

Who Was Shakespeare?



Generally Eclectic

Who Was Shakespeare?

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INTRODUCTION

Scholars have debated who wrote the plays, sonnets and longer poems published under the name Shakespeare. The conventional understanding is that a gentleman from Stratford with the first name William and a last name similar to Shakespeare wrote these works. For a variety of reasons, this understanding makes little sense. Little is known about the gentleman from Stratford. What is known is not convincing. How did someone from a small rural town get the education to write some beautifully and on such a range of contemporary events? How did he get the experience to write knowledgeably about foreign lands? How did he learn about the intricacies of the court of Queen Elizabeth? Why are there so few legal records of his life?

The most likely author of the works is Edward De Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford. The evidence is in the close relationship between the life of Edward de Vere, and the content of the plays, sonnets and longer poems. This site assumes that Edward de Vere wrote the works, and in defense of this conclusion, will include the following products:

- The case for Edward de Vere as the author of the works of Shakespeare requires that two issues be addressed in two parts:
 - To determine whether Edward de Vere or the Stratfordian wrote the works of William Shakespeare, it is essential to compare both cases according to all the relevant issues. This is done in Chapter 1: De Vere versus the Stratfordian.
 - If Edward de Vere was the author of the works of William Shakespeare, how did history get it wrong? This question is addressed in Chapter 2: The Historical Error.
- Who was Edward de Vere? To get a fuller understanding of his life, see Chapter 3: De Vere Chronology.
- What do the works of William Shakespeare tell us about the author of these works? To what extent is the information about the author of these works reflected in the life of Edward de Vere? If one starts from the premise that Edward de Vere wrote the works of William Shakespeare, what additional information do we gather about Edward de Vere, and what additional information do we gather about the works themselves? This question is addressed in Chapter 4: De Vere in the Plays.

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CHAPTER 1: DE VERE VERSUS THE STRATFORDIAN COMPARING THE COMPETING CLAIMS FOR AUTHORSHIP

The best way to address this question is to rigourously compare the competing claims against the claimants against the various issues that have been raised over time. A table format is the best way to do the rigourous content.

Issues	The Stratfordian	Edward De Vere
The Children		
The Children: One would expect that all the children of Shakespeare, someone who had the best command of the English language seen to date, would be at least literate and perhaps have some interest in the arts.	The Stratfordian fathered three children - Susanna, Hamnet and Judith - in Stratford-upon-Avon. Hamnet died at age eleven. Of the Stratfordian's two daughters, one was illiterate and the other could barely write her name. The Stratfordian was not actively involved in raising his children, since he spent much of his life in London. In 1596, he was a tax defaulter, but by 1597, he came into money and bought the second largest house in Stratford-upon-Avon. If the Stratfordian were "Shakespeare", one would think he would have used some of his money to make his daughters literate. This did not happen.	De Vere had seven children: one son (Edward Veer) by Anne Vavasour, five by Anne Cecil, of which three daughters (Elizabeth, Bridget, Susan) survived, and one (Henry de Vere) by Elizabeth Trentham. All de Vere's children were literate. Elizabeth married William Stanley, Earl of Derby - a courtier poet. Susan married Philip Herbert, the Earl of Montgomery. Susan married into one of the leading literary aristocratic families of the time, and was actively involved in literary matters. In 1619, she and her husband received a dedication from the publisher of the <i>First Folio</i> . The Earl of Pembroke was the Earl of Montgomery's brother. The Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery received the dedicatory epistle in the <i>First Folio</i> , and were instrumental in its publication.
Death Related		
Notice of the Death: One would expect the death of Shakespeare - the greatest literary figure of the times - would be noticed both in London, where Shakespeare's plays were performed and	The Stratfordian's death in 1616 attracted no particular notice either in London or in Stratford-upon-Avon.	Edward de Vere's death in 1604 was at least noticed.

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<p>where his plays and poems were published.</p>		
<p>The Grave: One would expect that Shakespeare would have a grave fitting the greatest literary figure of the times.</p>	<p>The Stratfordian's grave in Stratford-upon-Avon with these uninspiring words engraved on it:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear To dig the dust enclosed here. Blessed be ye man that spares these stones, And cursed be he that moves my bones.</p> <p>In the Stratfordian's graveyard is a monument which, in combination with the preface of the <i>First Folio</i>, is the most direct evidence for the Stratfordian as the author of the works of Shakespeare. In the preface to the <i>First Folio</i>, Leonard Digges wrote: "When that stone is rent/And time dissolves thy Stratford monument...". The monument consists of an epitaph, two figures sitting on a ledge sheltering a figure (presumably the Stratfordian) with his arms on a pillow, quill pen in his right hand, and a blank piece of paper on the pillow.</p> <p>Some believe the monument was constructed around the time of the publication of the <i>First Folio</i>, by de Vere's family and friends, in order to get the <i>First Folio</i> published without getting themselves in</p>	<p>De Vere was buried in an unmarked grave in the churchyard of St. Augustine in Hackney.</p>

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	<p>serious trouble with King James and his close friends. De Vere's family and friends were decidedly out of favour with King James for their opposition to the marriage of his son to a Spaniard. The <i>First Folio</i> contained politically explosive material (e.g. Macbeth, Julius Caesar), and largely glorified the Tudor regime.</p>	
<p>The Will: At the deaths of both de Vere in 1604 and the Stratfordian in 1616, there were a number of unpublished Shakespearean plays. For example, the First Folio published in 1623 contained nineteen plays that had not yet been published. As these works had value, one presumes that these and other literary works would have been mentioned in "Shakespeare's" will.</p>	<p>The Stratfordian's will is three pages long. It lists his assets, and includes specific bequests. It does not mention plays or other literary works. The will is that of a merchant.</p>	<p>No will from De Vere surfaced. One possible explanation is that he committed suicide. In the event of suicide, some of his possessions would have been forfeited to the Crown. Related to the suicide hypothesis is the fact that on the day of de Vere's death, Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, was imprisoned in relation to allegations that he planned to kill several Scotsmen close to King James. (He was quickly released.) Many of the Sonnets were written to a younger man than the author, and they indicate a special relationship. If de Vere authored the Sonnets, then he probably had a very special relationship with Henry Wriothesley. His imprisonment in combination with de Vere's declining health could triggered de Vere's suicide.</p>
<p>The Sonnets.</p>		
<p>The Sonnets are a highly personal collection of poems, probably written over a period of time. They provide a lot of information about their author.</p>		

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<p>Of interest is whether the extent to which this personal information matches what is known of de Vere and the Stratfordian.</p>		
<p>Carrying the Canopy: Sonnet 125 states:</p> <p><i>Were't aught to me I bore the canopy With my extern the outward honouring Or laid great bases for eternity, Which proves more short than waste or ruining?</i></p> <p>The author is stating that he bore the canopy, which is a covering for the monarch (presumably Elizabeth) as protection from the rain. Bearing the canopy is an honour reserved only for the privileged few.</p>	<p>There is no chance the Stratfordian carried the canopy.</p>	<p>There is no historic record that de Vere bore the canopy, but the records on bearers of the canopy are incomplete. De Vere, as one of the leading courtiers, would at least be a possible bearer of the canopy.</p>
<p>Of High Birth: Sonnet 91 states:</p> <p><i>Thy love is better than high birth to me</i></p> <p>This suggests the author is familiar with, and presumably had "high birth".</p>	<p>The Stratfordian was not of high birth.</p>	<p>De Vere was of high birth.</p>
<p>Truth in the Sonnets: Sonnets 101 to 125 contain "true" or "truth" 20 times (101 - 4 times, 105 - 4 times, 107, 108, 110 = 3 times, 114, 118 - 2 times, 119, 120, 123, 125). Sonnet 82 states: "In true plain words by thy true-telling friend."</p>		<p>De Vere's family motto was: Nothing is Truer than Truth. The name de Vere comes from the French meaning "of the truth".</p>
<p>The Year of Publication of the Sonnets: The sonnets were</p>	<p>The Stratfordian was alive in 1609. The publication of the</p>	<p>By 1609, de Vere had been dead for five years. The publication</p>

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<p>published in 1609. The sonnets deal almost obsessively with Shakespeare's love of another man, who many presume to be Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, to whom <i>Venus and Adonis</i> and <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i> had been dedicated in 1593 and 1594.</p>	<p>Sonnets during the lifetime of the author seems bizarre, as the Sonnets focus on Shakespeare's obsession with another man. This is not something most men would want in the public domain.</p>	<p>coincides with the sale of the family home by de Vere's wife, and may have been part of cleaning house prior to a move. As de Vere had been publicly accused of homosexuality and pederasty in the Arundell-Howard libels, it would have been particularly difficult for de Vere to publish the sonnets during his life time.</p>
<p>Contemporary Personal References</p>		
<p>Limited Personal References: Personal references appear in diaries, notebooks, etc. of people living at the time who claim to having met, seen or otherwise encountered Shakespeare, one of and perhaps the leading literary figure of the times. When people met, saw or otherwise encountered notable figures of the day such as the actor Richard Burbage or the playwright Ben Jonson, they noted it down. Scholars have scoured the documents of the time to find out more about Shakespeare. Personal references to William Shakespeare are almost, but not quite, non-existent.</p>	<p>If the Stratfordian wrote the works of Shakespeare, one would have expected a large number of contemporary references, both not only from Londoners, where his plays and long poems were published, but also in Stratford-upon-Avon, where his accomplishments would have been well known.</p>	<p>If "Shakespeare" was a pseudonym for someone else, then the paucity of contemporary personal references would be expected.</p>
<p>The George Buc Reference: Scholars have managed to find one personal reference to William Shakespeare. In the title page of quarto edition of an anonymous play in 1599, George Buc claimed to have asked a question of William Shakespeare about the play, to</p>	<p>As Buc undoubtedly would have known de Vere but specifically referred to "William Shakespeare", the claim is made that Shakespeare and de Vere must have been two different individuals.</p>	<p>In referring to "William Shakespeare", Buc could have been referring a well-known person using his also well-known pseudonym (de Vere).</p>

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<p>which Shakespeare provided a response which found its way onto the title page.</p>		
<p>Richard Hunt's Reader: William Camden's edition of <i>Britannia</i>, written in Latin in 1590, describes Stratford-upon-Avon. Richard Hunt was born in 1596 and became a vicar in a town 12 miles from Stratford-upon-Avon. In his copy of Camden's book there is a hand-written reference, next to the section about Stratford's famous sons, to William Shakespeare. The reference identifies the Stratfordian as Stratford-upon-Avon's own "Roscius". Roscius was a Roman actor who achieved great fame and amassed a fortune before retiring from acting.</p>	<p>If the hand written comment came from Richard Hunt, then it suggests that by the time Hunt was a mature man with sufficient income to buy books (i.e. sometime after the Stratfordians death), the Stratfordian had a local reputation for wealth and acting.</p>	<p>It is not clear who made the hand written comment - Hunt, or one of the likely many owners of the book to the present time. Therefore, the source of the comment could have been someone acting on hearsay, rather than direct knowledge. That the Stratfordian amassed considerable wealth would have been evident in Stratford-upon-Avon. The source of his fortune was apparently as an actor, and not a playwright or poet. Ironically, in London, there were only limited references to the Stratfordian as an actor, and some of those limited references are suspect.</p>
<p>Contemporary Literary References</p>		
<p>The Francis Meres Reference: In 1598, Francis Meres wrote <i>Palladis Tamia</i> - the equivalent of a <i>Farmer's Almanac</i> for educated and wealthy Londoners. One chapter deals with literary criticism. It is the first book of literary criticism to mention Shakespeare. Meres mentions Shakespeare among notable English writers, and recognizes Shakespeare for both his long poems, sonnets circulated among private friends, and his plays both comedies and tragedies. It also mentions de Vere as best for comedies.</p>	<p>The suggestion is that because de Vere and Shakespeare are mentioned as separate individuals in <i>Palladis Tamia</i>, they must be two different people.</p>	<p>However, <i>Palladis Tamia</i> was a 700 page work. Most of its statements came from other critics and literary works (including <i>The Art of English Poesie</i>). Many classical and neoclassical quotes came from a school boy's text book. Meres may have been not the best informed literary critic, and consequently unable to distinguish between a real person and a pseudonym.</p>

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<p>The Disappearance of de Vere's Works: An anonymous publication in 1589 <i>The Art of English Poesie</i> had praised de Vere's skills as a comic playwright and secret court poet, yet none of de Vere's plays survive to the present, raising the question where did they go?. A number of writers of the day included dedications to de Vere in their publications. While some dedications were undoubtedly provided as flattery to a powerful figure, some reflected sincere words of praise. In 1622, Henry Peacham's book <i>The Compleat Gentleman</i> appeared. The book is about courtly etiquette and provides an exhaustive list of great Elizabethan poets. De Vere topped the list, while Shakespeare was no where to be found. This occurred despite the publication of the Sonnets in 1609 under the authorship of William Shakespeare. Revised editions over the following four decades did not mention Shakespeare either.</p>	<p>Not relevant</p>	<p>The disappearance of de Vere's works suggest that he was either producing poems and plays anonymously, or was writing under pseudonym. Presumably, Peacham, who was aware of the affairs of court, knew about the pseudonym.</p>
<p>The Return from Parnassus: Part 2: Shakespeare is mentioned in Act 4 of this play. It was performed by students from Cambridge University in the period 1597 to 1602. The author is anonymous. The play pokes fun at the theatre industry of the time, and Kemp and Burbage are characters in the plays. They are about to give instructions to fellow actors about how to act. The</p>	<p>The Stratford case takes these words literally. It uses this reference to suggest that Shakespeare, a fellow actor to Burbage and Kemp, is better than the university playwrights (including de Vere), with their continual references to Ovid, Metamorphosis, Proserpina, and Juppiter. Shakespeare is even better than Ben Jonson. Burbage concurs with Kemp.</p>	<p>The de Vere case interprets this as a satirical comment, with the obvious implication that the playwright and the students knew who authored the plays attributed to Shakespeare and it was not the Stratfordian. The quotation appears in the context of a play that puts down actors as a group. The character Kemp in the play is modeled after the real actor Kemp, who was famous for his comedic parts.</p>

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<p>key reference is as follows:</p> <p>Kemp: Few of the university pen plaies well, they smell too much of the writer Ovid, and that writer Metamorphosis, and talke too much of Proserpina and Juppiter. Why heres our fellow Shakespeare, puts them all downe. I, and Ben Jonson too. O that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow, he brought up Horace giving the Poets a pill, but our fellow Shakespeare hath given him a purge that made him bewray his credit.</p> <p>Burb: It is a shrewd fellow indeed.</p>		<p>Presumably, the scene was intended as comedy. The character Kemp notes that Metamorphosis is a writer along with Ovid, where in fact <i>Metamorphosis</i> was a work written by Ovid. The character Kemp did not know this. University students would have found the ignornance of actors to be amusing. The character Kemp notes that their fellow actor Shakespeare puts down all the university playwrights, who make continual references to Ovid, Metamorphosis, Proserpina and Jupitter. Yet Shakespeare the playwright made numerous references to them. University students of the period would have found this amusing too, not only because of the actors ignorance, but also because they would think it ludicrous to suggest that someone could write such works without a university education. Yet both characters acknowledge that the fellow actor Shakespeare is claiming to be the author of the plays. The character Burbage replies that Shakespeare is a shrewd fellow, presumably a valid comment on the business mind of the Stratfordian.</p>
<p>The name "William Shakespeare"</p>		
<p>The Origin of and Claim to the Name "Shakespeare": In relationship to the plays, long poems and the Sonnets of William Shakespeare, the name first appeared in 1593 with the</p>	<p>The Stratfordian's name was spelled in a variety of ways. Of the three signature's by the Stratfordian not related to his will, the name was spelled Willi Shak (1611 - witness</p>	<p>De Vere's claim to the name Shakespeare comes through the Bolbeck coat of arms, which features a lion shaking a broken spear.</p>

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<p>publication of <i>Venus and Adonis</i>. It then appeared in 1594 with the publication of <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i>. It appeared with official quarto editions of various plays. The title pages of these plays typically included wording indicating that these were "author approved" versions, to distinguish them from a variety of unofficial versions that proliferated in an era before copyright laws. The name also appeared with the publication of the Sonnets in 1609, and later appeared in 1623 with the publication of the <i>First Folio</i> - a collection of 37 plays. The spelling was either Shakespeare, or Shake-speare.</p>	<p>affidavit in the Belott-Mountjoy case), William Shakspe (1613 - Blackfriar's conveyance), and Wm Shakspe (1613 - Blackfriar's mortgage). As the will was signed when the Stratfordian was near death, not much can be made of the signatures in it.</p> <p>The Stratfordian's name according to third party evidence was: Shakspeare (1598 - Richard Quiney's letter to William asking for a loan) Shagspere (1582 - bond protecting the Bishop of Worcester should a lawful impediment exist to William's marriage with Anne Hathwey) Shaksper (1564 - christening of Gulielmus Johannes in 1564, 1575 - father's name on the purchase of a house in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1577 - writ of habeas corpus showing that the father had been in prison, 1589 - party to a court action, 1598- Abraham Sturley's letter to Richard Quiney to get Quiney to ask William for a loan, 1596 -father's name in an application for a coat of arms, 1599 - charges against the Garter King at Arms for granting a coat of arms to William's father among others who were not entitled) Shakspeare (1585 - baptism of William's twins Hamnet and</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>The name may have originated with a speech made by Gabriel Harvey to Queen Elizabeth's court in 1578 at Cambridge. De Vere was riding beside Queen Elizabeth. Harvey stated "Pallas striking her shield with her spear-shaft will attend thee." "Pallas" referred to Pallas Athene, the spear shaker and ancient Greek goddess of wisdom, poetry and the fine arts. Harvey urged de Vere to "...throw away the insignificant pen, throw away the bloodless books...Minerva strengthens thy right hand... within thee burns the fire of Mars. Thine eyes flash fire, thy countenance shakes a spear, who would not swear that Achilles had come to life again...".</p>

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	<p>Judith) Shaxper (1601 - description of William as a householder of Stratford-upon-Avon, 1601 - reference to William in Thomas Whittington's will, 1602 - William's purchase of 107 acres in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1604 - William's legal action against Philip Rogers in a Stratford Court, 1605 - William's purchase of tithes from Stratford-upon-Avon and other towns, 1609- a judgment in favour of William in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1612 - a complaint against William in relation to tithes, 1612 - William's deposition in relation to a court case between Bellot and Mountjoy, 1612 - William's purchase of a property in Blackfriars and related mortgage, 1614 - reference to William's attempt to enclose land in Stratford-upon-Avon) Shaxpere (1582 - marriage licence of William and Anna Whately of Temple Garden, 1598 - letter from Abraham Sturley to Richard Quiney in relation to a loan to Quiney from William, 1597 -contract by William to buy a house in Stratford-upon-Avon), Shakespeare (1583 - baptism of Susanna, daughter of William, 1596 - tax defaulter in St. Helen's Bishopgate in relation to an assessment, 1597 - tax defaulter on another assessment, 1599 - record of William as one of</p>	

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	<p>the sharers in the Globe Theater, 1603 - inclusion of William in a list of nine actors licensed to act as the King's Company, 1604 - a record of cloth issued to William with eight other actors to participate in a procession, 1605- bequest to William in the will of actor Augustine Philip)</p> <p>Shakespeare (1598 - request for a loan from Richard Quiney, 1598 - payment to William for a load of stone in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1613 - payment to William)</p> <p>Shak (Sturley letter regarding a loan to Richard Quiney)</p> <p>While the variety of spellings of the last name by William and others may have been common in a time when many were illiterate, they also suggest that the Stratfordian may not have been literate.</p>	
<p>The Hyphenated Shakespeare: The name was hyphenated in the dedicatory letters addressed to the Earl of Southampton in both <i>Venus and Adonis</i> and <i>Lucrece</i>. Of the thirty-two editions of Shakespeare's plays published before the <i>First Folio</i> where Shakespeare's name appears, fifteen cases had the name hyphenated. The hyphen appeared more commonly in the early publications than the later ones. It was hyphenated in <i>The Sonnets</i>. Two of the four</p>	<p>Proponents of the Stratfordians case have suggested that when typesetters were using italics and tried to write an "k" followed by an "s", the two letters could overlap causing the type to break. To solve the problem, they inserted an "e" or a hyphen or both.</p>	<p>Proponents of de Vere's case sometimes cite the hyphen as clear evidence of a pseudonym, specifically one involving the shaking of a spear. They suggest that initially the hyphen was intended to denote a pseudonym, but over time, it became either unnecessary or cumbersome to do this.</p>

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<p>dedicatory poems in the <i>First Folio</i> used a hyphen. Others writing about Shakespeare also hyphenated the name on occasion. John Davies of Hereford hyphenated the name in the poem "Our English Terence". John Webster, a contemporary dramatist, hyphenated the name in an appraisal of contemporary playwrights.</p>		
<p>De Vere's Nickname "Will":</p>	<p>Not relevant.</p>	<p>See Will Monox reference. Also Sonnet 135.</p>
<p>The Legalities of a Pseudonym: The de Vere candidacy requires the use of a pseudonym in the publication of the plays, the Sonnets and the longer poems. Publication involves a legal process through the Stationers' Register.</p>	<p>De Vere's use of a pseudonym, particularly one which was similar to the name of another person, would presumably be noticed by the Stationers' Register.</p>	<p>While the Stationers' Register may have noticed the use of a pseudonym, de Vere was a person of considerable standing relative to the Stationers' Register. In addition, one presumes that de Vere's father-in-law William Cecil and Queen Elizabeth were also involved in the pseudonym. As a consequence, the Stationers' Register would have been unlikely to object.</p>
<p>Shakespeare's Knowledge</p>		
<p>Shakespeare's knowledge of the Denmark and the Danish Court: In <i>Hamlet</i>, Shakespeare talks of a Danish drinking ritual involving cannons ("There's no health the king shall drink today but the great cannon to the clouds shall tell.") Shakespeare also talks of Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern. There was one courtier in Denmark with the name Rosenkrantz and two with the name Guldenstern. The source of Shakespeare's information</p>	<p>It is unclear how the Stratfordian would have acquired this knowledge.</p>	<p>While de Vere never visited Denmark, his brother-in-law, Peregrine Bertie (Lord Willoughby), visited Denmark in 1582 as the English ambassador on behalf of Queen Elizabeth to invest King Frederick II of Denmark as a Knight of the Garter - an honour intended to encourage Frederick to end the harassment of British ships in the area. Bertie revisited Denmark in 1585. In total, Bertie spent five months at Elsinore. He got on well with</p>

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<p>about the Danish court likely came from the English ambassador. Note that in the last scene from Hamlet, the English Ambassador announces that Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern are dead.</p>		<p>the Danish King, and presumably participated in feasts with the King that included speeches and drink, all performed after a volley from Elsinore's cannons. During his time at Elsinore, Bertie would have met top Danish officials, including Rosenkrantz and the two Guildensterns.</p>
<p>Shakespeare's Knowledge of Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i>: Arthur Golding's <i>Metamorphoses</i> is widely regarded as the second most influential source for Shakespeare, after the Bible.</p>	<p>It is unclear how the Stratfordian would have acquired his knowledge of Golding's translation of Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i>.</p>	<p>Arthur Golding was de Vere's uncle and half-brother to de Vere's mother. De Vere had probably known Golding for most of his life. Around 1563, Golding was hired by William Cecil to manage that part of de Vere's estate not held by Robert Dudley. It was also likely that Golding was tutoring de Vere at the time. De Vere was being raised in the household of William Cecil as a ward of the Crown. Golding was a Latin scholar and published his translation of Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i> into English in 1563. In 1564, he dedicated his translation of Justin's <i>Abridgement of the Histories of Trogus Pompeius</i> to de Vere. If de Vere wrote the works of Shakespeare, then his maternal connection to Golding would explain the reference in Titus Andronicus where the plot calls for a copy of Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i> to be brought on stage by a boy, who says: "Tis Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i>. My mother gave it to me."</p>
<p>Shakespeare's Aristocratic Side: Of Shakespeare's 37 plays, 36 are set in highest</p>	<p>The Stratfordian did not come from an aristocratic background, although he</p>	<p>De Vere was an aristocrat, fully conversant with aristocratic life in England. When he traveled,</p>

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<p>realms of society - royal courts, the world of the nobility, etc. The principal characters (with a few exceptions such as Shylock and Falstaff) are from the upper echelons of society, and the plots revolve around them. Lower class characters are usually introduced for their comic effect. Shakespeare spends little time developing their characters, and their names tell all: Bottom, Snug, Starveling, Dogberry, Simply, Feeble, Mistress Quickly, Doll Tearsheet. Numerous lines from Shakespeare's plays espouse aristocratic themes: the preference for order; distrust of the population; sympathy for the burdens of the aristocracy. Shakespeare was also fully conversant with aristocratic past-times: falconry, horsemanship, and fox-hunting, for example.</p>	<p>could have had aristocratic sympathies. He was schooled in Stratford-upon-Avon, and worked in and around the theater, eventually rising to hold an ownership interest in a theater. His knowledge of aristocratic ways he could have come, perhaps, through dealings with the aristocracy, although the aristocrats of the day have not provided evidence that they dealt with him.</p>	<p>he met with aristocrats and the upper echelons of society in the places he visited.</p>
<p>Shakespeare's Knowledge of Classical Greek and Latin Literature: Classical references flow easily from Shakespeare's quill. He was clearly familiar with all or some of the works of Ovid, Plautus, Virgil, Terence, Caesar, Sallust, Cicero, Livy, Horace, Seneca, Lucretius, Juvenal, Plato and others. This knowledge came at a time when books were relatively rare and expensive, and English translations were not always available.</p>	<p>It is unclear how the Stratfordian could have acquired the depth of classical knowledge demonstrated by Shakespeare. He may have learned a bit in grammar school. He may have been able to borrow a few books. He may have been able to spare some time from the drudgery of day to day living in London in the late 1500s. It is conceivable that he could have acquired some knowledge of the classics through talking with people fully conversant with them,</p>	<p>De Vere received a classical education from William Cecil, who oversaw his education program that included, at one point in time at least, two hours per day of Latin. De Vere's uncle William Golding was a classical scholar who was likely a tutor of de Vere as well. In addition, Cecil had one of the best libraries of the time. In his travels to Italy, de Vere would have had opportunities to advance his classical education. Wealthy in his youth, de Vere would have had the resources to buy books in England and abroad.</p>

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	<p>but these individuals would have been rare. Even a genius would lack the necessary resources to be as conversant with the classics as Shakespeare.</p>	
<p>Shakespeare's Knowledge of French and Italian, and Modern Literature: Shakespeare was familiar with the Italian and French authors and literature. Some Shakespeare scholars have noted that the material in his plays originated not with available English translations, but directly from Italian and French sources.</p>	<p>It is unclear how the Stratfordian would have acquired both his language skills in Italian and French, and more important, access to the literature that formed the basis of some of Shakespeare's plays. Grammar school, night-time reading, and access to knowledge persons would be insufficient.</p>	<p>De Vere studied French as part of his education in the household of William Cecil. He wrote a letter in French at the age of thirteen. He would have had access to Cecil's library. He traveled in France and Italy. As a wealthy man, he would have been able to buy books. As a nobleman in the English court, he would have had access to the best minds in England and abroad.</p>
<p>Shakespeare's Knowledge of Law: Shakespearean and legal experts frequently cite Shakespeare's understanding of law. One legal expert observed that Shakespeare had "a deep technical knowledge of the law" and an easy familiarity with "some of the most abstruse proceeding in English jurisprudence". Legal phrases are common in the plays. Words are frequently used in their legal interpretations. <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> provides an example of Shakespeare's knowledge of the law, since it revolves around the legal meaning of "a pound of flesh". In <i>Hamlet</i>, the legal intricacies of <i>Hales v. Petit</i> are comically presented by the Gravediggers as they discuss Ophelia's death.</p>	<p>It is unclear how the Stratfordian would have acquired this legal knowledge. While he was involved in several court cases, and may have spent time at the court house or talking with legal experts, these mechanisms seem insufficient to provide the level of knowledge exhibited by Shakespeare.</p>	<p>De Vere grew up in the household of one of the most powerful law makers in England - William Cecil. In addition, he studied law at Gray's Inn, where he matriculated in 1567. During his lifetime, he was the subject of several law suits. As an aristocratic landowner who had been illegally dispossessed of some properties, he had an ongoing interest in property law.</p>

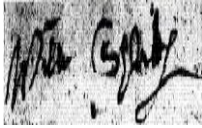


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<p>Shakespeare's Knowledge of Italy: Shakespeare set a number of his plays in Italy. This was a relatively new practice in English drama. Scholars have noted Shakespeare's extraordinary knowledge of Italy. So precise is his topographical knowledge of Italy, Italian customs and practices, Italian theater, Italian art and Italian characters that many contend that Shakespeare must have visited Italy.</p>	<p>There is no evidence that the Stratfordian ever visited Italy.</p>	<p>De Vere visited Italy over the period 1574 and 1575.</p>
<p>Shakespeare's Knowledge of London Theatre: In Shakespeare's original manuscripts, he occasionally inserted the names of actors rather than the characters in the speech headings. In typesetting these original manuscripts, compositors passed on these minor errors. This suggests an intimate knowledge of the actors who would be performing the roles he created.</p>	<p>The Stratfordian was supposedly an actor, although the evidence is limited to (1) a reference that he played the ghost in Hamlet in Nicholas Rowe's biography of 1709, (2) Ben Jonson's list of actors in two of his plays - a questionable source since Jonson could have been referring to a person using a pseudonym, as the hyphenated Shake-speare suggests, and (3) Ben Jonson's reference to Shakespeare as the first principal actor of Shakespeare's play in the introduction to the <i>First Folio</i> - which reference is untrue, according to theatre records. Unquestionably, the Stratfordian was a shareholder in a theatre company, through which he would have been familiar with the theatre.</p>	<p>De Vere associated with playwrights and actors, lived near the theatre district, attended plays, owned at various times a company of actors, through which he would have been familiar with the theatre.</p>
<p>Trivial Things that Shakespeare Knew:</p>	<p>There is no evidence that the Stratfordian visited Italy or the Adriatic. He is therefore</p>	<p>De Vere likely visited Mantua while traveling between cities which he is known to have</p>

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<p>In <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i>, the author describes at some length a painting of the Siege of Troy. The depth of detail suggests that the author had seen and remembered the painting. The Italian painter Giulio Romano created a series of paintings of the Trojan War at Mantua. In The Winter's Tale, Shakespeare talks of the Italian sculptor Julio Romano, demonstrating that he was familiar with Romano and giving credibility to the hypothesis that the painting of the Siege of Troy was Romano's.</p> <p>Shakespeare attributed a sea coast to Bohemia in The Winter's Tale. Critics including Ben Jonson ridiculed Shakespeare for this geographical error, since Bohemia was assumed to have no sea coast. However, between 1575 and 1609, the King of Bohemia and Hungary did hold a small parcel of sea coast along the Adriatic Sea.</p>	<p>unclear where his knowledge of Romano's painting of the siege of Troy came from, or how he would have known a trivial historical fact about the Bohemian kingdom on the Adriatic Sea for a period of thirty-four years.</p>	<p>visited. If he did visit Mantua, he would have come across Romano's painting of the siege of Troy, and may have met Romano. While in Venice, de Vere may have heard about the Bohemian sea coast. In addition, it is likely that de Vere traveled down the Adriatic Coast to what is known as Dubrovnik, as part of his travels. Note that Twelfth Night was set in "a city in Illyria, and the sea-coast near it" (i.e. the Adriatic coast around Dubrovnik).</p>
Penmanship		
<p>The Ability to Handle a Quill Pen: As a prolific writer of plays, sonnets and long poems, Shakespeare undoubtedly had the ability to handle the quill pen. Those without some literacy often wrote with frequent blots, as the ink flowed uncontrolled off the quill.</p>	<p>Only six examples of the Stratfordian's hand writing remain. These were signatures. Of the six, three were from his will, which was written soon before his death and probably when he was ill. As such, they can be dismissed as examples of his ability to write. Three signatures do provide evidence of his ability to write. They are provided</p>	<p>De Vere was extremely well educated. A number of his written documents remain today, and show the expected ability to write without frequent ink blots. In addition, Ben Jonson, who wrote the introduction to the <i>First Folio</i>, wrote in one of his notebooks that was published after his death: "I remember, the Players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in</p>

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	<p>below. The blots and the inconsistency in the signatures suggest the Stratfordian had limited writing abilities.</p> <p>First signature - 1611 witness in Belott-Mountjoy case</p>  <p>Second signature - 1613 Blackfriars conveyance</p>  <p>Third signature - 1613 Blackfriars mortgage</p> 	<p>this writing, (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line."</p>
<p>The Wriothesley-Southampton Connection</p>		
<p>The Henry Wriothesley Connection: <i>Venus and Adonis</i> and <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i> were dedicated in 1593 and 1594 respectively to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, who was born in 1574.</p>	<p>It is unclear how the Stratfordian, a relative unknown who had only recently arrived in London, would have known Henry Wriothesley, let alone have a sufficiently strong relationships to generate a dedication. At the time, dedications were sometimes employed as flattery, but if the Stratfordian is</p>	<p>Henry Wriothesley was a ward of Crown, and raised by William Cecil, who had raised de Vere. William Cecil was also raising de Vere's three daughters Elizabeth, Bridget and Susan. De Vere would have known Wriothesley during his stay in the Cecil household. William Cecil wanted Wriothesley to marry Elizabeth de Vere, the daughter of</p>

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	<p>Shakespeare, one wonders why he would want to flatter a young man.</p>	<p>Edward de Vere and Cecil's daughter Anne Cecil. De Vere was also supporting the marriage. Wriothesley resisted the marriage. If de Vere was Shakespeare, the dedication of <i>Venus and Adonis</i> and <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i> may have been part of de Vere's efforts to find a husband for his first daughter.</p>
<p>The Multiple Authors Hypothesis</p>		
<p>A number of commentators have suggested that the plays of Shakespeare were written by more than one person, based on different styles in the plays and the fact that some plays seem disjointed. The multiple authors hypothesis raises questions about resources. Why would other authors contribute to the Shakespeare "brand"? If paid to do so, where did the money come from? If unpaid, what was their motivation?</p>	<p>It is unclear where the Stratfordian could have obtained the resources to get others to write plays that would ultimately be published under his name, and for which he would ultimately be paid.</p>	<p>In 1586, de Vere was granted a lifetime pension by Queen Elizabeth in the amount of £1,000 pounds - an enormous amount of money at the time. The pension was renewed by King James after the death of Elizabeth. De Vere once described the pension as related to his "office". There has been no documentation explaining why the pension was granted by a normally frugal queen, or what de Vere's "office" was. William Cecil, de Vere's father-in-law and the Queen's principal adviser, was undoubtedly behind the pension. More than anything, he was probably looking for financial support for his daughter and grandchildren. De Vere was primarily interested in the arts, particularly theatre. He had written masques that had been presented at court as well, had supported acting companies, and socialized with actors, writers and other playwrights. If there were any serious office that de Vere could hold, it would probably relate to the</p>

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		<p>arts. At the time, Londoners were developing an interest in the theater. The Queen was concerned with holding the country together against internally divisive Protestant - Catholic forces, and protecting the country against threats from Spain. The Spanish Armada set sail to conquer England only two years later in 1588.</p> <p>All these factors have led to the suggestion that the "office" may have been to oversee the production of plays to develop English nationalism within the general population and to glorify and build support for the Tudor regime.</p> <p>If this suggestion is true, it would also explain inconsistent writing styles among the plays, since de Vere's office was not necessarily to write the plays, but to oversee the production of plays, at least in part by getting others to write plays under de Vere's guidance. Some of de Vere's secretaries and assistants (John Lyly, Anthony Munday) were playwrights and authors.</p> <p><i><u>The Tempest</u></i> was likely one of the last of the Shakespearean plays to be written. It is possible the play was incomplete at the time of de Vere's death. This play contains a number of connections with William Stanley, the Earl of Derby, who was not only a playwright, but also the husband of de Vere's</p>

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		daughter Elizabeth. Some have suggested that William Stanley wrote the works of Shakespeare, and perhaps he was involved in completing <i>The Tempest</i> and perhaps other plays. William Stanley's involvement in the works of Shakespeare could have come through a family connect.
The 1604 Question		
<p>Background: Finding evidence of plays written after the death of Edward de Vere has been as evidence that Edward de Vere could not have written some Shakespearean plays, as he had died before the play was written. De Vere died in 1604. Mechanisms for dating plays include registration, publication and performance dates to put an upper limit on the date of a play; contemporary events mentioned in a play and dates of the source material to put a lower limit on the date of a play; and historical context. Scholars have attempted to use the "maturity" of plays to put a sequence on their production, but this does not give a date for a play.</p>	<p><i>The Riverside Shakespeare</i> is a text often used in classrooms. It dates eleven plays after 1604, including <i>King Lear</i>, <i>MacBeth</i>, <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>, <i>Coriolanus</i>, <i>Timon of Athens</i>, <i>Cymbeline</i>, <i>The Winter's Tale</i>, <i>The Tempest</i> and <i>King Henry the Eighth</i>.</p> <p>The Stratfordian case for the authorship of the plays went substantially unchallenged for a considerable period of time. Given that the Stratfordian had shares in a theatre company, one would assume that any plays he wrote would have been written a relatively short time before they were performed, registered or published, since there is no financial benefit for having plays around that are not earning money. With a financial interest in getting plays into the public domain, the fact that many plays were</p>	<p>The Pelican/Viking editions of Shakespeare in 1969 and 1977 note that only <i>The Tempest</i> and <i>Henry VIII</i> are likely to have been written after 1604. Karl Helze, a literary historian from Germany, put dates for these plays in the 1603-1604 period. W.R. Chetwood's <i>Memoirs the the Life and Writings of Ben Jonson</i>, written the the eighteenth century, concluded all Shakespeare's plays were written before 1604.</p> <p>With de Vere, plays could have been produced well before they were performed, registered or published. With his annuity, he would have had some financial independence. He would presumably be more interested in performances at court. This would be consistent with the fact that many plays were not published until 1623.</p>

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	not published until 1623 is inconsistent with what one would assume to be his motivations.	
<p>The Multiple Authors Hypothesis: Some believe there were multiple authors to the plays of Shakespeare, because of differences of style.</p>	No Comment	<p>The dating of plays has been an issue for the case for de Vere as the author of the works of Shakespeare, particularly with regard to <i>The Tempest</i>. It is possible that de Vere left some works incomplete when he died in 1604, and that <i>The Tempest</i> was one of those works. William Stanley, the Earl of Derby, was de Vere's son in law. He was reported to have written comedies, although no comedies have been recognized under his authorship. <i>The Tempest</i> contains a number of connections to Stanley's family. The play's romantic hero - Prince Ferdinand - has the almost the same name as William Stanley's brother (Ferdinando). The setting could have been a small island off the Isle of Man, known as the Calf of Man. The Stanley family ruled the Isle of Man.</p>
<p>Contemporary Events Mentioned in Plays: Shakespeare's plays occasionally cited contemporary events such as a supernova in 1572 (Hamlet), or William Gilbert's theory of geomagnetism in 1600, mentioned in Troilus and Cressida. Any play with such a reference would have to either be written after the event, or experienced a final edit after the event. A supernova</p>	<p>A supernova occurred in October 1604, but is not mentioned in any Shakespearean play, nor is Johannes Kepler's study of planetary orbits in 1609. The Stratfordian was alive for these spectacular events, so the absence of references to these events is notable.</p>	<p>De Vere's death in 1604 would explain why he would not have made references to both the supernova and Kepler's work.</p>
	<p>MacBeth was performed in 1611, but includes a number of references to equivocation.</p>	<p>The Doctrine of Equivocation had been around for some time. In 1583, ee Vere's father-in-law</p>

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<p>occurred in October 1604, but is not mentioned in any Shakespearean play, nor is Johannes Kepler's study of planetary orbits in 1609.</p>	<p>Father Henry Garnett used the Doctrine of Equivocation in his defence in 1606. He had been accused of trying to blow up Parliament in the Gunpower Plot on November 5, 1605. The doctrine was a hot topic around this time, and this led scholars to assume MacBeth had been written sometime after 1606.</p>	<p>William Cecil had written about Catholics who used "hypocritical and sophisticated speech" to evade questioning under torture. In 1584, the Spaniard Martin Azpilcueta formally spelled out the Doctrine of Equivocation. This doctrine was disseminated through continental Europe and England. In 1595, Robert Southwell used the Doctrine of Equivocation in his own trial, arguing that Catholics could lie to Protestant inquisitors in good conscience.</p> <p>De Vere had been trained in law, and was undoubtedly familiar with the legal issues related to equivocation. More practically, he undoubtedly confronted these issues as a juror in the trial of Mary, Queen of Scots.</p>
<p>Dates of Publications of Plays and Poems: Over the period 1593 to 1604, new plays or poems of Shakespeare appeared in print about twice per year, on average. Then, there was a period where no new works appeared for several years. In 1608 and 1609, three new works appeared (King Lear, Troilus and Cressida, and the Sonnets). Then, there was another period of silence, followed by the publication of Othello in 1622 and the First Folio in 1623.</p>	<p>The Stratfordian was alive until 1616. With an interest in a theatre company and presumably at the height of his writing skills, one would have anticipated a regular flow of works into publication, at least until he left London and retired to Stratford-upon-Avon. It does not seem reasonable that eighteen Shakespeare plays would remain unpublished until the <i>First Folio</i>, nor does it make sense that the publishing of new plays were largely stop around 1604.</p>	<p>De Vere died in 1604. In 1609, his wife Elizabeth Trentham sold the family home. This may explain the new publications around 1608 and 1609, when she decided to clean up her affairs and move. The question what to do with her husband's plays and sonnets may have come to the fore at that time. The new publications around 1622 and 1623 were probably both driven by the timing and interest of de Vere's descendants, particularly his daughter Susan, to see her father's works published.</p>
<p>Pursuit of Legal Interests: The First Folio talks of "stolen and surreptitious copies,</p>	<p>The Stratfordian had a history of pursuing his legal interests through the courts. If in fact</p>	<p>Writing under the "William Shakespeare" pseudonym, de Vere and his descendants would</p>

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<p>maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealth of injurious imposters", indicating that a number of Shakespeare's plays in print up to 1623 were printed without the author's approval.</p>	<p>he had passed title to plays he had written to his acting company, they would have been in a position to pursue their legal interests in these stolen plays. There is an absence of court cases pursuing legal interests in these stolen plays.</p>	<p>have been prevented from pursuing his legal interests in the works of Shakespeare, because legally the author did not exist.</p>
<p>Dates of Reprints of Plays: Some of the new publications of Shakespeare's plays came from actors scripts, audience notes, and the like. To distinguish these versions from official versions approved by the author, publishers would include wording such as "newly corrected, augmented, and emended". The official versions of reprints ended in 1604.</p>	<p>The Stratfordian was alive. There is no obvious explanation why the corrected reprints stopped in 1604.</p>	<p>De Vere's death in 1604 would explain the end of the corrected reprints.</p>
<p>Source Material: Shakespeare never attached source material to his plays. Scholars have subsequently attempted to identify source material to his plays. If the scholarly efforts to identify particular sources for a play are correct and if the source is dated after de Vere's death, then de Vere's candidacy as the writer of that play at least is ruled out.</p>	<p>Some have argued that the source material for <i>The Tempest</i> is dated after de Vere's death, and therefore rules out de Vere's candidacy as the author of the works of Shakespeare. In the case of <i>The Tempest</i>, the supposed source material was a manuscript written by William Strachey in 1609 about recollections of a wreck of the ship <i>Sea-Venture</i> on Bermuda. The basis for attributing this as a source of <i>The Tempest</i> include thunder strokes, the cutting down the mast, the division of the survivors into two parties, and St. Elmo's fire - a continuous spark of electricity around the ship's</p>	<p>Shakespeare never attached source material to his plays, so the validity of the argument against the de Vere candidacy depends on the quality of the scholarship. As a number of scholars have observed, these events (cutting of masts, division of survivors into two parties, St. Elmo's fire) are common to many shipwrecks, and not unique to the one in Bermuda. In addition, descriptions of these events have existed since St. Paul's account of his shipwreck in Malta. A particularly vivid description of St. Elmo's fire was written by Robert Tomson and published in 1600. De Vere was alive in 1600. With several previous investments in</p>

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	<p>mast. In addition, one of the characters in the play noted that he had traveled "at midnight to fetch dew from the still vex'd Bermoothes".</p>	<p>overseas voyages, de Vere may well have read Tomson's account.</p> <p>The reference in The Tempest does not necessarily refer to the Bermuda islands. At that time, "the Bermudas" was also the nickname of an area near Charing Cross in Westminster. The "dew" being fetched from "Bermoothes" could have been distilled liquor.</p> <p>More significantly, the first performance of The Tempest was November 1, 1611. However, Strachey did not return from across the Atlantic until late October or early November, 1611. In 1612, Strachey wrote another book which referred to an incomplete work about the Bermudas. Since his manuscript on the shipwreck in the Bermudas referenced a dozen external source books - books that would not have been available to him until after his return from New World, Strachey could not have produced his manuscript before the first performance of The Tempest.</p> <p>Much of Strachey's language that appears in The Tempest originated not from Strachey, but from a 1523 work by the Dutchman Desiderius Erasmus and a 1555 work by the Englishman Richard Eden. Strachey, in fact, was relying on secondary sources. De Vere would likely have seen Eden's work, since he had been a student of de Vere's tutor Sir</p>

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		Thomas Smith and had also been a private secretary to de Vere's father-in-law William Cecil.
<p>Performance Dates: Henry VIII was performed on June 29, 1613 on the date that the Globe Theatre burned to the ground. Letters written at the time refer to the play as "new".</p>	<p>If the play was newly written (as opposed to "performed for the first time"), then the date of the play supports the candidacy of the Stratfordian as the author of the works of Shakespeare.</p>	<p>The play could have been "new" in the sense of performed for the first time. It is interesting that in 1663, Samuel Pepys also reported that the play was "new".</p> <p>The play deals with the disgrace of Queen Catherine, the building up of Ann Boleyn, and the birth of Ann's daughter, who became Queen Elizabeth. Elizabeth subsequently had her half sister Mary, a Queen of Scots, executed. Mary's son James became King of England in 1603. A play that aggrandized Ann Boleyn and her daughter Elizabeth would not have been overly popular with King James, nor would its author. Nor would it make much sense for a playwright after 1603 to write such a play. For these reasons, eighteenth and nineteenth century scholars maintained that the play was written before 1603.</p>
<p>Cryptic Comments from the Time</p>		
<p>"That eternitie promised by our ever-living poet": This phrase was written by the publisher of the Sonnets in the introduction in 1609. The phrase "ever-living poet" suggests the poet is dead. Some of the Sonnets express the author's view that there is an eternal quality to the sonnets,</p>	<p>The Stratfordian was alive in 1609.</p>	<p>De Vere died in 1604.</p>

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so in effect, the author was promising eternity.		
<p>"Sweet Swan of Avon: This was Ben Jonson's reference to William Shakespeare in Jonson's memorial poem to Shakespeare in the <i>First Folio</i>.</p>	<p>The Stratfordian had a direct connection to the Avon River, coming from Stratford-upon-Avon.</p>	<p>Less well known is that de Vere likely had a connection with the Avon River. In the late 1580s, de Vere sold his home Fisher's Folly. His immediate whereabouts are known, but there is speculation that he spend time at Billesley Hall, about three miles from Stratford-upon-Avon. De Vere's materal grandmother was a Trussel. Billesley Hall had been in the Trussel family for 400 years. Local rumour holds that <i>As You Like It</i> was written there. De Vere also had an estate with a country house called Bilton in the Avon River valley near Warwickshire.</p>
<p>"A never writer to an ever reader news": This appears in the introduction of the 1609 publication of <i>Troilus and Cressida</i>.</p>	<p>In 1609, the Stratfordian was supposedly still producing plays, so the phrases "never writer" does not make sense.</p>	<p>Applied to de Vere, this phrase could easily mean: from a dead writer (which de Vere was by 1609) to an Edward de Vere (i.e. E short for Edward a VER short for de Vere) reader.</p>
<p>"The First Heir of My Invention": This is from William Shakespeare's dedicatory letter to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, from the publication <i>Venus and Adonis</i>.</p>	<p>Supporters of the Stratford case maintain that the poem <i>Venus and Adonis</i> was the first product of the author's creative faculties.</p>	<p>Supports of the de Vere case contend that "invention" cannot mean the author's creative faculties, since several works by the author were already in the public domain but not yet attributed to Shakespeare. They suggest that "invention" refers to his invention of the pseudonym. As <i>Venus and Adonis</i> is the "first heir", it is apparent that the author is contemplating more publications.</p>

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CHAPTER 2: THE HISTORICAL ERROR: WHY HISTORY GOT IT WRONG

The case for De Vere as the author of the works of Shakespeare requires an explanation of how history got it wrong. Specifically, it requires answers to these questions:

- Why did de Vere choose to write under a pseudonym?
- Given the need for a pseudonym, why "William Shakespeare"?
- What was the relationship between de Vere and the Stratfordian?
- Why did others continue to use the pseudonym after de Vere's death?
- What about the Stratfordian's graveyard?

WHY DID DE VERE CHOOSE TO WRITE UNDER A PSEUDONYM?

1. Court etiquette: Baldassare Castiglione, an Italian philosopher, wrote the definitive book on court etiquette for de Vere's time. The book, entitled *Il Cortegiano* (the Courtier), emphasized the key role of the nobility in the functioning of the state, and outlined the proper standards of behaviour for the nobility. Castiglione's book had been translated into English by the 1560s. As an indication of how seriously de Vere took *Il Cortegiano*, he undertook to translate Castiglione's book into Latin, thereby making it available to the nobility of Europe. When De Vere was twenty-two years old, he wrote the preface for the Latin translation. The preface saw the courtier as the most perfect of beings. In *Il Cortegiano*, Castiglione observed that a nobleman who is also a writer must "take care to keep them [his writings] under cover ... and let him show them only to a friend who can be trusted."

2. De Vere's secret office: In 1586, de Vere was granted a lifetime pension by Queen Elizabeth in the amount of £1,000 - an enormous amount of money at the time. The pension was renewed by King James after the death of Queen Elizabeth. De Vere once described the pension as related to his "office". There has been no documentation explaining why the pension was granted by a normally frugal queen, or what de Vere's "office" was.

William Cecil, de Vere's father in law and the Queen's principal adviser, was undoubtedly behind the pension. More than anything, he was probably looking for financial support for his daughter and granddaughters.

De Vere was primarily interested in the arts, particularly theatre. He had written masques that had been presented at court, had supported acting companies, and socialized with actors, writers and other playwrights. If there were any serious "office" that de Vere could hold, it would probably relate to the arts. At the time, Londoners were developing an interest in the theatre.

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All these factors suggest that the "office" may have been to oversee the production of plays to develop English nationalism within the general population and to glorify and build support for the Tudor regime.

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If this suggestion is true, then it would explain why so many historical plays form part of the works of Shakespeare. It would also explain the secrecy attached to the purpose of the funding, for to the extent that it were known that one of the country's leading courtiers wrote the plays, their propaganda value would diminish. It would explain why de Vere's name is not attached to the plays; a condition of the pension would require that de Vere not use his own name.

3. Too much anonymous material: Initially for de Vere's "office", anonymous authorship would be sufficient, but too many anonymous plays would trigger questions about the real authorship, so a pseudonym would become necessary. By 1592, anonymous plays such as *Harey the VI*, *Harey of Cornwall*, and *Titus and Ondronicus* - probably early versions of plays later attributed to Shakespeare - were being staged in London.

4. The theft of anonymous material: Copyright laws did not exist in Elizabethan times. There was no shortage of individuals around that could and did claim to author anonymous material. Writing anonymously meant that unscrupulous individuals could claim the material as their own and get paid for it.

5. De Vere's bad reputation: By 1593, when the name "Shakespeare" first appeared in publication, de Vere's reputation was largely in tatters. He had squandered his family fortune. He had abandoned a military post as a leader of the defence forces when the Spanish Armada was threatening, thereby putting his country at risk. He had treated his first wife Ann Cecil badly, a fact that her father - one of the most powerful men in England - was undoubtedly quick to point out (e.g. on Ann Cecil's tomb). He had had an affair with another woman while married, made her pregnant twice, and was imprisoned in the Tower of London as a consequence. He had been involved in a family feud with the other woman's family for several years. He had reconciled to Rome at a time when Protestant England felt threatened by Catholicism, confessed his wrongdoings in court, and put himself at the mercy of Queen Elizabeth, undoubtedly to his own humiliation. He had been accused of homosexuality and other heinous acts in the Arundell Libels. He had associated with actors and writers and other persons considered to be of low class ("lewd friends" in the words of William Cecil, his wife's father). Quite possibly, de Vere felt a pseudonym would be preferable to his own name for the publication of his writings. (Shakespeare's dedication in the publication of *Venus and Adonis* describes the work as "the first heir of his invention", hinting that more works were coming). In one of the poems known to be written by de Vere, he says: "To wail this loss of my good name is of these griefs the ground."

6. The intended content of De Vere's writing: The author of the Sonnets clearly expected them to be published at some time. Given the content of the Sonnets, and the fact that the Sonnets were written to other parties with whom the author had a relationship, often a close one, the author may have felt a pseudonym would be appropriate not only to protect his reputation, but also that of the targets of the Sonnets. With regard to the plays, a pseudonym would give the author some freedom to skewer public figures with some degree of anonymity. One poem known to be written by de Vere lays out de Vere's plan, namely to use his wit, presumably through his writings, to avenge his injuries.

Fain would I sing, but fury makes me fret,

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And Rage hath sworn to seek revenge of wrong;
My mazed mind in malice is so set,
As Death shall daunt my deadly dolours long;
Patience perforce is such a pinching pain
As die I will, or suffer wrong again.
I am no sot, to suffer such abuse
As doth bereave my heart of his delight;
Nor will I frame myself to such as use
With calm consent, to suffer such despite;
No quiet sleep shall once possess mine eye
Till Wit hath wrought his will on Injury.
My heart shall fail, and hand shall lose his force,
But some Device shall pay Despite his due;
And Fury shall consume my careful corse,
Or raze the ground whereon my sorrow grew.
Lo, thus in rage of ruthless mind refus'd,
I rest reveng'd on whom I am abus'd.

WHY DID HE CHOOSE "WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE"?

Background: In relationship to the plays, long poems and Sonnets of William Shakespeare, the name first appeared in 1593 with the publication of *Venus and Adonis*. It then appeared in 1594 with the publication of *The Rape of Lucrece*. After that, it appeared with official quarto editions of various plays. The title pages of these plays typically included wording indicating that these were "author approved" versions, to distinguish them from a variety of unofficial versions that proliferated in an era before copyright laws. After de Vere's death, the name "William Shakespeare" appeared with the publication of plays up until around 1607, the publication of the Sonnets in 1609, the publication of *Othello* in 1622 and finally in 1623 the publication of the *First Folio* - a collection of 37 plays, many of which had not been previously published. The spelling was either "Shakespeare", or "Shake-speare".



1. The Bolbec symbol: De Vere's Bolbec coat of arms features a lion shaking a broken spear, from which comes "Shake-speare", or "Shakespeare".

2. Similarity to a living person connected with the theatre: In 1592, Robert Greene - a pamphleteer, playwright and friend of de Vere's - wrote *Groatsworth's Wit* just before he died. *Groatsworth's Wit* appeared in London book stalls in October 1592. The story is about a scholar and author on the one hand (de Vere), and a country bumpkin (the Stratfordian) on the other. The

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bumpkin had been a puppet master and "country author" who put together morality plays in carnivals. Seven years into his career, the bumpkin arrived in London, hired others to write plays that he produced, had garments used in theatres as his share of the plays that were produced, filled his speech with Latin phrases he did not understand, and was fond of pompously expressing trite statements. Greene warned his friends to watch out for this "upstart crow, beautified with our feathers", a dilettante and vainglorious braggart who was "in his own conceit the only shake-scene in the country."

In short, there was a country bumpkin who steals and produces plays. This bumpkin has been in the business seven years, and just recently arrived in London in 1592. His biography is consistent with what is known about the Stratfordian, namely that he had left Stratford-upon-Avon in 1585, disappeared from historical view for seven years, and reappeared in London in 1592 with a name similar to "shake-scene".

From de Vere's perspective, it made sense to select a pseudonym similar to that of a real person involved in the theatre. With de Vere's typical wit, he selected a pseudonym similar to that of a real person and related to his own coat of arms. With his arrogance, he presumably assumed that no one that mattered would assume that the country bumpkin from Stratford-upon-Avon could possibly be the author to the works he would publish under the Shakespeare "brand". He undoubtedly never imagined that the "street smart" country bumpkin from Stratford-upon-Avon would claim the works of Shakespeare as his own, and that history would believe him.

WHAT WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DE VERE AND THE STRATFORDIAN?

1. The Stratfordian stole plays. Suggestive evidence to this effect comes from three sources other than *Groatsworth's Wit*, mentioned above.

In 1599, the anonymous play *Histrion-Matrix* appeared. It burlesqued *Troilus and Cressida*. Poverty - the lead character in the play - speaks of himself as one who "shakes his furious spear" (i.e. de Vere, based on his coat of arms), and scorns a scoffing fool, an "artless idiot" who plucks "fairer feathered birds" (i.e. the writings of others). The language is consistent with that used by Greene in *Groatsworth's Wit* ("upstart crow, beautified with our feathers"), and presumably referring the same country bumpkin who roamed the country side and appeared in London in 1592 and was associated with "shake-scene", namely the Stratfordian.

In 1599, Ben Jonson wrote an epigram about a "poet-ape" who many saw as England's best author (Shakespeare) but who was in fact someone who initially stole witty pieces from one or more playwrights, and eventually stole entire plays and claimed to be the author, as he became more prominent in the London theatre scene. The "poet-ape" began as a broker, but eventually became a thief. The "poet-ape" was more than likely the same person referred to in *Histrion-Matrix*, and in *Groatsworth's Wit*, namely the Stratfordian.

Also in 1599, Jonson wrote a comedy called *Every Man Out of His Humour*. The comedy lampoons Sogliardo, a buffoon who so wanted to become a gentleman that he bought gentleman status - an obvious reference to the Stratfordian's successful application for a coat of arms so that he could call himself a gentleman in 1599. In the comedy, Sogliardo's coat of arms is a boar

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without a head, brain or wit. De Vere's heraldic crest was a boar. Jonson was in essence saying that by claiming the works of de Vere/Shakespeare as his own, the Stratfordian was a headless and brainless version of de Vere.

2. De Vere was annoyed. In Act 5, Scene 1, from *As You Like It*, a comedic scene turns suddenly and inexplicably nasty. The number of parallels between the scene and what was likely occurring in real life between de Vere and the Stratfordian provide a circumstantial case that de Vere was "Shakespeare", that he was very annoyed with the Stratfordian, and that he was resorting to the pen to express his anger.

The scene includes Touchstone and William. The setting is the forest of Arden, near a property formerly owned by de Vere but also close to Stratford-Upon-Avon. Both Touchstone and William want to marry Audrey. William is a twenty-five year old who was born near Arden (like the Stratfordian). When Touchstone asks William if he is wise, William replies that he has a "pretty wit", to which Touchstone replies that a fool thinks he is wise, but a wise man knows himself to be a fool. Note the similarities between the character of William and the "upstart crow" and "poet-ape" of *Groatsworth's Wit, Histrio-Matrix*, and *Every Man Out of His Humour*. Touchstone addresses William as "gentle friend", meaning "gentleman friend". This is likely a reference to the Stratfordian's initiative to buy a coat of arms so he could be called a gentleman. After a little friendly banter, the conversation turns ugly. Touchstone says:

"Then learn this of me: To have is to have. For it is a figure of rhetoric that drink, being pour'd out of cup into a glass, by filling one doth empty the other. For all your writers do consent that ipse is he. Now, you are not ipse-for I am he."

In Italian, "to have is to have" translates to "A Vere is a Vere." The reference to drinks and cups relates to a concept from Plato's *Symposium* where knowledge cannot be passed around through association. Touchstone is telling William he does not acquire knowledge by being associated with Touchstone. "Ipsa" means "he himself", and Touchstone is telling William that there has been a confusion of identities and he is not "the one". Touchstone goes on to tell William, whom he describes as a "clown", to abandon Audrey. If he does not,

"thou perishest; or, to thy better understanding, diest. Or, to wit, I will kill thee, make thee away, translate thy life into death, thy liberty into bondage. I will deal in poison with thee, or in bastinado, or in steel; I will bandy thee in faction, I will o'errun thee with policy. I will kill thee a hundred and fifty ways. Therefore, tremble and depart."

What is striking about this outburst is that it does not follow from the play. There is no suggestion in the play that William is confusing identities, or trying to acquire knowledge by association. This non-sequitur suggests the use of the play to deliver a message outside the play to someone involved in the theatre and certain to hear it, namely the Stratfordian.

3. The Stratfordian got paid off. The first biography of the Stratfordian was published by Nicholas Rowe of London in 1709. This is almost 100 years after his death, which raises the question why so little contemporary interest in the man whom history has viewed as one of the greatest writers ever in the English language. Rowe's source was the actor Thomas Bitterton,

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who claimed to have obtained the information while visiting Stratford-upon-Avon. Rowe notes that the Stratfordian was the oldest of ten children. His father was a wool dealer and butcher who withdrew his son from school at an unusually early age. After a deer poaching incident, the Stratfordian escaped punishment by fleeing Stratford-upon-Avon. He started in a theatre company at a low level, and his top performance was as the ghost in *Hamlet*. According to Rowe, Sir William D'Avenant claimed the Earl of Southampton gave the Stratfordian £1,000 for the purchase of property.

In 1596, the Stratfordian's wife had borrowed from a shepherd and had still not repaid the money at the time of the shepherd's death in 1601. The Stratfordian was a tax defaulter in St. Helen's Bishopsgate, for an earlier unpaid assessment of 5 shillings. He had also been involved in a public brawl. In 1597, he was a tax defaulter at the same address for the unpaid portion of 13 shillings on another assessment.

Suddenly, his fortunes changed. In 1597, he undertook to buy the second largest house in Stratford-upon-Avon for £60. In the years that followed, he became the third largest grain hoarder in his home county. He became a partner or joint venturer with the Burbages in the Globe Theatre, which was being rebuilt in Southwark. Within eight years, he had bought tithes in 4 jurisdictions for £440. He was buying and selling grain, malt, and stone. He was making loans, and if they were not repaid, he went to court. Rough estimates suggest the Stratfordian invested about £900.

The scripts for plays by Shakespeare were worth about £6 each. All the plays together would not have been worth more than £240. As a playwright, the Stratfordian could not have amassed that kind of money for his life's work, let alone his production up to 1596. As an actor, there was not much money for lesser actors, and there was no indication that the Stratfordian was anything more. Writing and acting could not have produced the money.

All this suggests that Southampton may have, in fact, given the Stratfordian £1,000. The question is why. Southampton was a patron of the arts, and known to support playwrights and actors. It is conceivable that if the Stratfordian created the works of Shakespeare, then the Southampton might have provided the money as a patron of the arts. However, £1,000 would have been a lot of money in the 1590s, far more than needed to support a struggling artist.

A more plausible scenario is that de Vere, with his good friend Southampton, paid off the Stratfordian to stop claiming the works of William Shakespeare as his own. Note that Southampton and de Vere were both aristocratic patrons of the arts. De Vere, much older than Southampton, had urged Southampton to marry his daughter. Southampton's upbringing in the Cecil household paralleled de Vere's, so perhaps they had this upbringing in common. In addition, if de Vere created the works of Shakespeare, then de Vere dedicated two long poems to Southampton, and in all likelihood, wrote a number of Sonnets to Southampton, including a number urging the subject of the sonnet to marry and have children. In short, they were very close. Southampton's pay out could have been done to help his friend.

WHY DID THE PSEUDONYM CONTINUE TO BE USED AFTER DE VERE'S DEATH IN 1604?

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1. Publisher's Pressure: Shakespeare was a well known author. Publishers would have an easier time selling their books under the authorship of Shakespeare than under a less known name such as Edward de Vere.

2. De Vere's Wishes: De Vere's wishes would have relevance if either the holders of the source material, or the financiers of the publication, were de Vere's family. There is little doubt that the source material lay with his family, and his family was directly involved in the publication of the *First Folio*. It is clear from the Sonnets that the author expected the Sonnets to be published at some later date, and given the content of the Sonnets, presumably after the author's death. In that case, it is likely that the author would have communicated his wishes regarding publication to his family. Those reasons that led to de Vere to begin using a pseudonym in 1593 for the publication of the *Venus and Adonis* would presumably continue to be relevant after his death, and include a commitment he made not to use his real name initially to Queen Elizabeth and presumably later to King James as part of his "office" for which he was paid £1,000 per year, the view that courtiers should share their views only with trusted friends, and a desire to protect the Shakespeare "brand" from his own bad reputation.

3. The salacious material in the Sonnets: Many of the Sonnets appear to be written to a man much younger than the author toward whom the author expressed strong feelings of love. Some modern commentators have suggested that they hinted a homosexual relationship. Many believe the target of these Sonnets was Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. Southampton lived until 1625, and the continued use of the pseudonym by de Vere's family and their publisher would have protected his reputation.

4. The politics at the time of the *First Folio*: In 1621, King James was planning to marry his son Prince Charles to the Spanish Infanta Doña Maria. Four earls opposed the Spanish marriage; de Vere's son; his daughter's husband the Earl of Montgomery, her brother-in-law the Earl of Pembroke, and Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton. Henry de Vere and Henry Wriothesley were imprisoned about that time for their opposition. In 1621, *Othello* was registered for publication under the name William Shakespeare, and published the following year. This was the first new Shakespeare play in fourteen years. De Vere's daughter Susan and his son Henry probably wanted to see the publication of their father's plays, not only because they were great works of art, but also because they undoubtedly knew de Vere wanted and expected his works to be in the public domain, as indicated in the Sonnets. If the alliance with Spain had proceeded, there was a risk that the plays would never be published, given that de Vere was an apologist for the Tudor regime. To publish them under the name Edward de Vere would have been risky for the sponsors of the publication, because their sponsorship might be perceived by King James and his associates as a political act intended to undermine the King's authority. Remember too that many of the plays deal with the death and overthrow of Kings, Queens and other leaders. So by the 1620s, the politics of the day may have supported the continued use of the pseudonym.

WHAT ABOUT THE STRATFORDIAN'S GRAVEYARD?

1. The tombstone: The graveyard includes the Stratfordian's tombstone, and a monument.

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The tombstone includes these uninspiring words:

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

One would expect more from one of the greatest masters of the English language.

2. The Monument: The monument to the Stratfordian in his graveyard, in combination with the preface of the *First Folio*, is the most direct evidence for the Stratfordian as the author of the works of Shakespeare.

In the preface to the *First Folio*, Leonard Digges wrote: "When that stone is rent/And time dissolves thy Stratford monument...". It is odd that the preface to one of the greatest assemblies of works in the English language refers to a monument in a graveyard. Surely, there are better things to talk about, unless of course the preface is part of a plan to draw attention to a monument which obscures the real identity of the author of the *First Folio*.

The monument consists of the Stratfordian's coat of arms, two figures sitting on a ledge sheltering a figure (presumably the Stratfordian) with his arms on a pillow, quill pen in his right hand, a blank piece of paper on the pillow, and an epitaph, which reads:

JUDICIO PYLIUM, GENIO SOCRATEM, ARTE MARONEM:
TERRA TEGIT, POPULUS MAERET, OLYMPUS HABET.

STAY PASSENGER, WHY GOEST THOU BY SO FAST?
READ IF THOU CANST, WHOM ENVIOUS DEATH HATH PLAST
WITH IN THIS MONUMENT SHAKSPEARE; WITH WHOME,
QUICK NATVRE DIDE: WHOSE NAME DOTHT DECK Y TOMBE,
FAR MORE THAN COST: SIEH ALL, Y HE HATH WRITT,
LEAVES LIVING ART, BVT PAGE, TO SERVE HIS WITT.

Note that the name "Shakspeare" is not spelled the way it appears on publications.

The epitaph at first reading appears complimentary, but a closer look suggests a second meaning may have been intended. "SIEH" is German for "Look there", and if one looks around the monument at all that the Stratfordian has written, one sees a blank page on the monument and uninspiring poetry on the tombstone. In the last line of the epitaph, consider these definitions of the words used: "art" means "contrivance" and "page" means "servant". With these definitions, the last line means "leaves this living contrivance or ruse as a servant to serve his wit".

The first line is similar in language to other epitaphs written by Ben Jonson, who oversaw the production of the *First Folio*. This suggests the monument may have been linked to the production of the *First Folio*, rather than to the death of the Stratfordian.

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When the Stratfordian died in 1616, there was no particular notice either in London or in Stratford-upon-Avon. No records exist regarding the construction of the monument.

If the politics of the day forced the sponsors of the *First Folio* to continue the use of the "William Shakespeare" pseudonym, then they may have felt it was in their interest to cement the deception by by constructing a monument to the Stratfordian in his graveyard. The monument would have been constructed around 1623. The preface to the *First Folio* would promote its existence. If those in power took offense at the publication of the *First Folio*, the author was William Shakespeare from Stratford-upon-Avon, but he was dead and buried, with a suitable monument near his tombstone.

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CHAPTER 3: THE TUMULTUOUS LIFE OF EDWARD DE VERE

Time	Event
1550 April 12	Edward de Vere was born at Castle Hedingham, Essex, to John, 16th Earl of Oxford and Maryery, countess of Oxford. Among other things, John de Vere had a troupe of actors.
1554	De Vere's sister Mary was born.
1554 to 1562	De Vere was under tutelage of Sir Thomas Smith, probably at Smith's estate of Ankerwicke, near Windsor. Smith was one of the foremost educators of the day and a man with a wide range of interests - mathematics, arithmetic, law, natural and moral philosophy, geography, astronomy, etc. Many of these interest show up in the Shakespeare's plays.
1558 October	De Vere was enrolled in Queen's College, Cambridge - Smith's alma mater.
1559	De Vere matriculated at St John's College Cambridge
1561 August	Queen Elizabeth visited Castle Hedingham, where she presumably met de Vere for the first time.
1562 July	De Vere, who was twelve years old at the time, was contracted to marry into the powerful Hastings family. While de Vere never married into the Hastings family, Mary Hastings is the person on whom the character MARIA in Love's Labour's Lost . Like MARIA, Mary Hastings turned down an offer of marriage by the envoy of the czar of Muscovy.
1562 August 3	The 16th Earl of Oxford, de Vere's father, died and was buried. De Vere may not have known his father well. The use of his properties was conveyed in trust to the duke of Norfolk, a 26 year old nephew, and Robert Dudley. Records suggest that Dudley acquired much of the lands belonging to de Vere's father. In Hamlet , Dudley is the character on which the King is based, one who stole an inheritance from HAMLET.
1562 September 3	De Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, road into London in procession on his way to take up residence as a Royal Ward of Court at the London home of Sir William Cecil, later Lord Burghley who, as Secretary of State, was the head of Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council. Even though a minor, his full title was <i>Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxenford, Lorde Greate Chamberleyne of Englande, Viscount Bulbecke, and Lorde of Badlesmere and Scales</i> .
1563	De Vere's title as Earl of Oxford was challenged by the husband of his half sister Katherine de Vere. The challenge did not succeed.
1563	De Vere was tutored by the Anglo Saxonist Laurence Nowell (who also signed his name on Beowulf manuscript during year)) and also perhaps by his uncle Arthur Golding.
1563 August 19	De Vere displayed competence in French by writing a letter in French to William Cecil.

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Time	Event
1564 September	De Vere and other prominent men, including William Cecil, received Master of Arts degrees from Cambridge. Queen Elizabeth participated in the celebrations, despite an edict which she issued in 1561 that no women were to stay over night at an English University or abbey. Historians of the time overlooked this example of royal hypocrisy, but Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Lost addresses the issue of breaking oaths.
1564	Arthur Golding dedicated his translation of <i>Justin's Abridgement of the Histories of Trogus Pompeius</i> to his nephew de Vere
1566 September	De Vere was awarded a masters degree from Oxford.
1567	The translation of Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i> by de Vere's uncle, Arthur Golding, was published. The translation was completed in 1563, around the time when Golding probably tutored de Vere. Many scholar's agree that Golding's translation of <i>Ovid</i> was a major influence on Shakespeare.
1567 February	De Vere matriculated from Gray's Inn, where he had studied law.
1567 July 23	De Vere killed (probably accidentally) William Cecil's under cook Thomas Bricknell while practicing his fencing. He was acquitted on the argument that he acted in self-defence, and went unpunished.
1567	With the tacit approval of the Privy Council, de Vere sent his retainer, the poet and soldier-of-fortune Thomas Churchyard, on a mission to the Netherlands.
1568 December 2	De Vere's mother, Margery nÃ©e Golding, died. De Vere's relationship with his mother was probably not close.
1569	Thomas Underdowne dedicated his translation of <i>An Aethiopian Historie by Heliodorus</i> to De Vere.
1569	De Vere was ill for months, carrying over to the first quarter of 1570. During 1570, de Vere convalesced in Windsor, which was the setting for The Merry Wives of Windsor .
1570 March 30	Queen Elizabeth sent de Vere to work under Earl of Sussex in the Northern campaign to stamp out Catholic unrest. There was a movement to have Mary Queen of Scots marry the Duke of Norfolk, de Vere's cousin. In traveling north, de Vere would have passed Kimbolton Castle (the scene for part of Henry the Eighth and the city of York and the forest of Galtres (settings for both King Henry the Fourth, Part 1 , and King Henry the Sixth, Part 3 . King Henry the Sixth, Part 3 depicts the northern rebellion accurately, as if written by a first hand observer, which de Vere was.
1570	There was a dedication to de Vere in Edmund Elviden's <i>Peisistratus and Catanea</i> .

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Time	Event
1571 April 2	Queen Elizabeth summoned the third Parliament of her reign. This was de Vere's first attendance. As Lord Great Chamberlain, he had a ceremonial role.
1571 May 7 and 8	De Vere was victorious in a royal tournament at Whitehall and was widely seen as one of the up-and-coming stars of Queen Elizabeth's court.
1571 December 16	De Vere married Anne Cecil, daughter of William Cecil, the Queen's chief minister. De Vere had grown up with Anne in the Cecil household, since William Cecil raised noblemen whose fathers had died. At sixteen, she was five years younger than de Vere. Shortly before the marriage, William Cecil became the nobleman Lord Burghley and took up the position of Lord Treasurer. Among other things, this may have occurred to address de Vere's concern that Anne Cecil was beneath him in status.
1571	There was a dedication to de Vere, with a preface by him, published in Thomas Bedingfield's translation of <i>Cardanus Comfort</i> .
1571	Arthur Golding made a dedication to de Vere in his translation of Calvin's version of <i>The Psalms of David</i> . Golding, a staunch Puritan, appeared concerned about the moral directions that de Vere was taking.
1572 January 5	De Vere wrote a preface in Latin to Batholomew Clerke's translation into Latin of <i>Castiglione's Il Cortegiano (The Courtier)</i> . This made the document accessible to the urbane leadership in Europe, since Latin was a common language. <i>The Courtier</i> outlined proper etiquette and expressed the view that courtiers have a key role in the proper functioning of the state. Among other things, <i>The Courtier</i> urged self-respecting courtiers to hide their poetry and prose from the public.
1572 May	Queen Elizabeth gave de Vere a licence to begin to repossess family lands that had been taken out of his control when his father died.
1572 June 2	The Duke of Norfolk (de Vere's cousin) was executed for treason. De Vere had tried to save his cousin, but was unsuccessful. Norfolk left three sons. As You Like It mirrors the Norfolk situation. It deals with a deceased and deified father, and the troubles of his sons as they deal with inheritance, marriage and court.
1572	De Vere took part in a Royal entertainment at Warwick Castle. The theatrics were overdone. An incendiary missile overshot its mark, hitting a nearby house and setting it and neighbouring houses on fire, and perhaps killing two people.
1572 September	De Vere wrote to William Cecil wishing to be considered for some military service.
1572 October	De Vere and his wife Anne Cecil were at de Vere's Essex estate of Wivenhoe. One of de Vere's servants, Rowland Yorke, had reportedly barred Anne from her husband's chambers. De Vere was spending a lot of

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Time	Event
	money. His servants were behaving riotously. Anne was apparently forced to put up with this bad behaviour.
1573	Thomas Twyne provided a letter of dedication de Vere in <i>The Breviary of Britain</i> . The letter noted de Vere's interest in books on geography, histories and other learning.
1573	De Vere and Thomas Bedingfield published the English translation of <i>Cardanus's Comfort</i> . De Vere had commissioned the work, probably around the time of the trial of the Duke of Norfolk, in an attempt to influence the outcome through philosophy.
1573	One of de Vere's servants was hanged for murder which today might be considered a crime of passion.
1573 May 1	The Spanish agent Antonio de Gueras wrote to a Spanish governor about an arrangement in which £15,000 would have been paid to William Cecil in as a bribe for a more open and friendly trade policy. Cecil did not want to be directly associated with the bribe. Cecil owed de Vere £15,000 in dowry for marrying his daughter. It is likely that Cecil asked his son-in-law de Vere to pick up the money on the continent.
1573 May	In a letter to Cecil, three of de Vere's servants were accused of two of Cecil's servants on the Gravesend-Rochester road. It is an event remarkable similar to Act II, Scene 2 in King Henry the Fourth Part 1 in which FALSTAFF and three of PRINCE HAL's companions rob travelers, carrying the King's taxes, on the same road.
1573 May 11	A young courtier Gilbert Talbot wrote to his father that Queen Elizabeth was delighted by de Vere's personage, dancing and valour; that Anne had indicated some jealousy at the relationship of his husband with the Queen and that the Queen was originally offended but the two had reconciled; and that Anne's father William Cecil did not meddle in the issue.
1573 or 1574	De Vere signed over a family estate called Battails Hall in Essex to William Byrd, a musician and organist at the Chapel Royal, once the elderly occupants passed away. Byrd is now considered one of the finest musicians of the Elizabethan period. One of de Vere's retainers later defrauded Byrd of Battails Hall. Byrd wrote <i>The Earl of Oxford's March</i> .
1574 January	Reports to William Cecil indicated that de Vere was making himself familiar with Antonio de Gueras, presumably in relation to de Vere's collection of £15,000.
1574 March	De Vere made a proposal to Queen Elizabeth that was refused. She criticized him for his lack of thrift, and was offended by his reaction.
1574 July	De Vere hired a ship and went to the low countries. The Elizabethan court was troubled by what appeared to them a defection to the Catholic side. Queen Elizabeth dispatched Thomas Bedingfield to bring de Vere back. De Vere returned by July 27, 1574. If the purpose of the trip was to secure the

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Time	Event
	£15,000, there was no evidence that he did so. It was generally concluded that his trip was not suspicious in any way, and reflected his obvious desire for foreign adventure, which was noted with approval.
1574 August	De Vere disappeared from court.
1574 September or October	Anne de Vere asked the Earl of Sussex to arrange lodging for her husband at Hampton Court, in the hope that she could persuade her husband to resume sleeping with her.
1574	George Baker, the doctor for de Vere and his wife, dedicated a book to de Vere. Baker practiced Paracelsian medicine, a new, empirical approach to healing using chemical distillations and essences that was a forerunner to modern pharmacy.
1575 January 30	De Vere made out an indenture dealing with his estate should something happen to him, prior to leaving for his Grand Tour of the Continent. The indenture included a Schedule of Debts, that indicated he and his father had accumulated debts of £9,096.
1575 February 7	De Vere left England on the start of his tour.
1575 March 17 to 18	In a letter to William Cecil from Paris, de Vere thanked Cecil for informing him of his wife's pregnancy. He also indicated that now that he had an heir, he would continue his travels.
1575 April	De Vere left Paris for Strasbourg, to visit the humanist scholar Johan Sturm. Afterward, he traveled through the Alps, probably bypassed Milan, visited Verona and finally arrived in Venice in mid-May. The annual theatrical season in Venice lasted from mid-May to mid-July. Venetian theater was a mixture of high and low theater, proletarian and refined, tragic and comic. The Merchant of Venice probably provides some clues to de Vere's lodgings and dealings in Venice. In 1575, tension between Jews and other Venetians was at its highest. This tension was also incorporated into The Merchant of Venice .
1575 Summer	De Vere probably visited Ragusa (now known as Dubrovnik), about 48 hours sailing time from Venice. Ragusa was probably the unnamed Illyrian city that provided the setting for Twelfth Night . The Winter's Tale has several scenes on the seacoast of Bohemia. Between 1575 and 1609, the king of Bohemia held a 35 mile stretch of coastline between Venice and Ragusa. Shakespeare's critics have suggested that he was ignorant of European geography, but in fact, de Vere had a better understanding than the critics, because he had probably been there. While de Vere may have wanted to visit Greece, there is little evidence that he got there. His plays based in Greek settings do not contain the same vivid references to Greece as his Italian plays to Italy.

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1575 July 2	Anne (Cecil) de Vere gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth. The date noted by her father William Cecil was January 3, 1575.
1575 Late Summer	De Vere was reported to be in Palermo, Sicily, where he challenged all persons for all manners of weapons in defense of Queen Elizabeth.
1575	De Vere was in Genoa, according to Italian bankers handling de Vere's money. He was there at a time of civil strife.
1575 September	De Vere was in Venice, where he learned that his letters had not made it through the Alps because of plague. He also received two letters from William Cecil, one of which reported that Anne had delivered a daughter Elizabeth.
1575 September 24	A letter from de Vere to William Cecil from Venice, reported that de Vere had been sick, liked Italy, was planning to return to England soon, and gave thanks about the news of the delivery of his child. Cecil noted the date of de Vere's letter in notes he wrote while preoccupied with proving the legitimacy of his daughter Anne's child.
1575 September	De Vere likely visited Titian, the famous Italian painter. Most cultured visitors to Venice visited with Titian. Titian painted four replicas of Venus and Adonis, based on Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i> . In the paintings, VENUS clings to ADONIS, who appears bothered by these actions. In most classical interpretations of Ovid, the attraction between VENIS and ADONIS is mutual. In only one of the four Titian copies, the painting in Titian's studio, ADONIS wears a stylized man's hat known as a bonnet. In Shakespeare's <i>Venus and Adonis</i> , VENUS is attracted to ADONIS, who is bothered by Venus's advances. ADONIS wears a bonnet that hides his angry brow. Undoubtedly, de Vere based his poem on the Titian painting that he had seen in 1575. Titian's friend, Pietro Aretino, provided situations, character studies, and ideas for a dozen Shakespeare plays.
1575 November 27	A letter from de Vere to William Cecil from Padua told Cecil not to block of the sale of his lands because of de Vere's rising debts. Padua was a university town. Ottonelle Discalzio was a celebrated professor and jurists who made regular trips to Venice to adjudicate court cases. In The Merchant of Venice , the celebrated jurist from Padua University, Bellario, was consulted to settle the case of SHYLOCK versus ANTONIO. To get from Venice to Padua, de Vere probably traveled by ferry along the river Brenta, which connected Padua to the Venetian Lagoon. In The Merchant of Venice , PORTIA calls "the tranect, the common ferry". PORTIA lives on the Brenta in the Belmont estate 10 miles from Venice and 2 miles from a monastery. The Villa Foscari meets these criteria. NERISSA, PORTIA's assistant, mentions a recent visit to Belmont by the MARQUIS OF MONTFERRAT, one of the titles of Gonazaga. Gonazaga had visited the Villa Foscari in 1574.

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1575 November	A day's journey from Padua is Mantua, where de Vere's idol Baldassare Castiglione had lived and worked. Because of de Vere's interest in Castiglione, he most likely visited Mantua. A few miles from Mantua is the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie where Castiglione was buried. Atop the tomb of Castiglione and his wife is a sculpture by Giulio Romano to Castiglione's wife, who died nine years before him. Giulio Romano is mentioned in The Winter's Tale , where a painted statue of the wronged wife HERMIONE is compared to a statuary by "that rare Italian master Giulio Romano". He is also alluded to in <i>Venus and Adonis</i> and <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i> . While de Vere saw Romano as a sculptor, he was more generally known as a painter. Critics of Shakespeare have occasionally suggested that Shakespeare was ignorant of Italian art. Visitors such as de Vere to Mantua would have stayed as guests to the local duke Guglielmo Gonzaga. One of the guest rooms in the duke's palace, Appartamento di Troia, contained frescoes of famous scenes from <i>The Trojan War</i> by Giulio Romano. Shakespeare's <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i> contained a 202 line description of these frescoes. The description has little connection to the theme of the poem, as if the poet introduced the description to demonstrate his knowledge of these frescoes.
1575 December 12	De Vere headed for Florence, probably arriving around December 16. After Florence, de Vere headed toward Rome, where Catholic pilgrims had been summoned by the Pope to celebrate a Jubilee Year. Not coincidentally, HELENA in All's Well that Ends Well tracked down her wayward husband BERTAM by disguising herself as a pilgrim on Jubilee. Because Rome had reached its capacity, many pilgrims went to overflow sites near Florence, one of which was the shrine of St. James the Great near the Tuscan towns of Pistoia and Prato. Helena in All's Well that Ends Well said her Italian destination was St. Jaques le Grand, in effect stating that she was going toward Florence to track down her husband.
1576 January 3	A letter from de Vere to William Cecil from Siena, the southern Tuscan town, urged Cecil to sell some of his lands to appease his creditors. De Vere was intent on making the most of his travels and was prepared to sell land to do so. Cecil was undoubtedly concerned about the long-term income of de Vere, his daughter Anne and their daughter. Over the period from Christmas to January 5, Siena had celebrations, parties and plays. On the January 5 (the twelfth night), a Sienese tradition was the performance of the comedy <i>The Deceived</i> by the Piccolomini's Academy. Twelfth Night mirrors the plot of <i>The Deceived</i> .
1576 January 3	William Cecil was increasingly worried that his son-in-law de Vere would not accept paternity of his daughter Anne's child, so he drew up a memorandum identifying key dates in the De Vere's and Anne's chronology.
1576 January	After Siena, de Vere returned to Venice for its Carnival season. During this season, the upper and lower classes put on masks and performed

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	masquerades and skits. In Shakespeare's plays such as Much Ado About Nothing , King Henry the Fifth , and Antony and Cleopatra , masks and disguises are common features.
1576 March 5	de Vere left Venice and set off to return to England, via Milan. There are several references to Milan in Shakespeare's plays. In Much Ado About Nothing , MARGARET mentions a gown owned by the duchess of Milan. SILVIA in The Two Gentlemen of Verona speaks of FRIAR PATRICK's Cell, a real place where an Irish friar stopped in 1576. At the time, Milan was controlled by Spain. In The Two Gentlemen of Verona , the DUKE OF MILAN indicates his nationality by addressing his colleagues using the Spanish word "Don". By the end of March, de Vere was out of Italy.
1576 March April	De Vere probably visited Count Roussillion in or near Tournon-Sur-Rhône. Tournon represented only a small departure from his likely route. All's Well that Ends Well captures the life of the Roussillion, particularly the daughter Hélène de Tournon, the victim of a haughty lover and family politics.
1576 March 21	De Vere arrived in Paris on the way home. He was advised by one of his men, Rowland Yorke, of all the latest court gossip, including news about his wife Anne and her child.
1576 April 4	A letter from de Vere to William Cecil from Paris expressed his 'misliking' of the situation with Anne Cecil.
1576 April 20 or so	Crossing from France to England, de Vere's boat was attacked by Dutch pirates who looted most of his possessions. This outraged Queen Elizabeth, who sent a special envoy to the Prince of Orange to demand satisfaction at this "disgrace upon her realm". De Vere returned to England humiliated and probably without many of his possessions. William Cecil attempted to intercept de Vere immediately on his return, to address questions related to the paternity of Anne's child. Rather than accepting an invitation to stay at Cecil House, de Vere moved into the house of Edward Yorke, older brother of Rowland Yorke, de Vere's servant. Roland Yorke fought with the Catholic rebels in the Northern Uprising of 1569. While fighting for the English three years later in the Dutch wars of independence, he was infamous for his conduct with young nuns. In 1584, he tried to betray the position of English allies to Spain. He reportedly died through Spanish poison. In addition to these various misdeeds, he was presumed to have provided de Vere with information about Anne's child. Roland's brother Edward worked for the Duke of Leicester, a long-time adversary of both William Cecil and de Vere. Two of Shakespeare's plays deal with servants and associates (IAGO in Othello and IACHIMO in Cymbeline) who put their lords (OTHELLO and POSTHUMUS) into rage and jealousy against wrongly accused wives. In Much Ado About Nothing , a high ranking military commander (e.g. the Duke of Leicester) masterminds the jealousy subplot against a wrongly accused wife.

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1576 April 27	Now back in England, de Vere wrote again to William Cecil saying he had no intention of meeting his wife. This was the start of a five year separation from Anne.
1576 July 13	A letter from de Vere to William Cecil from London noted that Queen Elizabeth and William Cecil both wanted de Vere to reconcile with Anne Cecil, but stated that de Vere was not interested in a reconciliation.
1577 January 1	<i>A Historie of Errors</i> is performed before the Queen by the Children of St. Paul's. This likely became The Comedy of Errors .
1577 October 28	De Vere attended the wedding of William Howard and Elizabeth Dacre. William Howard was the youngest son of the Duke of Norfolk, who had been beheaded for treason. It would take William Howard 23 years to sort out estate issues, particularly since his eldest brother had married into the Dacre family. The play As You Like It , which was probably finalized in 1600, was based on the story of the Howard family.
1577 Christmas to 1578 March	Mary de Vere, de Vere's sister, married Peregrine Bertie. The Taming of the Shrew was based on their relationship. So was Twelfth Night .
1578 January 15	Queen Elizabeth awarded Castle Rising to de Vere for his "true and faithful service done and given to us". Castle Rising had belonged to the beheaded Duke of Norfolk, and was worth about £250 per year. The relationship between Queen Elizabeth and de Vere was rocky at this time. Queen Elizabeth was unhappy about de Vere's treatment of his wife. De Vere was probably unhappy about the beheading of the Duke of Norfolk. De Vere had not exchanged New Year's gifts with Queen Elizabeth in several years.
1578	De Vere invested £3,000 through Michael Lok in Frobisher's voyage to seek out a Northwest passage. The Merchant of Venice reflects this experience, as the generous ANTONIO invests 3,000 ducats with thy financier SHYLOCK (based on Michael Lok). Frobisher's venture was a disaster.
1578	De Vere was praised before the royal Court during the Queen's summer progress by aspiring Cambridge scholar Gabriel Harvey. Harvey's Latin eulogy was translated to include the phrase "thy will shakes speares". The eulogy noted that de Vere was excellent in letters and had written many English poems.
1578 August 14	The Spanish Ambassador Bernardino de Mendoza reported on the reception at court for the Duke of Alençon's envoys in pursuit of marriage proposals for Queen Elizabeth. De Vere reportedly refused to obey a request from Queen Elizabeth to dance before ambassadors from the Duke of Alençon, presumably because he felt the request was demeaning.
1578 December 28	The Lord Chamberlain's Men, a theater group under the Earl of Sussex and De Vere's mentor, performed at Richmond Palace a play titled <i>An History of the Cruelties of a Stepmother</i> . Ostensibly, the play was about a conniving

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	stepmother. The courtly audience would have assumed that this stepmother was Catherine de Medici, mother of the Duke of Alençon. Queen Elizabeth was considering marriage to the Duke, and if the marriage took place, Catherine de Medici would become England's "stepmother". De Vere opposed the marriage. The play may have been a preliminary version of Cymbeline , which is also about a conniving stepmother. De Vere's mother in law disliked de Vere, and the feeling was mutual. De Vere and Queen Elizabeth exchanged New Year gifts, presumably reflecting an improving relationship.
1579 January 6	The Lord Chamberlain's Men performed <i>The History of the Rape of the Second Helen</i> about the rape of Helen in the Trojan War. Shakespeare later dealt with this issue in Troilus and Cressida .
1579 March 3 or so	De Vere, the Duke of Surrey and others performed <i>A Moor's Masque</i> at court. This was probably an early version of Othello , a story about a husband who conspires to kill his wife at the goading of a servant.
1579 September	De Vere and Philip Sidney quarreled over a tennis game. Sidney was considered a rising literary figure. Both were young, intelligent and well-educated. Sidney had criticized theatrical techniques which compressed time and space into a few hours on the stage, and shifted moods and setting without explanation to the audience. Shakespeare plays regularly did just that. Sidney and de Vere also differed on the Alençon marriage to Queen Elizabeth, with de Vere a supporter and Sidney an opponent. Sidney and de Vere wanted to resolve the dispute through a duel, but Queen Elizabeth ordered de Vere to not leave his quarters.
1579	De Vere began a relationship with Anne Vavasour, a tall, dark-haired nineteen year old from a genteel family living in the north of England. She was known for her beauty, poetic prowess and wit. Her uncle Thomas Knyvet, a groom in the Queen Elizabeth's privy chamber, had introduced her to court, where she became a gentlewoman in the Queen's bedchamber. De Vere probably met Anne Vavasour through his cousin Charles Arundell.
1580 early	De Vere purchased Fisher's Folly, a luxurious house near Bishopsgate, across the street from the Bedlam insane asylum, and a third of mile south of London's commercial theaters - the Curtain and the Theater. At the time, Londoners were flocking to the theaters. A few Puritans and religious types objected, but Elizabeth supported the theaters. In early 1580, de Vere had also taken over the theater group the Earl of Warwick's men. Between 1580 and 1582, De Vere hired John Lyly and Anthony Munday as his private secretaries. He also provided support to Thomas Watson and Robert Greene.
1580 February	De Vere reportedly confided to his cousin Henry Howard that Anne Vavasour was pregnant, and fearing Queen Elizabeth's anger, de Vere was contemplating leaving England. Anne miscarried.

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1580	John Lyly, de Vere's secretary, dedicated <i>Euphues and his England</i> to de Vere. The work satirizes courtly manners using pompous and overblown language.
1580 June or July	Anne Vavasour became pregnant again.
1580	John Hester dedicated <i>A Short Discourse upon Surgery</i> to de Vere.
1580	Gabriel Harvey caricatured de Vere as 'Italianate Englishman' in <i>Speculum Tuscanismi</i> , but also praised him as "peerless in England" as a "discourser for tongue".
1580 December	De Vere confessed to Queen Elizabeth that he, Henry Howard, Charles Arundell, and Francis Southwell had reconciled to Catholicism through a Jesuit priest who was later sneaked out of England through the French Ambassador.
1581 January	De Vere won a prize in a tournament at Whitehall. His tournament speech is later published in Edmund Spenser's <i>Axiochus</i> .
1581 March 23	The unmarried Anne Vavasour, one of the Gentlewomen of the Queen's Bedchamber, bore a son who would be named Edward Vere (and go on to be knighted for his military service). De Vere, who was known to be the child's father, fled London, but was soon captured and sent to the Tower of London.
1581 June 8	Queen Elizabeth ordered de Vere's release from the Tower of London, but he remained under house arrest in Greenwich for another month or more.
	De Vere's Catholic cousin Henry Howard, Charles Arundell, and Francis Southwell responded to de Vere's allegations with a one hundred page document accusing de Vere of being a liar, murderer, atheist, pederast, alcoholic, etc. The document is known as the <i>Arundell-Howard libels</i> . Henry Howard and Charles Arundell would later be implicated in another plot against Queen Elizabeth in 1583, and would write another set of libels to extricate themselves from trouble.
1582	De Vere was exiled from court. Banishment from court is the theme of Titus Adronicus and Timon of Athens .
1582 January	The Alençon marriage with Queen Elizabeth was essentially dead.
1581 December	De Vere and his wife Anne (Cecil) began correspondence with de Vere hoping that it would lead to a reconciliation. All Anne's letters have been preserved in the Cecil archive. None of de Vere's replies were preserved.
1582 January	De Vere and Anne Cecil came to a reconciliation and began living with each other.
1582 March	There is a 'fray' between de Vere and Sir Thomas Knyvett, uncle of Anne Vavasour, over the latter's honour. The fray began an interfamily feud (like

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	the MONTAGUE-CAPULET feud in Romeo and Juliet). De Vere was injured, although he was able to ride on a tournament several years later. The injuries sustained may have contributed to his lameness, which he mentioned in Sonnets 37 and 89.
1582 June	There were three violent skirmishes between de Vere's men and Sir Thomas Knyvett's men (just as there were three skirmishes between the MONTAGUES and CAPULETS in Romeo and Juliet).
1582	The poet Thomas Watson dedicated a book of sonnets <i>The Hekatompathia</i> to de Vere. The book contains introductory comments that undoubtedly came from de Vere. The quality of the comments is considered Shakespearean in quality.
1582 June	De Vere's brother in law, Peregrine Bertie (Lord Willoughby), went as Queen Elizabeth's Ambassador to the Danish court at Elsinore for the investiture of King Frederick III. He revisited Elsinore in 1585, and spent five months in total there. Elsinore was the setting for Hamlet . While at Elsinore, Bertie met the Danes Rosenkrantz and Guldenstern. He also met the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, who observed a supernova that was referenced by the guards in Hamlet . Hamlet also includes a small part for the English Ambassador (de Vere's brother in law), who announces that ROSENKRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN are dead.
1583	The best actors in London merged to form a new company - the Queen's Men. The Queen's Men subsequently performed early versions of plays that would be later revised and published as Shakespeare's. Queen Elizabeth's spy master Francis Walsingham ran the troupe.
1583 May 9	The newly born son of Edward and Anne (Cecil) de Vere was buried.
1583 June 1	Queen Elizabeth and de Vere resolved their differences and de Vere was allowed back into court.
1583 June 10	Queen Elizabeth's court visited Oxford University. The court saw a Latin play <i>Dido</i> , a university play that was never published or acted again. The Polish Prince and General Laski was in attendance. HAMLET asks actors to perform Aeneas's tale to <i>Dido</i> , the play that was acted at most once and which was caviar to the General (Laski). Also in attendance at court was the Italian Giordano Bruno, who taught at Wittenburg and who supported Copernicus's theory of the heavens. HAMLET also refers to these theories
1583	De Vere acquired the sub-lease on the Blackfriars Theater and appointed his secretary Lyly as manager.
1584 April 6	Daughter Bridget was born to Edward and Anne (Cecil) de Vere.
1584 November 17	De Vere again won a prize at a Royal tournament, held to celebrate the anniversary of the coronation.

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1584 December	<i>The History of Agamemnon and Ulysses</i> is performed at court by de Vere's troupe of boy actors. This was probably an early performance of Troilus and Cressida .
1585 August	De Vere was appointed commander of the horse in the Lowlands (Dutch) theater of war. All's Well that Ends Well includes names of commanders in the lowland campaign.
1585 October	De Vere was recalled from the lowlands campaign. His long-time enemy Leicester was placed in charge. On his return home, a ship containing de Vere's provisions (venison, wine, letter of appointment) was captured by Spaniards. In Hamlet , there is an encounter with pirates and a plot twist involving stolen letters at sea.
1585 or 1586	Daughter Francis was born to Edward and Anne (Cecil) de Vere.
1586 June 25	A letter from de Vere to William Cecil asked Cecil to provide de Vere with £200 " tyll her Magestie performethe her promes.".
1586 June 26	Presumably to fulfill her promise, Queen Elizabeth granted Vere £1000 per annum. There is no documentary indication about the purpose of the payments, which continued until de Vere's death. It is believed that the purpose of the payments was to produce propaganda plays which supported the Tudors and encouraged English nationalism at a time when the country was facing an invasion by Spain. Shortly after this time, the Spanish Ambassador to England complained to King Philip of Spain about the treatment of the King in English plays.
1586	De Vere was described by William Webbe as "most excellent" among court poets.
1586 October	De Vere was third in precedence at the trial of Mary Queen of Scots at Fotheringay. His future father in law, Thomas Trentham, had been appointed, as one of the "principal gentlemen in Staffordshire", to accompany the Scottish Queen from her Staffordshire exile to Fotheringay.
1587 May 26	Daughter Susan was born to Edward and Anne (Cecil) de Vere.
1587 September	Daughter Frances died in infancy.
1588 June 5	Anne (Cecil) de Vere died at age thirty-three and was buried in Westminster Abbey. According to letters by Thomas Cecil and others, William Cecil was so incapacitated by grief over the death of "my ladie of Oxenford" that he was incapable of conducting Privy Council business. There is no record that de Vere was attended the funeral on June 26.
1588 May 30	Drake led the English fleet against the Spanish and Portuguese fleet. Indirect evidence suggests that de Vere was involved in the campaign. The fleet encountered bad weather (perhaps the inspiration for the opening scene in The Tempest). By June 6, the fleet had returned to Plymouth, where de

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	Vere probably learned about the death of his wife. Drake would make subsequent attempts to set sail. De Vere may have been part of these attempts.
1588 July 27	De Vere was at Tilbury east of London, supposedly to lead 2,000 men to protect England from a Spanish invasion fleet should the fleet get past English naval defenses. By August 1, de Vere had abandoned his position, and returned to London.
1588 November 24	Nobles and military leaders paraded through the streets of London to celebrate the defeat of the Spanish Armada at sea.
1588 December	De Vere sold Fisher's Folley. With Anne (Cecil) de Vere's death, her father William Cecil began suing de Vere for debts.
1589	<i>The Arte of English Poesie</i> , by George Puttenham was published. It notes: "And in Her Majesty's time that now is are sprung up another crew of courtly makers, noble men and gentlemen of her Majesty's own servants, who have written commendably well as it would appeare if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest, of which number is first that noble gentleman Edward, earl of Oxford. ... The earl of Oxford and Master (Richard) Edwards of Her Majesty's Chapel (are the best) for comedy and interlude."
1590	De Vere had made a verbal agreement to cover the rent of Thomas Churchyard, who had worked for de Vere for various periods since the 1560s. De Vere was unable to meet the first payment due on March 25, so Churchyard took refuge in a church. Churchyard's apartment was near the Church of St. Benet's of Paul's Wharf. In Twelfth Night , FESTE begs for cash and includes a reference to St. Benet
1590	Spencer dedicated a sonnet to de Vere in <i>The Faerie Queen</i> . The sonnet talks about writing of the glory of de Vere's ancestors "under a shady veil". This is presumably a reference to the fact that de Vere had been writing plays glorifying the Tudor regime and its supporters (including de Vere's ancestors) under a pseudonym.
1590 September	De Vere told William Cecil that he was chronically ill.
1591 November or December	De Vere married another one of Queen Elizabeth's Maids of Honour, Elizabeth Trentham, daughter of the wealthy Staffordshire landowner the late Thomas Trentham of Rocester Abbey. Elizabeth Trentham was in her thirties, had been one of the Queen's maids of honour for ten years, and was an independent woman with a good understanding of legal and business matters. PORTIA, in The Merchant of Venice , was probably based on Elizabeth. BASSIANO married PORTIA in part to address financial concerns. Elizabeth's brother Francis Trentham took over the management of de Vere's near bankrupt estate and gradually returned it to profitability.

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1591 December 2	De Vere sold the manor of Castle Hedingham - the de Vere family seat from the time of William the Conqueror - to William Cecil in trust for his three daughters Elizabeth, Bridget and Susan. By this time, de Vere had lost all the lands he inherited from his father or acquired from the Queen Elizabeth, and was now a landless lord. Three years later, de Vere's story would be retold by the Queen's Men through a play called the <i>True Chronicle History of King Lier</i> . This is a story of a foolish man who wasted his inheritance and independence.
1592 Early	Edward and Elizabeth (Trentham) de Vere moved into their new home in north London near the Theater and the Curtain (theaters).
1592	The critic William Webbe notes: "I may not omit the deserved commendations of many honorable and noble lords and gentlemen of Her Majesty's court, which in the rare devices of poetry have been and yet are most excellent skillful-among whome the right honorable earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of most excellent among the rest."
1593 January	The satirist and pamphleteer Thomas Nashe issued a pamphlet referring to Will. Monox (probably a reference to William My Ox, alias Edward De Vere). The pamphlet was dedicated to a prolific poet who Nashe calls "Gentle William Apis (=the name of a legendary Egyptian ox) Lapis (=Latin for "lacking empathy")", in other words, de Vere. The pamphlet described Gentle William as a little fellow and drunkard, with one of the best wits in England". De Vere captured his relationships with Nashe in Love's Labour's Lost .
1593 February 24	Henry de Vere, son and heir of Edward and Elizabeth (Trentham)de Vere was born.
1593 April 18	<i>Venus and Adonis</i> was approved for publication, dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. The message of the play appears to be advice to the Earl to be wary Queen Elizabeth, an old but lusty queen. The author is William Shakespeare. This was the first time this name appeared in print.
1593 September 3	Robert Greene died. In October, Greene's <i>Groatsworth of Wit</i> was published. The story involved a country author who initially put together morality plays in traveling carnival shows. After seven years, he moved to London, produced plays written by others, had a wardrobe used in his plays, and used Latin phrases he did not understand. Greene warned his play-writing friends to be wary of an "upstart crow, beautified with our (play write's) feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the rest of you. And being an absolute <i>Johannes Factotud</i> is in his own conceit the only shake-scene in the country." This is probably the first public reference to William Shakspere from Stratford on Avon. Like the character in <i>Groatsworth of Wit</i> , Shakspere had left Stratford on Avon in 1585 and seven years later appeared in London.

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1593	The poem <i>Willobie His Avis</i> was printed anonymously. There were many similarities between the relationship between Edward and Elizabeth (Trentham) de Vere and the relationship between Willobie and Avis. Willobie's Avis had served ten years with the Queen, starting at twenty, just like Elizabeth (Trentham) de Vere. Avis was born in western England where "Austin pitched his tent". Elizabeth (Trentham) de Vere was from Austin priory of Rocester, to the northwest of London. After marriage, Avis and her husband lived near a famous well and a castle bought and sold by brothers. Edward and Elizabeth (Trentham) De Vere lived near the Well of St. Agnes and the site of a former priory bought and sold by the actor James Burbage and his brother-in-law that became the Curtain and the Theater. <i>Willobie His Avis</i> also suggested that the Earl of Southampton had courted de Vere's wife. De Vere became aware of the courting, and encouraged it. In the end, Elizabeth remained faithful to de Vere.
1594 May 9	<i>The Rape of Lucrece</i> , an epic poem dedicated to the Earl of Southampton by William Shakespeare was published. The story is of a constant and faithful wife in a male dominated world of ruthless courtiers. The message for Southampton was to be careful, and marry Elizabeth de Vere, because among other things the Cecil clan, including William Cecil, wanted this marriage.
1594 July 7	De Vere wrote William Cecil seeking redress for various abuses that hindered him in the performance of his office. While there is no formal documentation as to what that office was, on the assumption that the office was to write propaganda plays in support of the Tudor regime, the abuses in question were likely the expropriation of his anonymously produced by various others, perhaps including William Shakspere.
1594 October 6	Southampton reached the age of majority, where he could make decisions for himself. He indicated he would not marry Elizabeth de Vere. William Cecil demanded Southampton pay a fine of &Pound;5,000
1594	The Taming of the Shrew and <i>The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster</i> (King Henry the Sixth, Part 2) were published anonymously.
1595 January 26	De Vere's daughter Elizabeth married William Stanley, the Earl of Derby who maintained his own company of players. It is widely believed by scholars that, at the fabulous wedding feast in the presence of the whole court, the festivities concluded with a performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream . The play tells the story of de Vere's obsession with a possible husband for his daughter, while the possible husband and daughter had other ideas.
1595 March 25	De Vere tells William Cecil of his lameness. Over the period 1590 to 1602, seven other de Vere letters refer to lameness, infirmity or ill health. Sonnets 37 and 89 also mention lameness.

Who Was Shakespeare?

Time	Event
1595 October to 1596	De Vere visited Bath, a city known for its mineral springs. Sonnets 153 and 154 talk of a journey to Bath.
1597 January	Elizabeth (Trentham) De Vere was served with a legal notice to pay an outstanding bond. She had nothing to do with the transaction triggering the law suit. In the end, the de Veres won the legal case. The situation roughly parallels the proceedings in The Merchant of Venice , where ANTONIO takes out a loan from SHYLOCK, cannot meet his obligations, and ends up in court. In court, PORTIA (Elizabeth De Vere) addresses one of the leading issues of the day - the letter of the law justice versus fairness - with a clear argument in favour of fairness.
1597 July	Rumours arose that Essex, an enemy of de Vere's and the one who was luring Southampton away from de Vere's camp, had slept with de Vere's daughter and recent bride Elizabeth. Annoyed with Essex, de Vere responded with sonnets 78 to 86. In these sonnets, de Vere tried to warn Southampton to stay out of the Essex camp.
1597 September 2	Elizabeth (Trentham) de Vere and her brother Francis Trentham purchased the large manor house of King's Place in Hackney - a substantial country manor house with a celebrated Great Hall, a classic Tudor Long Gallery, a chapel and "a proper lybrayre to laye bokes in". The land included orchards and gardens and around 270 acres of farm land. It would remain the principal London home of de Vere and his wife until his death in 1604. His wife finally moved out in 1609 after selling it to the poet ffulke Greville.
1597 September	De Vere told Robert Cecil in a letter: "I have not an able body".
1597 December 14	This was de Vere's only day in the House of Lords in a Parliament that was called in October and continued for four months. It was also de Vere's last day to ever sit in Parliament.
1598 August 4	William Cecil died. De Vere's remembrances were probably reflected on the one hand in the character of POLONIUS in Hamlet , and on the other hand, in PROSPERO's description of GONZALO in The Tempest as the owner of the best library in England and a provider of books to de Vere.
1598	Cuthbert Burby published " <i>A Pleasant Conceited Comedy Called Love's Labour's Lost ... Newly corrected and augmented by W. Shakespere</i> ". This was the first publication of a Shakespeare play.
1598	De Vere was named as "best for comedy" in Francis Meres' <i>Palladis Tamia</i> . Meares also cited Shakespeare as one among others who has enriched the English language. Shakespeare is cited as among England's best for tragedy and comedy.
1599	The Lord Chamberlain's Men performed Shakespeare's King Henry the Fifth at the newly constructed Globe Theater.

Who Was Shakespeare?

Time	Event
1599 May or June	Edward and Anne (Cecil) De Vere's second daughter Bridget married Francis Norris, an aspiring politician.
1599	An anonymous play <i>Histrion-Mastix</i> spoofed Troilus and Cressida . TROILUS describes himself as one who "shakes his furious spear" (meaning De Vere, whose coat of arms featured someone shaking a spear).
1599	Ben Jonson wrote an poem about a "poet-ape" who now stole entire plays from others and called them his own, but who originally started stealing bits and pieces of plays and putting them together. When accused of stealing plays, the "poet-ape" would suggest it was up to others to figure out who really wrote the plays. Jonson thought everyone understood that the "poet-ape" did not write the plays. This was probably a reference to William Shakspere from Stratford on Avon. When de Vere and other authors made their plays available anonymously, their works were easy targets.
1599	William Jaggard published <i>The Passionate Pilgrim</i> by W. Shakespeare. The publication contained some sonnets and other poems that showed de Vere's feelings toward Southampton. It was most unlikely that the author (de Vere or anyone else) would want these sonnets made public in his or her lifetime. Of the twenty poems in the publication, fifteen were by other authors. The publication was most likely the work of a publisher trying to make money by capitalizing on the Shakespeare name.
1599 December 25	Robert Armin, one of Shakespeare's greatest clowns, visited de Vere at de Vere's home. The likely purpose was to assist de Vere with As You Like It , a play about fortunes of the three sons of the executed Duke of Norfolk. William Howard, one of the sons, was finally about to receive his inheritance, after twenty two years. Armin's character in the play would have been TOUCHSTONE. One scene expressed de Vere's displeasure at this time toward William Shakspere from Stratford on Avon.
1600	Based on references to Timon of Athens in the work of John Marston and Ben Jonson, the Shakespearean play would have been performed in London by 1600. Timon of Athens mirrored de Vere's life, in telling the story of an aristocrat who had fallen from grace.
1601 February 19	The trial of Essex and Southampton for treason began. De Vere joined twenty-five other peers on the tribunal. The tribunal condemned both Essex and Southampton to death.
1601 March 18	There was news that Southampton's death sentence has been changed to life imprisonment in the Tower of London.
1601 spring	De Vere unsuccessfully sought the lands of Sir Charles Danvers, who was executed for his part in the Essex Rebellion.
1601 February to May	De Vere unsuccessfully sought the governorship of Jersey.

Who Was Shakespeare?

Time	Event
1602	De Vere's acting company and that of Worcester merged and took up residence at the Boar's Head.
1603 March 24	Queen Elizabeth died. A state funeral took place on April 28. Queen Elizabeth was succeeded by James, son of Mary Stuart, thus uniting the English and Scottish thrones for the first time.
1603 April 10	King James I released Southampton from the Tower of London and restored to him his former titles and appointments.
1603 April 28	There was a state funeral for Queen Elizabeth.
1603 May 7	De Vere wrote Robert Cecil seeking the possession of former family properties of Waltham Forest and Havering House. Undoubtedly to his surprise, de Vere received notification on July 18 that King James I had granted de Vere's wish.
1603 July 25	De Vere participated in the coronation dinner and services of King James I.
1603 August 2	De Vere's crown annuity of £1,000 was renewed by King James I. As a thank you, de Vere closed Hamlet , with HAMLET, in his dying voice, saying that FORTINBRAS (James I), the prince from the north, should inherit the throne of England. This reference suggests that Hamlet was one of the last plays that de Vere worked on. HAMLET's dying words to HORATIO probably reflected de Vere's state of mind as his death approached. "What a wounded name, Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind me! ... Absent thee from felicity awhile ... to tell my story."
1604 March 15	De Vere and other peers escorted King James I through London.
1604 June 24	De Vere died, presumably of the illnesses that plagued him. There was no will or record of any funeral or any memorial. These facts suggest a suicide. On June 24, Southampton and others were arrested on the charge that they had plotted to slay several Scots who were friends of King James I. They were released the next day.
1604 July 6	Edward de Vere was buried at St John's Church, Hackney.
1604	A new quarto version of Hamlet was published.
1604 Christmas	Southampton staged Love's Labour's Lost for King James and the court.
1604 December	Susan De Vere, the youngest daughter of Edward and Anne (Cecil) de Vere, married Sir Philip Herbert (later the Earl of Montgomery). At the time, the Herberts were the premier literary family in England.
1608	King Lear was published. Other works published around this time include <i>Pericles</i> and Troilus and Cressida .

Who Was Shakespeare?

Time	Event
1609 April 1	Elizabeth (Trentham) de Vere received permission to sell King's Place house and grounds.
1609 May 20	The publisher Thomas Thorpe registered "A Booke called Shake-speare's Sonnets" for publication with the Stationer's Company. In the dedication and title page, Thorpe wished the person who acquired the sonnets - one W. H. - the eternity promised by the "ever living poet". "W.H." was probably William Hall, a relative of Anthony Munday, who was de Vere's private secretary. The sale of King's Place probably encouraged Elizabeth (Trentham) de Vere to clean up some loose ends, including doing something with the sonnets that de Vere had been writing for years. It is inconceivable that a living author would have published these versus in his or her lifetime.
1613 January 3	Elizabeth (Trentham) de Vere was buried.
1614	William Shakspere from Stratford on Avon moved from London back to Stratford on Avon.
1616 April 23	William Shakspere from Stratford on Avon died, a few days after making his will. There was a singularly uninspiring poem on the grave. There was a monument near his grave. There are no records for the construction of the monument, and no mention of the monument before 1623. The epitaph graph on the monument was not one what one expect for one of the greatest writers in the English language. The language was similar to that used by Ben Jonson on similar monuments. If Jonson wrote the epitaph, then it was probably created in 1623, around the time that Jonson wrote the introduction to the <i>Shakespeare's Folio</i> .
1621 Fall	Othello by William Shakespeare was published. This previously unpublished play was about an insecure leader who was manipulated by the villain IAGO. At the time, King James I was seeking a marriage of his son with Spain. The marriage was opposed by Southampton, de Vere's son Henry, and the Earls of Montgomery and Pembroke, who had married de Vere's daughters. The publication of Othello at this time may have been a literary attempt to express opposition to the marriage.
1622	Henry Peacham produced a book on courtly etiquette called <i>The Compleat Gentleman</i> . The book included a list of Elizabethan poets. Shakespeare was not mentioned. De Vere was at the top of the list.
1623 November 8	William Jaggard presents <i>Shakespeare's Folio</i> to the London Stationer's company. The <i>Folio</i> contained thirty-seven plays, of which nineteen had not yet been published in any form. The <i>Folio</i> was dedicated to the earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, who were husbands of de Vere's daughters. The publication of the <i>Folio</i> at this time can be seen in several ways: the last chance for the de Vere daughters to get their father's work into the public domain; a glorification of Elizabethan protestant England and its defiance of Spain at a time when King James I wanted to get close with Catholic Spain;

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Time	Event
	a political literary protest by protestant forces opposing the marriage of the King's son to Spain. Because of the political sensitivities at the time, ascribing the works to Edward De Vere would have been dangerous, so the <i>Folio</i> continued the now long-standing practice of attributing the works to Shakespeare. The publisher undoubtedly preferred this, since Shakespeare material tended to sell well.

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CHAPTER 4: DE VERE IN THE PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE

The plays of Edward de Vere were the 36 published in the *First Folio* in 1623. By 1623, de Vere had been dead for nineteen years. The *First Folio* was sponsored by the husband and brother-in-law of one of de Vere's daughters. De Vere's family would likely have had possession of de Vere's original papers. While other "Shakespeare" plays were published in subsequent Folio editions, these were probably included by publishers of these editions to enhance sales, and may not have been written by Shakespeare.

There is an ongoing debate whether the works attributed to Shakespeare were written by one person. Because there are different writing styles in the plays, it is often suggested that they were the product of a "committee". It is reasonable to assume that de Vere was responsible for the production of the plays attributed to Shakespeare, but may not have been the sole writer. De Vere probably did not complete all the plays he was working on at the time of his death. His family would likely have ended up with his incomplete plays. Others, including the Earl of Derby - de Vere's son-in-law - may have finished up these incomplete plays, so they could be published. In addition, de Vere employed several poets and playwrights, particularly during the 1580s when he still had some money beyond the retainer from Queen Elizabeth to produce "propaganda" plays. These included Anthony Munday and John Lyly. It is likely that employees wrote at least parts of some plays under de Vere's direction.

If one assumes that Edward de Vere was responsible for the plays attributed to Shakespeare in the *First Folio*, and one examines these, several interesting things happen:

1. There are so many instances where the works of Shakespeare reflect the known history of Edward de Vere, that there is an overwhelming circumstantial case that de Vere was responsible for the works attributed to Shakespeare
2. The techniques used by de Vere to write the plays become evident. They include:
 - Using his friends, relatives, enemies and acquaintances as character models. No wonder the characterization is so real.
 - Writing plays in some instances to explore personal experiences in his own life. No wonder the plays contain such passion.
 - Using his formidable powers of observation at court and elsewhere to create stories in exquisite detail.
3. The reasons why many of the plays were written in the way they were written becomes clear. For example, the history plays were propaganda plays to promote the English nation in support of Queen Elizabeth, and were undoubtedly written to justify de Vere's annual income of £1,000 from Queen Elizabeth. Other plays were written to skewer enemies, or to explain himself and his life.
4. By combining the personality revealed through the plays with the known history of Edward de Vere, one gets a fuller understanding of the man behind the greatest works in the English language. The picture is one of a very human individual, with tremendous strengths, big weaknesses, a checkered life with ups and downs, huge errors in judgment, impetuous and arrogant in youth but gaining maturity over time. De Vere was a man of great wit and intelligence who was smarter than everyone else and knew it, but he lacked the ability to translate these attributes into power and influence, perhaps in part because

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he did not have the patience to work with others less talented than himself to develop a power base. As a result, he was not taken seriously among his fellow peers and other key figures in Elizabeth's court. In response, he resorted to writing, using his plays to exert a secondary type of influence.

To see the relationship between Edward de Vere within the various plays of Shakespeare (as printed in the *First Folio*), check out the following.

Who Was Shakespeare?

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

PLOT SUMMARY

Egeus orders his daughter Hermia to marry Demetrius; she refuses because she and Lysander are in love. Her friend Helena is in love with Demetrius, who once loved her but now does not. Under the law of Athens, Duke Theseus gives Hermia four days to obey her father on pain of death or confinement to a nunnery. Hermia and Lysander escape this harsh law by running away to the woods. Demetrius pursues them there, with Helena pursuing him. In the woods, Oberon and Titania, King and Queen of fairies, have quarrelled because Titania refuses to hand over an Indian changeling boy to be Oberon's page. Oberon instructs the mischievous Puck, Robin Goodfellow, to press the juice of a magic flower on Titania's eyes as she sleeps; it will make her fall in love with the first being she sees on waking. In an attempt to reconcile Demetrius and Helena, Oberon orders that juice should be put on his eyes whilst he is sleeping and she is near, but Robin mistakenly puts it on Lysander, who thus falls in love with Helena. She thinks she is being mocked. Love-juice is then placed on Demetrius' eyes in order to rectify the mistake, but the result is that he too falls for Helena. The boys fight over her and the girls quarrel. While Titania has been sleeping, a company of Athenian artisans under the leadership of Peter Quince has come to the wood to rehearse a play for the ensuing wedding festivities of Duke Theseus and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. Robin puts an ass's head on Bottom the weaver and because of the love-juice Titania falls in love with him. Eventually all is restored to right and the artisans perform their comically tragic play of 'Pyramus and Thisbe'.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

Sir Thomas Heneage, as Vice Chamberlainship of England, was second in command of a new theatrical troupe - the Lord Chamberlain's Men. On May 2, 1594, Heneage married Mary Browne Wriothesley - mother of the Earl of Southampton. Several references in the play suggest the play was written for events around the time of the wedding. There is a reference to young lovers observing the rite of May, suggesting the action takes place in early May. There is mention of inclement weather in the spring of 1594. Also, there is a reference to Venus in the morning sky, where Venus could be found in late spring of 1594.

The subplot talks of a marriage between a powerful gallant figure (Duke Theseus=Earl of Southampton) and with former mortal enemy (Hippolyta=Elizabeth De Vere). The alliance represents a truce between unfriendly clans. For the Earl of Southampton, the message would be that he should marry into the Cecil (and de Vere) clan. On May 9, 1594, Lucrece was published, again attempting to encourage Southampton to marry into the Cecil clan.

In another subplot, there is a theatrical group with a garrulous, malaprop-sprouting, limelight grabbing ham (Bottom=Will Shakspeare from Stratford on Avon) at the center. Bottom is transformed into an ass, with whom the fairy Queen Titania (=Elizabeth) inappropriately falls in love. Bottom experiences the life of a royal consort, but eventually the magic wears off, and Bottom and the fairy Queen return to normal. At face value, Queen Elizabeth may have taken a shine to Will Shakspeare from Stratford on Avon.

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On January 26, 1595, Elizabeth de Vere married William, Earl of Derby. It is likely that the play was performed at their wedding as well. Events at the wedding are mentioned in the play. There is reference to "four happy days brings in another moon" i.e. January 26. In addition, the play ends with faeries being sent to bless "each several chamber ... through the palace'. The wedding took place in Greenwich Palace.

The central plot is a love triangle among Hermia (=Elizabeth de Vere), Demetrius (=Southampton) and Lysander (=Derby). Hermia's father Egeus (=de Vere) is embarrassingly enamoured with Demetrius. The play makes fun of his infatuation. Hermia and Lysander have eyes only for each other. In the end, Hermia marries Lysander, and Egeus stages a wedding play for the couple. Demetrius ends up marrying Helena (=Elizabeth Vernon). Elizabeth Vernon was a cousin of Essex, and one of the Queen's maids of honor. Demetrius is still under the love potion when the play ends. As such, it holds out the possibility that Southampton will break off the relationship with Vernon.

Who Was Shakespeare?

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

PLOT SUMMARY

Helena, orphaned daughter of a doctor, is under the protection of the widowed Countess of Rossillion. In love with Bertram, the countess' son, Helena follows him to court, where she cures the sick French king of an apparently fatal illness. The king rewards her by offering her the husband of her choice. She names Bertram; he resists. When forced by the king to marry her, he refuses to sleep with her and, accompanied by the braggart Parolles, leaves for the Italian wars. He says that he will only accept Helena if she obtains a ring from his finger and becomes pregnant with his child. She goes to Italy disguised as a pilgrim and suggests a 'bed trick' whereby she will take the place of Diana, a widow's daughter whom Bertram is trying to seduce. A 'kidnapping trick' humiliates the boastful Parolles, whilst the bed trick enables Helena to fulfil Bertram's conditions, leaving him no option but to marry her, to his mother's delight.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

In seeking to find her wayward husband Bertram in Florence, Helena disguises herself as a pilgrim on Jubilee. She says her Italian destination is St. Jaques le Grand. In de Vere's Tuscan visit, Rome had reached its capacity and pilgrims found the gates to Rome shut. Overflow sites included the shrines of St. James the Great (St. Jaques le Grand in Helena's native French) in the Tuscan towns of Pistoia and Prato.

On his way out of Italy in 1576, de Vere was known to travel from Milan to Lyon. The Mont Cenis pass northwest of Turin province was the most probably route through the Alps. Landing in France, de Vere's caravan probably followed Mont Cenis's mountain stream the Arc, leading to the river Isère, which flows through Grenoble and St. Marcellin, where it meets the Rhone. A day's journey up the Rhone is the hillside town of Tournon. In the sixteenth century, the local magistrate was Just-Louis, Lord Tournon, count of Rousillion. In the Tournon household was the unmarried sister H  l  ne de Tournon. The mother of H  l  ne and Just-Louis - the dowager countess of Rousillion, also lived with the family. The play features the Dowager Countess of Rousillion and her son, the Count of Rousillion. Helena in the play was probably based on H  l  ne.

H  l  ne was in love with a French Marquis who returned her affections. The marquis family opposed the match, because they wanted him to be a priest. The marquis gave in, and at a court function, he refused to acknowledge H  l  ne's presence. She swooned, and apparently died of sorrow causing a scandal. Underlying the play is de Vere's mistreatment of his wife Ann Cecil as a result of family politics.

Helena portrays the relationship at Ann Cecil's most ambitious and aggressive. Helena seeks Bertram's hand. Bertram objects because Helene is beneath Bertram in social rank. The play resolves this dilemma with a quick entitlement of Helena's family (as occurred with William Cecil, who is reported by the Spanish ambassador to have offered a generous dowry of 15,000 pounds) and a threat against Bertram from the King that he had better marry Helena or else.

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I will throw thee from my care forever
Into the staggers and careless lapse
Of youth and ignorance, both my revenge and hate
Loosing upon thee in the name of justice
Without all terms of pity

In the play, the Clown jests: "I know a man ... that sold a goodly manor for a song." In 1573 or 1574, De Vere signed over a family estate called Battails Hall in Essex to the musician William Byrd, the organist at Chapel Royal. Bird is today considered one of the finest composers in Elizabethan England. He wrote a march of the Earl of Oxford.

In 1585, England was fighting the Spanish in the lowlands (now the Netherlands). In August, de Vere is reported to have crossed the English Channel to join with his forces in the lowlands. They moved up the coastline to the Hague, and met with Lord Norris and other superior officers in the lowlands campaign. The group awaited orders, as no one had been put in charge. In due course, de Vere's enemy Leicester was appointed commander. By October, de Vere was recalled to England. While de Vere's role in the campaign was limited, the play is filled with names of various field commanders.

The play was written in 1602-1603 by a mature Edward de Vere. It is a mature play about immaturity, mirroring his mature reflections on his life.

Who Was Shakespeare?

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

PLOT SUMMARY

Following the assassination of Julius Caesar and the battle of Philippi, Mark Antony, Octavius Caesar and Lepidus are the joint rulers of the known world. Antony, however, is captivated by Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, and neglects his responsibilities to spend time with her in Alexandria. This scandal is the talk of Rome and creates a rift between Antony and young Octavius Caesar. News comes from Rome that Antony's wife is dead. More urgently, the power of the triumvirate is being challenged by Pompey. Antony is forced to return to Rome and resume his responsibilities. When it is suggested that he should cement the alliance with Octavius by marrying his sister, Octavia, Antony agrees. Back in Egypt, the news of Antony's marriage sends Cleopatra into a jealous tirade. On the brink of war, Antony and Octavius make peace with Pompey. Shortly afterwards, however, Antony learns that not only has Octavius attacked Pompey after all, but he has also spoken scornfully of Antony in public and has had Lepidus imprisoned on dubious charges. Antony sends Octavia back to negotiate with her brother while he returns secretly to Alexandria. News arrives in Rome that Antony and Cleopatra have crowned themselves and their children kings and queens in Alexandria. Octavius declares war on Egypt. The Egyptian forces lose the sea-battle of Actium when Antony deserts the battle to follow Cleopatra's fleeing ship. Antony is consumed with shame and despair. However, hearing that Octavius has offered to make a secret treaty with Cleopatra, he rouses himself for a second, victorious battle. On the eve of the third battle, Antony's soldiers are nervous and fear bad omens. Even the faithful Enobarbus deserts him. The Egyptian fleet surrenders and Antony, in his fury, accuses Cleopatra of betraying him to Octavius. She retreats from his anger to her monument and sends a false report that she is dead. On hearing this, Antony attempts suicide and is brought to Cleopatra's monument to die in her arms. Rather than be captured and enslaved by the Romans, Cleopatra also kills herself. With all his enemies eliminated, Octavius returns victorious to Rome.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

In 1580, de Vere was not on the best of terms with Elizabeth. De Vere had had discussions with his Catholic cousin Henry Howard and Howard's cousin Charles Arundell, and Francis Southwell, about schemes to returning England to the Catholicism. Just before Christmas 1580, de Vere confessed to Elizabeth that he and his friends had reconciled to Rome. Howard and Arundell were arrested. De Vere returned to the Anglican fold. There followed a number of accusations against de Vere by both Howard and Arundell. By 1583, Elizabeth still had doubts about de Vere's loyalty, and was considering legal proceedings against him as a warning. Henry Howard prepared a pamphlet against de Vere. De Vere gets the last word on the pamphlet, by making mocking quotations from this pamphlet in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

On June 5, 1588, de Vere's wife Ann Cecil unexpectedly died at the age of 33. In the Spring of 1588, Sir Francis Drake intended to lead an English fleet south to stop the Spanish Armada before it could leave Spanish waters. However, strong winds prevented the fleet from leaving port. On May 30, the English fleet set sail. De Vere was among prominent Englishmen who took to sea against the Spanish. However, by June 6, the fleet returned to Plymouth. They tried to set sail again on June 19, but encountered headwinds and returned to port on June 21. On June 24,

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the English fleet set sail again, but could not find the Spanish Armada, and returned to Plymouth on July 12. A week later, the Armada was sighted near Cornwall. By July 27, de Vere was at an English camp near Tilbury, at least four days journey from Plymouth. Leicester reports at this time that de Vere seemed willing to risk his life against the Spanish. The Armada was expected to make landfall at Essex, and Elizabeth gave de Vere the job of leading 2,000 men in the port of Harwich. De Vere did not want the job, and returned to London, annoying the English military commanders. The Armada was defeated at sea. For de Vere, the period included the death of his wife, a failed naval mission, and conflicts with the English military leadership.

Lives by Plutarch tells the story of a celebrated Roman (Marc Antony) who had gone from losing a wife to forfeiting a naval battle, in part because the Roman worthy had retreated before his fleet could engage the enemy. Marc Antony had had a celebrated relationship with Cleopatra. Plutarch's *Lives* provides the background against which de Vere presented his life at that time.

In the first scene of the play, Cleopatra (Elizabeth) asks Antony about his inconvenient marriage to Fulvia:

CLEOPATRA: Excellent falsehood!
Why did he (Antony) marry Fulvia and not love her?
I'll seem the fool I am not ...
ANTONY Let's not confound the time with conference harsh:
There's not a minute of our lives should stretch
Without some pleasure now.

This probably reflects years of conversations between Elizabeth and De Vere.

Shortly afterward, Antony is informed of his wife's death.

MESSENGER Fulvia thy wife is dead
ANTONY There's a great spirit gone! Thus did I desire it:
What our contempts doth often hurl upon us,
We wish it ours again. The present pleasure,
By revolution lowering, does become
The opposite of itself: She's gone, being gone
The hand could pluck her back that shov'd her on.

At a later point, Antony states: "My idleness doth hatch."

Like de Vere, Antony does not appear overly upset by the passing of his wife.

In the play, Antony by now has offended Octavius Caesar, and prepares for war. Cleopatra lost at the Battle of Actium, before the enemy could be engaged, Cleopatra turned her ship around and fled, and Antony, "like a dotting mallard", followed her.

For de Vere and Antony, there was a turning around of the fleet before engagement. For de Vere personally, the retreat of the English fleet before engagement with the Spanish was a defeat

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(even though the English eventually prevailed), whereas for Antony, there actually was a defeat. Mallard is a pun on Drake, the English leader who turned his ships around before the search and destroy mission against the Spanish.

After Actium, Antony feels he has acted dishonourable, and realizes that he is not a military or political leader, but a follower.

ANTONY O whither hast thou led me, Egypt (Elizabeth)? See
How I convey my shame out of thine eyes
By looking back what I have left behind
'Stroyed in dishonor
Egypt (Elizabeth), thou knowst too well
My heart was to thy rudder tied by th' strings,
And thou shouldst tow me after:

This undoubtedly represents de Vere's outlook. His personal shame perhaps comes from abandoning his allotted role in defending England. After 1588, he essentially retreated from public life.

Who Was Shakespeare?

AS YOU LIKE IT

PLOT SUMMARY

Orlando is the youngest of three brothers, badly treated by the oldest, Oliver; Duke Senior, meanwhile, has been banished and the court usurped by his younger brother, Frederick. Orlando fights with Charles, the court wrestler, and he and Rosalind, daughter of the exiled duke, fall in love. Rosalind and her cousin Celia, daughter of usurping Duke Frederick, leave the court for the Forest of Arden, taking the fool Touchstone with them; Rosalind disguises herself as a boy ('Ganymede'), while Celia calls herself 'Aliena'. On being told by the old family servant Adam that Oliver is plotting to kill him, Orlando also flees to the forest. In Arden, Rosalind and Celia buy a farm in order to help the old shepherd Corin; Orlando meets up with the banished duke and his courtiers. 'Ganymede' offers to assist Orlando in his wooing by pretending to be Rosalind, so that he can rehearse his love-lines. The shepherd Silvius is in love with shepherdess Phoebe, but she falls for 'Ganymede'. Touchstone, after initially scorning rural life, decides to marry Audrey the goatherd, displacing country bumpkin William. Oliver comes to the forest and his life is saved by Orlando; he repents of his wicked ways and falls in love with Celia. Wicked Duke Frederick becomes a hermit and Rosalind, restored to her female self, arranges multiple marriages, presided over by the god Hymen. All ends happily, save that the melancholy traveller Jaques wants no part in the festivities.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

The play is about the legally entangled fortunes of the three sons of the duke of Norfolk, who was executed. De Vere was haunted by his inability to save his cousin from the gallows. The play follows the troubles of Norfolk's surviving sons in marriage, inheritance, and courtly life. The eldest and youngest married into the same family - the main plot in the play. In 1577, de Vere had attended the wedding of Norfolk's youngest son William to Lady Elizabeth Dacre. By 1599, William Howard was nearing an agreement to purchase the rights to his wife's inheritance. The play was intended as a present to celebrate a small victory.

In 1575, de Vere visited the cathedral in Siena. In the cathedral was a mosaic representing the seven ages of man. In the play, Jaques is a world traveler who "sold his lands to see other men's". Jaques describes the seven ages of man in a speech that begins "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players". The speech goes on to say:

... At first the infant
Mewling, puking in the nurse's arms.
Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school ... Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

In Act 5, Scene 1, the rapid-fire comic Touchstone confronts a simple country lad named William. Both Touchstone and William want to marry Audrey. The setting is the forest of Arden,

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near de Vere's former property of Bilton, near his extended family's property of Billesley, and near Stratford on Avon. Touchstone and Audrey hire a priest - Sir Oliver Martext - to carry out the ceremony.

TOUCHSTONE:...But

Audrey, there is a youth here in the forest lays claim to you.

AUDREY: Here

Comes the man you mean.

Enter William

TOUCHSTONE: It is meat and drink to me to see a clown. By my troth, we that have good wits have much to answer for; we shall be flouting. We cannot hold.

WILLIAM: Good ev'n, Audrey.

AUDREY: God ye good ev'n, William.

WILLIAM: Good ev'n to you, sir.

TOUCHSTONE: Good ev'n, gentle (= next highest caste above yeoman) friend. Cover thy head, cover the head; nay, prithee be cover'd. How old are you, friend?

WILLIAM: Five and twenty, sir.

TOUCHSTONE: A ripe age. Is thy name William?

WILLIAM: William, sir.

TOUCHSTONE: A fair name. Wast born I' the forest here?

WILLIAM: Ay sir, I thank God.

TOUCHSTONE: "Thank God"- a good answer. Art rich?

WILLIAM: Faith, sir, so so.

TOUCHSTONE: "So so" is good, very good, very excellent good; and yet is is no, it but so so. Art thou wise?

WILLIAM: Ay, sir, I have a pretty wit.

TOUCHSTONE: Why, thou say'st well. I do now remember a saying, "The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool."

TOUCHSTONE: ... Do you love this maid?

WILLIAM: I do, sir.

TOUCHSTONE: Give me your hand. Art thou learned?

WILLIAM: No, sir.

TOUCHSTONE: Then learn this of me. To have is to have (=in Italian, *Avere è Avere* translates "A vere is a vere"). For it is a figure of rhetoric that drink, being pour'd out of cup into a glass, by filling the one doth empty the other. For all your writers do consent that ipse is he. Now, you are not ipse (= he himself i.e. Shake-speare) - for I am he.

WILLIAM: Which he, sir?

TOUCHSTONE: He, sir, that must marry this woman (=my muse). Therefore, you clown, abandon - which is in the vulgar, "leave" - the society - which in the boorish is "company" - of this female - which in the common is "woman." Which, together is, "Abandon the society of this female" - or, clown, thou perishest; or, to thy better understanding, diest. Or, to wit, I will kill thee, make thee away, translate thy life into death, thy liberty into bondage. I will deal in poison with thee, or in bastinado, or in steel; I will bandy with thee in fration. I will o'errun thee with policy. I will kill thee a hundred and fifty ways. Therefore, tremble and depart!

AUDREY: Do, good, William.

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WILLIAM: God rest you, merry sir.

[Exits]

De Vere was annoyed that a young, upstart commoner called William Shakspeare from Stratford on Avon, with a background in acting and commerce, was claiming credit for the works that were written by William Shake-speare - a pseudonym that he had begun using in 1593 in a dedication to the Earl of Southampton in registering and publishing *Venus and Adonis* and which came into regular use for plays after 1598. The pseudonym was necessary to allay speculation about the authorship of a number of plays that had been appearing anonymously. Because of his nobleman status and position at court, as well as the fact that many of the plays dealt with personalities of the day, including the Queen, it would have been inappropriate for de Vere to use his own name. The bitter tone in Touchstone's voice illustrates that anger de Vere felt that someone else - particularly some of lower status - was claiming authorship, based on a similarity of names.

The play toys with the idea of "atomies" as nature's unit of irreducible smallness. De Vere's only known secretary in his later years was Nicholas Hill. Hill was ridiculed around London as the leading advocate of Democritus's atomic philosophy.

Who Was Shakespeare?

CORIOLANUS

PLOT SUMMARY

Famine in Rome is kindling unrest between the common people and the patricians. The people particularly resent the arrogant Caius Martius, son of Volumnia, who makes no secret of the fact that he despises them. The citizens rise up against the patricians, whom they suspect of hoarding corn for themselves. They are rewarded with the creation of two people's representatives, or tribunes, who are given new powers to sit in the Senate. War with the neighbouring Volscians halts the rioting, however, and, in the battle for the town of Corioli, Caius Martius leads the Roman army with such spectacular bravery that he is honoured with the title 'Coriolanus'. Back in Rome, the patricians urge Coriolanus to seek the consulship. Reluctantly, he agrees to submit himself to the necessary public display of humility in order to win the assent of the citizens, but once again his inability to mask his contempt turns them against him. Not only do they refuse their assent but, incited by their tribunes, they banish Coriolanus from Rome. In revenge, he joins the Volscians and his former enemy Tullus Aufidius. Together they march on Rome. Coriolanus refuses all attempts at conciliation by his former comrades and only through the intercession of his mother, wife and son is he finally persuaded to spare the city. He establishes a peace, but is killed by the resentful Volscians.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

The play recites the history, recorded in Plutarch's Lives, of an arrogant, Roman general who leads a victorious force against a foreign uprising. The moral of the play is expressed by Menenius, who in the first scene tells a starving crowd to accept the status quo and digest things rightly.:

MENENIUS: There was at time when all the body's members
Rebell'd against the belly...
The senators of Rome are this good belly,
And you the mutinous members: For examine
Their counsels and their cares, digest things rightly
Touching the weal o'th'common, you shall find
No public benefit which you receive
But it proceeds or comes from them to you,
And no way from yourselves. What do you think,
You, the great toe of the assembly.

For his irreverence toward the people and the government, Coriolanus is eventually banished.

Caius Marcius Coriolanus is a historical Roman general. Audiences find the play disappointing, because Coriolanus is snobbish and unappealing. Audiences are indifferent to whether Coriolanus lives or dies. However, Coriolanus is based on Essex, who de Vere disliked. The play is a darkly comic critique that intentionally strips away all the protagonist's ennobling qualities.

Like Coriolanus, Essex leads an expedition against a foreign uprising. Essex's arrogance and his sense of entitlement without limits are mirrored in Coriolanus.

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Like Coriolanus, Essex is eventually banished. For de Vere, Essex on the one hand represented the noble courtier of Castiglione: noble birth, wealth, valor, patronage, courageous service to the prince. On the other hand, Essex was arrogant. His ambition had no limits. He was a megalomaniac who had taken the privileges of rank too far.

In some respects, Essex's life followed de Vere's. In their youth, both had risen from promising youths to powerful young elites to rejected and dejected nobleman.

Who Was Shakespeare?

CYMBELINE

PLOT SUMMARY

Cymbeline, King of Britain when Augustus Caesar was Emperor of Rome, has a daughter, Innogen, and two sons who were stolen in infancy. The queen, his second wife, has a son, Cloten, whom Cymbeline wishes Innogen to marry; but she has secretly married a commoner, Posthumus Leonatus. Cymbeline banishes Posthumus to Rome, where he meets Iachimo, who wagers with him that he can seduce Innogen. Arriving in Britain, Iachimo realizes that she is incorruptible, but, hiding in her bedroom, obtains evidence which convinces Posthumus that he has won the wager. Posthumus orders his servant Pisanio to kill Innogen at Milford Haven, but instead Pisanio advises her to disguise herself as Fidele, a page; in Wales, she meets her brothers, who were stolen twenty years before by the banished nobleman Belarius. Cloten pursues Innogen to Wales in Posthumus' clothes, determined to rape her and kill Posthumus. Instead, he is killed by one of her brothers, and his decapitated body laid beside Innogen, who has taken a potion that makes her appear dead. When she revives, Innogen/ Fidele joins the Roman army, which is invading Britain as a result of Cymbeline's failure to pay tribute to Rome. Posthumus and the stolen princes are instrumental in defeating the Roman army. A final scene of explanations leads to private and public reconciliation.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

The play is about the wicked stepmother par excellence. The Queen (stepmother) attempts to marry Imogen off to a vainglorious dolt called Cloten. Imogen chooses instead to marry Posthumus, a heroic young nobleman. The nobleman is irrationally jealous of his wife - a jealousy driven by Posthumus' colleague Iachimo.

Imogen fakes her death to bring Posthumus - her husband - to his senses. Iachimo - Posthumus's servant - turns Posthumus's rage and jealousy against a chaste and wrongly accused wife Imogen.

At the personal level, the play is about de Vere's relationship with his wife - Anne Cecil. De Vere is Posthumus. Anne Cecil is Imogen. Iachimo - the servant who turns Posthumus against his wife - is Rowland Yorke. The wicked stepmother is Lady Burghley.

In 1569, Yorke had fought with the Catholic rebels in the Northern Uprising. By 1572, he was fighting for the Protestant forces in the Dutch wars of independence. He was characterized as "a man of loose and dissolute behaviour and desperately audacious". Yorke had banned de Vere's wife - Anne Cecil - from de Vere's private chamber in 1573. In 1576, when de Vere returned from his foreign travels in a rage over the alleged infidelity of his wife, he stayed with Rowland and Edward Yorke. Edward Yorke was a servant of the Earl of Leicester - a rival of both the Cecil family and de Vere. By 1584, the libeler Charles Arundell accused the Earl of Leicester of various crimes, including attempting to disrupt the marriage of de Vere and Anne Cecil. If this accusation is true, Leicester was certainly successful. By 1584, in the Lowlands Yorke attempted to betray allied positions to the Spanish, and two years later, he did so again for silver. He died in 1588 reportedly from poisoning.

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There are a number of direct similarities between Posthumus and de Vere. Both were orphans, raised in the same households as their wives, recipients of first rate educations. An incidental character in the play says: "Posthumus [gleaned] all the learnings that his time could make him the receiver of, which he took as we do air, fast as 'twas minister'd." This was undoubtedly true of de Vere's life in the Cecil household. Perhaps echoing Anne Cecil, Imogen tells her father: "It is your fault that I have lov'd Posthumus. You bred him as my playfellow."

Lady Burghley disliked de Vere and wanted Anne to marry Philip Sydney, whom de Vere disliked and perhaps characterized as the In the play, de Vere's views of his stepmother were articulated by the court physician, who says of the Queen:

I do not like her. She doth think she has
Strange ling'ring poisons. I do know her spirit
And will not rust one of her malice ...
She is fool'd
With a most false effect. And I the truer
So to be false with her.

While the play at the personal level is about characters in de Vere's life, most play goes at the time would have seen the play as being about political events of the time. The wicked stepmother is Catherine de Medici, who would have become stepmother to England if Elizabeth had married Alençon The play summarizes de Vere's view of the potential marriage:

That such a crafty devil as his mother
Should yield the world this ass? A woman that
Bears all down with her brain; and this her son
Cannot take two from twenty, for his heart,
And leave eighteen.

The banished courtier undoubtedly echoes de Vere's feelings toward court life when he says: "The art o' the court as hard to leave as keep, whose top to climb is certain falling, or so slippery that the fear's as bad as falling."

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HAMLET

PLOT SUMMARY

Old Hamlet, King of Denmark, is dead and has been succeeded by his brother. The new king has also married Gertrude, the widowed queen. Hamlet, Gertrude's son, is already distressed by his father's death and the hasty remarriage; when his father's ghost appears to tell him that he was murdered by his own brother, Hamlet vows revenge. To cover his intentions, he feigns madness. Polonius, councillor to the court, whose daughter Ophelia is all but betrothed to Hamlet, believes that his madness is caused by love. Spied on by Polonius and the king, Hamlet encounters Ophelia and violently rejects her. A company of actors arrives and Hamlet asks them to perform a play, hoping that its similarity to the murder of his own father will force the king to reveal his guilt. Hamlet's suspicions are confirmed. He visits his mother, reviling her for her hasty marriage, and accidentally kills Polonius, who is hiding in the chamber. The king sends Hamlet to England, planning to have him murdered. Laertes, Polonius' son, demands revenge for his father's death. His sister, Ophelia, maddened by grief, has drowned. Hamlet returns and confronts Laertes at her funeral. The king, meanwhile, has plotted with Laertes to kill Hamlet in a fencing match in which Laertes will have a poisoned sword. The plot miscarries and Laertes dies. Gertrude drinks from a poisoned cup intended for Hamlet, and also dies. Hamlet, wounded by the poisoned sword, kills the king before he, too, dies. Young Fortinbras of Norway arrives and lays claim to the throne of Denmark.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

Ophelia is a Greek word meaning "profit" or "indebtedness". To de Vere, Anne Cecil meant both - profit in the sense of securing the promise of a dowry, and indebtedness to the house of Cecil.

Like Anne Cecil, Ophelia was caught between a headstrong lover and a duplicitous father. Ophelia never sees through the dealings of her father and brother, and follows obediently to her fate. She permits herself to be used by everyone. Anne Cecil undoubtedly behaved in a similar way.

In March 1575, Anne Cecil - four months pregnant at the time - sought an abortion from the Queen's physician Richard Master. De Vere undoubtedly heard of this. In the play, Ophelia drowns beneath a white willow tree whose flowers were known to cause abortions. Before drowning, she distributes flowers to Danish courtiers. The flowers were used as antifertility drugs. One the flowers - rue, was the most powerful abortion medicine in contemporary literature.

In a confrontation with Ophelia's father, Hamlet says:

HAMLET: ... Have you a daughter? Let her not walk i' th'sun. Conception is a Blessing; but as your daughter may conceive, friend, look to 't.

De Vere suspected that Anne Cecil may have had her child Elizabeth by another way. In the play, Ophelia, in her distracted state, sings bawdy songs and recites tales of copulation. ("Young men will do't if the come to't;/By Cock they are to blame.")

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The Gravedigger explains that Yorick, the royal jester whom Hamlet once knew, had died 23 years before. Yorick's inspiration was probably Will Somers, the royal jester who had died in 1560 and whom de Vere would have known as a child.

Hamlet's primary sources - the chronicle histories of Belleforest and Saxo Grammaticus - were in Burghley's library.

In 1583, de Vere's brother in law - Perergrine Bertie - had paid an extended visit to Elsinore on a mission from Elizabeth to invest King Frederick II of Denmark as a knight of the Garter. Between 1582 and 1585, Bertie spent five months at Elsinore. Hamlet chronicles a peculiarly Danish ritual: King Claudius says: "There's no health the king shall drink today but the great cannon of the clouds shall tell." Bertie met top Danish officials, including one courtier Rosenkrantz and two called Guildenstern. Bertie also visited the astronomer Tycho who had observed a supernova ten years before. Guards in the play mention the "star that's westward from the pole". De Vere acknowledges Bertie's contribution to the play by having the English Ambassador to Elsinore (Bertie) say a few lines to close the play.

De Vere had a tendency to make bad investments in ventures such as Frobisher's search for the north-west passage. Hamlet (de Vere) claims he was "but mad north north-west".

In 1561, Thomas Cecil was living in Paris, and gaining a reputation as a lout. William Cecil was gathering intelligence on his son's behaviour. In Hamlet, Polonius sent spies to check on his son Laertes, living in Paris.

De Vere's family inheritance was stolen from him. A week before his death, de Vere's father created a will in which the "use" of his properties was vested in the Duke of Norfolk - a 26 year old nephew - and Robert Dudley, a favourite of the Queen. This was a legalistic trick to avoid losing inheritance in the Court of Wards bureaucracy under William Cecil. Shortly after, William Cecil dies unexpectedly. Robert Dudley, a beneficiary in the will, was suspected of poisoning his wife, thereby creating the possibility that he might marry Elizabeth. In the play, Hamlet's chief motivation for revenge is the murder of his father and the theft of family inheritance. Hamlet notes: "I can say nothing - no, not for a king upon whose property and most dear life a damned defeat was made."

De Vere had a falling out with Philip Sidney over a tennis match. De Vere suspected that Burghley used this event to promote enmity between de Vere and Sidney. In Hamlet, Polonius recites dirty tricks that can be used to discredit a courtier, including starting a smear campaign over a "falling out at tennis".

Giordano Bruno was an astronomer who believed (1) the stars were free floating objects in a fluid universe, (2) the universe was infinite, leaving no room for a heaven or hell, and (3) the elements of the universe contain a divine spark at the root of life. Bruno gave lectures at Oxford, which de Vere would have heard. Later, Bruno taught at the University of Wittenberg. In the play, Hamlet is a student of Wittenberg University. He recites Bruno's theory of an infinite universe ("I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams."). In a poem to Ophelia, Hamlet wonders what the stars are made of and

Who Was Shakespeare?

whether they are indeed fluid or fixed in space ("Doubt thou the stars are fire/Doubt that the sun doth move/Doubt truth to be a liar/But never doubt I love"). Hamlet laments the loss of a comforting and familiar framework of five elements ("This goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o'er hanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors.").

In 1585, de Vere was returning from the campaign in the lowlands when a shipping carrying de Vere's provisions and money and an important letter was looted by pirates. In Hamlet, there is an meeting with pirates, and a plot twist involving stolen letters.

In 1603, James I replaced Elizabeth as King of England. In July, James restored the de Vere family properties at Waltham Forest and Havering House in Essex to de Vere. The properties had been stripped from the family by Henry VIII. In August, the new king extended de Vere's annuity of £1,000. As if to say thank, as Hamlet is dying, he tells his confidant Horatio that the prince from the northern kingdom (Fortinbras = James I) should inherit the throne.

HAMLET: I cannot live to hear the news of England.

But I do prophesy th'election lights

On Fortinbras. He has my dying voice ...

FORTINBRAS: For me, with sorrow, I embrace my fortune.

I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,

Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

In 1576, de Vere encountered a Teutonic prince who paraded his troops before de Vere. Soon after, de Vere boarded a ship for England, but was stripped naked by pirates, and left in England. Hamlet has troops paraded in front of him by Fortinbras. Afterward, he boards a ship, which is attached by pirates. Hamlet is stripped naked and left on Danish shores.

In a conversation with his cousin Henry Howard, de Vere commented on a dream in which his mother Margery and her husband Charles Tyrell visited him in a dream. Charles Tyrell had a whip, and his mother, dressed in sheet, foretold him of things to come. Hamlet was visited in a dream by his dead father.

Who Was Shakespeare?

JULIUS CAESAR

PLOT SUMMARY

Julius Caesar has returned to Rome triumphant from the war against Pompey. The Roman republic is prepared to heap him with new honours, causing concern and dismay among some senators who fear that too much power is held by one man. Caius Cassius plots a conspiracy to murder Caesar, enlisting the support of the well-respected Marcus Brutus. Brutus has misgivings but is persuaded that Caesar's death is necessary for the good of the republic. However, he rejects Cassius' proposal that Mark Antony, close friend of Caesar, should also be killed. Brutus, Cassius and their co-conspirators stab Caesar to death at the senate house on the Ides of March. At Caesar's funeral Brutus addresses the people and successfully explains the conspirators' motives. However, Mark Antony speaks next and turns the mob against the conspirators, who are forced to flee from Rome. Mark Antony and Caesar's nephew, Octavius, take command of Rome and lead an army against the conspirators. Brutus and Cassius are defeated at Philippi where they kill themselves rather than be captured.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

In 1584, the death of the duke of Alencon had left the French crown with a contested line of succession to Henri III. By 1588, contenders for the crown were Henri, king of Navarre, who was the protestant favourite, and Henri, duke of Guise, the Catholic favorite. He was sometimes referred to as "Caesar", and there was a four page comparison of Guise and Julius Caesar. The duke of Guise was a feudalist intent on preserving the role of the French nobility. De Vere was sympathetic to the duke of Guise, not least because of his views on the role of the nobility. In 1577, de Vere had sent servants to France to fight on Guise's behalf. In January 1588, under the king's orders, Guise was lured into a private antechamber at Chateau Blois and stabbed dozens of times by a squad of nobles. As Guise had been popular with the Catholic population, he was buried with much honor. Reports of supernatural events that gave warning of the impending assassination began to appear soon afterwards. Henri III then allied with the Protestant faction to crush the remnants of Guise's Catholic League. However, in August 1588, a fanatical monk stabbed and killed the king.

The play was likely started in 1588 or 1589. Various plays at the time echoed the phrase "Et tu, Brute?". It was probably revised later in de Vere's life. Caesar, like de Vere, had excessive pride and gullibility. The assassins were generally likeable. There were no obvious winners in the play - perhaps a reflection of a mature playwright who saw things in many shades of gray, rather than black and white.

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KING HENRY IV, PART 1

PLOT SUMMARY

After deposing King Richard II, Henry Bolingbroke has ascended the throne as Henry IV. Guilt about the desposition troubles his conscience, and the stability of his reign is threatened by growing opposition from some of the nobles who helped him to the throne. His son, Prince Hal, is living a dissolute life, frequenting the taverns of Eastcheap in the company of Sir John Falstaff and other disreputable characters. Opposition to the King becomes open rebellion, led by the Earl of Northumberland's son Henry Percy, known for his courage and impetuous nature as Hotspur. The Percy family support the claim to the throne of Hotspur's brother-in-law Edmund Mortimer. The rebellion brings Hal back to his father's side. The King's army meet the rebels at the Battle of Shrewsbury, where Hal vows to seek out and defeat Hotspur.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

In 1573, three of de Vere's men set upon two of Burghley's men in Kent on the road between Gravesend and Rochester. Burghley's men wrote a letter seeking Burghley's protection. This letter represents the remaining historical record of the event. In *King Henry the Fourth, Part One*, de Vere gives his side of the incident. In the play, the Falstaff and his men set upon travellers at Gad's Hill (a landmark on the road between Gravesend and Rochester). Falstaff (de Vere) states:

FALSTAFF: I'll starve ere I rob a foot further. And [if] 'twere not as good a deed as drink to turn true man and to leave these rogues, I am the veriest varlet that ever chewed with tooth ... A plague upon it when thieves cannot be true to one another.

This is de Vere's apology to the Queen and Burghley for an event in the reckless period of his youth.

The historical Shakespearean plays were the product of de Vere's arrangement with Queen Elizabeth in which she paid de Vere an annuity of £1,000 and in return de Vere writes propaganda plays for the masses to promote the virtues of and loyalty to the regime.

Who Was Shakespeare?

KING HENRY IV, PART 2

PLOT SUMMARY

In despair at the death of his son, the Earl of Northumberland lends his support to a second rebellion, led by the Archbishop of York. As the threat of civil war looms over the country, King Henry grows sick, while also fearing that his son Hal has returned to his old life with Falstaff. Falstaff is sent on a recruiting expedition and renews old acquaintance in Gloucestershire. The rebel army is met by the King's forces, led this time by John of Lancaster. On his deathbed, King Henry is reconciled with his son Hal, who has begun to distance himself from his former companions. A new, mature Hal accepts the crown as Henry V.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

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Who Was Shakespeare?

KING HENRY V

PLOT SUMMARY

To finance the projected war on France, the commons are about to pass a bill confiscating the Church's lands. Seeking to avoid the long-term implications of this, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of Ely make the newly-crowned King Henry an irresistible offer of cash, at the same time confirming the legitimacy of his claim to the French throne. Henry orders the invasion of France. Before the army embarks at Southampton, Henry discovers that three of his nobles have plotted to assassinate him. King Charles of France receives the English ambassadors but finally rejects Henry's claim to the crown. Henry's forces besiege and then take the town of Harfleur. Following the victory, the English forces begin a retreat through Normandy on account of the poor condition of the men, who are disheartened by sickness and foul weather. Even so, Henry rejects the French Herald's offer of ransom and the two armies prepare to fight. On the eve of the Battle of Agincourt, Henry tours the camp in disguise to sound out the opinions of his men, is led to consider the heavy responsibilities of kingship. In the French camp, by contrast, confidence is high. As battle is joined, Henry rallies his troops and an English victory is confirmed, with miraculously small losses. As part of the subsequent treaty, Henry woos and wins French Princess Katherine to ensure the linking of the two countries through marriage.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

In 1579, the Puritan pampheter Stephen Gosson produced a essay criticizing literature as evil. The pamphlet was dedicated to Philip Sidney, who was considered a rising literary star. Sidney responded with an essay *Defense of Poesy* that disagreed with Gosson on most points, but did criticize theatrical innovations that compressed time and space into a two hour period, and shifted moods and settings without explanation. Sidney observed:

... By the by, we hear news of shipwreck in the same place, then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock... While in the meantime two armies fly in represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not recived it for a pitched field.

In *Henry the Fifth*, de Vere, a rival and not particularly good friend of Sidney, responded through the CHORUS:

CHORUS: As so our scene must to the battle fly;
Where-O, for pity!-we shall much disgrace
With four or five most vile and ragged foils
(Right ill dispos'd om brawl ridiculous)
The name of Agincourt.

The historical Shakespearean plays were the product of de Vere's arrangement with Queen Elizabeth in which she paid de Vere an annuity of £1,000 and in return de Vere writes propaganda plays for the masses to promote the virtues of and loyalty to the regime.

Who Was Shakespeare?

KING HENRY VI, PART 1

PLOT SUMMARY

Following the death of his father Henry V, the young Henry VI is proclaimed king under the protectorship of his uncles, the Dukes of Gloucester and Exeter. There is conflict between Gloucester and his long-term rival, the Bishop of Winchester, and their respective supporters. Charles the Dauphin, fortified by his alliance with the mysterious maid Joan Le Pucelle (Joan of Arc), continues to dominate the battles in France. Joan is captured and burned, and an uneasy peace is concluded between England and France. In light of this, Gloucester engineers a politically astute marriage between Henry and the Earl of Armagnac's daughter. Meanwhile, in France, Suffolk is enchanted by Margaret, the daughter of the Duke of Anjou. Suffolk woos Margaret to be Henry's queen and in order to gain her father's consent cedes the newly-conquered French territories of Anjou and Maine. Suffolk returns to England and persuades Henry, against opposition from the court, to marry Margaret and make her Queen of England.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

The historical Shakespearean plays were the product of de Vere's arrangement with Queen Elizabeth in which she paid de Vere an annuity of £1,000 and in return de Vere writes propaganda plays for the masses to promote the virtues of and loyalty to the regime.

The setting is the city of York, and the forest of Galtres, both places that de Vere would have visited in traveling from London to Newcastle in 1570, while participating in the suppression of the Northern Uprising under the Earl of Suffolk.

Around 1573, de Vere's servants were out of control. One swindled the musician William Bird out of an estate provided by de Vere. Another was hung for murder in an adulterous crime of passion. According to William Cecil's version of events, three of de Vere's servants lay in a ditch, attacked two of Cecil's servants on horseback, and raced off toward London on horses. Cecil's men took up lodging in Gravesend. De Vere's version of events occur in the play. Falstaff and three associates carry out an assault at Gad's Hill on the Travellers - a landmark on the road between Gravesend and Rochester. The Travellers quickly flee the scene. As if to express an apology for these actions to the Queen and William Cecil, Falstaff (de Vere) concludes:

FALSTAFF: I'll starve ere I rob a foot further. And [if] 'twere not as good a deed as drink to turn true man and to leave these rogues, I am the veriest varlet that ever chewed with a tooth ... A plague upon it when thieves cannot be true to one another.

The Bishop of Ross in the Northern Rebellion of 1569 is a key inspiration for the Archbishop of York, the charismatic religious leader that spurred on the rebel forces. As Henry IV observes:

For the same word, rebellion, did divide
The action of their bodies from their souls
... But now the bishop
Turns insurrection to rebellion.

Who Was Shakespeare?

KING HENRY VI, PART 2

LOT SUMMARY

Despite the recently concluded peace between England and France, dissension is rife within the English Court. Suffolk's influence, both at court and with the new Queen Margaret, intensifies. The factious English nobles unite in their common aim to get rid of the Duke of Gloucester. His wife Eleanor, the Duchess of Gloucester, aspires to the crown and is lured by a priest, John Hume, who is in the pay of Suffolk, to consult a witch about her ambitions. She is brought to trial and banished. Gloucester resigns his staff of office, allowing Henry to become King in his own right. Somerset returns from France with the news of the loss of all English territories. York and others seize this opportunity to implicate Gloucester in the loss of France and to accuse him of treason. Suffolk, Margaret, Winchester and York agree that Gloucester should be murdered. Meanwhile, there is a rebellion in Ireland and York is sent by Suffolk to deal with the crisis. Gloucester is murdered. The King turns against Suffolk, who is subsequently banished and murdered. Cade's rebellion is finally quashed but York returns to claim the crown, supported by his sons, Edward, Richard and George, and by Salisbury and Warwick. The two sides take up arms, Henry supported by Margaret, Somerset, Buckingham and the Cliffords. For the first time, the Lancastrians face Yorkists at the Battle of St Albans. The play ends with the King and Queen in flight and the Yorkists contemplating the crown.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

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Who Was Shakespeare?

KING HENRY VI, PART 3

PLOT SUMMARY

Having won the battle of St Albans and with Richard Plantagenet sitting on the throne of England, the Yorkists confront the Lancastrians. King Henry, to his wife's dismay, agrees to York's demand that he disinherit his son, Edward, Prince of Wales. Margaret vows to destroy York and his followers. She enlists the support of Clifford and others to raise an army. Margaret's forces meet with those of York in battle, during which York's youngest son, Rutland, is killed by Clifford. York is then captured by Clifford and Northumberland, taunted with details of Rutland's death and brutally murdered. Edward and Richard are informed of their father's murder and unite with Warwick, who proclaims Edward the new Duke of York. They raise an army and defeat the Lancastrians at Towton. Henry, Margaret and their son are forced to flee north; Clifford is killed. Henry is captured and brought to London, where he is placed in the Tower by the new King Edward. In France, Margaret and Warwick meet at the court of King Lewis. News reaches them that Edward has married Lady Elizabeth Grey, in spite of his earlier betrothal, instigated by Warwick, to King Lewis' sister, Lady Bona. This insult turns both Warwick and Lewis against Edward. Warwick pledges support to Margaret, releasing Henry from the Tower and reinstating him as King of England. Warwick leaves London to muster his army, during which time Edward returns and recaptures Henry. The forces of Edward and Warwick meet at Barnet, where Warwick is killed. Margaret arrives in England with reinforcements. Her forces encounter Edward's for the last time at Tewkesbury, where the Wars of the Roses seem finally to be over.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

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KING HENRY VIII

PLOT SUMMARY

The Duke of Norfolk tells Buckingham of the meeting between Henry VIII and Francis I of France at the field of the Cloth of Gold. On the instigation of Cardinal Wolsey, Buckingham is arrested. The Queen interrupts the indictment of Buckingham to demand the King rescind a tax imposed by Wolsey to finance the French War. At a party held by Wolsey, Henry meets Anne Bullen - and falls in love with her. Buckingham is tried and executed. The Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk fail to turn the King against Wolsey. Henry doubting the legality of his marriage to Katherine, sets up a tribunal, presided over by Wolsey and Cardinal Campeius of Rome. Anne Bullen is made Marchioness of Pembroke. Katherine walks out of the tribunal, and demands that the case be decided in Rome. Wolsey and Campeius fail to convince the Queen to throw herself on the King's mercy. Anne secretly marries Henry. A conspiracy by the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk to disgrace Wolsey is successful, and Wolsey falls. Cranmer is appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. Katherine is divorced, Anne is crowned Queen. Katherine is told of Wolsey's death, and she herself dies. Anne gives birth to Elizabeth. Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester,

Who Was Shakespeare?

attempts to indict Cranmer for heresy. He fails through Henry's intervention. Elizabeth is christened and Cranmer predicts the glory of her reign.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

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Who Was Shakespeare?

KING JOHN

PLOT SUMMARY

King Richard I, the revered 'Lionheart', is dead. His brother John has become King of England, but the French argue that the throne should belong to the boy Arthur, son of John's deceased older brother Geoffrey. Matching the dispute over the throne is a dispute over inheritance in the noble Falconbridge family. It is discovered that Philip Falconbridge (the 'Bastard') is the illegitimate son of Richard I; he is accordingly knighted 'Sir Richard and Plantagenet'. French and English forces fight for the town of Angiers in France; a citizen proposes that the opponents should be united by a marriage between Lewis the Dauphin, heir to France, and John's niece, Lady Blanche. Arthur's mother Constance is furious that the French have given up on her son's claim. John is excommunicated for failing to agree to the Pope's choice for the post of Archbishop of Canterbury. The papal legate Cardinal Pandulph stirs the French to resume war against the English. Arthur is captured and John commissions his servant Hubert to execute the boy; young Arthur dies from a fall while trying to escape. John changes his mind and agrees to the Pope's wishes. A French invasion force is shipwrecked. John falls sick and dies. His son Henry becomes king, though the Bastard remains the most forceful character.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

Robert the third earl of Oxford, helped force King John to sign the Magna Carta at Runnymede. He was elected one of the Charter's twenty-five guardians. He was excommunicated by the pope for insolence. He committed treason when he joined a rebellion to hand the throne over to the French Dauphin. In response, King John laid siege to Castle Hedingham. The French Dauphin returned to France and John retained his throne. In the play, Robert the third earl of Oxford is not mentioned.

The Shakespeare King John was based on John Bale's version, which was Protestant propaganda. Bale's version was available only in manuscript, and never published after the 1560s. De Vere likely saw a performance of Bale's version in 1561 at Ipswich, or at least would have access to the manuscript, since de Vere's father was one of the longtime patrons of John Bale.

In 1563, shortly after the death of de Vere's father, his elder half sister Katherine and her husband threatened a lawsuit against de Vere and his sister Mary, claiming he was a bastard and illegitimate claimant to his father's estates. The lawsuit was unsuccessful at the time (but later resurrected). Queen Elizabeth reportedly once called de Vere a bastard - an event which angered the proud de Vere. De Vere himself gave birth to a bastard son - Edward Veer - through Anne Vavasour.

The key character in King John is Philip the Bastard. The historical Philip the Bastard was inconsequential. At the play's beginning, Philip the Bastard is introduced into court with a disinheritance scheme not unlike de Vere's case. Throughout the play, Philip the Bastard utters memorable speeches and immortal lines.

Mary Queen of Scots abandoned the Scottish throne in 1568, driven by a murder scandal in which Burghley's agents may have played a role. She was a legitimate heir to the English throne

Who Was Shakespeare?

should Elizabeth die. As such, she was considered a threat to those around Elizabeth, who wanted her dead. In 1586, evidence was brought forward that she was plotting to overthrow Elizabeth. De Vere was one of 45 jurors who condemned Mary, Queen of Scots to death in October 1587. Elizabeth procrastinated in consenting to the execution until February 1588. The execution itself was botched; the executioner required to chop. Elizabeth disowned responsibility, laid responsibility with her secretary, and imprisoned him. In de Vere's King John, King John - like Elizabeth - sidesteps responsibility for sanctioning the death of Arthur - the Catholic heir to the throne. As a propaganda piece, King John blunted the criticism Elizabeth faced for the beheading of Mary Queen of Scots.

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Who Was Shakespeare?

KING LEAR

PLOT SUMMARY

Lear, King of Britain, decides to abdicate and divide his kingdom between his three daughters. When his beloved youngest, Cordelia, refuses to make a public declaration of love for her father she is disinherited and married to the King of France without a dowry. The Earl of Kent is banished by Lear for daring to defend her. The two elder daughters, Goneril and Regan, and their husbands inherit the kingdom. Gloucester, deceived by his bastard son Edmund, disinherits his legitimate son, Edgar, who is forced to go on the run to save his life. Lear, now stripped of his power, quarrels with Goneril and Regan about the conditions of his lodging in their households. In a rage he goes out into the stormy night, accompanied by his Fool and by Kent, now disguised as a servant. They encounter Edgar, disguised as a mad beggar called 'Poor Tom'. Gloucester is betrayed by Edmund and captured by Regan and Cornwall, who put out his eyes. King Lear is taken secretly to Dover, where Cordelia has landed with a French army. The blind Gloucester meets but does not recognize Edgar, who leads him to Dover. Lear and Cordelia are reconciled, but in the ensuing battle are captured by the sisters' forces. Goneril and Regan are both in love with Edmund, who encourages them both. Discovering this, Goneril's husband Albany forces Edmund to defend himself against the charge of treachery. A knight appears to challenge Edmund and, after fatally wounding him, reveals himself to be Edgar. News comes that Goneril has poisoned Regan and then committed suicide. Before dying, Edmund reveals that he has ordered the deaths of Lear and Cordelia.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

De Vere's three daughters inherited their alienated father's family estate in his lifetime, like King Lear.

In 1563, shortly after the death of de Vere's father, his elder half sister Katherine and her husband threatened a lawsuit against de Vere and his sister Mary, claiming he was a bastard and illegitimate claimant to his father's estates. The lawsuit was unsuccessful at the time (but later resurrected?). Queen Elizabeth reportedly once called de Vere a bastard - an event which angered the proud de Vere. In Lear, the bastard Edmund spends most of the play trying to disinherit half-brother Edgar from the earldom of Gloucester.

EDMUND: Why bastard? What base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true
As honest madam's issue?...
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed
And my intentions thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top the legitimate. I grow, I prosper:
Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

Edmund tricks his gullible father into doubting the truth of Gloucester's own legitimate son by means of a letter. Edmund convinces his trusting brother to flee on the false pretence that Edgar has somehow offended their father. Edgar disguise himself as a madman to escape detection.

Who Was Shakespeare?

Edgar meets up with Lear, who although disheveled and distracted, believes Edgar is a philosophy. Edgar ends up leading a blinded Gloucester, who gains his vision for the truth after his physical sight is lost. Edgar challenges Edmund to combat. Prior the combat, Edgar is asked to reveal his identity. Edgar reveals how the proud de Vere must have felt in connection with his half sister's lawsuit.

EDGAR: Know, my name is lost,
By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit,
Yet am I noble as the adversary
I come to cope.

In the combat, Edgar wins, and Edmund falls. After Edgar wins, he reveals his true identity.

In 1580, de Vere bought Fisher's Folly - a palatial home. Across the street was Bedlam, a notorious insane asylum. In the play, Edgar feigned madness for the purpose of disguise, and gave himself the name Tom o'Bedlam.

Dr. John Caius was a doctor of medicine who had studied anatomy at the University of Padua in the Republic of Venice. He taught at Cambridge in the 1550s, where de Vere attended as an eight year old. He was later appointed physician to Queen Elizabeth. Dr. Caius is the alias used by the Earl of Kent during his period of exile in the play.

Susan was the youngest daughter of Anne Cecil and de Vere. By this time, de Vere was out of money, and therefore no hope of a dowry. She was the model for Cordelia in the play:

LEAR: What can you say to draw a third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

CORDELIA: Nothing.

LEAR: Nothing?

CORDELIA: Nothing.

LEAR: Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.

CORDELIA: Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave

My heart into my mouth. I love Your Majesty

According to my bond, no more nor less ...

LEAR: But goes they heart with this?

CORDELIA: Ay, my good lord.

LEAR: So young and so untender?

CORDELIA: So young, my lord, and true.

LEAR: Let it be so. The truth then be thy dow'r!

The de Vere family motto was: "Nothing truer than true."

Who Was Shakespeare?

KING RICHARD II

PLOT SUMMARY

Richard II begins with a dispute between Henry Bolingbroke, King Richard's cousin, and Thomas Mowbray. Both Henry and Mowbray accuse each other of treason, and Henry also accuses Mowbray of conspiring to murder the king's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester. The irony here, as expressed in the next scene by Henry's father, John of Gaunt, is that everyone knows that Richard himself was involved in Gloucester's murder. After Gaunt and Richard are unable to calm the men down, Henry and Mowbray agree to settle the matter with trial by combat. Before the fight, the Duke of Gloucester's widow (the Duchess of Gloucester) tries to convince Gaunt to take action against Richard, but Gaunt refuses, since he believes his duty to the king is a religious matter. Though Mowbray and Henry Bolingbroke are both prepared to fight to the death for their honor, Richard arbitrarily decides to stop the battle. The king then banishes both men, Mowbray for life, and Henry for first ten but then only six years.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

Who Was Shakespeare?

KING RICHARD III

PLOT SUMMARY

Richard III is a play about evil, violence and murder. It charts the rise of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, a cold-blooded and dastardly villain who slaughters his family and even marries his victim's widow to become king. It's a history play, but the plot isn't necessarily true to events: Shakespeare wrote the play during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The hero of the play, who ends Richard's reign of tyranny, is Richmond, who goes on to become King Henry VII, Queen Elizabeth's grandfather.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

Who Was Shakespeare?

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST

PLOT SUMMARY

The King of Navarre and three of his lords form a little 'academe' in which they vow to study for three years, renouncing the company of women. But the Princess of France and three of her ladies arrive on a diplomatic mission, throwing the plan into chaos as soon as the vows are made. The men from Navarre trump each other in a scene in which they are overheard reading aloud their bad love poems. The ladies then comprehensively outwit the men in a scene involving Russian disguise. A comic sub-plot concerns an extravagantly spoken Spaniard, his clever page, a country clown and a pregnant dairymaid, with contributions from a curate and a pedantic schoolmaster, culminating in a pageant of classical and biblical heroes, 'The Nine Worthies'. Halfway through this show, Marcade arrives with news of the death of the princess' father. The mood turns somber and the ladies give the men the task of performing a year's ascetic penance or community service before they will marry them.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

The play reveals an understanding of mannerisms, manners and courtly culture. De Vere visited Navarre in 1576.

In 1561, Queen Elizabeth visited Ipswich, where she was shocked at indiscreet behaviour among ministers and readers at the colleges. In response, she wanted to issue an edict prohibiting the clergy from marriage. She later watered down the edict to the prohibition of women from lodging at universities. In 1564, de Vere and other prominent men of court were to receive Masters of Arts degrees from Cambridge University. Elizabeth was to present the degrees. Elizabeth lodged at Cambridge University for five nights, despite her decree from three years before. In the play, sequestered scholars have pledged not to fraternize with women. However, the Princess of France (Queen Elizabeth) pays a visit. The Princess's attendant Boyet (Cecil) announces the Princess's arrival, but is sent back to inform the Princess that girls are not allowed and that the scholars intend to "ledge you in the field". The play includes a conversation that might have occurred between Elizabeth and Cambridge University, if the latter had enforced her edict:

KING: Fair Princess, welcome to the court of Navarre.

PRINCESS: Fair I give you back again; and welcome I have not yet: the Roof of the court is too high to be yours, and welcome to the wide Fields to base to be mine.

KING: You shall be welcome, madam, to my court

PRINCESS: I will be welcome, then: conduct me thither.

KING: Hear me, dear lady: I have sworn an oath.

In the play, Vavasour turns up as Rosaline, who matches wits with Berowne.

BEROWNE: My gentle sweet,
Your wit makes wise things foolish
A rich things but poor.

Who Was Shakespeare?

ROSALINE: This proves you wise and rich, for in my eye-

BEROWNE: I am a fool, and full of poverty.

ROSALINE: But that you take what doth to you belong,

It were a fault to snatch words from my tongue.

When de Vere was twelve, his father discussed a marriage arrangement with one of the Hastings sisters. If culminated, the arrangement may have led to de Vere's offspring sitting on the throne of England. Shortly afterward, de Vere's father died, ending the arrangement.

In later life, de Vere looked on her as the one that got away. In the play, Maria's (Mary Hastings) eyes were described as uttering "heavenly rhetoric" and she is described as the "empress of love".

Mary Hastings caused a scene at court when she publicly refused to marry an envoy of the czar of Muscovy. The play spoofs this event. The wooing lords - Ferdinand, Longaville, Berowne, Dumaine -, disguised as ambassador from Muscovy, try to win over Maria and her friends. Like Mary Hastings, Maria publicly refuses the Russians.

Growing up in the Cecil household, de Vere became acquainted with John Gerard, the noted horticulturist and the designer and manager of Cecil's numerous gardens. Gerard wrote *Herbal: Or General History of Plants*. The play uses floral imagery for Gerard's pamphlet in talking about the seasonal emergence of the cuckoo bird by associating the late spring cuckoo with the blooming of silver-white lady-smocks.

The play includes a sub-plot involving the swashbuckling Spaniard Don Adriano de Armado (De Vere, perhaps in reference to rumours at the time of writing (1592-1594) that de Vere had aligned himself with Spain), Moth (De Vere's young friend Thomas Nashe), and Costard (Will Shakspeare from Stratford). In the play, Armado decides to give the Costard liberty on condition that he deliver love letters to their common woman. Perhaps this refers to the expropriation of de Vere's plays (love letters) by Shakspeare. Armado and Costard have a difference which is about to lead to a scrap. Moth warns his master Armado that if he scraps with Costard, he will lose his reputation. Costard is presented as a competent actor capable of commanding a situation.

Who Was Shakespeare?

MACBETH

PLOT SUMMARY

Macbeth and Banquo, generals in the service of King Duncan of Scotland, are returning victorious from battle when they are hailed by three witches who prophesy that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor and then King of Scotland, whereas Banquo's descendants will be kings. The first part of the prophesy is soon fulfilled when Duncan rewards Macbeth's loyal service: encouraged by this, and playing on her husband's ambition, Lady Macbeth persuades him to murder Duncan while he is a guest at their castle. Malcolm and Donalbain, Duncan's sons, flee to England for safety. Macbeth, now king, has Banquo murdered in an attempt to secure his own position, but Banquo's ghost appears to him at a banquet. Macbeth visits the witches again. They warn him to beware of Macduff, a noble who has also fled to England, but assure him that he cannot be harmed by any man born of woman. Macbeth orders the murder of Macduff's wife and children. In England, Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty and they then raise an army to march against Macbeth, but he, armed with the witches' prophecy, believes himself invincible. As his enemies draw nearer, Macbeth learns that his wife is dead. He faces Macduff in combat but when he learns Macduff was born by Caesarian section he realizes that he must face death. Malcolm is crowned King of Scotland.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

In 1574, the 24 year old de Vere met Margaret, countess of Lennox and mother to Lord Darnley, the murdered second husband of Mary, Queen of Scots. She likely provided de Vere with access a manuscript in her family archives about the kings of Scotland. This manuscript is the main source for the play. It was not printed until the 19th century. The manuscript includes details, conversations and vignettes that can be found nowhere else and which include MacBeth's hallucinations to his paralysis at the site of a forest marching forward.

Mary Queen of Scots abandoned the Scottish throne in 1568, driven by a murder scandal in which Burghley's agents may have played a role. She was a legitimate heir to the English throne should Elizabeth die. As such, she was considered a threat to those around Elizabeth, who wanted her dead. In 1586, evidence was brought forward that she was plotting to overthrow Elizabeth. De Vere was one of 45 jurors who condemned Mary, Queen of Scots to death in October 1587. Elizabeth procrastinated in consenting to the execution until February 1588. The execution itself was botched; the executioner required to chop. Elizabeth disowned responsibility, laid responsibility with her secretary, and imprisoned him.

De Vere's view about the killing of a king was expressed in underlinings in his bible, and is summarized by MacDuff:

MACDUFF: Confusion now hath made his masterpiece:
Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope
The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence
The life o' th' building.

Who Was Shakespeare?

As a member of the jury, de Vere was as much MacBeth as anyone. Mary was in England as a royal guest; under Scottish law, she was technically in England under a double trust. Macbeth notes this point of Scottish law:

MACBETH: He's here in double trust
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself

De Vere was undoubtedly stating his personal views and guilt through MacBeth, when he said:

MACBETH: Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had liv'd a blessed time; for from this instant
There's nothing serious in mortality:
All is but toys; renown and grace is dead,
The wine of life is drawn, and t he mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.

Who Was Shakespeare?

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

PLOT SUMMARY

The Duke of Vienna decides to leave the city for a while, appointing his deputy, Angelo, to govern in his absence. Angelo resolves to revive vigorous laws against sexual license, which have fallen into disuse. Under these laws a young gentleman, Claudio, is sentenced to death for having made his fiancée Juliet pregnant before their wedding ceremony. Claudio's sister Isabella, a novice nun, is persuaded by his friend Lucio to plead with Angelo for her brother's life. Angelo promises to free Claudio if Isabella will sleep with him. She refuses and tells her brother that she must keep her honour and he, therefore, must die. The duke has stayed in Vienna disguised as a friar observing the new regime and he now persuades Isabella to pretend to accede to Angelo's demands. Her place in Angelo's bed is secretly taken by Mariana, Angelo's former fiancée whom he deserted. After the event, Angelo betrays Isabella by trying to carry out Claudio's execution but his plans are foiled by the duke's intervention.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

Duke would appear to be in complete control of his situation, but powers outside the scope of the play force him into disguise. The Duke leaves a sex crazed Puritan in charge of the state, but remains in the city in disguise. He complicates matters in scene after scene. Among other things, the Duke throws in the bed trick (a la Anne Cecil), and saves another character from execution by the skin of his teeth (Southampton, following the Essex episode).

In the play's first scene, the Duke pretends to leave Vienna, but dons a disguise. By way of explanation, he explains:

DUKE: I love the people
But I do not like to stage me to their eyes.
Though it do well, I do not relish well
Their loud applause and aves vehement,
Nor do I think the man of safe discretion
That does affect it.

Talking through the Duke, de Vere talks about his reasons for writing anonymously, and the prospect that a man of no small ego may not be remembered in history.

The Duke sets Mariana - a chaste and wronged wife - upon the state's unsuspecting deputy (Angelo). Angelo has sex with his long-ago betrothed Mariana, while thinking he is sleeping with another woman (Isabella). Isabella becomes the play's advocate for truth telling and mask removing. The Duke dismisses the pleadings:

ISABELLA: It is not truer he is Angelo
Than this is all as true as it is strange.
Nay, it is ten times true. For truth is truth
To th'end of reckoning.

Who Was Shakespeare?

DUKE: Away with her! Poor soul,
She speaks this in the infirmity of sense!

This is a retelling of one of the explanations for the birth of Anne Cecil's first child Elizabeth.

The expression "truth is truth" is a component of the de Vere family motto. In a letter to William Cecil, de Vere used words similar to those of Isabella: "Truth is truth, though never so old, and time cannot make false that which was once true."

By the late 1590s, Anthony Munday - de Vere's longtime secretary - published a translation of Sylvain's Orator under the name Lazarus Piot. In the biblical story, Lazarus is lame and sickly (like de Vere at the time) and piot is slang for saucy chatterbox. In one of the Orator's tales, a ravished maid demands that the rapist be made her husband, and that he be sentenced to death. This same plot is incorporated into the play.

Who Was Shakespeare?

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

PLOT SUMMARY

The war is over. Pedro Prince of Aragon, with his followers Benedick and Claudio, visits Leonato, Duke of Messina, father of Hero and uncle of Beatrice. Claudio falls in love with Hero and their marriage is agreed upon. Beatrice and Benedick despise love and engage in comic banter. The others plot to make them fall in love with each other, by a trick in which Benedick will overhear his friends talking of Beatrice's supposed secret love for him, and vice versa. Meanwhile Don John, the prince's misanthropic illegitimate brother, contrives a more malicious plot with the assistance of his follower Borachio: Claudio is led to believe that he has witnessed Hero in a compromising situation on the night before her wedding day - in fact it is her maid Margaret with Borachio. Claudio denounces Hero during the marriage ceremony. She faints and on the advice of the Friar, who is convinced of her innocence, Leonato announces that she is dead. Beatrice demands that Benedick should kill Claudio. The foolish constable Dogberry and his watchmen overhear Borachio boasting of his exploit and the plot is exposed. Claudio promises to make amends to Leonato: he is required to marry a cousin of Hero's in her place. When unmasked, she is revealed as Hero. Beatrice agrees to marry Benedick.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

In 1576, de Vere visited Florence, a centre of art and learning at the time, home of Dante and Machiavelli. Florence was home to the monastery Santa Maria Novella, known for its perfumes and sweet oils. De Vere returned to England bearing perfumed gloves as gifts to the queen and others - perhaps purchased during his stopover in Florence. In the play, the Florentine Claudio gives "sweet gloves" to his betrothed Hero.

During his visit to Venice in January 1576, de Vere would have experienced the Venetian Carnival, where Venetians of all ranks and status donned masks and performed with one another in skits and masquerades. These performances may have influenced the use of masks in plays like *Much Ado About Nothing*.

In the play, Margaret mentions a sumptuous gown owned by the duchess of Milan. Milan was known as a centre of high fashion. On his return to London, de Vere joked that cobblers' wives in Milan were better dressed every working day than the Queen was on Christmas. During his travels to Italy, de Vere visited Milan three times.

The play contains a jealousy subplot masterminded by Don John - a military commander of the highest station. There are hints that the character may have been based on the Earl of Leicester, suggesting that Leicester may have masterminded a plot to arouse de Vere's jealousy in his relations with Anne Cecil.

Beatrice is the protagonist in the play. She is witty and combative, proud and reluctant to be courted. She is engaged in "a kind of merry war" with a vainglorious soldier Benedick, who claims to be a lifelong bachelor. The sportive barbs between Benedick and Beatrice were probably based on conversations between Anne Vavasour - a teenager who around 1580 had a

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pregnancy with de Vere that miscarried, and a second pregnancy that led to a son that she named Edward Veer. - and de Vere - a 30 year old nobleman with a wife and married daughter.

The first line in the play is:

BEATRICE: I pray you, is Signior Montando (=Lord Upward Thrust) returned from the wars or no?

Benedict writes verses for Beatrice, but says he can "find no other rhyme for lady but baby". Beatrice says that Benedick once lent his heart to her "And I gave him use for it. A double heart for his single one." Benedict and Beatrice refer to the labours of Hercules - who served penance for killing his own children. Beatrice responds: "I am not for him. Therefore, I will even take six pence ... and leads his apes into hell." In an old English ballad (The Maid and the Palmer), a maid leads an ape into hell by way of atoning for a dead illegitimate child. The play suggests that Beatrice not only conceived a stillborn child, but also was pregnant again. Halfway through, Beatrice gets sick. In response an attendant pricks Beatrice with a thistle, and gives the maid "distilled carduus benedictus", which doctors of the day administered to diagnose a pregnancy.

In the play, Dogberry is a constable that unearths a conspiracy concerning the deception of the jealous groom Claudio. In outlining the charges, Dogberry uses a mixed up numbering system:

DOGBERRY: Marry, sir, [the accused] have committed false report. Moreover, they have spoken untruths, secondarily they are slanders, sixth and lastly they have belied a lady, thirdly they have verified unjust things, and to conclude, they are lying knaves.

In 1580, de Vere had confessed to the Queen his Catholic leadings. He and some Catholic friends had discussed measures to return England to the Catholic fold with Henry Howard and Charles Arundell. Arundell replied with a document that accused de Vere of a number of things. In enumerating de Vere's vices, Arundell used a confused numbering system. In the play, de Vere used Dogberry to poke fun at Arundell.

In the play, Hero's betrothed Claudio unjustly accuses Hero of infidelity. In response, Hero is spirited into hiding and everyone is told that Claudio's cruelty has killed Hero, in a plot devised by Hero's ghostly father. Claudio eventually concludes that he was wrong. In the play, Claudio is given a full pardon without ever apologizing. (Yet sinn'd I not - but in mistaking.") The agent of evil is Don John. De Vere accused his wife Anne Cecil of infidelity. The play is a form of public acknowledgement, although de Vere does not admit error and puts the blame on the Earl of Leicester.

It was probably performed at court in 1583 under the name "A History of Ariodante and Orlando Furioso" - the source text for *Much Ado About Nothing*. The context would have been de Vere presenting his case of his recent life (Anne Vavasour's pregnancy, de Vere's flirtation with Catholicism, his plottings with Arundell and Howard, the Arundell libels).and arguing for a reinstatement at court. In Claudio's (de Vere's) refusal to admit error in relation to Hero (= Anne Cecil), and presenting the relationship between Benedict (=de Vere) and Beatrice (= Anne Vavasour), the play was probably perceived as an insult by the Queen.

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OTHELLO

PLOT SUMMARY

Othello the Moor, a general employed by the Venetian state, has secretly married Desdemona, a daughter of the senator Brabantio. Iago, an ensign nursing resentment against Othello, enlists the help of Roderigo, a disappointed suitor of Desdemona. They wake Brabantio in the middle of the night with the news of his daughter's elopement. Brabantio takes the case to the senate where, learning that she has married Othello of her own accord, he disowns his daughter. Othello is immediately ordered to the Venetian colony of Cyprus to repel a threatened Turkish invasion. Desdemona sails with her husband, taking with them her companion Emilia, who is also Iago's wife, and Othello's lieutenant Michael Cassio, newly promoted over Iago's head. Once in Cyprus, Iago plants the suspicion in Othello's mind that Desdemona has been unfaithful to him with Cassio. He engineers a drunken brawl for which Cassio is blamed and dismissed by Othello. Desdemona intercedes on Cassio's behalf but her constant pleas to Othello for his reinstatement only serve to convince Othello that Cassio is her lover. Iago acquires a treasured handkerchief that belonged to Desdemona and uses it as 'proof of the affair. Increasingly maddened by jealousy, Othello orders Iago to kill Cassio and strangles Desdemona himself. Emilia discloses her husband's plot and Othello, tormented by grief and remorse, kills himself. Iago, after murdering his own wife, is left to the justice of the Venetian state.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

The lies and misplaced trust between Othello and Iago probably reflect the relationship between de Vere and Rowland Yorke.

In 1569, Yorke had fought with the Catholic rebels in the Northern Uprising. By 1572, Lieutenant (a rank Iago aspired to) Yorke he was fighting for the Protestant forces in the Dutch wars of independence. He was characterized as "a man of loose and dissolute behaviour and desperately audacious". Yorke had banned de Vere's wife - Anne Cecil - from de Vere's private chamber in 1573. In 1576, when de Vere returned from his foreign travels in a rage over the alleged infidelity of his wife, he stayed with Rowland and Edward Yorke. Edward Yorke was a servant of the Earl of Leicester - a rival of both the Cecil family and de Vere. By 1584, the libeler Charles Arundell accused the Earl of Leicester of various crimes, including attempting to disrupt the marriage of de Vere and Anne Cecil. If this accusation is true, Leicester was certainly successful. By 1584, in the Lowlands Yorke attempted to betray allied positions to the Spanish, and two years later, he did so again for silver. He died in 1588 reportedly from poisoning.

Yorke introduced into England a bold and dangerous way of thrusting the rapier in dueling. Iago brags that he had often "yerk'd ... [opponents] under the ribs."

Having visited Florence, he knew that its citizens were recognized for their arithmetic and book-keeping. The play notes this.

In the play, Philip Sidney provides the basis of the character of Michael Cassio.

The character Iago is probably named after the patron saint of Spain - Santiago.

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ROMEO AND JULIET

PLOT SUMMARY

A long-standing feud between the Montagues and the Capulets flares up in a brawl on the streets of Verona, halted only by the arrival of Prince Escalus. Romeo, only son of the Montagues, is hopelessly in love with the unattainable Rosaline. Attempting to shake him out of his melancholy, his friends Mercutio and Benvolio persuade him to go to a party at the Capulets' house. There he meets and falls instantly in love with Juliet, the Capulets' only daughter, and she with him. With the help of Juliet's Nurse, they are secretly married the next day by Friar Laurence. Juliet's cousin Tybalt quarrels with Romeo and in the fight which ensues Mercutio is killed. Romeo avenges his friend's death and kills Tybalt, for which he is banished from Verona on pain of death. After spending a single night with his bride, he escapes to Mantua. Juliet learns that her parents plan to marry her to Count Paris. Distraught, she turns to Friar Laurence, who devises a plan. He gives her a drug which will make her appear to be dead. The intention is that her parents will place her in the family tomb and when she awakes from her drugged sleep, Romeo will be waiting to escape with her to Mantua. When Romeo returns to Verona, he believes her really to be dead and kills himself. Waking to find Romeo dead beside her, Juliet kills herself. The two families, united in grief, vow to end their feud.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

De Vere became entangled in a love affair that led to an interfamily war, like the war between the Montagues and Capulets.

Friar Laurence is based on de Vere's Protestant tutors Sir Thomas Smith and Laurence Nowell. Sir Thomas Smith, like Friar Laurence, was adept at making tinctures and tonics. Not coincidentally, Friar Laurence is the only papist authority figure in Shakespeare that is treated with respect and authority. In other words, respect of former teachers outweighs religious concerns.

In December 1574, Anne Cecil fell sick and there were fears she might die. Sir Thomas Smith sent Anne a potion. Anne recovered. Smith practiced Paraclesian medicine - a new and empirical approach to healing based on distillations of chemicals and essences. In 16th century England, the Paraclesians were considered quacks.

De Vere's supporters were at war with Knyvet and his supporters in 1582. De Vere and Thomas Knyvet had a duel in which both were injured, and one of de Vere's servants was killed. Some men claiming to be employees of de Vere began to attack members of Knyvet side, starting with Rocco Bonetti, who was known for introducing a form of Italian swordmanship to England. Bonetti sought protection from de Vere's men. In 1584, two supposedly retainers of de Vere - Gastrell and Horsley - attacked Knyvet and four associates in Blackfriars. Four days later, there was another skirmish between Gastrell and another man Harvey. Romeo and Juliet begins after three brawls between the Montagues and the Capulets. In the words of the Prince:

Three civil brawls bred of an airy word
By thee, old Capulet and Montague,

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Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets
And made Verona's ancient citizens
Cast by their grave-beseeming ornaments
To wield old partisans, in hands as old,
Canker'd with peace, to part y our canker'd hate.
If ever you disturb our streets again
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.

Romeo and Juliet then reports a subsequent melee where as Montague falls. A slain servant of de Vere's is buried eight months after the Blackfriars fight. Subsequently, a Capulet is slain. (Burghley reports the death of one of Knyvet's servants a month after de Vere's man is slain. In Romeo and Juliet, there is another challenge to a duel. De Vere was challenged to another duel by Knyvet, and does not answer and the interfamily war ends.

As a result of the brawls, Romeo is banished from Mantua. By the end of 1582, de Vere is expelled from court, and low on money, much like Romeo.

Juliet was a young bride, as was Anne Cecil when she married de Vere at 15 years.

The play toys with the idea of "atomies" as nature's unit of irreducible smallness. De Vere's only known secretary in his later years was Nicholas Hill. Hill was ridiculed around London as the leading advocate of Democritus's atomic philosophy.

In 1575, De Vere visited Venice, which was suffering an epidemic of bubonic plague. Those in contact with victims were quarantined for 40 days. The textile industry closed down. The city lost a quarter of his inhabitants. Church spires across the Veneto glowed with "lanterns of the dead" - an Italian funeral tradition that appears in Romeo and Juliet.

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THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

PLOT SUMMARY

Ephesus and Syracuse are at odds. Any Syracusan found in Ephesus will be executed unless he can pay a ransom of a thousand marks. Egeon, an old Syracusan merchant, has been arrested. He explains how he has come to Ephesus: he and his wife Emilia had identical twin sons and identical twin slaves, purchased for the purpose of serving the sons. In a shipwreck many years ago, he was separated from his wife, one son and one slave. The survivors are renamed in memory of the lost ones: Antipholus for the son and Dromio for the slave. Once grown to manhood, Antipholus of Syracuse, with his Dromio, had set off in search of his brother and mother. Egeon is now in search of them. The Duke gives him until evening to find the ransom money. By chance Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse have also just arrived in Ephesus. The other Antipholus and Dromio have been living there since the wreck. And so the comedy of errors ensues. The locals constantly mistake the visiting twins for the natives - even Antipholus of Ephesus' wife Adriana and her sister Luciana are fooled. The confusions result in Antipholus of Ephesus being arrested for debt and declared mad, while Antipholus of Syracuse take refuge from his brother's angry wife in a Priory - where the abbess turns out to be Egeon's long-lost wife. All is resolved and Egeon is freed.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

The play was written to argue to Elizabeth for reinstatement to court in 1583. The play apologizes for de Vere's errors in matrimony.

The play is about marriage into a powerful family - a marriage that never should have been. De Vere is the misunderstood husband Antipholus of Ephesus, married to a "fond fool" of an impatient wife Adriana. Antipholus has a twin brother Antipholus of Syracuse that he does not know. He falls in love with Luciana, the placid and idealized sister of Adriana. De Vere splits both the character of himself and his wife. Anne Cecil's character is divided between Luciana (= the light one) and Adriana (= the dark one). De Vere's character is split between two protagonists. The marriage was unsuccessful because it united his bride with only half his self. The Duke of Ephesus observes of the twin brothers:

One of these men is genius to the other;
And so of these, which is the natural man,
And which the spirit? Who deciphers them?

The play reveals de Vere at the time as an overgrown adolescent unwilling to shoulder responsibility for his failed marriage. The play is an attempt to explain and excuse his errors, but does not acknowledge fault.

Elizabeth is portrayed as the fat kitchen wench Nell.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: What's her name?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: Nell, sir; but her name and three quarters, that's an "el" and three quarters (=syllables), will not measure her from hip to hip.

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ANT. In what part of her body stands Ireland.

DRO. Marry, sir, in her buttocks, I found it out by the bogs.

ANT. Where Scotland?

DRO. I found it by the barrenness, hard in the palm of the hand.

ANT. Where France?

DRO. In her forehead, arm'd and reverted, making war against her heir ...

ANT. Where stood Belgia, the Netherlands?

DRO. O, sir, I did not look so low.

In 1563, William Cecil hired Laurence Nowell to tutor de Vere, whose father had recently died and who was now under the wardship of Cecil. Nowell was a cartographer, who at the time was working on the most detailed map of the British Isles known to that time. The map can now be found in the British Library as an example of Renaissance cartography. The map may have inspired a series of cartographical jokes in the play about maps of England, Ireland, and other nations.

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THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

PLOT SUMMARY

Antonio, the merchant of Venice, lends three thousand ducats to his friend Bassanio in order to assist him in his wooing of the wealthy and beautiful Portia of Belmont, an estate some distance from Venice. But Antonio's own money is tied up in business ventures that depend on the safe return of his ships from sea, so he borrows the money from Shylock, a Jewish moneylender whom he has previously insulted for his high rates of interest. Shylock lends the money against a bond whereby failure to repay the loan on the agreed date will entitle Shylock to a pound of Antonio's flesh. Portia's father has decreed that she will marry whichever suitor makes the correct choice when presented with three caskets, made of gold, silver and lead. Where wealthy suitors from Morocco and Aragon fail, Bassanio succeeds by choosing lead. His friend Gratiano marries Portia's lady-in-waiting Nerissa at the same time. News arrives that Antonio's ships have been lost; he is unable to pay his debt. Shylock's claim to his pound of flesh is heard in the law court before the duke. Unknown to their husbands, Portia disguises herself as a young male lawyer acting on behalf of Antonio, Nerissa as a clerk. Portia's ingenious defense is that Shylock is entitled to his pound of flesh but not to spill any of Antonio's blood; she argues that the Jew should forfeit his life for having conspired against the life of a Venetian. The duke pardons Shylock on condition that he gives half his wealth to Antonio and half to the state. Antonio surrenders his claim on condition that Shylock converts to Christianity and leaves his property to his daughter Jessica, whom he has disinherited for running away with her Christian lover Lorenzo. Portia and Nerissa then assert their power over Bassanio and Gratiano by means of a trick involving rings that the men have promised never to part with. Finally there is good news about Antonio's ships.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

During his Italian travels, de Vere went into debt to borrowing from local loan merchants. He knew from his travels that a dish of baked doves was an honoured northern Italian gift.

De Vere's long-time secretary Arthur Munday wrote *Zelauto* in 1580 - a Homeric novel of worldly adventure. Munday had just returned from his own continental travels, and dedicated the publication to de Vere. The plot for *Merchant of Venice* contains a variation on the plot line from Munday's work.

De Vere's mother was Margery. From de Vere's history, she made not have played a major role in his life. As a young child, he is likely to have lived with tutors, and after the passing of his father, he resided in the Cecil household. When de Vere resided in the Cecil household, Margery wrote polite greetings to her son in letters to William Cecil. While de Vere used family names frequently in plays, there is only one reference to his mother. In this play, Launcelot declares to Old Gobbo that he (Launcelot) is his son. Margery is Old Gobbo's wife.

In his Italian travels, de Vere met Discalzio, who was the inspiration for the character Bellario in the play. Bellario was the University of Padua law professor asked to settle the case of Shylock versus Antonio.

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In the play, Portia lives on the river Brenta in an estate called Belmont, located ten miles from Venice and 2 miles from the monastery. Only one villa meets these descriptors - Villa Foscari. Guglielmo Gonzaga - duke of Mantua - had visited the villa. In the play, Portia's assistant Nerissa recalls a recent visit to Belmont by the Marquis de Montferrat, also known as Guglielmo Gonzaga - duke of Mantua. De Vere probably stayed with the duke in Mantua, during his Italian travels.

Portia is probably modeled on Elizabeth Trentham, de Vere's second wife (married 1591). Bassanio courts Portia, at least in part to get out of debt.

BASSANIO: Gentle lady,
When I did first impart my love to you,
I freely told you all the wealth I had
Ran in my veins - I was a gentleman -
And then I told you true; and yet, dear lady,
Rating myself at nothing, you shall see
How much I was a braggart. When I told you
My state was nothing, I should then have told you
That I was worse than nothing.

In the play, Antonio has taken a loan from Shylock in anticipation of money from overseas. The money fails to come, and Antonio defaults on his debt, and Antonio and Shylock go to a Venetian court. In the trial scene, legal terminology is plentiful. The case loosely parallels a case involving de Vere and Thomas Gurlyn. In this case, Gurlyn claimed de Vere owed him money stemming from events twelve years before (1585). Without satisfaction over this period, Gurlyn sued de Vere's wife Elizabeth Trentham, because she controlled the household money. Ultimately, Elizabeth Trentham won.

At the time, there were two potential justice systems through which the matter could be resolved: common law (which took the law literally) and the chancery (equity) courts. The conflicting justice systems (strict constructions of established law versus fairness and equity) was the leading legal question of the day. In the play, de Vere holds that equity should prevail over a strict interpretation of the law. According to Portia:

PORTIA: The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The thronéd monarch better than his crown ...
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seems justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice by thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,

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And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

Portia's pleadings borrow from Ecclesiasticus 28:1 - 3, a key pre-Christian teach. In de Vere's bible, de Vere noted this section particularly, and posed hand written notes addressing the questions of mercy and forgiveness.

In 1578, de Vere invested £3,000 in the Cathay Company under Michael Lok in a venture led by Martin Frobisher to find a waterway to the Pacific through the northwest passage under Frobisher. The venture was a failure. In the play, the generous Antonia takes out a 3,000 ducat bond with the financier Shylock - a name based on Michael Lok.

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THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

PLOT SUMMARY

Sir John Falstaff, staying in Windsor and down on his luck, decides to restore his fortunes by seducing the wives of two wealthy citizens. He sends Mistress Page and Mistress Ford identical love letters, but they discover his double dealing and set about turning the tables, arranging an assignation at Mistress Ford's house. The jealous Frank Ford has heard of Falstaff's plan and decides to test his wife's fidelity. Pretending to be Master Broom, he pays Falstaff to seduce his wife on his behalf, twice almost catching them together. The Pages' daughter Anne is pursued by three suitors. The French physician Doctor Caius is her mother's choice, whilst her father favours Slender, Justice Shallow's kinsman. Anne herself is in love with Fenton. Mistress Quickly is being paid by all three suitors to advance their cause. A duel between Doctor Caius and Parson Evans is averted when the Host of the Garter Inn plays a trick on them, and they in turn pay him back. In Windsor Great Park at night, Falstaff is set up for his final punishment - and one of Anne Page's suitors is successful.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

In the play, Fenton originally loved "sweet Anne Page". In an autobiographical sense, de Vere may be stating that he originally loved Anne Cecil.

The play mocks Ford (who is at one point labeled "Ox" - as in Oxford) for mistreating his innocent and cunning wife. In one scene, Ford's English friend Page, his Welsh colleague Evans and his French doctor Caius are amazed at Ford's inability to recognize his jealous and unfounded accusations against his wife.

Thomas Smith - de Vere's tutor as a young man and one of the leading intellectuals of the time - practiced Paracelsian medicine - an empirical approach using chemical distillations and essences to cure medical problems. This medicine anticipated the pharmaceutical industry. While this practice was considered quackery in de Vere's time, de Vere was a patron. In the play, the French doctor Caius keeps "simples" in his closet. "Simples" were the chemical distillations.

Dr. John Caius was a doctor of medicine who had studied anatomy at the University of Padua in the Republic of Venice. He taught at Cambridge in the 1550s, where de Vere attended as an eight year old. He was later appointed physician to Queen Elizabeth.

Prior to marrying de Vere, Anne Cecil's father William Cecil and Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester and uncle of Philip Sidney, negotiated a marriage contract between Anne Cecil and Philip Sidney that would take effect when they reached the age of consent. A marriage alliance with the Cecils would enhance the power of the Earl of Leicester. The contract details the financial details, including Sidney's modest income, the increase that he would receive on the death of his father, and the further increase when his mother passed away, plus an additional boost of £300 annually if the marriage occurs. It also notes that Anne has a £700 inheritance. De Vere, whose inheritance had been stolen by Leicester, used the play to mock Leicester, not least by calling him "Shallow". Shallow wants his nephew Slender to marry Anne Page, who has a

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£700 inheritance. Anne is not interested in Slender. Slender confesses that he is a poor gentleman until his mother dies. Anne Page later states:

ANNE PAGE: (aside) This is my father's choice.
O, what a world of vile, ill favor'd faults
Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a year!

Sidney was indifferent to a marriage with Anne. In the play, Slender tells Anne Page: "I would little or nothing of you. Your father and my uncle hath made [the] motions."

In the play, the young and valiant groom Fenton woos the lovely Anne Page, to the consternation of her parents. They wed in secret and live happily ever after. The marriage between Anne Cecil was not the first choice for Anne's parents. William Cecil had attempted to have Anne marry Philip Sidney, and de Vere was not a favourite of Cecil's wife.

In his youth prior to the death of his father in 1561, de Vere was moved out of Castle Hedingham and into the household of Sir Thomas Smith, former Secretary of State to King Edward, protestant friend of the family, and a formidable educator and scholar. Smith lived at Ankerwicke near Windsor overlooking the Thames. In 1570, de Vere was ill and hired a room in Windsor during his recovery. Windsor, and the neighbouring areas of Datchet Mead and Frogmore form the background to the play. In nearby Datchet Mead, a hunter Herne hanged himself on a big oak tree, and his ghost haunted the local woods. This story appears in the play.

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THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

PLOT SUMMARY

Christopher Sly, a beggarly tinker, falls asleep drunk, having been thrown out of an ale-house. A lord takes him into his house and plays a trick involving the pretense that Sly is a lord himself, for whose benefit a company of players will act *The Taming of the Shrew*. The main action then commences. Fortune-hunting Hortensio, rich old Gremio and newly-arrived-in-town Lucentio all wish to court beautiful Bianca, but she cannot marry before her older sister, shrewish Kate. Petruchio vows to woo Kate both for her dowry and for the challenge of overcoming her fearsome reputation. Hortensio and Lucentio gain access to Bianca by disguising themselves as tutors, while Lucentio's servant Tranio plays the role of his master. Petruchio marries Kate - turning up late wearing the most unsuitable clothes imaginable - and takes her off to his country house, where he 'tames' her through various forms of deprivation. Tranio persuades a travelling schoolteacher to pretend to be Lucentio's father Vincentio in order to give assurance of Lucentio's financial means; there is confusion when the real Vincentio turns up, but the love-match between Lucentio and Bianca is happily settled. Hortensio marries a wealthy widow and Petruchio and Kate return to reveal that she is a changed woman.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

In the play, Padua is described as "nursery of arts". De Vere knew this, having visited there. An unnamed Lord describes a picture he has seen:

We'll show thee *Io* as she was a maid,
And how she was beguiled and surpris'd,
As lively painted as the deed was done.

When de Vere was leaving in Italy in March 1576, Milan was under the control of Spain, and a Spanish duke - Don Antonio de Guzman - ruled the City. In *The Two Gentleman of Verona*, Shakespeare's Duke of Milan addresses colleagues using the Spanish title "Don". It is therefore possible that de Vere visited Milan. If so, he probably would not have stayed with the Duke or the Archbishop, but some other person who was a patron of the arts. One such person was Leone Leoni, a 67 year old artist with an extensive collection of paintings, including Correggio's masterpiece *Io*.

Preregrine Beatty married de Vere's sister Mary between Christmas 1577 and March 1578. From November 1577 to March 1578, a comet appeared. The comet is referenced in the play:

PETRUCHIO: Gentles, methinks you frown,
And were gaze this goodly company,
As if they saw some wondrous monument,
Some comet or unusual prodigy?

There are many parallels between the play and the real life characters. Like Preregrine, Petruchio is a swash buckler, has a sharp tongue, is a superlative swordsman, and dislikes ceremonies.

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Both Preregine and Petruchio have weddings that take place in a drunken haze. Like Kate, Mary de Vere had a quick temper and harsh tongue.

Shortly after the marriage, Anne Cecil's brother Thomas reports that Preregine and his wife had been fighting, and predicts that "Mary will be beaten with the rod which heretofore she prepared for others". An historian further notes that "the early differences between the couple were soon adjusted, and (Mary) proved a most loyal, capable wife." This is the essential plot of the play.

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THE TEMPEST

PLOT SUMMARY

Twelve years before Prospero, the Duke of Milan, was usurped by his brother, Antonio, with the help of Alonso, King of Naples, and the King's brother Sebastian. Prospero and his baby daughter Miranda were put to sea and landed on a distant island where ever since, by the use of his magic art, he has ruled over the spirit Ariel and the savage Caliban. He uses his powers to raise a storm which shipwrecks his enemies on the island. Alonso searches for his son, Ferdinand, although fearing him to be drowned. Sebastian plots to kill Alonso and seize the crown. The drunken butler, Stephano, and the jester, Trinculo, encounter Caliban and are persuaded by him to kill Prospero so that they can rule the island. Ferdinand meets Miranda and they fall instantly in love. Prospero sets heavy tasks to test Ferdinand and, when satisfied, presents the young couple with a betrothal masque. As Prospero's plan draws to its climax, he confronts his enemies and forgives them. Prospero grants Ariel his freedom and prepares to leave the island for Milan.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

On his return from Italy, de Vere boasted to friends that he would have been made the Duke of Milan for his valiance on the battlefield were it not for one of Queen Elizabeth's agents. One of de Vere's colleagues in 1575 was a nobleman - Prospero Fattinanti - who because the Duke of Genoa.

In the play, Prospero tells his daughter (Miranda) that her mother "was a piece of virtue and she said thou wast my daughter". This echoes what Ann Cecil would have told de Vere about Elizabeth.

The character of the Earl of Derby, who married de Vere's eldest daughter Elizabeth, is portrayed by Ferdinand (after Ferdinando, Lord Strange - the Earl's brother). Puns on the word "strange" are made throughout the play.

The authorial character Prospero is initially not convinced about the worthiness of Ferdinand as his daughter's husband. Eventually, Ferdinand convinces Prospero of his worthiness, and Ferdinand and Miranda marry. At the wedding, Prospero stages a wedding masque. (De Vere staged a play at the wedding of his daughter Elizabeth.) In the wedding masque, the maid Psyche must go to extreme lengths to please an exacting mother of the groom (Venus). Prospero admits he is asking a lot of Ferdinand, but his daughter represents "a third of mine own life"; de Vere had three daughters.

In the play, Prospero is the ailing sorcerer. The Tempest was written toward the end of de Vere's life, when he was ailing.

In the play, Prospero plays tribute to the doddering court counselor Gonzalo. Of Gonzalo, Prospero says:

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Knowing I lov'd my books, he furnish'd me
From my own library volumes that
I prize above my dukedom.

This is a tribute from de Vere to Burghley, who was responsible for de Vere's education.

De Vere invested in Martin Frobisher's expeditions to North America. On his second expedition, Frobisher returned with two adult Eskimos and an infant who died. Their cadavers were put on display. In the play, the clown Trinculo talks of Englishmen who "will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian."

In 1605, shortly after de Vere died, a dramatist was brought before the Privy Council to answer to the crime of dramatizing the Essex uprising. It was dangerous to write about the uprising around the time that de Vere was writing to the play. In the play, Caliban - a deformed subhuman - is the rebellion's ringleader. As Essex was rumoured to have had an affair with Elizabeth, Caliban was said to have had an affair with Miranda. Caliban's co-conspirators are presented as simple drunkards who followed their lead without understanding what they were doing. Caliban and his co-conspirators attempt to enter Prospero's cell and steal some magic. However, Prospero and Ariel force Caliban and company into a cage. The rebels are imprisoned. Prospero says:

Let them be hunted soundly. At this hour
Lies at my mercy all mine enemies.
Shortly shall all my labours end, and thou
Shalt have the air at freedom. For a little
Follow, and do me service.

Prospero arranges for pardoning of the rebels. Prospero reflects on his career as one who brought back to life long-dead monarchs and nobles (just as de Vere had done). Prospero, knowing that he is in poor health, says:

Go, release them, Ariel
My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore ...
The strong-bas'd promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar. Graves at my command
Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure ... I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.

In the epilogue, Prospero says:

Release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands,

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Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please. Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be reliev'd by prayer,
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your indulgences set me free.

On May 30, 1588, de Vere may have been part of Drake's fleet that set out to defeat the Spanish Armada. The fleet encountered strong winds and was forced to return to harbour on June 6, 1588. On June 5, 1588, de Vere's wife Ann died suddenly at thirty-three years old. There is no evidence that de Vere attended the funeral. There is no record of any actions by de Vere in the late spring and early summer of 1588. A likely reason was his involvement in Drake's expeditions against the Spanish Armada.

The opening scenes of the *Tempest* describe a ship's encounter with life-threatening winds. The accuracy of the descriptions suggest the author must have had some experience with such a situation. It is likely that de Vere did, as part of Drake's fleet.

De Vere's long-time secretary Arthur Munday published two English translations under the pseudonym "Lazarus Plot". One of the two publications was part of Munday's ongoing project to Anglicize the continental *Primaleon* and *Palmerin* series of chivalric romances. These were sources for the *Tempest*.

Who Was Shakespeare?

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

PLOT SUMMARY

Valentine sets off from Verona for Milan to see the world. Proteus stays at home because of his love for Julia. She is in love with him, but neither knows of the other's love until Lucetta shows Julia a love letter from Proteus. He is reading her reply when his father, Antonio, informs him of his decision to send him to the duke's court to join Valentine. The lovers take their leave and swear eternal constancy. In Milan, Proteus finds that Valentine has fallen in love with Silvia, the duke's daughter, and plans to elope with her to foil her father's plan to marry her to Turio. Valentine confides his plan to his friend but Proteus, infatuated with Silvia at first sight, betrays the plan to the duke and Valentine is banished from Milan. In the wilderness he encounters a band of outlaws and is elected their leader. Meanwhile Julia, disguised as Sebastian, has come to Milan in search of Proteus. Overhearing him declare his passion for Silvia, she is devastated but, under cover of her disguise, enters his service as a page. When Proteus sends her with a message to Silvia, Julia is encouraged to find that his advances are again rejected and that Silvia remains faithful to Valentine. Silvia escapes into the forest to join Valentine. The duke and Turio set out in pursuit, followed by Proteus and Julia. Silvia is captured by the outlaws but then rescued by Proteus who, seeing that she still spurns him, tries to force himself on her. Valentine intervenes and Proteus is forced to confront his act of betrayal. Julia reveals her identity and reconciliation begins.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

In de Vere's Italian travels, records show he visited Milan and other cities. During his travels between cities, he probably visited Verona.

The lead characters Proteus and Valentine are alter egos of de Vere. Silvia is the daughter of the most powerful man, as was de Vere's wife Anne. The play stages de Vere's marital strife as a love triangle plot. In the play, Proteus and Valentine are close friends from Verona. Valentine and Silvia have fallen in love, but Proteus becomes infatuated with Silvia. Silvia asks Valentine to compose verses for her. In doing so, Valentine (de Vere) discovers that he writes for himself.

VALENTINE: Please you, I'll write Your Ladyship another.

SILVIA: And when it's writ, for my sake read it over,
And if it please you, so; if not, why, so.

VALENTINE: If it please me, madam? What then?

SILVIA: Why, if it please you, take it for your labour;
And so good morrow, servant.

Valentine's servant Speed notes:

SPEED: Excellent device, was there ever heard a better,
That my master, being scribe, to himself should write the letter.

Who Was Shakespeare?

THE WINTER'S TALE

PLOT SUMMARY

Polixenes, King of Bohemia, has been on a nine-month visit to the court of his childhood friend Leontes, King of Sicilia, and his wife, Queen Hermione. Groundlessly, Leontes becomes convinced that his heavily pregnant wife has been having an affair with Polixenes. He tries to persuade his most trusted courtier, Camillo, to poison Polixenes. Convinced of the queen's innocence, Camillo warns Polixenes and they depart for Bohemia together. Another courtier, Antigonus, is ordered to leave Hermione's newly born daughter on a desert shore. Leontes tries Hermione for treason; when he denies the truth of the god Apollo's oracular declaration of her innocence, his son Mamillius dies. He is then told that the queen has also died. Antigonus leaves the baby girl on the coast of Bohemia, where he is torn to pieces by a bear. An old shepherd and his clownish son find the baby, bring her up as a member of their family and name her Perdita. Sixteen years later, she is being courted by Polixenes' son, Prince Florizel, who has disguised himself as a shepherd, Doricles. The roguish peddler Autolycus tricks the shepherds out of money. Polixenes and Camillo come in disguise to the countryside; when the king denounces his son for courting a low-born shepherdess, Florizel and Perdita flee to Sicilia, with the assistance of Camillo. The shepherd and clown follow, bringing tokens that reveal Perdita's true identity. That which was lost having been found, Paulina, the lady most loyal to Hermione, reveals a statue of the dead queen and tells the assembled company to prepare themselves for a great wonder.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

Who Was Shakespeare?

TIMON OF ATHENS

PLOT SUMMARY

Timon, a rich Athenian, is famous for his liberality. As the play opens a group of people is gathering outside Timon's house, waiting to offer him flattering gifts or beg favours. There is much talk of his generosity and open-heartedness, which is immediately borne out when he appears, paying a friend's debts to free him from prison and giving money to a servant to allow him to marry. Only the cynical philosopher Apemantus has doubts about the sincerity of Timon's friends. The young general Alcibiades is warmly welcomed by Timon, who invites him and other friends to a banquet, at which there is more lavish distribution of gifts. However, Timon's steward Flavius realizes what his master doesn't - that Timon's extravagant lifestyle has emptied his coffers. Timon's creditors start to ask for payment and one after another he asks his friends for help, only to be refused by all. He invites them all to a second banquet, where he turns the tables on them. Alcibiades pleads in vain with the senate for the life of one of his soldiers who has committed a murder; in anger they banish him from Athens. The disillusioned Timon goes to live as a recluse outside Athens, railing bitterly against mankind. One day, digging for roots to eat, he discovers gold. He gives it away, first to Alcibiades, to pay the army he has raised against Athens, and his two whores, Timandra and Phrynia, then to some bandits. He finally offers some to his steward Flavius. Hearing of this, more false friends come out to flatter Timon but he drives them away, along with the senators from Athens who come to beg for his help against Alcibiades. Alcibiades wins his war against the Athenian senators, at which point news reaches the city that Timon is dead.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

The play is about a spendthrift Timon who is unable to manage power, money or responsibility. Timon gives away all his wealth to his so-called friends. When the money runs out, so do his friends. Before his final downfall, Timon has some moments of reckoning with his steward Flavius.

FLAVIUS: O my good lord
At many times I brought in my accounts,
Laid them before you, you would throw them off,
As say you found them in mine honesty ...
My loved lord,
Though you hear now, too late!-yet now's a time-
The greatest of your having lacks a half
To pay your present debts.

TIMON: Let all my land be sold!

FLAVIUS: 'Tis all engaged, some forfeited and gone,
And what remains will hardly stop the mouth
Of present dues.

Fearing punishment from Timon, Flavius asks for an independent audit.

Who Was Shakespeare?

The play parallels de Vere's life in the early 1580s. De Vere spent reckless, supporting friends, the arts and others. He was admired, and supported admirable causes, including the arts. To pay expenses, he sold his lands. Eventually, he ran out of assets. When his secretary John Lyly reported that de Vere had run out of money, de Vere blamed Lyly. Lyly in turn, like Flavius, welcomed an audit of the accounts. Like Timon, de Vere retired with his wife Ann from court and London life.

At the end of the play, Timon rails against humanity, calling for the destruction of Athens. In the process, he recalls the doubtful paternity of a child:

TIMON: Spare not the babe
Whose dimpled smiles from fools exhaust their mercy:
Think it a bastard, whom the oracle
Hath doubtfully pronounc'd the throat shall cut,
And mince it sans remorse. Swear against objects,
Put armor on thine ears and on thine eyes
Whose proof nor yells of mothers, maids, or babes,
Nor sight of priests in holy vestments bleeding
Shall pierce a jot. There's gold to pay thy soldiers.
Make large confusion.

This may have reflected de Vere's feeling toward the English court.

The play's philosopher Ademantus sums up Timon's situation:

ADEMANTUS: The middle of humanity thou never newest, but the extremity of both ends.
When thou wast in thy gilt and thy perfume, they mock'd thee for too much curiosity; in thy rags
thou know'st none - but art despis'd for the contrary.

This description also applies to de Vere. He mingled with the elites at court. He also inhabited the lowly world of actors. His father-in-law Lord Burghley once commented on de Vere's "lewd friends". However, by the early 1580s, de Vere was out of money. He confessed to discussing plans to overthrow the government. He had been accused of numerous crimes in the Arundell libels. He had fathered an illegitimate child, for which he had been imprisoned.

Who Was Shakespeare?

TITUS ADRONICUS

PLOT SUMMARY

The brothers Saturninus and Bassianus are in contention for the Roman emperorship. Titus Andronicus, Rome's most honoured general, returns from wars against the Goths with their queen, Tamora, her sons and her lover, Aaron the Moor, as captives. Her eldest son is sacrificed by Titus; she vows revenge. Titus is nominated emperor by his brother Marcus, one of Rome's tribunes. This Titus declines, instead nominating Saturninus. To seal the bond of friendship, the new emperor offers to marry Titus' daughter Lavinia. She, however, is already pledged to Bassianus. Saturninus, by now infatuated with Tamora, makes her empress. Manipulated by Aaron, Tamora's sons, Chiron and Demetrius, avenge their mother by raping and mutilating Lavinia, and killing Bassianus. Aaron falsely implicates two of Titus' sons in this murder. In his turn Titus vows revenge and sends his surviving son Lucius to the Goths to raise an army. Titus achieves his revenge by killing Tamora's sons and serving them up to her at a banquet, and then killing her. He himself is killed by Saturninus and his death avenged by Lucius, who is made emperor.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

De Vere's mother's half brother was Arthur Golding. Golding translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is regarded as the most influential source for Shakespeare. Golding resided near the de Vere family in Essex in the 1550s and early 1560s. Golding was likely a tutor to de Vere, after his father died and de Vere was placed in the custody of William Cecil. In 1564, Golding dedicated his English translation of Justin's *Abridgement of the Histories of Trogus Pompeius*. The plot in the play calls for a copy of Ovid to be brought on stage. The book is introduced by BOY, who was of school age. He says: "'Tis Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." This was likely a reference to de Vere's maternal ties to Golding translation of Ovid's poem.

De Vere's wife Anne Cecil gave birth to a daughter while de Vere was traveling in Europe. De Vere questioned the paternity of Anne's daughter, and refused to live with his wife for a number of years. However, in the end, he conceded he may have been wrong at least in his treatment and perhaps in questioning the paternity of Anne's daughter. Many of the de Vere's plays portray different theories about the circumstances surrounding the birth of Anne's daughter. This play (and the poem *The Rape of Lucrece*) hints at the scenario that Anne was raped.

In 1582, de Vere was dealing with the shame and scandal of his exile from the court of Queen Elizabeth. In the play, there is an important role for banishment. When Titus learns that his son Lucius has been banished from Rome, he sees it as a good thing.

TITUS: O happy man! They have befriended thee.
Why, foolish Lucius, dost thou not perceive
That Rome is but a wilderness of tigers?

When Lucius returns from his banishment, he describes the experience:

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LUCIUS: Myself unkindly banished,
That gates shut on me and turn'd weeping out
To be relief among Rome's enemies;
Who drown'd their enmity in my true tears,
And op'd their arms to embrace me as a friend ...
My scars can witness, dumb although they are,
That my report is just and full of truth.
But soft, methinks I do digress too much,
Citing my worthless praise: O, pardon me;
For when no friends are by, men praise themselves.

Who Was Shakespeare?

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

PLOT SUMMARY

For seven years the Greeks and Trojans have been at war following the Trojan prince Paris' abduction of Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, from her Greek husband Menelaus. The besieging Greek army is encamped under the walls of Troy and, at the point at which the play begins, the war has reached stalemate. The Greeks are quarrelling amongst themselves. Achilles, their greatest champion, refuses to fight and has withdrawn to his tent with his lover, Patroclus. Ulysses tries to entice Achilles back to the field by arousing his jealousy against Ajax, a rival warrior, whom he acclaims as their new hero and elects to meet Hector, the Trojan champion, in single combat. Equally at odds with themselves, the Trojans are debating the value of continuing the war merely for the sake of keeping Helen. Hector declares her not worth the lives she costs but when his brother Troilus contends that honour demands they continue to fight for her, Hector is brought round to his point of view. Although the single combat between Ajax and Hector ends in a show of amity, hostilities are resumed the following day. Troilus, however, is much distracted from these military concerns by his love for Cressida, the daughter of Calchas, a Trojan who has defected to the Greek camp whilst leaving his daughter in Troy. The young lovers are eagerly abetted by Cressida's uncle Pandarus, who acts as their go-between. However, after only one night together they are parted when, in exchange for the captured general Antenor, Cressida is sent to join her father in the Greek camp. Almost immediately she betrays Troilus with the Greek Diomedes and, discovering this, Troilus is plunged into despair. Despite his sister Cassandra's prophecies of doom, Hector goes into battle and is treacherously murdered by Achilles, who has finally been roused into action by the death of Patroclus. With the fall of Troy certain, Troilus, disillusioned as a lover, assumes Hector's role as the Trojan champion and vows revenge on Achilles. The dying, disease-ridden Pandarus is left to end the play.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

The play is about the siege of Troy by the Greeks. An Elizabethan audience would have interpreted the play as a discussion of the issues at stake in the siege of the Netherlands.

Pandarus is an unflattering representation of William Cecil. Pandarus sets up an amorous rendezvous between Troilus (de Vere) and Cressida (the Queen).

Achilles and Patroclus are Grecian officers who are part of the force besieging Troy. Rather than fight and serve honorably with their fellow Grecians, Achilles and Patroclus prefer to spend their days in their tent, privately enjoying each other's pleasures. The satirist Thersites outlines the rumours against Achilles and Patroclus.

THERSITES [to PATROCLUS] Thou art said to be Achilles male varlet.

PATROCLUS: Male varlet, you rogue? What's that?

THERSITES: Why, this masculine whore. Now the rotten diseases of the south [venereal disease] ... take and take again such preposterous discoveries!

PATROCLUS: Why, thou damnable box of envy, thou, what means thou to curse thus?

THERSITES: Do I curse thee?

PATROCLUS: Why, no, you ruinous butt, you whoreson indistinguishable cur, no.

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THERSITES: No? Why art thou then exasperate, thou idle immaterial skein of sleeve silk, thou green sarsenet [fine silk] flap for a sore eye, thou tassel of a prodigal's purse, thou!

Elizabethan authors had equated Essex with Achilles at least four times prior to 1599. De Vere disliked Essex. His depiction of Achilles as an inept leader is a criticism of Essex. Patroclus could have been a representation of Southampton, who de Vere had promoted as a husband to his daughter Elizabeth. The dialogue suggests that Southampton's reaction to rumours was to not deny the rumours, but attack the communicator of the rumours.

In the play, Ulysses is the model officer. Ulysses gives Achilles a lesson on the transitory character of courtly favour.

ACHILLES: What, am I poor of late?

'Tis certain, greatness, once fall'n out with fortune,
Must fall out with men too ...

What, are my deeds forgot?

ULYSSES: Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
A great-siz'd monster of ingratitude.

Those scraps are good deeds past, which are devour'd
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
As done ...

For beauty, wit,
High birth, vigor of bone, desert in service,
Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all
To envious and calumniating Time.
One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

De Vere would have known how easy it is to fall out of favour in court, based on his experiences in the early 1580s. His advice could have been directed at Essex, although he disliked Essex and would be unlikely to want to provide advice to him. More likely, his advice was directed at Southampton.

In 1600, William Gilbert's theory of geomagnetism was published. The play references the theory ("As true ... as iron to adamant, as earth to the center.")

Who Was Shakespeare?

TWELFTH NIGHT

PLOT SUMMARY

Viola and her twin brother Sebastian have been shipwrecked off the coast of Illyria. Each believes that the other has drowned. Viola disguises herself as a boy and, under the name of Cesario, enters the service of the duke Orsino. The duke sends Cesario to woo the lady Olivia on his behalf, but Olivia falls in love with the lovely 'boy'. Viola/Cesario, meanwhile, has fallen in love with Orsino. Sebastian is saved by the sea captain Antonio and he too arrives in Illyria. Malvolio, Olivia's steward, disapproves of the other members of her household - her kinsman Sir Toby Belch, his friend Sir Andrew Aguecheek and the jester Feste. Led by the ingenuity of Maria, Olivia's waiting-woman, these three plot Malvolio's downfall. Olivia meets Sebastian and, mistaking him for Cesario, arranges for them to be secretly married. Further confusion follows upon mistakes as to the identity of the twins. Orsino is furious at the apparent falseness of his page, but, with the eventual meeting of the twins, true identities are revealed and Orsino recognizes his love for Viola.

RELATIONSHIP TO DE VERE

The play mirrors the events of Alençon's proposals to marriage with Elizabeth. De Vere casts himself as Feste - the jester who comments on the various events. Olivia is the witty and charming female ruler whose hand in marriage is sought. The suitor Duke Orsino is Alençon. He sends a series of messengers. Olivia rejects the first messenger, and falls for the second. Eventually, Duke Orsino arrives, as Alençon did in the summer of 1578. Feste (de Vere) comments on the events. Feste also entertains Duke Orsino with a love song, presumably acknowledging that de Vere entertained Alençon during a visit in September 1579.

In the play, Olivia's court consists of a number of characters based on individuals in Elizabeth's court around 1579 - Maria (based on de Vere's sister Mary), Sir Toby Belch (based on Peregrine Bertie), Sir Andrew Aguecheek (based on Sir Philip Sidney, Bertie's best friend), Malvolio (based on Christopher Hatton).

The play pokes fun at Aguecheek, who pretends to be sophisticated but makes one verbal pratfall after another. De Vere was not fond of Philip Sidney. However, the play gives a two-sided portrait of Aguecheek. Sir Toby Belch likes Aguecheek, and speaks of him as an ideal courtier who "speaks three or four languages word for word without book". Aguecheek tells Belch, "I am a fellow o' the strangest mind I' th' world: I delight in masques and revels sometimes altogether." In short, he is a lover of the arts. Sidney was an artistic rival of de Vere, but one who took exception to some of de Vere's dramatic techniques, for example compressing entire lives into a two hour time period, or shifting moods and settings without explaining each step to the audience.

In *Twelfth Night*, Aguecheek provokes a duel, then tries to wiggle his way out of it. In September 1579, Sidney and de Vere got into an argument over a tennis match. Sidney left in a rage, preparing to fight a duel. Elizabeth forbade the duel.

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In 1579, de Vere was not living with his wife Elizabeth, to the consternation of Elizabeth's father Burghley. In *Hamlet*, Polonius recites a list of dirty tricks to discredit a courtier, one of which involves a smear campaign over a "falling out at tennis". The suggestion is that de Vere's argument with Sidney was used by Burghley to smear de Vere.

In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio is a self-infatuated "clodpole". Sir Toby Belch calls Malvolio a "rascally sheep-biter". Hatton in 1980 wrote a letter to Elizabeth describing himself as "Your Majesty's Sheep. The letter included a veiled reference to de Vere. It noted that the Sheep has no tooth to bite: where the Boar's tusk may both "raze and tear". The Boar was the animal on de Vere's heraldic crest, and around that time, de Vere was raising hell.

Also in the play, Malvolio comes across a prank letter intended to make him look foolish. The signature on the letter is "The Fortunate Unhappy" - a play on Hatton's Latin pen name "Felix Infortunatus" meaning the "Happy Unfortunate".

In the play, Malvolio is imprisoned, and denied pen, ink and paper. Feste cross examines Malvolio, who only wants a candle, pen, ink and paper.

MALVOLIO: Good fool, as ever thou wilt deserve well at my hand, help me to a candle and pen, ink and paper ... Fool, there was never man so notoriously abused. I am as well in my wits, fool, as thou art.

FESTE: But as well, then you are mad indeed if you be no better in your wits than a fool.

In 1580, Edmund Campion, who had been one of de Vere's commencement speakers at Oxford in 1566, had returned from Prague. The pope had advocated the assassination of Elizabeth, and the antipapists in Elizabeth's court (Burghley, Walsingham, Leicester, and Hatton) wanted Campion tried for treason. He was subsequently imprisoned and tortured so brutally on the rack that he could not raise his right hand to be sworn as a witness. He was given two hours to work on his courtroom defense, and denied pen, ink and paper. De Vere's secretary Anthony Monday served as witness at the trial. In *Twelfth Night*, de Vere put Hatton in Campion's position.

The play portrays Sir Toby Belch as a mischief-making, dueling, drinking, quarrelsome swordsman - a slight exaggeration of Peregrine Bertie. Belch is a companion of Aguecheek, as Bertie was to Philip Sidney. Belch gets into two sword fights that the cowardly Aguecheek evaded.

In Maria's first scene on stage, she is greeted, "Bless you, fair shrew." Maria was lady in waiting to the romantically entangled Olivia. De Vere's sister Mary was lady in waiting to the romantically entangled Elizabeth. Like Mary to Peregrine Bertie, Maria is ultimately loyal to Sir Toby Belch, who boasts, "She's a beagle true bred and one that adores me."

In the play, Antonio and Sebastian are two friends reunited when the latter washes ashore after it was believed he had perished at sea. In the late 1570s, King Sebastian of Portugal went missing in action after leading a crusade against Morocco. He left the Portuguese throne vacant, with no heir in sight. In 1580, King Philip of Spain took control of Portugal. A strong Spain under King Philip created fears that a Spanish armada might attack England. If Sebastian were washed

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ashore, he could take back the Portuguese throne. Many in England championed Antonio, a pretender to the English throne who had visited England in 1580. He found supporters in Sidney (Aguecheek) and Hatton (Malvolio).

In the play, Feste begs for three gold pieces, saying, "The old saying is the third pays for all. The triplex, sir, is a good tripping measure. Or the bells of St. Benet, sir, may put you in mind - one, two, three." Feste ultimately gets his cash.

Thomas Churchyard was a soldier and poet, and had been in de Vere's service off and on since the 1560s. In his 70s, he had entered into a lease with Julia Penn, a London landlady, who had apartments. De Vere guaranteed the rent, but backed out of paying. Churchyard sought refuge in a nearby house of worship. The Church of St. Benet's of Paul's Wharf was near the apartment.

In the summer of 1575, de Vere was in Venice. Following the coast of present day Croatia, one would come upon the city state of Ragusa in the area known as Illyria. Ragusa is now known as Dubrovnik. By the 16th century, Venetian ships regularly visited Ragusa, which was seen as a safe place for restocking. Ragusa has a place in de Vere's family history. King Richard I shipwrecked near Ragusa, built a cathedral in the city to thank God for delivering him from disaster, continued inland, and was captured. The first Earl of Oxford contributed to paying the king's ransom, and his brother may have accompanied the king. In the 16th century, Ragusa was a place where Slavic, Italian and Ottoman cultures came together. The play is set in an unnamed Illyrian city. A shipwreck off the coast leads a band of travelers to fall in love with the city. Olivia criticizes boorish Toby Belch by saying he is only "fit for the mountains and the barbarous caves, where manners ne'er were preached". The city was most likely Ragusa. There are mountains around the city's harbour and there are networks of caves where pirates and criminals attacked shipping. De Vere likely visited Ragusa, and this visit allowed him to describe it in the play.

The plot for the play is based on the an Italian play by Alessandro Piccolomini called *The Deceived (GI'Ingannath)*. In the Italian play, there are brother sister twins. The sister is in love with a nobleman who is wasting his time on someone else. The sister disguises herself as a male servant, and carries letters between the nobleman and his lover. The twin brother was supposed to be dead, but arrives on the scene and solves the problem by falling in love the nobleman's lover. The twin sister then snags the nobleman. De Vere wrote a letter from Siena dated two days before the Italian play would have been performed. He undoubtedly would have seen the play. This Sieneese play is the basis for *Twelfth Night*.