

How Rosicrucian Friends Concealed and Revealed Shakespeare's Secrets with Symbols, Clues, and Ciphers

Based on a presentation at the AMORC conference, "Hidden in Plain Sight," July 22–25, 2010

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Abstract

The secrecy required to protect the life and throne of Queen Elizabeth I led to considerable censorship of drama and suppression of printed literature in Elizabethan England. Religious strife led to persecution of alleged heretics, and the powerful Catholic Church stifled scientific discoveries that appeared to contradict scripture. Severe punishments (including torture, maiming, or death) were imposed on any of the Queen's subjects who plotted against her or "spoke ill" of her. Despite this repressive climate, Renaissance ideals and humanistic ideas were circulating among the English intellectuals, artists, scientists, and philosophers. Secret societies such as the Freemasons and Rosicrucians enabled the free and safe exchange of ideas. These societies developed secret codes, symbols, and rituals with which they could initiate members and avoid persecution. The symbols were also used to convey to future generations that "William Shakespeare" was a pen name devised to shield the author, Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, from retaliation for his satires of courtiers, and to protect the reputation of the "Virgin Queen" by whom he had a love-child. Portraits using Rosicrucian symbols also convey the connections of Oxford/Shakespeare to his natural son, Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton. Southampton's Tower Portrait [1603] contains numerous Rosicrucian symbols as well as an impresa indicating that he had royal blood, though he did not oppose King James I as the successor to Queen Elizabeth. Ciphers imbedded in a plaintext by Oxford/ Shakespeare give clues that solve the Dedication to the Sonnets.

La manière dont des amis de rosicruciens ont caché et révélé les secrets de Shakespeare à l'aide de symboles, indices et cryptogrammes

Basé sur une présentation donnée à la conférence AMORC, « Dissimulé en pleine lumière », 22–25 juillet, 2010

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Résumé

La discrétion requise pour protéger la vie et le trône de la Reine Elisabeth I a amené à une censure considérable du dramatique et à une répression de la littérature écrite dans l'Angleterre Elisabéthaine. Les conflits religieux ont mené à la persécution de supposés hérétiques, et la puissante Eglise Catholique a opprimé les découvertes scientifiques qui paraissaient être en contradiction avec les Ecritures. Des punitions sévères (incluant la torture, la mutilation, ou la mort) furent imposées sur tous sujets de la Reine qui complotaient contre elle ou médisaient à son sujet. En dépit de ce climat répressif, les idéaux de la Renaissance et les idées humanistes circulaient parmi les intellectuels, les artistes, les scientifiques et les philosophes anglais. Les sociétés secrètes telles que les franc-maçons et

les rosicruciens ont permis l'échange d'idées en toute sécurité et liberté. Ces sociétés ont développé des codes, symboles et rituels secrets avec lesquels ils pouvaient initier des membres et éviter la persécution. Les symboles furent également utilisés pour transmettre aux générations futures le fait que « William Shakespeare » était un pseudonyme conçu pour protéger l'auteur, Edward De Vere, 17ième Comte de Oxford, contre les représailles pour ses satires des courtisans, et pour protéger la réputation de la « reine vierge » avec qui il eut un enfant. Les portraits empruntant des symboles rosicruciens transmettent également les liens existant entre Oxford/Shakespeare et son enfant naturel, Henry Wriothesley, troisième Comte de Southampton. Le portrait de la Tour de Southampton [1603] comporte plusieurs symboles rosicruciens, ainsi qu'un impresa indiquant qu'il était de sang royal, bien qu'il ne s'est pas opposé au roi Jacques I en tant que successeur de la reine Elisabeth. Des cryptogrammes intégrés dans un texte en clair par Oxford/ Shakespeare donnent les indices pour déchiffrer l'engouement aux sonnets.

Como los Amigos Rosacruces Ocultaron y Revelaron los Secretos de Shakespeare con Símbolos, Pistas y Claves.

Basada en una presentación de la conferencia de AMORC "Oculto a plena vista," July 22–25, 2010

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Resumen

El secreto requerido para proteger la vida y el trono de la Reyna Elisabeth Primera, causó una considerable censura de drama y supresión de la literatura impresa en la Inglaterra elizabetana.

Las Contiendas religiosas dieron en persecuciones de los llamados heréticos, y la poderosa Iglesia Católica dejó caer su rigor sobre los descubrimientos científicos que parecían contradecir las escrituras. Castigos severos (incluyendo tortura, mutilación o muerte) fueron impuestas en cualquier sujeto de la Reyna que se mostrara en contra de su trono o que hablara calumnias en contra de ella. A pesar de este clima represivo, Ideas Renacentistas y Humanistas circulaban entre los intelectuales ingleses, artistas, científicos y filósofos. Sociedades Secretas como los Francmasones y Rosacruces permitieron la libre y segura expresión de ideas. Estas sociedades desarrollaron códigos secretos, símbolos, y rituales con los cuales iniciaban a los miembros para evitar persecución. Los símbolos también se utilizaron para transmitir a generaciones futuras que "William Shakespeare" era solo un nombre de pluma para proteger al autor, Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford de la venganza por sus sátiras de cortesano, y para proteger la reputación de la "Reyna Virgen" de la cual él tuvo como el amor de su infancia. Retratos usando símbolos Rosacruces también convergen con la conexión de Oxford/Shakespeare hacia su hijo natural, Henry Wriothesley, tercer Earl de Southampton. El retrato de la torre de Southampton [1603] contiene numerosos símbolos Rosacruces como una impresión indicando que él tenía sangre real, pero él no se opuso al Rey James I como el sucesor de la Reyna Elisabeth. Claves que se encuentran enveadas en un texto de Oxford/Shakespeare dan pistas que resuelven a quien están dedicados los sonetos.

Como os Rosacruz Amigos Ocultaram e Revelaram os Segredos de Shakespeare com Símbolos, Vestígios e Cifras

Baseado numa apresentação na conferência da AMORC, "Hidden in Plain Sight," 22–25 de julho de 2010

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Resumo

Havia um sigilo necessário para proteger a vida e o trono da rainha Elizabeth I, o qual resultou em uma censura considerável de drama e supressão da literatura impressa na Inglaterra Elisabetana. As lutas religiosas levaram à perseguição dos que foram declarados hereges, e também as descobertas científicas -que pareciam contradizer as Escrituras - foram suprimidas pela poderosa Igreja Católica. Punições graves (incluindo tortura, mutilação ou morte) foram impostas a qualquer um dos súditos da Rainha que conspiravam contra ela, ou "falavam mal" dela. Apesar deste clima repressivo, os ideais renascentistas e idéias humanistas estavam circulando entre os intelectuais, artistas, cientistas e filósofos ingleses. As sociedades secretas como os maçons e os rosacruzes possibilitaram o livre e seguro intercâmbio de idéias. Essas sociedades desenvolveram códigos secretos, símbolos e rituais com os quais eles poderiam iniciar os membros e evitar a perseguição. Os símbolos foram usados também para transmitir às gerações futuras que "William Shakespeare" era um pseudônimo criado para proteger o autor, Edward de Vere, 17 ° Conde de Oxford, das retaliações que poderiam ser causados devido às suas sátiras dos cortesãos, e para proteger a reputação da " Rainha Virgem " com quem ele teve um filho ilegítimo. Retratos usando símbolos Rosacruzes também transmitiram as conexões de Oxford/Shakespeare ao seu filho natural, Henry Wriothesley, terceiro conde de Southampton. No Retrato Southampton's Tower [1603] contém inúmeros símbolos rosacruzes, bem como um emblema indicando que ele tinha sangue real, apesar de que ele não se opôs que o rei James I fosse o sucessor da rainha Elizabeth. Cifras embutidas em um texto simples de Oxford / Shakespeare dão pistas que solucionam a Dedicção aos Sonetos.

Wie Rosenkreuzische Freunde Shakespeares Geheimnisse, mit Hilfe von Symbolen, Hinweisen und Chiffren, verborgen und wieder zum Vorschein gebracht haben.

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Zusammenfassung

Die Geheimnistuerei die zum Schutz von Leben und Thron der Koenigin Elizabeth I. erforderlich war, bedurfte erheblicher Zensur von Drama und Unterdrueckung von gedruckter Literatur im damaligen England. Religioeser Unfrieden brachte Verfolgung von angeblichen Haeretikern, und die maechtige katholische Kirche unterdrueckte wissenschaftliche Entdeckungen die in scheinbarem Konflikt mit der heiligen Schrift standen. Strenge Strafen, (einschlieesslich Folter, Verstuemmung oder Tod) erwarteten Untertanen, die der Verschwuerung gegen die Koenigin bezichtigt wurden oder sich auch nur kritisch gegen sie ausdrueckten. Trotz dieses repressiven Klimas machten Renaissance Ideale und humanistische Ideen die Runde unter englischen Intellektuellen, Kuenstlern, Wissenschaftlern und Philosophen. Geheime Gesellschaften wie Freimaurer and Rosenkreuzer ermoeeglichten den freien und sicheren Austausch von Ideen. Diese

Gesellschaften entwickelten geheime Chiffren, Symbole und Rituale, durch welche Mitglieder eingeweiht und Verfolgung vermieden werden konnte. Die Symbole wurden auch benutzt um zukuenftigen Generationen mitzuteilen, dass “William Shakespeare” nur ein Pseudonym war, geschaffen um die Identitaet des Autoren, Edward De Vere, den 17. Earl von Oxford, von Verfolgung zu schuetzen fuer seine Satiren von Hoeflingen und zum Schutz der “Jungfraeulichen” Koenigin mit der er ein Liebeskind hatte. Portraete die sich rosenkreuzischer Symbole bedienten, vermittelten auch die Verbindung zwischen Oxford/Shakespeare und seinem unehelichen Sohn, Henry Wriothesley, den 3. Earl von Southampton. Southamptons Tower Portraet [1603] enthaelt mehrfache Rosenkreuzische Symbole, sowie ein impresa, das anzeigen sollte, dass er von koeniglichem Blut war, obwohl er nicht den Nachfolger der Koenigin Elizabeth, James 1, ablehnte. Chiffren die im text von Osford/Shakespeare enthalten sind, geben Hinweise zur Loesung der Hingabe zu den Sonetten.

Introduction

The most profound characteristic of Shakespeare’s plays and poetry, most fans will agree, is his deep understanding of human nature. How well he understood the human impulses of greed, selfishness, and power struggles. How well he understood grief and melancholy, but also love and delight. He understood the folly of lovers and social-climbers, but he also perceived the transforming effects of true love, forgiveness, and mercy. His works show appreciation of nature’s beauty and bounty, but also an appreciation of human creations—art, music, science, poetry, mythology, and drama. The depth of his insights and the breadth of his humanity have given us the term “Renaissance Man,” and the period in which he lived has been called “The Enlightenment” in contrast to the “Dark Ages” of Medieval Europe.¹ Rosicrucians and Freemasons will recognize their own ideals of that period reflected in Shakespeare’s plays and poetry.

Many of Shakespeare’s admirers wonder how he acquired his amazing store of knowledge—of the law, Greek and Roman classics, the history of England and Europe, five foreign languages, botany, heraldry, courtly courtesy, and military matters. He expressed that knowledge in language so witty, incisive, and imaginative that he permanently changed the English language.

But knowledge is not inherited: even the most ingenious of inborn talents must be nurtured and disciplined to produce great art. Wisdom is even more difficult to acquire, yet Shakespeare’s philosophy reveals an ability to use his knowledge wisely. Historians such as Francis Yates, Manly P. Hall, and Arthur Waite have detected in Shakespeare’s works an underlying optimism and faith revealing the influence of Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry. These philosophical movements were spreading throughout Europe in the sixteenth century, although public manifestos were not issued until the eighteenth century.² I believe Shakespeare participated in both groups, interacting with the finest minds in England, such as the astrologer-magician Dr. John Dee³, the poet Edmund Spenser⁴ and the scientist-philosopher Francis Bacon.⁵ These stimulating contacts shaped Oxford’s humanistic views and therefore gave birth to the wisdom so apparent in the works of the author William Shakespeare.⁶

It is the thesis of this paper that “William Shakespeare” was a pen name of Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, who used Rosicrucian and Freemason imagery in his plays and poems; also, that the symbols in the literature, in portraits, and in the riddle of the Dedication to the Sonnets of 1609, were intended as clues to future generations to reveal “Shakespeare’s” true identity, especially to future Rosicrucian and Freemason members who could read the clues.

Who Were Some Important Rosicrucians in the Elizabethan age?



Dr. John Dee, Astrologer



Edmund Spenser, Poet



Sir Francis Bacon, Scientist

The two societies had similar goals—self-improvement of individual members, protection of fellow members, and the improvement of society through good works. Although the Freemasons first operated as a trade guild, and the Rosicrucians focused upon occult matters and Hermetic traditions, both groups evolved into philosophical and intellectual communities with spiritual objectives. They both used symbols and allegory, such as symbolic stairs or steps to indicate their level of skill (for operative Masons) or advancement toward enlightenment (for “Speculative Masons” such as aristocrats). Rosicrucians had a passion for acquiring knowledge, especially in the fields of science yet unknown—which is the very definition of “occult.” Unlike the Freemasons, Rosicrucians accepted women members, and their cosmic symbolism always incorporated feminine principles as well as masculine ones.

Men like Sir Francis Bacon took pride in their involvement in Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry, and the two societies became much intertwined, having many symbols in common. Alfred Dodd, a Rosicrucian historian, credits Bacon with expanding the original three levels of masonry (apprentice, fellow craftsman, and master) into thirty-three degrees of accomplishment, each degree associated with character traits to be desired. Dodd also credits Bacon’s “Rosicrosse Literary Society” with preserving Shakespeare’s sonnets and republishing them in 1640, employing the publisher John Benson for the purpose.⁷ If Dodd is correct, Bacon has done a great service to humanity by preserving the Sonnets.

The Need for Secrecy

These societies met in secret to investigate scientific inquiries unimpeded by hostile religious authorities, or to exchange ideas freely among members who had sworn solemnly to keep secret whatever occurred in meetings. Members swore to keep secret the identities of fellow members and any information that might lead to the harm of another member or the loss of property. Historian John Robinson explains in his book *Born in Blood* how religious persecution actually brought this about, as it did when Philip IV of France persecuted the Knights Templar, or Henry VIII in England persecuted Catholics. So keeping vows and secrets was often a matter of life and death. Because their vows were sacred, each new initiate had to believe in a higher power, but no discussion of religion was permitted in meetings because religious strife would strain or damage the cooperative relationships. Each member was considered equal, regardless of social rank or church affiliation.

In her book *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, Frances Yates names several plays of Shakespeare's that were influenced by Rosicrucian teachings—*Hamlet*, *Lear*, and especially *The Tempest*, in which the magician Prospero represents the possibilities that a future humanity can become more compassionate through a sort of Rosicrucian enlightenment. Others would add *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and others for their use of occult symbolism. We cannot take space here for detailed analysis of these plays, but let's look at other evidence that author Shakespeare was a Freemason and a Rosicrucian, absorbing from these ethical societies the wisdom of the centuries.

In doing so, we must consider whether the traditional attribution of Shakespeare's works to a Stratford businessman has led us astray. The businessman's name is similar to that of the author, although his six extant signatures show that the businessman spelled his own name differently than the author did.⁸ More importantly, no one has ever established a connection between the traditional "Shakespeare" [i.e. Shakspeare] and the nascent movement of Rosicrucianism riding the waves of the Renaissance from Italy and France to England.⁹ The erudition in Shakespeare's works, contrasted to the known biographical facts of the Stratford businessman, strongly suggests that "William Shakespeare" was the pen name of a nobleman who had good cause to keep his true identity hidden until it could be safely revealed to future generations.

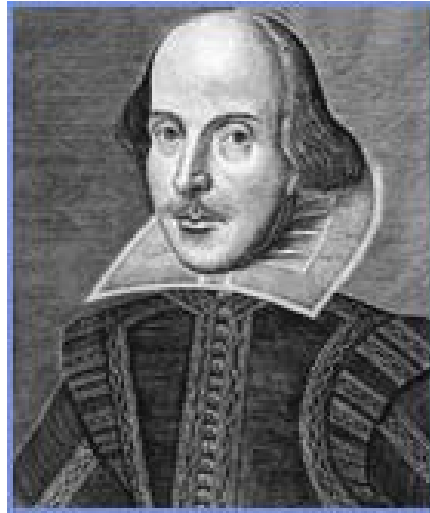
Clues in Portraits That Shakespeare was a Rosicrucian

We find symbolic clues in some woodcuts or brass engravings purporting to be likenesses of William Shakespeare, although no known portrait of the Bard was painted while he was alive. Numerous images have been proposed, but almost all have been proven to be mistakes or forgeries. Even the best known images of "Shakespeare" can be seen as attempts by the author's friends to alert readers to the mystery of the author's true identity.

To the Reader.

This Figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the Grauer had a strife
with Nature, to out-doo the life :
O, could he but haue drawne his wit
As well in brasse, as he hath hit
His face ; the Print would then surpasse
All, that vvas euer vvrit in brasse.
But, since he cannot, Reader, looke
Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

B. I.



This familiar picture, called the “Droeshout Engraving,” was printed in the First Folio in 1623. The initials “B. I.” stand for “Ben Jonson” (the letters “J” and “I” were interchangeable). The wording is ambiguous, saying that the engraving was cut *for* Shakespeare, not that it is a picture *of* Shakespeare. “Gentle” can mean kindly, or a “genteel, like a gentleman” (nobleman). Jonson implies that the engraver was unable to grasp the full nature of his subject, and cannot visually capture his genius, so Jonson urges readers to judge Shakespeare by his writing, not by his picture. Other symbolic clues suggest that something is wrong with this picture—the hard line that makes the face look like a mask; the unnatural placement of the head (which is also disproportionately large); the jacket with two right arms; and the two left eyes. The ill-fitting collar may have been copied from a lacy ruff in the portrait of an aristocrat, but altered to make it seem more suitable to a commoner.

Images and The Sonnets

The first edition of *Shake-Speare's Sonnets*, published in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe, had no portrait but did contain a puzzling riddle for a dedication (we will return to that point later). The book was quickly suppressed, so only a few copies have survived. However, a second edition was printed in 1640 by a publisher named John Benson (not to be confused with playwright Ben Jonson, who died in 1637). This edition contained a picture called the



“Marshall Engraving,” which was apparently a reversed copy of the Droeshout image from the First Folio, but with some significant differences. The differences seem to indicate that Shakespeare was a Freemason.

Marshall's picture shows a gloved hand holding a sprig of acacia, and a cape covering the right shoulder. Gloves were used symbolically in Freemason rituals, and the acacia (an evergreen plant) symbolized immortality or resurrection. This portrait also has elements of Masonic geometrical design—the cape has a triangular notch, the buttons form a straight vertical line, and the collar makes a level horizontal line. A halo of light behind the head contrasts with the dark shadow above the right shoulder, evoking the Masonic symbolism of light (enlightenment) and darkness (ignorance). The oval frame is half dark and half light,

suggesting the mixture of good and evil in human experience. Again, a dark line along the chin suggests a mask, and several question marks appear in the caption (a parody of Ben Jonson's tribute to Shakespeare's memory):

*This Shadow is renowned Shakespear's? Soule of th' age?
The applause? Delight? The wonder of the Stage.*

The inserted question marks make a complete travesty of the meaning. Other ambiguous language may also give cause for questioning. Actors in Shakespeare's time were called "shadows" because they represented unreal characters. Could the publisher be suggesting that the image is unreal, that it should be questioned? And can we infer from the symbolism that the real author is a Freemason? The engraver apparently wants us to make that connection.

Example of Symbols in Portraits of Queen Elizabeth

For another example of symbols in portraiture, note Queen Elizabeth's picture known as "The Sieve Portrait": black and white are royal colors symbolic of victory (also associated with the Knights Templar banner). Lacy ruffs indicate a high social class; dancers and pillars in the background suggest Elizabeth's fondness for dance and theater, and pearls symbolize virginity. The sieve also represents virginity, a symbol taken from a story in which a virgin proved her chastity by carrying water in a sieve. Elizabeth had beautiful hands, which she liked to have featured prominently in her portraits.



Examples of other portraits from the Elizabethan era using symbols.



Left

Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, at age twenty-one, showing military symbols of a knight's helmet and battle vest in background. The gloves are Freemason symbols, as is the downward-pointing finger. Some say that Southampton was Elizabeth's son, who might have been eligible to inherit the throne of England, if she had chosen to name him as her successor. However, he angered the Queen by refusing a bride she had chosen for him, but instead secretly married his pregnant sweetheart. As we shall see, a later portrait of him employs even more Rosicrucian and Freemason imagery (The Tower Portrait of 1603).

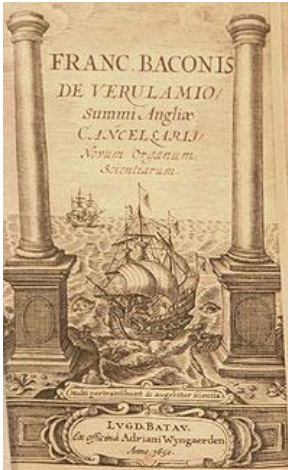
Right

William Cecil, Lord Burghley, riding on a gray mule. He is shown holding a carnation and a sprig of honeysuckle in his right hand. The honeysuckle perhaps represents his role as adviser to the Queen. The carnation, its name derived from the Latin "carne" meaning "meat" because of its red color, could represent Burghley's role as torturer and executer of convicted traitors. His coat of arms (shield) appears to hang from a tree, imposed upon the blue circlet indicating his knighthood in the Order of the Garter, with its inscribed motto: *Honi soi qui mal y pense* (evil is he who thinks evil thoughts). To the left and below them his motto is written: *Cor Unum Via Una*, meaning "where your treasure is, there shall your heart be." He served as Lord Treasurer to Queen Elizabeth, but his many enemies would put a more cynical interpretation on his motto.

Center

Sir Francis Bacon wears a nobleman's ruff and a black hat in almost all his portraits. He is alleged by some to be the unacknowledged son of Queen Elizabeth, born when she was twenty-nine, which would have had to be kept secret if it were true.¹⁰ He has also been alleged to be the "concealed poet" who authored Shakespeare's works. (This is a view held by many Rosicrucians, since Bacon is widely recognized as an advocate for Rosicrucian philosophy and the pursuit of knowledge.) Bacon used symbols in the frontispiece of his

work *Novum Organum* [1620] showing a small ship sailing through the mythical Pillars of Hercules into uncharted waters. Those pillars were named after the rocks of the Strait of Gibraltar, the gateway from the known waters of the Mediterranean into the uncharted waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Thus they symbolized the scientific exploration of the unknown in the search for truth.



Frontispiece of Francis Bacon's Scientific Work the *Novum Organum* ("new instrument") which advocated inductive logic as the best instrument for determining scientific truth and the laws of the natural world.

Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, Portraits with Symbols



Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, has also been proposed as the person who used the pen name of "William Shakespeare."¹¹ He obtained degrees from Cambridge University by the age of fourteen, and from Oxford at age sixteen. He also attended Gray's Inn law school, equivalent to post-graduate studies. He was a highly regarded poet who also wrote plays to be performed at Elizabeth's court. In the first picture he wears a fine white jacket decorated with black lace (Elizabeth's royal colors), and he holds a pendant ornament in the shape of a boar (the De Vere family crest).

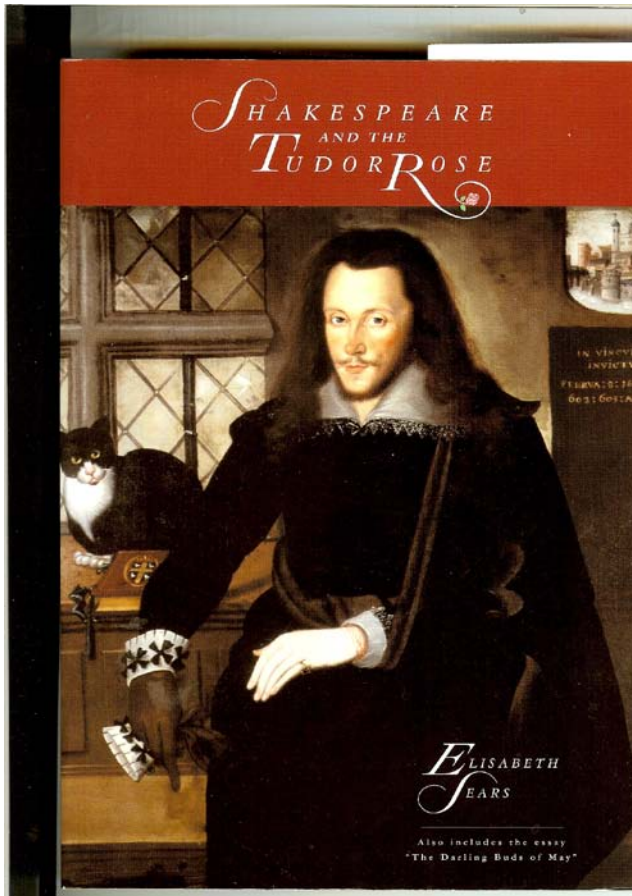
In the second picture (also De Vere) he wears a black robe with a lacy ruff revealing his aristocratic status. He carries a prayer book or Bible, with a red ribbon as bookmark. The skull beside him on a red cloth indicates a familiarity with Freemason rituals in which a skull is used to remind initiates of their mortality.¹² (The Freemason resurrection ritual may have

inspired the graveyard scene in *Hamlet*.) The scarlet cloth signifies to Rosicrucians a red rose as well as the blood of Jesus Christ. Freemasons would see in the scarlet cloth the symbolic color of the Royal Arch degree, representing fervency and zeal.¹³

The third portrait bears the date of 1575, when Oxford would have been twenty-five years old, but the legend added to the upper right corner also gives his presumed date of death (June 24, 1604), and the names of his two wives. His aristocratic status is shown by the finely detailed fabric of his jacket, the symbolic lace ruff, and a cape draped casually over his left shoulder.

Was Southampton a Rosicrucian? A Freemason?
Was he the natural son of Edward De Vere and Elizabeth Tudor?

Elisabeth Sears has written a book about Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, also known as “the Tudor Rose” or “Prince Tudor.” She offers evidence that Elizabeth Tudor had a child by Edward de Vere who was raised as Henry Wriothesley, Jr., the 3rd Earl of Southampton.¹⁴



The portrait shown on the cover of Elisabeth Sears’ book (known as the “Tower Portrait”) was painted in 1603, shortly after Queen Elizabeth died. Elizabeth’s successor was King James VI of Scotland, who then became James I of England. Southampton had received a sentence of life imprisonment for his involvement with his friends in the Essex Rebellion of 1601. The new King James I, convinced that the sentence had been too harsh, released him from the Tower, restored his title and estates, and gave him the prestigious award of the Order of the Garter.

The impresa in the upper right hand corner is a traditional way of telling something important about the portrayed individual. Through symbolic pictures of the castle and Tower, as well as the royal swans swimming in troubled waters, Southampton indicates his connection to royalty.¹⁵ He is probably asserting that he is Queen

Elizabeth’s son, but he has chosen not to compete with King James I for the throne of England. He prefers to live a quiet life according to his Rosicrucian ideals. An abundance of symbols in this portrait indicate that he was both a Rosicrucian and a Freemason. Obviously he wanted the world to know that, but why? Here are some of the clues to his association with these secret societies.

- A pillar or column below the impresa establishing the name of the Earl and the date of the portrait (1603)
- Kabbalah talisman on his left wrist, a red string as an amulet appealing for the protection of Rachael
- Black and white colors in Southampton's garments and in the cat's fur
- The cat resembling an Egyptian sacred symbol and suggestive of nine lives
- White collar with lace edges forming triangles (Freemason clue)
- Gloved right hand pointing toward the floor with one finger (Freemason clue)
- Crosses of the Knights Templar decorating the cuffs of the gloves (Freemason clue)
- Long, slender fingers like those of Elizabeth, wearing a ring with a pentagram symbol
- Book on table, with circle design on cover (possibly an ancient religious symbol)
- Four quarters in circle design with four dots, symbols of alchemical elements: earth, air, fire, water
- Ribbon dangling from a book forming odd shape such as a sigma, zeta, or Hermetic symbol
- Cross bars in window suggesting Rose Cross symbol (Rosicrucian clue)
- Window panes in triangle and diamond shapes (Freemason clues; one pane appears cracked or broken)

The young 3rd Earl of Southampton was the person to whom Shakespeare dedicated the first narrative poem published under his name, "Venus and Adonis," in 1593. The language of the dedication to V and A follows a traditional pattern, humbly presenting the poetic work and exalting the dedicatee. Although this has been interpreted as an address to a patron, later dedications indicate a closer relationship. Southampton's biographer Charlotte Stopes could not find any evidence that he had met William Shakspeare of Stratford, but she imagines a scenario in which it might have been possible.¹⁶

Rosicrucian Symbols in Portrait of Henry Wriothesley (Southampton)



Note that Shakespeare refers to the work as “the first heir of my invention.” Could the “invention” be a new pen name, since it had never before appeared in print? Charleton Ogburn, Jr. argues this persuasively, though this concept of “invention” would not fit the known biographical facts of the Stratford resident.¹⁷ It applies logically to Oxford. The Earl of Oxford had formerly published poems with his own initials or posies (mottos), but he began to use the “invented” name of “William Shakespeare” in 1593.



TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE
Henrie VVriothsley, Earle of Southampton,
and Baron of Titchfield.



Right Honourable, I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my vnpolisht lines to your Lordship, nor how the worlde vwill censure mee for choosing so strong a proppe to support so vveake a burthen, onelye if your Honour seeme but pleased, I account my selfe highly praised, and vowe to take aduantage of all idle houres, till I haue honoured you vvith some grauer labour. But if the first heire of my inuention proue deformed, I shall be sorie it had so noble a god-father : and neuer after eare so barren a land, for feare it yeeld me still so bad a haruest, I leaue it to your Honourable suruey, and your Honor to your hearts content, vvich I wish may alvvaies ansvere your ovne vvish, and the vvorlds hopefull expectation.

Your Honors in all dutie,

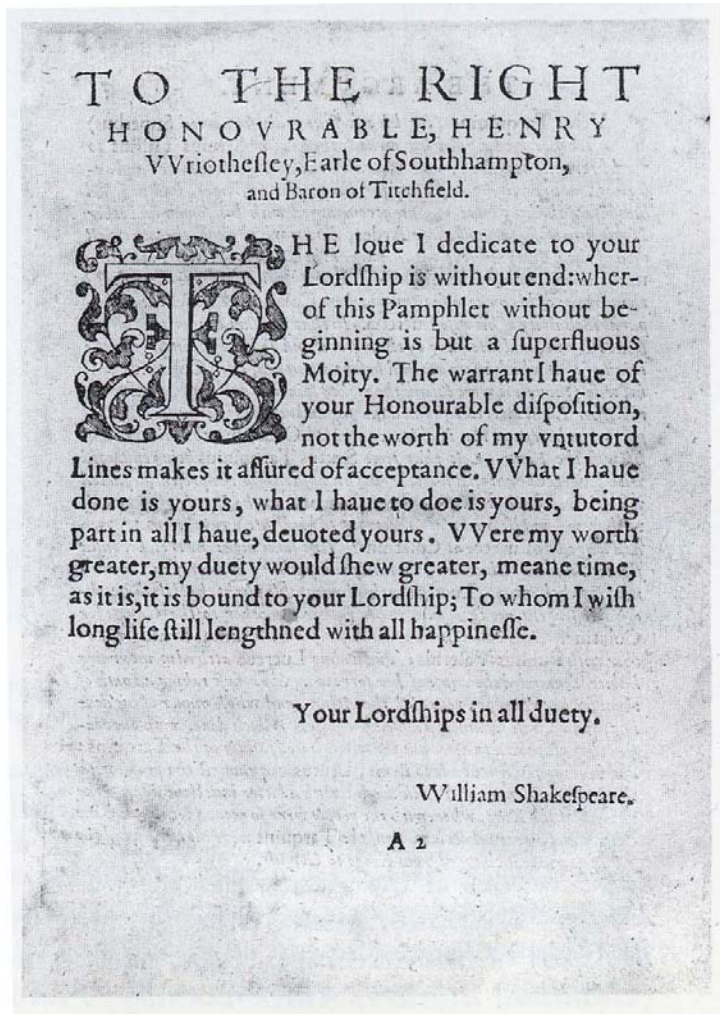
William Shakespeare.

The headpiece above the dedication may be significant, for Francis Bacon also used it, and it appeared on the King James Bible. It uses the “double A” watermark, with an elaborately curved light-colored “A” on the left, and a mirror-image dark “A” on the right, symbolizing polarities in life that can be reconciled, something like the black-and-white mosaic of floor tiles seen in Masonic lodges.¹⁸ The “A’s” stand for Athena and Apollo, the two spear-shakers of Greek mythology associated with wisdom and enlightenment.¹⁹

More importantly, however, notice the changes made in Shakespeare’s dedications to Southampton over time, between 1593 and 1594. The first dedication was warm and quite traditional, but the second was an impassioned statement of loyalty and love.

In 1594, the poem “The Rape of Lucrece” was published, with a tone showing such affection that some readers believed it indicated a homosexual attraction. (Note especially the sentences in red.)

However, if the Dedication was from a father to his son, which seems more likely, the sentiments would be entirely appropriate. The use of the word “duety” (duty) strongly suggests a fatherly devotion.



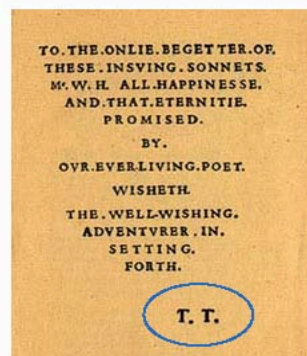
Dedication to “Rape of Lucrece” [1594]

- TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE HENRY WRIOTHESLEY,
- EARLE OF SOUTHAMPTON AND BARON OF TITCHFIELD.
- **The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end: wherof this Pamphlet without beginning is but a superfluous Moity. The warrant I have of your Honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutord Lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours, what I have to doe is yours, being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater my duty would shew greater, meane time, as it is, it is bound to your Lordship; To whom I wish long life still lengthned with all happinesse.**
Your Lordships in all duty.
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The intensity of the expression of love for Southampton has led to some speculation that Shakespeare had a homosexual attachment to the young lord. Yet this theory would not make sense, if Shakespeare was the commoner that tradition holds him to be. It would be extremely brash and dangerous for a commoner to show such intimacy with an aristocrat so very far above him in rank, and homosexuality was a capital crime in Elizabethan England. However, if this affection was bestowed upon a son by his father, it would seem perfectly natural.

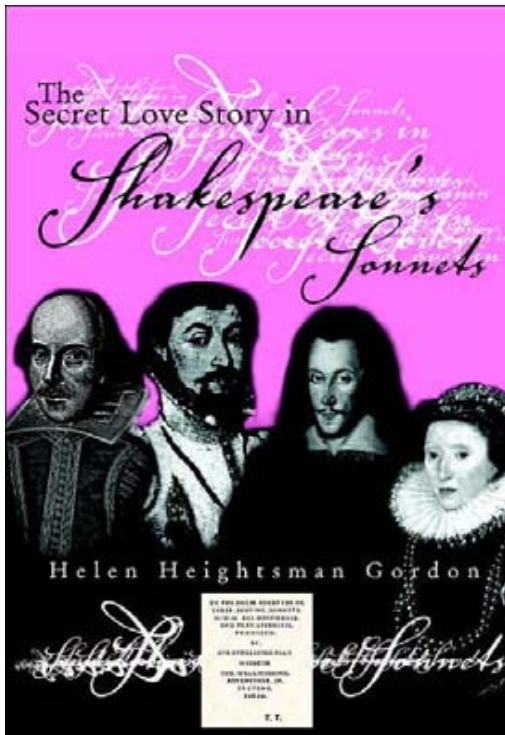
It was not until 1609 that Shakespeare’s name again appeared on published poetry. Thomas Thorpe published a book entitled *Shake-speare’s Sonnets: Never Before Imprinted*. The dedication was in the form of a riddle, looking almost like a gravestone, with all capital letters and words separated by dots. It has been puzzling scholars and readers for the past four centuries, but now we have the means to obtain better information and propose a solution.

Dedication to “Shakespeare’s Sonnets” published in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe



Once we realize that Edward De Vere was the author, the meaning of the sonnets becomes clearer and much more satisfying. So now the Dedication riddle can be solved, and a beautiful love story can be told.

That love story is revealed in the sonnets, which (although placed in scrambled order) weave a narrative of events that closely parallel the ups and downs in the life of Edward De Vere.²⁰



He was the favorite of Queen Elizabeth in 1572–1574, during which time rumors circulated that they had a love-child, who was being raised as the 3rd Earl of Southampton.²¹ Their son was born October 6, 1573. Edward and Elizabeth wanted to marry, but Elizabeth’s advisors convinced her to remain single for political reasons.²² Edward was devastated, feeling betrayed by his “Cressida,” but he continued to love Elizabeth all of his life.

William Cecil, Lord Burghley, arranged for the child to be reared by the 2nd Earl of Southampton, a Catholic who was imprisoned for participating in the Babington plot against Elizabeth’s life. In return for his release from prison, the 2nd Earl (whose name was Henry Wriothesley), named the child after himself and made him heir to the Southampton title and estates. When the 2nd Earl died in 1581, the nine-year-old boy became a ward of the court under the guardianship of William Cecil, Lord Burghley.

In 1590 young Henry came to court as an eligible bachelor seventeen years old. Lord Burghley, who had previously become the guardian of Edward De Vere when the youth was twelve, had arranged Edward’s marriage to Anne Cecil, his daughter, when she was fourteen and Edward was twenty-one. In 1590 Burghley wanted to arrange a marriage between his granddaughter, Elizabeth Vere, and Southampton. When Southampton refused, Lord Burghley imposed a crippling fine of £5,000 upon his estate.²³ As the father of Elizabeth Vere, Edward was involved in the negotiations. That’s when he learned that Southampton was his natural son. He had not seen his son since he was born, a touching moment described in Sonnet 33, in which he uses beautiful Rosicrucian imagery:

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
 Flatter the mountaintops with sovereign eye, [sovereign sun, all-seeing eye]
 Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
 Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy. . . [turning pale water gold]
 Even so, my sun early one morn did shine [sun = a pun on “son”]
 With all-triumphant splendor on my brow.
 Alas, alack! He was but one hour mine,
 The region cloud hath masked him from me now. [region = regina or regent]

Edward was delighted with his grown son, who resembled Elizabeth in her prime, as he said in Sonnet 3, “Thou art thy mother’s glass (mirror), and she in thee/ recalls the lovely April of her prime.” When portraits are placed side by side, there does seem to be a family resemblance:

Queen Elizabeth and two pictures of Henry Wriothesley, at ages twenty-one and thirty



Libels That “Leave a Wounded Name Behind”

Before we turn to the evidence of cryptology, I want to make one more connection to the symbolism of Freemasonry and how it affected the life and works of Edward De Vere. In 1580 De Vere reported two Catholic relatives of his who were plotting to assassinate the Queen. They reacted in terror for their lives, accusing De Vere of every vile kind of behavior they could think of.²⁴ Elizabeth did not take these false allegations seriously, but when she learned that De Vere had made one of her maids of honor pregnant, she punished both Oxford and his mistress, along with their newborn infant, sending them to the Tower in January of 1581.



The mistress was Ann Vavasor, recognized by Charlton Ogburn, Jr., as the model for Rosaline in *Love's Labours Lost*, and probably also the Dark Lady of the Sonnets.²⁵ The Queen also banished Oxford from court for many months, when he must have experienced being “in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes.”

To prove his loyalty to Queen Elizabeth, in spring of 1581 Oxford fought a tournament against one of his traitorous accusers, the Earl of Arundel. He dressed in costume as the “Knight of the Tree of the Sun,” staging the event before a gold-colored tent under a big tree with gold-colored leaves, wearing gold armor and accoutrements. He pledged his loyalty to the Queen as if she were the Sun itself.²⁶

Oxford did win the tournament, and later his enemies were convicted of the treason he had reported, but his father-in-law kept the records of all the derogatory accusations that would besmirch his name. He had learned the truth about how easily a good name can be sullied, as he said in Sonnet 121, “Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed.” In that sonnet, incidentally, he uses a phrase that is part of a Freemason ritual, as well as a Biblical quote: “I am that I am.”

Idealism of the Freemason 28°: Truth, World Peace

The 28° in Freemasonry is the degree of the Knight of the Sun, one of the highest levels a Mason can attain. If Oxford had reached that level of personal virtue and civic valor, he would have been reminded of his duties in a ceremony attended by other Masons of high degree.²⁷

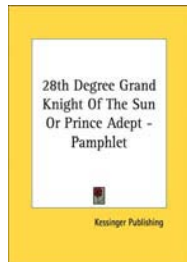
Brother Truth asks the blindfolded applicant: What is it you desire?

Answer

To be brought out of darkness that I may see the true light and know the truth. To eradicate from within me all prejudice, the offspring of error into which men have fallen by a thirst after all riches, and by pride.

Brother Truth reminds the applicant of the tools he has acquired at earlier levels: the columns of Solomon's temple, the Bible, square, compass, level, plumb line, rough and smooth stones, a grave, a corpse, a cord to draw it out, a key, scales, a lighted urn, a blazing star, a candlestick with seven branches, and brass utensils for washing and purifying oneself.

At this level, the acacia sprig is especially important, representing the tree of life and a zeal for truth. It also symbolizes resurrection, as it has from ancient Egyptian times.



The applicant at that level will vow to accept others of all faiths without despising them, yet not permit blasphemy against the Bible. He promises to be upright and square ("on the level"), to understand humans in our rough, unhewn state, to assist unpolished people by employing reason and knowledge, to serve like beacons to them. He promises to be loyal to lawful authority, to avoid the traps of ignorance and envy, to be circumspect

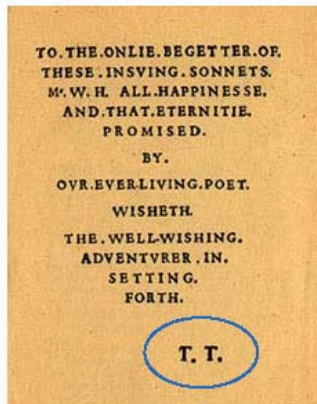
in guarding secrets entrusted to him. He is reminded to avoid wicked people, to control his own passions, and to obey just laws. By holding tight to Truth, by directing his actions to serve the Sovereign God, and by cleansing himself of bitterness, he will rise by degrees to the highest heaven, where Truth resides, there to be absorbed by the holy and unchangeable name of the Supreme Being.

That last sentence seems astonishingly applicable to the universal concepts of the Divine being explored in the twenty-first century as a means to world peace. These ideals seem to permeate the works of Shakespeare, as well as the world of ethical Freemasonry and truth-seeking Rosicrucianism. Therefore it seems reasonable to assume that Rosicrucian and Freemason principles contributed substantially to the keen insights into human nature, the ethical ideals, and the universal wisdom that still inspire us four centuries after Shakespeare's death.

The Role of Cryptography in the Love Story

One of the confusing aspects of the Dedication to the Sonnets has been the assumption that it was written by the publisher rather than the poet himself. The two gammas under the dedication have often been mistaken for the initials "T. T." – though they differ from other "T" letters in the Dedication. The ambiguity of those letters was probably intended to mislead the censors, who would have destroyed the manuscript if the true author had been revealed. To disguise the name of the dedicatee, his initials were anagrammed as "W. H." which has led to much speculation, but generally scholars have concluded that he was Henry Wriothesley, the Fair Youth of the sonnets. Here is an image of the original dedication page.

Dedication to “Shakespeare’s Sonnets” published in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe



In solving this riddle, we must take a different approach than has formerly been used.

First, we must clear our minds of the clutter of tradition and picture a different scenario. We must picture a dispirited father desperately trying to save his son from execution in 1601. His brilliant plays and poems have been concealed under a pen name, then assigned to another person. He wants to leave a legacy for the son he cannot acknowledge—a book of sonnets

written over several years that tell the story of his parents' love affair and the circumstances leading to his conception and birth. So he collects his poetry into a small book of 154 sonnets, which he hopes his son will receive and perhaps publish after he is gone. If future generations could read the poems, then the son would have the immortality of literature, although he might lose his mortal life at a young age. Then this father collects the poems and writes a dedication in the form of a puzzle that does not reveal his identity or the identity of his son, unless the readers have been educated in what to look for. Fortunately, the son is saved by the king's pardon in 1603, but his father dies in 1604.

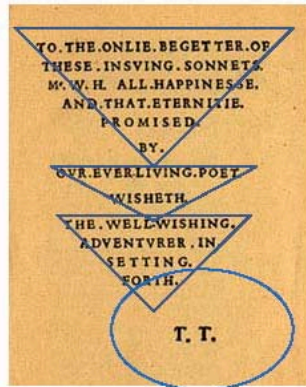
Second, we must recognize that the author “Shakespeare” was a Freemason and a Rosicrucian, because he evidenced a knowledge of their symbols and rituals in his works. The poet reasoned that these societies would be likely to continue their traditions and symbols for hundreds of years more. Therefore he put his message into a form that future generations (“eyes not yet created”) might be able to comprehend, “when all the breathers of this world are dead.”

The Stratford resident had no connection to these secret societies, but Edward De Vere and Francis Bacon did.²⁸ In fact, it was two Freemasons who presumably financed the First Folio—the “incomparable pair of brethren”—William and Philip Herbert, to whom the First Folio was dedicated. (The word “brethren” is a clue; Masons called themselves “brothers.”) They were the sons of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, a famous patroness of the arts and the sister of the poet Sir Philip Sidney. William Herbert was the 3rd Earl of Pembroke and Lord Chamberlain to the king, a position that gave him authority to decide which plays were to be performed and published.²⁹ Philip Herbert was the 1st Earl of Montgomery, who married Susan Vere, the youngest daughter of Edward De Vere. After his brother William died, Philip succeeded him as 4th Earl of Pembroke and also acquired the title of Lord Chamberlain.

Masonic Symbols in the Dedication

Masonic symbols form the shape of the Dedication (three triangles), and numerology (a Rosicrucian field of study) reveals a 6-2-4 pattern in the lines making up those triangles. An English mathematician, John Rollett, discovered that the letters in the name “Edward De Vere” form a 6-2-4 pattern, as do the number of lines in each triangle.³⁰ Mr. Rollett further discovered that selecting words in that frequency pattern yielded the phrase “These sonnets

Dedication to “Shakespeare’s Sonnets” published in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe



all by E. Ver the Forth.” Many Oxfordians have played with the possibilities of whatever meaning can be derived from this phrase, such as whether “forth” could mean “fourth” and whether “the forth T” has significance, but so far no consensus has emerged.

One person who has pursued that “fourth T” symbolism is Dr. Alan Green. Speaking in 2009 at a meeting of the Shakespeare-Oxford Society, Green noted that the Triple Tau symbol, made by arranging the tau (the Greek letter T) in groups of

three, could explain the concept of a “Fourth T.” These symbols also appear in the monument at Stratford which begins “Stay, passenger, etc.” According to Green, these symbols were probably imbedded in the monument phrases by Dr. John Dee, a famous astrologer and mathematician who served Queen Elizabeth and knew many of her courtiers, including Oxford.³¹ Green speculates that Dee also encrypted the Dedication to the Sonnets, but that attribution seems dubious because Dr. Dee would have had no motive for using the Dedication as a means to identify Oxford as Shakespeare.



Since the Triple Tau is a Masonic symbol of the Royal Arch Degree, the appearance of that symbol in Shakespearean monuments would indicate that the Royal Arch Degree was already in evidence during Shakespeare’s time. Considering the secrecy so essential during Elizabeth’s reign, it seems quite possible that all thirty-three Masonic degrees were functioning as rituals in the sixteenth century, but the lack of written records hinders us in determining who might have been affected by such a system, and when.

Several Oxfordians have discovered names or partial names in the Dedication by using a Cardano grill³² to search for a hidden message using ELS or “equidistant letter sequencing.” One of these independent researchers, Dr. David L. Roper, applying his expertise in cryptology, concluded that it was Ben Jonson who arranged the words in the Stratford monument so that they formed an ELS cipher stating his personal avowal that De Vere was

Shakespeare: Dr. Roper applied statistical formulas yielding the message SO TEST HIM, I VOW HE IS E. DE VERE AS HE, SHAKSPEARE: ME. I.B. ³³ With these same methods, he ruled out two other candidates: Christopher Marlowe and Francis Bacon.

This method has revealed the name of Henry Wriothesley, and even the name “Elisabeth” spelled with an S. Roper and others have assumed that the Dedication was written by Thomas Thorpe, but they have no explanation for why Thorpe would put the Dedication into the form of a riddle.

Unfortunately, many Oxfordians have been “turned off” by the subject of ciphers, because Baconians have pursued the concept to such lengths that they find Bacon’s name enciphered virtually everywhere. Even if that is shown to be the case, these ciphers alone do not prove that Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare. More evidence would be needed to show that Bacon was actively involved in dramatic productions at court.

Another question arises as to the purpose of a Dedication. Shakespeare’s other dedications clearly intended to honor Henry Wriothesley, and the Sonnets Dedication promises immortality to a “Master W. H.” who was probably the same Henry Wriothesley, his name obscured within a riddle that could not easily be solved by strangers. This makes much more sense than supposing that Thomas Thorpe wrote the dedication, or that Thorpe would dedicate a book of sonnets he did not write, wishing immortality to a person whom he does not name.

Here are some other symbols and clues. The use of all capital letters, and the dots between words, suggest the Freemason and Rosicrucian codes, inviting readers to look for a hidden message, though not exactly written in those codes. Spelling out “Knights Templar” in those codes illustrates how bulky they can be. Using only those “pigpen” codes would have been a dead giveaway to William Cecil and other code-breakers.

Secret codes of Freemasons and Rosicrucians These codes use dots or blanks in a “pigpen” grid to represent letters

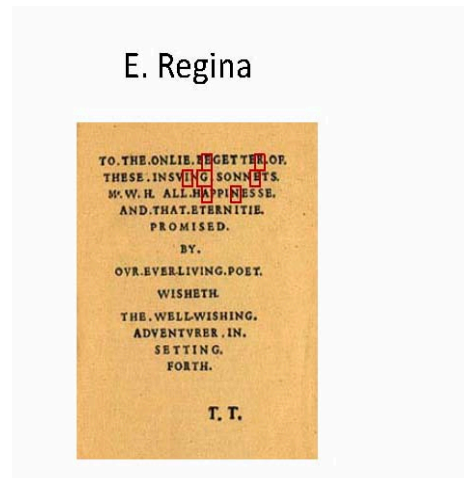
| THE FREEMASON CIPHER | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| A | B | C | J | K | L | T | | | | | |
| D | E | F | X | N | | E | | | | | |
| G | H | I | M | I | | M | | | | | |
| N | O | P | W | G | | P | | | | | |
| Q | R | S | X | H | | L | | | | | |
| T | U | V | Z | T | | A | | | | | |
| | | | | S | | | | | | | |

| ROSICRUCIAN CIPHER | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | K | L | T |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | N | O | E |
| J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | I | M | |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | G | P | |
| S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z | | H | L | |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | T | A | |
| | | | | | | | | | S | R | |

Oxford was also clever enough to use a modified form of steganography, putting the names of the principal characters in a code system not often used by the Queen’s spies. Here are the assumptions under which we can solve the puzzle of the Dedication.

Assumptions Proposed for solving the Riddle of the Sonnet Dedication of 1609

1. Oxford/Shakespeare wrote his own dedication to the sonnets. It was not written by the publisher.
2. The riddle form was chosen because Southampton's life would have been in danger if he had been openly acknowledged and recognized as a possible successor to the Queen. The salutation "To M [master] W. H. (or H. W.)" would be an appropriate way to address Henry Wriothesley in the interim before he regained his title. Also, the title "Master" is an appropriate way to address a Freemason above the master's level. The ambiguity of the shape of the gammas or Ts was probably deliberate, to throw the censors off the scent while guiding the enlightened ones through the "pillars of Solomon's temple."
3. The 28 words, separated by exactly 28 dots, form an oddly ungrammatical structure. Codebreakers Kahn and Roper cite the awkward structure as a clue that there is a hidden message.³⁴ The dots show that Shakespeare/ Oxford was familiar with the dots of the Rosicrucian and Freemason codes.



4. Perhaps the number 28 indicates that he was a Freemason at the 28^o, associated with the Knight of the Sun. The number 28 and the "gravestone" appearance of the message were probably intended as clues to future generations of Rosicrucians—those "eyes not yet created" that Shakespeare promised in Sonnets 55 and 81 would rescue the Fair Youth. Then he could "pace forth" into the immortality of literature "when all the breathers of this world are dead."
5. The dedication contains hidden ciphers revealing the names of three people involved in the love story: E De Vere (twice), Elisabeth Regina (or E. Regina), and Henry Wriothesley (twice). It also contains the mottos of all three: *Vero Nil Verius*, *Ever the Same*, and *All for One, one for all*.

Copies of the dedication are reproduced in color below, showing how the mottos and names were embedded.³⁵

Mottos

VERO NIHIL VERIUS (truth, nothing truer) (Oxford)

ONE FOR ALL, ALL FOR ONE (Southampton)

EVER THE SAME (Regina)

TO.THE.ON[★]LIE[▲].BEGETTER[▲]R.O[★]F.

THESE[▲].INS[▲]VING.SONNETS[▲].

M[★]W.H. ALL[★].HAPPINESS[▲]E.★

AND[▲].THAT.ETERNITIE.

PROMISED[▲].

BY.

OVR[▲].EVER-LIVING[★].POET.

WISHETH.

THE.WELL-WISHING[★].

ADVENTVRER[★].IN.

SETTING[▲].

FORTH[▲].

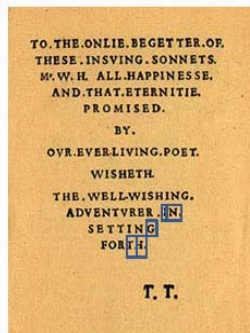
CIPHERS, NO. 2

© 2002 H. H. GORDON

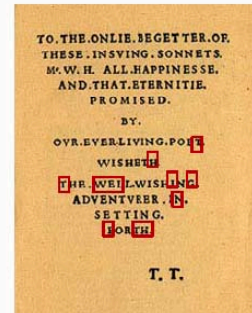
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

The word “night” appears in a cluster of letters in the bottom triangle. Surprised by seeing that, I became curious to see if I could find the word “Twelfth.” And so I did, in the other corner of the bottom triangle, beginning with “The wel” then looping down to pick up the F and TH in the word FORTH. But was this a reference to the play or the holiday?

**Dedication to “Shakespeare’s Sonnets”
published in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe**



Twelfth Night



After some thought, and some research into the twelve-day Christmas holiday (it begins December 25 and ends January 6), I concluded that this cluster referred to the holiday on January 6, 1573. Since Henry Wriothesley’s date of birth was October 6, 1573, then the Twelfth Night holiday of 1573, exactly nine months earlier, was the probable date of conception. Twelfth Night is known to be a celebration of the topsy-turvy, when nothing is what it seems, when anything can happen. On that auspicious date, something magical occurred.

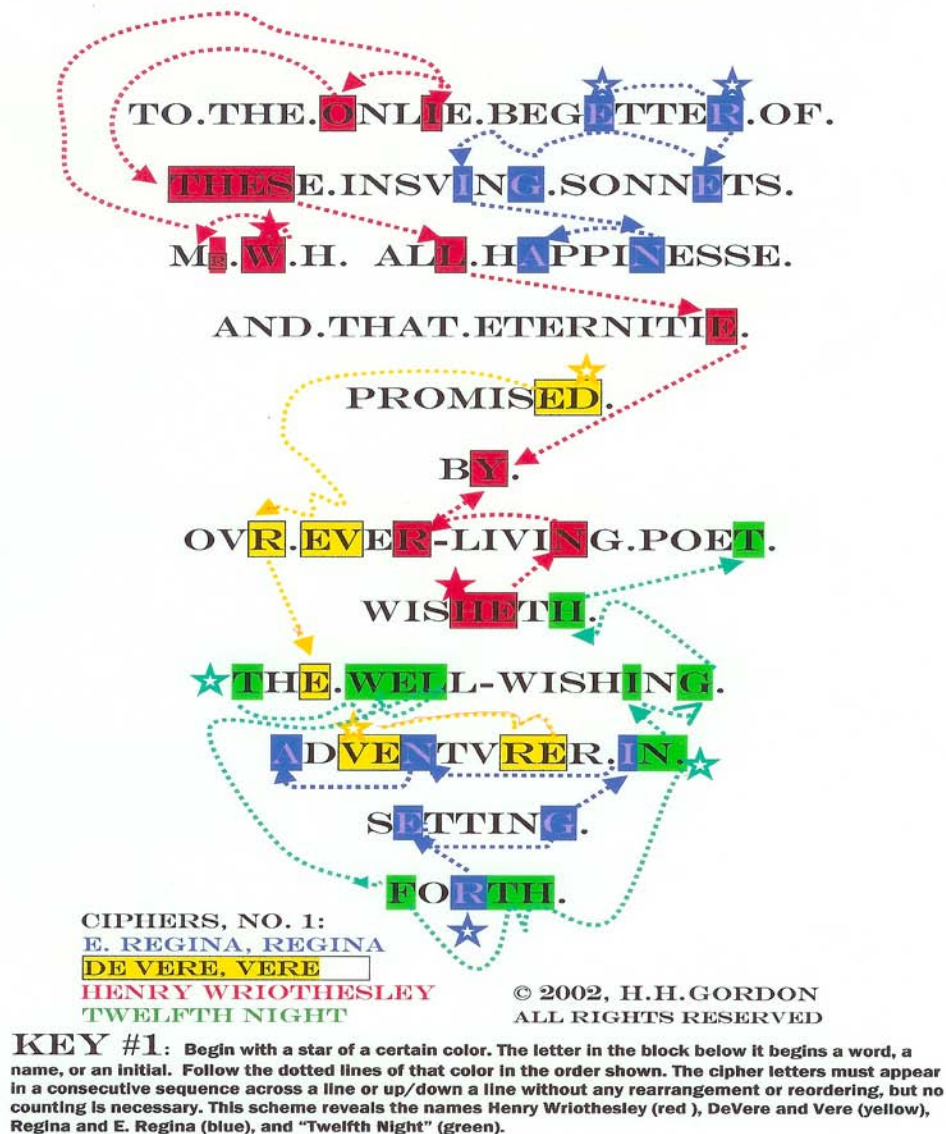
Now the Secret Can Be Told

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.³⁶ In 1570, some English subjects were tried—and some executed—for slander against the Queen.³⁷ Some had tongues and ears cut off; some were tortured and imprisoned.³⁸

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.³⁹ Reports from various sources claim that Elizabeth had as many as five children, including her alleged sons by Dudley, Francis Bacon, and Robert Devereux (2nd Earl of Essex).⁴⁰ Elizabeth wore Farthingale dresses with wide hoops to hide her pregnancies, and she made progresses into outlying areas where she could stay with trusted friends during her confinement. Comparing her to her father, the lusty Henry VIII, we might well wonder why the life of a queen must be so much more complicated than that of a king.

Here is a colored simulation of the Dedication⁴¹, showing the path one might take to find the names of the three principal characters in the Love Story, and the clue of Twelfth Night to assure Henry Wriothsesley that he was a child of love. Each of the names begins with a star and follows an orderly sequence. It would take a genius like Edward De Vere to put all this information, and more, into 28 words.



Understandable though it may be 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 may be, that for four hundred years Shakespeare devotees have cherished the romanticized ideal of a country lad blossoming suddenly 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 all around the globe 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 societies 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.

The End

Further Notes on Encryption

1. 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 bee 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 voide of all suspicion, or may elude all examination.⁴²

Bacon 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. Bacon 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?

2. Methods of encryption were known before the Elizabethan age. In 1518 Johannis Trithemius wrote (but did not publish) his *Steganographia*, which "circulated in manuscript for one hundred years, being copied by many persons eager to suck out the secrets that it was thought to hold."⁴³ 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.⁴⁴
3. It is doubtful that a message was encoded using ELS, or equi-distant letter sequencing. The Cardano Grille method for decoding ELS was well known in

Shakespeare's time by his adversaries, who could have quickly discovered his secret messages. But Shakespeare/Oxford was clever enough to use a less common pattern and to apply the pattern to maximum effect.

4. The principles of cryptography or steganography as defined by Francis Bacon apply to the Sonnets Dedication. Bacon says the plaintext (surface meaning) must make sense by itself, so as not to arouse suspicion. (A code without a surface plaintext would obviously contain a disguised message, whereas a plaintext surface meaning permits the message to be hidden in plain sight.)
5. This interpretation fits meaningfully into the larger scenario, as required by the standards of Francis Bacon. The plaintext seems to be a real dedication, however puzzling. But the encrypted message seems to say "I dedicate this book to my beloved son, begotten in a magical moment on Twelfth Night, and to his mother, Elisabeth Regina, as the only legacy I can provide for him without endangering his safety or harming the security of England." The proposed solution is also unique, or nearly so, because the chances are virtually nil that all of these names and mottos might be hidden within the subtext of a 28-word riddle.
6. This interpretation also fits the criteria set by Thomas and Elizebeth Friedman, experts in cryptography who examined the solution proposed by Delia Bacon and her Baconian supporters.⁴⁵ They declared the Baconian ciphers invalid, but they did not rule out the possibility that some future solution could be found, if the solution was unique or nearly so, and if it fit within a larger context that would make the message meaningful.
7. Oxford himself was an expert cryptographer capable of encoding a message within a plaintext. An example of his skill was presented by his biographer B. M. Ward⁴⁶ and repeated by Charlton and Dorothy Ogburn in their biography of Edward De Vere, *This Star of England* in 1952. This example, with its solution, is repeated in the appendices of *The Secret Love Story in Shakespeare's Sonnets*. 2008 edition, pages 163–165.

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End Notes

- ¹ Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, (London: Routledge Classics, 2nd ed. 2004).
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Benjamin Woolley, *The Queen's Conjurer: The science and magic of Dr. John Dee*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001).
- ⁴ Edmund Spenser, author of "The Faerie Queen", dedicated his poem to Queen Elizabeth.
- ⁵ Francis Bacon was one of the noted intellectuals of his time, author of "The New Atlantis," a philosophical, symbolic narrative, and *Novum Organum*, a treatise on inductive logic.
- ⁶ Peter Dawkins, "Shakespeare and Freemasonry" *Freemasonry Today*, Winter 1998. Reprinted on web site <http://www.sirbacon.org/Dawkinsfrmsnry.htm>.
- ⁷ Alfred Dodd, *The Secret History of Francis Bacon*, (London: C. W. Daniel Co., Ltd., 1941), fn, 207.
- ⁸ Charlton Ogburn, Jr., *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality*, (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1984), 119–121.
- ⁹ Yates, *Enlightenment*.
- ¹⁰ Dodd, *Secret History*, title page.
- ¹¹ Ogburn, *Mysterious*.
- ¹² Robert L. D. Cooper, *Cracking the Freemason's Code* (New York: Atria Books, 2006) 96–97.
- ¹³ Malcom C. Duncan, *Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor*, 3rd ed. (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1866), 222. Reprinted at www.sacred-texts.com/mas/dun/dun00.htm.
- ¹⁴ Elisabeth Sears, *Shakespeare and the Tudor Rose*, (Marshall Hills, MA: Meadowgeese Press, 2002), 17, 27.
- ¹⁵ Sears, 172–173.
- ¹⁶ Ogburn *Mysterious*, 331–333, and Charlotte Stopes, *The Life of Henry, Third Earl of Southampton*. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 40–44.
- ¹⁷ Ogburn *Mysterious*, 94–95.
- ¹⁸ Daniel Beresniak, *Symbols of Freemasonry*, (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 2003), 32. (First published in French for Asouline Publishing, 1997).
- ¹⁹ Dawkins, 3–4.
- ²⁰ Helen Heightsman Gordon, *The Secret Love Story in Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 2nd edition, (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2008).
- ²¹ Neville Williams, *All the Queen's Men: Elizabeth and her Courtiers* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1972), 152.
- ²² Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn, *This Star of England* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1952).
- ²³ Stopes, 86.
- ²⁴ Ogburn, *Mysterious*.
- ²⁵ Ibid. 613–614.
- ²⁶ Daniel Wright, "Shaking the Spear at Court" *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Summer, 1998.
- ²⁷ *28th Degree Grand Knight of the Sun or Prince Adept*. Pamphlet. (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing Company).
- ²⁸ Helen Heightsman Gordon, "William Shakespeare's Rosicrucian Revelations in the Dedication to Sonnets," *Rose-Croix Journal*, Spring 2007, www.rosecroixjournal.org.

- ²⁹ William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, became Lord Chamberlain to King James in 1623, a position in which he “exercised supreme authority in theatrical affairs.” He was grand Master of Freemasonry from 1618–1630. www.sirbacon.org.
- ³⁰ John Rollett, “Interpretations of the Dedication to Shakespeare’s Sonnets,” *The Oxfordian* 2 (October 1999):60–75. Reprinted with further commentary by Richard Malim, editor, 2005. *Great Oxford: Essays on the Life and Works of Edward De Vere*, (Tunbridge Wells, UK: Parapress Ltd., 1999), 253–266.
- ³¹ See Wooley, *The Queen’s Conjuror*.
- ³² Rollett and Roper, cited in William J. Ray, “Edward De Vere’s Concealed Authorship of the Shakespeare Canon and the Necessary Taboos of Blind Belief” www.wjray.net/shakespeare_papers/tabooing-de-verre.htm.
- ³³ Roper, 14–15.
- ³⁴ David Kahn, *The Codebreakers*, (New York: Macmillan, 1967), cited in Roper, 12.
- ³⁵ Helen H. Gordon, *Secret Love Story*, 22.
- ³⁶ Carolly Erickson, *The First Elizabeth*, (New York: Summit Books 1983), 266.
- ³⁷ Erickson, 266.
- ³⁸ Erickson, 269.
- ³⁹ Erickson, 269.
- ⁴⁰ Emilie Deventer Von Kunow, 6-10, cited in Dodd, *Marriage of Elizabeth Tudor*, introduction.
- ⁴¹ Gordon, *Secret*. 22–23.
- ⁴² Francis Bacon, cited in Tass Weir, *Knights Templar web site*, 1996.
- ⁴³ Kahn, 132.
- ⁴⁴ Woolley, 19–23, 279–281, 295.
- ⁴⁵ William and Elizebeth Friedman, *The Shakespeare Ciphers Examined*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), 26, 279–288.
- ⁴⁶ B. M. Ward, *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, (London: John Murray, 1928). Reprinted by Shakespeare-Oxford Society, 2003.