed between 1594 and 1600. In 1601 Southampton was sentenced to life imprisonment for participating in the Essex Rebellion with his friend, Robert Devereux, the Second Earl of Essex [Ogburn, D. 1952, 918]. Mentioning his full name would have put Southampton in further danger, but his initials, H.W., anagrammed as Mr. W. H., make it most probable that Southampton is the dedicatee. Other reasons will shortly become apparent.

Let us further assume that Shakespeare was both a Rosicrucian and a speculative Freemason, from the themes and symbols evident in his writing. If so, we can rule out Will Shakspeare of Stratford, the heretofore-presumed author in the received "Stratfordian" tradition, who had no known connections with the movements of Freemasonry or Rosicrucianism. We know so little about him that we have raised him to the status of an icon, making suppositions that have evolved into fiercely defended tenets that his genius explains everything in his writing. However, doubts have persisted about the disjuncture between the known biographical facts of Shakespeare's ordinary life and the sophisticated intellectual brilliance pervading the Shakespearean canon.

The doubts have sparked a debate now generally known as the Authorship Question or the Shakespeare Authorship Controversy. The skeptics believe that "William Shake-speare" or "Shakespeare" was a pen name used to hide the true author's identity. Though many candidates have been proposed, the only two which concern our present inquiry are (1) Francis Bacon, a lawyer and cryptologist in the court of Queen Elizabeth I; and (2) Edward De Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, Elizabeth's favorite court playwright. Oxford, in the opinion of a growing number of devotees, is the more likely candidate, with more compelling reasons for seeking anonymity.

These two Renaissance men had much in common. Both used Rosicrucian and Masonic symbols in their writing. For example, the "double A" symbol in the headpiece of Francis Bacon's philosophical books, standing for Apollo and Athena, the two Spear-shakers, is an

important signature in the Rosicrucian fraternity, used since the time of the Ancient Egyptians [Dawkins 1999, 3]. This “AA” signature also appears in the First Folio of Shakespeare’s plays, although the sponsors of the First Folio were not Bacon’s kin, but the relatives of Edward De Vere (his daughter, Susan, her husband, and her brother-in-law). These nobles from the Herbert family would have known the various meanings of the double-A polarities, which also are associated with Alpha and Omega (the beginning and the end), the duality of light and darkness, and particularly the bringing out of darkness into light.

Both Bacon and De Vere used the boar, a wild pig, as a heraldic symbol. The boar was sacred to Apollo, the divine swineherd, because its hoofprint was said to imprint the ground with the sign of “AA” [Dawkins 1999, 3-4]. Bacon’s name lends itself to punning on the boar, as Mistress Quickly does in Shakespeare’s *Merry Wives of Windsor*. And in Shakespeare’s “Venus and Adonis” the hero is slain by a boar.

A good case can be made for either man’s being the actual Shakespeare. Certainly, Francis Bacon was an acknowledged Rosicrucian whose writings celebrated the pursuit of knowledge and ultimate truth. He was a polymath well versed in science, literature, philosophy, mathematics, law, and cryptology, who even invented several ciphers of his own [Dawkins 1999, 1]. He used the symbol of the Pillars of Hercules in the frontispieces of his scientific treatise *Novum Organum* and his history of Henry VII [Leary 2004].

Yet there are objections to the Baconian theory of authorship. First, Francis Bacon was still alive when the Sonnets were published in 1609, but he did not claim to be their author at that time. Nor did he participate in editing the plays published in the First Folio in 1623, although he was still living. The error-filled First Folio has required too much amending to have been edited by the author himself. Third, Bacon produced such a quantity of writings in his own name that it would have been impossible for him to write an additional 37 plays and 154 sonnets, at a minimum, under a pseudonym. Moreover, the events of his life do not parallel those of the plays as Oxford’s do, and his lucid writing style shows none of the imaginative flair that distinguishes the works of Shakespeare [Ogburn, D. 1952, 538]. Comparing Bacon’s utopian (Rosicrucian) novel, *The New Atlantis*, with Shakespeare’s magical play, *The Tempest*, makes the distinction in their styles quite evident [Walker 2007].

But Oxford (Edward De Vere) has all of Bacon’s qualifications and more. Cutting-edge scholarship by Oxfordian researcher Derran Charlton reveals that Oxford was involved at a high level with the Rosicrucian and Freemason movements, as well as being a published poet and a playwright for Queen Elizabeth’s court [Charlton 1991,7]. In his youth, Oxford showed precocious talent for languages, music, and poetry. Educated in Elizabeth’s Court of Wards from the age of 12, he earned a bachelor’s degree by the age of 14 and the equivalent of a master’s degree in law from Gray’s Inn at 17 years of age [Ogburn, D. 1952, 10-13].

OXFORD'S CONNECTION WITH KNIGHTHOOD AND THE ARTHURIAN TRADITION

One of the Earl of Oxford's hereditary titles was Lord Bolbec, whose crest featured a lion rampant. Researcher Derran Charlton has examined rare documents showing that until 1571, the rampant lion had no spear, but after 1572, it was depicted holding a broken spear [Charlton 1991, 5]. Edward de Vere had won a jousting tournament in 1571, a victory awarded to the knight who broke the most lances of his opponents. Charlton speculates that this changed symbol may have contributed to the choice of the compound name "Shakespeare"; but even more important, the jousting establishes his contribution to keeping alive the legends of King Arthur. All English jousting tournaments were performed in memory of King Arthur, especially to stir patriotism at times when England seemed under threat of invasion [Charlton 1991, 9].

The most significant Arthurian revival occurred during the reign of Henry VII, the first of the Tudor monarchs, who needed to unify England after the devastating Wars of the Roses. Henry VII had a Tudor Rose painted in the center of a round table (thought to be the original Round Table of King Arthur). He also named his firstborn son "Arthur" and founded Arthurian Masonic Lodges, where membership was by invitation [Charlton 1991, 6]. The Arthurian Knights incorporated Knights of the Grail, Knights of the Spear, Knights of the Sword, and Knights of the Word. The Knights of the Word were responsible for reviving and re-invigorating the Arthurian legend. The Arthurian Society was necessarily secretive, but the King invited knights he could trust. Among them was John de Vere, the 13th Earl of Oxford, whose motto was "Vero Nihil Verius," meaning "nothing truer than truth" or "Nothing truer than Vere" [Charlton 1991, 7]. That was Edward's motto also.

The chivalric ideals of knighthood also influenced Spanish and Portuguese Knights of Exploration, whose charge was to explore the world and discover new lands. The world-girdling knighthood circle was completed by the marriage of Prince Arthur to Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand, Head of the Knights of the Order of St. James [Charlton 1991, 7]. To bring the European countries into the modern world, Henry VII encouraged alchemy, which simply meant the search for new technology and chemical transformations. To that end he promoted Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, of which Chapter 7 is devoted to alchemy. The philosopher's stone, and Merlin the Magician, are central to the Arthurian legends, linking them to alchemy and the occult sciences.

Although some alchemists wanted to turn base metals into gold, others merely sought new knowledge and illuminating truths. They believed that as knights became more chivalrous, noble, and just, they would be transformed in character, much as the colors in coal can be transformed into sparkling diamonds.

The Arthurian knights devised, or adopted, the motto "I AM." This suggests the Biblical quotation, "I am that I am," a phrase that Edward de Vere also used. These initials might also play into another Shakespearean mystery: the initials M.O.A.I. in the play *Twelfth Night*, which suggest a cipher representing, "I am the Alpha and the Omega – the beginning and the

end.” The joke is on the self-important Malvolio, who aspires to woo a woman above his station in life.

The symbolism used by Edward de Vere in his jousting tournament at Whitehall in 1581 has strong overtones of Masonic ideals. Billing himself as “the knight of the tree of the sun,” he strode forth from a tent of orange tawny taffeta, embroidered with silver, with pendants on the pinnacles [Charlton 1991, 9]. He sat down under a huge bay tree that had been gilded over completely, to represent the gold of the sun and the splendor of the Queen. His chief opponent, the Earl of Arundel, had recently made outrageous accusations that Oxford had engaged in immoral acts and said disrespectful things about the Queen. To counter these false charges, Oxford vowed to Elizabeth that he would defend this royal tree to the death, that he would incorporate his heart into that tree, that he “stood ready to die upon the points of a thousand lances, [rather] than to yield a jot in constant loyalty” [Charlton 1991, 9]. Then he won the tournament. The pageantry employed Masonic symbols of the tree of life, the sun, the pendants, and the knightly determination to live to high standards of loyalty, truth, and justice.

CIPHERS, STEGANOGRAPHY, AND THE AUTHORSHIP QUESTION

Baconian scholars Penn Leary (of recent memory), Bob Fowler (who has taken over Leary’s web site), and others have attempted to prove Bacon’s authorship through numerology and codebreaking strategies [Leary 2005]. These Baconian scholars find his name, variously spelled, embodied in the works, including the Dedication to the Sonnets. They apply a version of Masonic code to interpret the dots between words in the enigmatic twenty-eight-word Dedication. Leary has suggested that the initials “T.T.”, under the Dedication, may stand for the Pillars of Hercules, a symbol used by Bacon to indicate the search for knowledge as a ship sailing into uncharted waters “ne plus ultra” [Leary 2005]. But they cannot explain why Bacon would have accepted anonymity for only some of his work, not all. Nor can they say why he would have encoded his name in the Dedication, yet left readers with no other message that would reveal the name of the dedicatee.

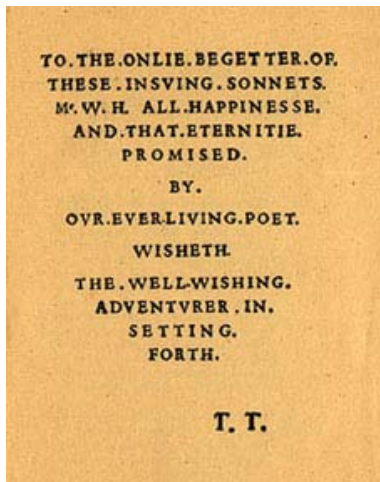
Leary and many other Baconians believe that Francis Bacon was an unacknowledged son of Queen Elizabeth, fostered by her loyal subjects Nicholas Bacon and his wife. But even if he had such a secret to reveal, it does not prove that Francis wrote the plays.

Oxford, however, fits the profile of Shakespeare to an astonishing degree. Thomas Looney (pronounced LONE-ee) was the Scottish schoolmaster who first identified Oxford as Shakespeare [Looney 1920]. Since then, many Oxfordian scholars, notably Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn, followed by their son Charlton Ogburn, Jr., have shown that Oxford had numerous life experiences closely matching events in the plays and sonnets [Ogburn, C. 1984]. They concur with many other scholars, including some orthodox Stratfordians, that the “Fair Youth” of the Sonnets was Henry Wriothesley, the Third Earl of Southampton, the dedicatee of the first two narrative poems published under the name “William Shakespeare” in 1593 and 1594.

The senior Ogburns, in their biography of Edward De Vere entitled *This Star of England* (1952), plunged even deeper into controversy by alleging that Henry Wriothesley was the love child of Edward De Vere and Elizabeth Tudor, giving rise to a stormy controversy known as the “Prince Tudor” theory. Their son, Charlton Ogburn, Jr., to avoid controversy, took no position on this theory in his groundbreaking analysis of the authorship question, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality* (1984) [Ogburn, C. 1984]. He later changed his position, to counteract an emerging trend toward interpreting the sonnets as homoerotic, because the fatherly tone of the first seventeen sonnets (“procreation sonnets”) seemed to him the very antithesis of a homosexual attraction. The Prince Tudor theory remains controversial, but it does explain many of the mysteries regarding Shakespeare’s life and motivations. If the poet was indeed addressing his natural son, the terms of affection can be understood as paternal, and the meaning of many of the sonnets becomes clearer.

Pursuing that question while researching for my book, *The Secret Love Story in Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, and building upon the work of scholars John Rollett, Robert Prechter, and David Roper in Oxfordian publications, I found ciphers in the twenty-eight-word Dedication that revealed the names of E. De Vere, Henry Wriothesley, and Elisabeth Regina—as well as all three of their mottos and the puzzling title words, “Twelfth Night” [Gordon 2005, Chapter 2]. These encryptions must have been intentional because the odds of all these names appearing by chance would be astronomically small. Furthermore, these observations fit into an overarching scenario that explains the need for secrecy and makes the content of many sonnets clearer than ever before.

Below is a picture of the original Dedication in the book of sonnets published in 1609 that has several puzzling features. Notice that the letters are all capitals, more like a Roman gravestone than the conventional dedications of the time. Unlike a Roman headstone, however, the dots are not placed at the beginning of each line, only at the end of each word or initial. Notice also that the shape of the Dedication forms three inverted pyramids or triangles, which symbolize strength in Masonic literature and are sometimes interpreted as a trinity representing the union of male and female, to generate new life. Some Oxfordian scholars have discussed in a chat group that the arrangement of lines forms a pattern of 6-2-4, the same numbers as in the name of Edward (6) De (2) Vere (4). Though one would not want to carry numerology too far, this numerical clue does suggest that Shakespeare/Oxford was familiar with numerology. The pyramids, inverted as they are, form the shape of V, which resembles the mason’s square but can also stand for Vere. (The letter W was often written as VV in Elizabethan times, so we might also be tempted to see the initial VV for Wriothesley topping the V for Vere in the tri-pyramid structure.) Perhaps these observations are not especially significant, and perhaps there are other clues yet to be discovered, but the links to Masonry and Rosicrucian symbolism are undeniably there for anyone to see.



Look closely at the “initials” which have been widely presumed to be the initials of the publisher, Thomas Thorpe. Penn Leary, the Baconian scholar who has searched tirelessly for the name “Bacon” encrypted in Shakespeare’s works, has suggested that this pair of “T’s” might stand for the Pillars of Hercules [Leary 2005]. But these letters are not like the letters “T” in the rest of the dedication. They are, in fact, not even the Greek letter *tau* for “T” but actually two Greek gammas, suggesting the letter “G.” This takes us deeper into the Masonic significance of the letter “G.” Many Masonic lodges place a large Roman “G” in the center of the compass and the square. Generally this is interpreted as standing for “God” and “Geometry,” but it is curiously non-geometric in shape. Brother John A. Cockburn, in an online article for the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon, points out that the original Freemasons would have used the letter gamma, which is shaped like a builder’s square [Cockburn 1897, 1]. Later it was changed to the Roman G, and thus has become a fixture that would be very difficult to change.

By aligning two gammas, Shakespeare suggests the columns of the Temple of Solomon, through which an initiate passes in the pursuit of wisdom and truth. Francis Bacon used the symbols of the Pillars of Hercules in the frontispiece of his book, *Novum Organum*, suggesting the scientist’s voyage into uncharted waters, but the Solomon Temple Pillars seem more appropriate in the Shakespearean context—passing from darkness into light.

CRYPTOGRAPHY SYSTEMS KNOWN PRIOR TO 1609

Just as Rosicrucianism thrived as an undercurrent of thought and moral codes in Renaissance Europe [Brydon 1994, 5-6], systems of ciphering and cryptology spread from guilds guarding trade secrets to intellectual fraternities who corresponded by secret and symbolic writings, often using assumed names. Religious strife and competition between nations also spurred the formation of spy systems and methods of encrypting messages. On a web site devoted to Knights Templar, Tass Weir (also spelled VVeir) observes correctly that the claim of a steganographically concealed cryptogram in the *Sonnets* front matter should be viewed and judged in the context of the popularity and availability of cryptographic information when the Dedication was written [Weir 1996].

Weir posts a timeline of manuals on cryptography that were available prior to the 1609 publication of the Sonnets [Weir 1996]. According to Weir, the first European manual on cryptography was de Lavinde's ciphers, produced in 1379. The nomenclature system it described reportedly held sway over all Europe and America for the next 450 years [Weir 1996]. A few other examples will suffice:

1470: Leone Battista Alberti's *Trattati in cifra* was published in Rome.

1518: Johannis Trithemius wrote (but did not publish) his *Steganographia*, which "circulated in manuscript for a hundred years, being copied by many persons eager to suck out the secrets that it was thought to hold" [Kahn 1967, 132]. A copy of the *Steganographia* was a prized possession of Dr. John Dee, an astrologer to Queen Elizabeth and an alchemist who explored occult subjects. Dee was acquainted with many Elizabethan intellectuals, including Edward De Vere, Francis Bacon, Philip Sidney, and Walter Raleigh [Woolley 2001].

1540: Giovanni Battista Palatino published his *Libro nuova d'imparare a scrivere... Con vn breue et vtile trattato de le cifere*. It was reprinted in 1545, and twelve more times by 1588.

1550: Girolamo Cardano's *De subtilitate libri XXI* was published. Cardano was a noted mathematician, physicist, and philosopher. This work, containing much information on encipherment, was reprinted nine times, including a French translation in 1556.

1556: Cardano published *De rerum varietate libri XVII*, a follow-up to his popular *De Subtilitate*. Both books were "translated and pirated by printers throughout Europe" [Kahn 1967, 144], as well as being reprinted four times by 1581 [Kahn 1967, 107].

Francis Bacon was well known for developing some of his own systems of encryption and decryption, elucidated in his 1605 work, *The Advancement of Learning*. The book was rewritten in Latin, greatly expanded, and issued in 1623 as *De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum*. An English "translation" of *Augmentis* was published in 1640. At the end of the enlarged section on cryptology he stressed the importance of using ciphers which "may be managed without suspicion." "For if Letters Missive fall into their hands, that have some command and authority over those that write; or over those to whom they were written; though the Cypher it selfe bee sure and impossible to be decypher'd, yet the matter is liable to examination and question; unless the Cypher be such, as may be void of all suspicion, or may elude all examination" [Bacon, cited in Weir 1996]. He considered steganography (hiding a message within a plaintext) to be the best system, if well done.

Because of Bacon's reputation, it would be easy to assume that he had devised the steganographic message in the Sonnets in 1609. But what motive would he have had? Bacon had received many advancements from King James I, who succeeded Elizabeth in 1603. He may have had royal blood, but he had no ambition to be King. If the sonnets were dedicated to Southampton, how could Bacon explain their relationship or the need for keeping it secret?

EDWARD DE VERE AS CRYPTOGRAPHER

The only contemporary of Bacon who had both a deep secret and the talent for encrypting it was Edward De Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. According to historian Neville Williams in his book, *The Life and Times of Elizabeth I*, rumors had been circulating around the court that Oxford and Elizabeth had a love affair in 1572-1573, and their love child was being raised as the Third Earl of Southampton [Gordon 2005, 25]. If the rumors were true, and if Elizabeth chose to acknowledge him as her son, Southampton might have had a claim to the throne. Yet he had been condemned as a traitor—serving a life sentence in the Tower until King James I released him.

One credible scenario is that Edward De Vere loved Elizabeth all his life, though they were never free to marry. Under the pseudonym of “William Shakespeare,” De Vere addressed many sonnets to Elizabeth (not all of them were addressed to the famous “dark lady”). Probably the poem entitled “The Absent Lover” was addressed to Queen Elizabeth (deare Dame), challenging her to decipher his name. Here is the plaintext of the poem as it appeared in B. M. Ward’s biography:

The Absent Lover

*The absent lover (in ciphers) deciphering his name,
doth crave some speedie relief as followeth.*

*L’Escu d’amour, the shield of perfect love,
The shield of love, the force of steadfast faith,
The force of faith which never will remove,
But standeth fast, to byde the broonts of death:
That trustie targe, hath long borne of the blowes,
And broke the thrusts, which absence at me throws.*

*In dolefull days I lead an absent life,
And wound my will with many a weary thought:
I plead for peace, yet sterve in stormes of strife,
I find debate, where quiet rest was sought.
These panges with mo, unto my paine I prove,
Yet beare I all uppon my shield of love.*

*In colder cares are my conceits consumd,
Than *Dido* felt when false *Enaeas* fled;
In farr more heat, than trusty *Troylus* fumd,
When craftie *Cressyde* dwelt with *Diomed*.
My hope such frost, my hot desire such flame,
That I both fryse, and smoulder in the same.*

*So that I live, and dye in one degree,
Healed by hope, and hurt againe with dread;*

Fast bound by faith when fansie would be free,
 Vntied by trust, through thoughts enthrall my head.
 Reviv'd by joyes, when hope doth most abound,
 And yet with grief, in depth of dollors drown'd.

In these assaultes I feele my feebled force
 Begins to faint, thus weries still in woes:
 And scarcely can my thus consumed corse,
 Hold up this Buckler to beare of these blowes.
 So that I crave, or presence for relief,
 Or some supplie, to ease mine absent grief.

L'envuoie

To you (deare Dame) this dolefull plaint I make
 Whose onely sight may some redresse my smart:
 Then shew your selfe, and for your servauntes sake,
 Make hast post hast, to helpe a faythfull harte.
 Mine owne poore shield hath me defended long,
 Now lend me yours, for elles you do me wrong.

—*Meritum petere, grave*

Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn explain the publication history of this poem [Ogburn, D. 1952, 1257-58]. It was first included in the collection *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, published in 1573, with Oxford's posy, "*Meritum petere, grave*," on the title page. Most of the included poems, except the few signed by George Gascoigne, were probably by Oxford using various posies or pseudonyms. The collection was reissued in 1576 in a spurious edition entitled *The Poesies of George Gascoigne*, making no mention of De Vere's contributions, and deleting all mention of the enciphered name in "The Absent Lover." In his biography, B. M. Ward restored the clue, enabling us to decipher the poet's name as shown below.

The poet challenged the recipient (deare Dame) to discover his name, which can be deciphered as follows:

Read this column downward

E(scu) d('amour)

w(hich)

a(nd)

r(est)

d(ebate)

D(ido)

e(nthrall)

V(ntied)

e(ase)

r(edress)

e(lles)

Read this column upward

E(scu)

r(est)

E(naeas)

V(ntied)

e(nthrall)

d(olors)

d(rownd)

r(elief)

a(bsent)

W(hose)

d(efended)

e(lles)

Adapted from Edward De Vere's biographer B. M. Ward, cited by Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn in *This Star of England*, pages 1257-1258.

Certain spelling conventions of the Elizabethan age must be considered in solving this puzzle. Most important is that Elizabethan English had fewer letters (only 23, compared to our present 26). The U and the V were interchangeable, so the cryptographer could use the V as a U in *untied*, yet employ it as a V in the name *Vere*.

THE EMBEDDED PATTERNS

The plaintext of the poem appears meaningful on its face, which is one mark of an excellent encryption, according to the criteria set forth by Francis Bacon. Following an unusual six-line stanza pattern, the rhyme scheme of *ababcc* is consistently maintained throughout six verses. The poet uses true rhymes, which sometimes necessitate an inverted sentence structure to fulfill the rhyme scheme, as in “And broke the thrusts, which absence at me throws.” So conventional and elegant is the poetry, that without the clue in the introduction, we might never look for a secret message. Since the poet’s name has twelve letters, giving himself thirty-six lines in the poem enables him to spread out the letters of his name, and thus to meet two more challenges within the poetical framework—that is, embedding his name twice, first reading downward and then reading upward.

Although the poet says his encryption is in “ciphers,” a more precise term might be “steganography,” because the plaintext conceals the encrypted message unobtrusively. Ciphers often substituted numbers for names, as can be seen in letters by Queen Elizabeth’s spies. Or ciphers might require a key possessed by both sender and receiver, such as a certain pattern of equidistant letter sequencing. In such cases, the awkwardness of the plaintext might suggest a hidden text. Codes, in contrast, may consist of all numbers or all letters in nonsense arrangements, making them vulnerable to known codebreaking methods.

Edward De Vere was familiar with codebreaking strategies such as equidistant letter sequencing, but so were many of his enemies. Thus, he avoided such obviously numerical patterns in this poem, but he did follow a strict pattern of encryption. Having provided the clue in the headnote that the hidden text was his name, he began with the first line, which contained a French word beginning with E (*Escu*) and another beginning with D (*d’amour*). The metaphor of a “shield of love” is particularly apt, since a shield provides protection, and he was protecting the name of the recipient (deare Dame), by hiding his own where no one but she (or someone else who was privy to the secret) could discover it. Assuming that De Vere was addressing Queen Elizabeth, she would have taken great pleasure in the word play and in De Vere’s flattering application of the courtly love tradition—an inaccessible woman being worshiped from afar. He may also have been pleading for justice, because she had permitted Gascoigne to plagiarize De Vere’s poetry in order to avoid gossip about De Vere’s poems being addressed to her.

Although at first the hidden-text letters may seem random, the key letters are always the initial letter of a word in a given line. They also appear in a fixed order moving top to bottom

and then bottom to top. In lines containing more than one key letter, the order may proceed either from left to right or from right to left. In Line 10, for example the RD of Edward appears in the words *debate* and *rest*. In Line 22, we find the V first, in *Vnited*, and the E later, in *enthrall*.

This way of embedding may have been an invention of Edward De Vere, since it does not follow the usual acrostic pattern of beginning each line with a significant letter. The analysis, however, is quite instructive, because it establishes a pattern that we can see in the Dedication to the Sonnets by William Shake-speare. Thus it enables us to approach that riddle in a similar frame of mind, assuming that De Vere was using the pen name of William Shakespeare, and wanting to send his message to future generations. De Vere had to be clever enough to get past the censors and enemies who wanted the name of Edward De Vere to be buried forever within a dung-heap of calumny.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TWELFTH NIGHT

Now let us return to the cipher of “Twelfth Night,” which appeared quite unexpectedly in the dedication. This cipher forms a rough “V” shape, which can stand for “Vere” (meaning “true”) or the shape of a mason’s square, which also suggests being “on the square” or telling a truth. After finding the ciphers for the names of father, mother, and son, and their mottos, I had discovered the trinity that formed the key to the sonnets [Gordon 2005, Chapter 2].

To read the enciphered names in the diagram below, begin with a star; follow the dotted lines in the direction of the arrows of the same color. Note that the letters must be read in a definite sequence, in one direction or another on a given line, although not in equidistant letter counts. This pattern, which was used by Edward De Vere in “The Absent Lover,” can be applied to the Sonnet’s Dedication, presumably by the same poet under his pseudonym.

TO.THE. **O**N**L**IE. BEG**I**TT**E**R. OF.
TH**E**S**E**. IN**S**V**I**NG. SON**N**E**T**S.
 M**E**. **W**.H. ALL. H**A**PP**I**N**E**SSE.
 AND. THAT. E**T**ERN**I**T**I**E.
 PROM**I**S**E**D.
 B**Y**.
 O**V**R. **E**V**E**R-L**I**V**I**NG. P**O**E**T**.
 W**I**S**H**E**T**H.
TH**E**. **W**E**L**L-W**I**S**H**I**NG**.
AD**V**E**N**T**V**R**E**R. **I**N.
SE**T**T**I**NG.
FO**R**T**H**.

CIPHERS, NO. 1:
 E. REGINA, REGINA
DE VERE, VERE
 HENRY WRIOTHESLEY
 TWELFTH NIGHT

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But was there another piece of evidence in this serendipitous finding? In checking for the significance of the Twelfth Night holiday, I learned that the twelve days of Christmas began on December 25 and ended in a splendid celebration on January 6. Then it occurred to me

that Henry Wriothesley was born on October 6, 1573. So January 6, 1573 would have been the probable date of conception. On that magic night, Elizabeth was celebrating with her favorite court playwright, Edward De Vere. And where was the Second Earl of Southampton? Imprisoned in the Tower for his Catholic sympathies, with no access to his Countess. So it might well be that the Third Earl of Southampton was a changeling child, raised by the Second Earl as his heir in exchange for his release from prison.

So now the hidden meaning can be inferred. “I wish you all happiness, my beloved son, for you are a child of love, conceived in amorous play on a magical holiday when anything can happen. Though your parents could not marry, being bound by duties and restrictions, their love for you is genuine and everlasting. These verses are the only legacy I can leave you, without causing you harm or serious losses, but in some far future time they will be rediscovered, and you will enjoy that eternity that only living literature can confer upon you.”

NOW THE SECRET CAN BE TOLD

Certainly it was no crime for Elizabeth and Edward to fall in love and create a child in a moment of passion. Yet the need for secrecy regarding Elizabeth’s pregnancy was a political imperative. To protect her kingdom from attacks by foreign Catholic monarchs, she created the persona of the Virgin Queen, holding herself open to the possibility of forming an alliance through marriage.

Speaking ill of the queen could invoke serious penalties in the police state that Elizabethan England had become. Yet gossip continually circulated about the Queen’s love affairs [Erickson 1983, 266]. In 1570, some English subjects were tried—and some executed—for slander against the Queen [Erickson, 266]. Some had tongues and ears cut off; some were tortured and imprisoned [Erickson 1983, 269]. Though suppressed in England, rumors ran unchecked in other European countries. The Venetian, Spanish, and French ambassadors reported that Elizabeth had several children (presumably by her long-term lover, the Earl of Leicester) [Erickson 1983, 269]. Reports from such various sources claim that Elizabeth had as many as five children, (presumably including sons Francis Bacon and Robert Devereux by Dudley).

Understandable though it is that English Oxfordians want to preserve the idealized image of the Virgin Queen, that sterile image has been replaced throughout most of the world by a more lovable vision of Elizabeth as a woman with human flaws offset by majestic virtues. Understandable as it is that for four hundred years Shakespeare devotees have cherished the romanticized ideal of a country lad blossoming into miraculous greatness, it is time that we restored the good name of Edward De Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, and credited him with enriching millions of lives with his life’s work.

It is time we recognized the devotion of De Vere’s daughter Susan; her husband, Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery; and his brother, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, who collected the scattered, suppressed works of Susan’s father and published them as the First Folio of William Shakespeare’s plays, lest these treasures be lost to the world.

It is time that the sacred brotherhoods to whom the poet appealed, now proceed through the pillars of wisdom, hear their brother's long-stifled plea, bring his truth from darkness into light, and perhaps in the process find some of the lost Words so long veiled in mystery.

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