

LIGHT ON THE SONNETS

By Michael Brame and Galina Popova

At the Second International Congress of Mathematicians that convened in Paris in 1900, the great Goettingen mathematician David Hilbert marked the century's turn with his famous list of twenty-three unsolved problems. His thesis was as simple then as it is apposite today, that mathematics grows and advances through its attention to and subsequent resolution of unsolved problems. Literary criticism is no different, or if it is, it should not be so, for literary problems constitute its very lifeblood, its *raison d'être*.¹

Viewing literary criticism as motivated by its problems brings out the similarity between it and the empirical sciences, while the history of science amply illustrates that puzzles are often solved as a consequence of embracing a powerful new idea motivating a fresh perspective. The old guard is expected to resist such ideas; they may rant and rave and even seek to vilify the new ideas and their authors, very much as we witness today in connection with the Shakespeare authorship debate. Truly, science advances death by death, and the same may be true of literary criticism.

When one encounters a range of problems that cannot be resolved within orthodoxy, a crisis is inevitable. When a new theory or framework is advanced whose effect is to resolve such puzzles by showing that they follow naturally from a bold new hypothesis, real progress ensues and the crisis eventually abates. To illustrate, we will briefly look at three simple puzzles drawn from Shakespeare's sonnets, beginning with Edward George Harman's observation made sometime prior to 1925:

There are many things about the Sonnets which seem quite irreconcilable with their authorship by an actor of humble origin. Among them may be mentioned the complaint in xxix. of being "in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes," when Shakespeare is supposed to have been so successful that he was able to retire on his means to Stratford after ten years' work in London.

Harman [1925: 242]

The attendant problem is that of reconciling Sonnet 29 with William of Stratford's attested fortune. All lovers of Shakespeare's sonnets must have recognized many such "reconciliation" difficulties, including one associated with a line drawn from the second quatrain of Sonnet 10: *For thou art so possessed with murd'rous hate*. Now a commoner would never have provoked a nobleman with such abusive language, and hence we face a second problem of reconciliation. Or consider George Russell French's 1869 observation that Shakespeare was lame, evidenced by a range of sonnets, from which we extract two representative lines.

SONNET 37: So then I am not **lame**, poor, nor despised

SONNET 89: Speak of **my lameness** and I straight will halt;

The parallelism of *lame* with *poor* and *despised* suggests that *lame* is to be interpreted literally, and this accords well with the second example. Shakespeare was lame, but this does not square with what we know of William of Stratford. Again we are faced with a reconciliation problem and back-formation (by claiming that this is evidence that William of Stratford was lame) will not make it go away. Because they cannot adduce independent evidence that their candidate was lame, orthodox critics cannot resolve this last problem within their framework, and many will recognize that is because they have the wrong man.

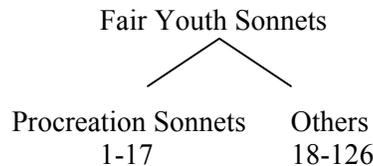
There are many more such puzzles, but these three amply illustrate a pervasive point of criticism going against orthodoxy.² Now enter J. Thomas Looney in 1920 with a bold new

hypothesis concerning Shakespeare’s identity as Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. The hypothesis proves interesting precisely because it bears fruit where the orthodox approach proves barren. In particular, solutions to the three problems are automatically subsumed under it:

- (i) Oxford was in disgrace on numerous occasions.
- (ii) Being the Lord High Chamberlain and a noble earl of ancient stock, Oxford possessed the prerogative of urging another nobleman to action with provocative language.
- (iii) The documentary evidence establishes that Oxford was lame.

Looney resolves a range of such problems with one daring hypothesis. The disgrace-problem, the provocation-problem, and the lameness-problem simply evaporate under it, while orthodox detractors continue along their way by refusing to address the difficulties. The Oxfordian revolution is analogous to what we find in science in the face of powerful new hypotheses considered interesting by resolving outstanding problems, thereby yielding new insights into the nature of things. We must surely award Looney the gold medal for daring to pioneer and revolutionize the field of Shakespearean criticism.

All critics know that Shakespeare’s sonnets are traditionally bifurcated at Sonnet 126, those following it comprising the Dark Lady group (excepting 153 and 154, forming an epilogue to the whole), those preceding and including it constituting the Fair Youth Sonnets (thanks to Malone). The first group is in turn traditionally parsed as shown in the tree diagram below.



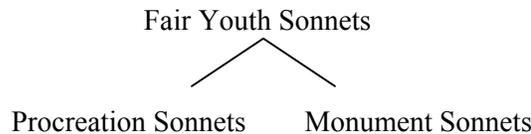
Sonnet 26 would seem to boast a special status, so much so that in 1922, C. C. Stopes could boldly claim that “with the manuscript he [Shakespeare] sent the special sonnet (XXVI)”. The idea of Sonnet 26 as a kind of dedication or envoy is attractive, but a serious problem, one we choose to call the Stopes Problem, arises as a consequence of its relative position within the group designated above as “Others”.

STOPES PROBLEM. How can one reconcile Stopes’ intuition about Sonnet 26 with its relative sequential order?

Now enter Hank Whittemore whose *Monument* was introduced in two articles of the summer issue of *Shakespeare Matters*. He advances an ingenious new hypothesis, one we choose to paraphrase in the following way and to refer to as WH:

WHITTEMORE HYPOTHESIS: The sonnets were written as a monument to the Earl of Southampton with Sonnets 27-126 centering on Southampton’s incarceration in the Tower as a consequence of his role in the Essex Rebellion.

WH induces a novel partition of the Fair Youth Sonnets and with it a fresh conceptual scheme with detailed empirical consequences.



Readers are invited to add “and Others” following each constituent category or to substitute names to suit their fancy. The Procreation Sonnets are divisible into subcategories of Procreation Proper and Others and so too the Monument Sonnets, into Tower Sonnets and Others. According to Whittemore the others in this latter category, Sonnets 107-126, include twenty poems spanning twenty days commencing with Southampton’s liberation by King James and terminating in the Eliza’s Funeral Sonnet 125 and the partially censored envoy 126, and we personally do not exclude the possibility that there may be others interspersed among the genuine Tower Sonnets.

Is WH a bold new approach on the order of Looney’s? Answers to that question may be premature, at least for us, and yet much is already clear. It immediately solves the Stopes Problem, since Sonnet 26 is now realized as a dedication or envoy to the first group of Fair Youth Sonnets, and more importantly, even paramount, the hypothesis takes Tower thinking to a new level, forcing us to rethink our interpretation of many sonnets. Indeed, it provides a framework within which a host of recalcitrant riddles are thereby elucidated and even explained.

To illustrate the latter claim, we recall the twelfth line of Sonnet 33: *The region cloud hath masked him from me now*. No doubt many Oxfordians, including us, have taken *region cloud* to relate to the word ‘regal’ and hence to Regina, who has hidden the fair youth from Oxford. Although such interpretations are on the right path, Whittemore’s approach tenders specificity by identifying the masking as internment in the Tower.³ Can that induced specificity garner independent support? Indeed it can, for the hypothesis yields further clarification of the primary data. To see this, we cite the complete second quatrain of the same sonnet.

Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
 With **ugly rack** on his celestial face,
 And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
 Stealing unseen to West with **this disgrace**.
Sonnet 33, 5-8.

On the pedestrian level one may association the word ‘rack’ with a rack of clouds. The phrase ‘ugly rack’, however, conjures up one important Tudor endpoint for those who were racked, namely the Tower. In other words, imprisoned in the Tower, Southampton bore an ugly rack on his celestial face, while the basest clouds, those responsible for his incarceration, are seen stealing unseen to West. Southampton’s disgrace is Oxford’s, and we derive a new point of contact with Harman’s earlier one vis-a-vis disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes.

We might also query who it was that permitted those basest clouds to ride. From the first quatrain the elliptical subject is identifiable as the sovereign eye, a reading consistent with the fact that the Queen did permit the basest clouds to ride by virtue of allowing Southampton to be tried in consequence of his participation in the Essex rebellion. This reading is consistent with an observation due to Martin Green [1973: 15], who draws on Prince Hal for salience.

Yet herein I imitate the sun,
 Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
 To smother up his beauty from the world,
1Henry4, 1.4, 221.

Thus, there are two suns, heaven’s eye or the golden monarch, and a son who, though stained, is not disdained. Both may appear in the terminal couplet, but we sense that the heaven’s sun is the heaven’s son and that the word ‘heaven’s’ involves a play either on the monarch or perhaps on Oxford.

Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth,
Suns of the world may stain, when heaven's sun staineth.
Sonnet 33, 13-4.

It is clear that WH engenders a unifying effect, as desired of a good scientific hypothesis. It unifies the Tower Sonnets into one conceptual framework, which should perforce lead to further consequences, more clarifications, and interesting new ramifications. To cite but two of these, we note that expectations are borne out by the terminal couplet of Sonnet 69.

But why thy odor matcheth not thy show,
The soil is this, that thou dost **common grow**.
Sonnet 69, 13-4.

Our interpretation of the final line has long been that Shakespeare is claiming that the fair youth has exhibited the traits of a commoner, while WH corrects and redirects such an interpretation: Southampton grew common precisely because he was stripped of his noble titles and rank as a consequence of being found guilty of treason. The Tower theme prevails and our understanding is accordingly advanced.⁴

Indeed, where Whittemore's theory leads might be described as an embarrassment of riches. To mention a second example, it imputes specificity to the opening line of Sonnet 35: *No more be grieved at that which thou hast done*. What Southampton has done is to follow Essex. Or for third example, we recall Shakespeare's use of legal terminology, usually explained by the fact that Oxford studied law. With respect to Sonnet 35, however, Whittemore's thesis is corrective by elucidating the "torrent of legal" terminology as relating in part to the trial and imprisonment of Southampton: *Thy adverse party is thy advocate*. Truly, Oxford was an adverse party within the context of Southampton's trial, both literally and as *adverse = Ed Vere*. But he was also his advocate. Miraculously, so much is now seen to converge under Whittemore's assumptions!

Both Whittemore and William Boyle have emphasized that Tower thought is not completely new. Most Stratfordians today recognize the explanatory value of the Tower interpretation of Sonnet 107, and we have independently proposed a Tower interpretation of several other sonnets.⁵ Whittemore, however, brings it all together in an exciting new way, which will be adjudicated at this early date by some Oxfordians as a genuine breakthrough.

Boyle remarks: "It is all politics, mixed in with the personal views of the writer ..." Indeed, by Whittemore's approach the Tower theme is central and one cannot deny that politics abound. On the other hand, Shakespeare-Oxford is also recounting a story of love, his love for the fair youth, his disappointment in the dark lady, and much more. The genius of Oxford was such that he always related several stories simultaneously.

As we have framed WH, the following proposition is logically independent of it in the sense that one can conceive of scenarios or worlds in which it takes a truth value opposite of WH, even if the two propositions are very much empirically bound up with one another.

QDARKL: Queen Elizabeth was the model for the dark lady of Shakespeare's sonnets.

The same can be said of the next hypothesis.

SOxQ: Southampton was the son of Oxford and Queen Elizabeth.

One may consistently accept WH, as we have framed it, and deny SOxQ and/or QDarkL. It is a mistake, however, to view either or both of QDarkL and SOxQ as hypotheses unworthy of serious discussion, scholarly debate, and future scrutiny. Why is that? For one thing SOxQ is

already suggested by two facts. It is more than obvious that the fair youth is Shakespeare's son.⁶ It is only slightly less obvious that Southampton is the fair youth.⁷ But how does Gloriana enter the picture? Apart from Shakespeare's clear reference to her as the mortal moon in Sonnet 107, we find various clues throughout the sonnets suggesting her presence. We have the famous line from Sonnet 76: *Why write I still all one ever the same*. The phrase *ever the same* is an obvious reference to the Queen's Latin motto *Semper eadem*. And we find additional hints when we return to Sonnet 33 in the phrases 'glorious', 'sovereign eye', and 'region cloud', all of which converge to provide a plausible play on Gloriana, the 'sovereign' queen and the 'regal' monarch. Given one such potential wordplay, we would find the interpretation unclear; in the presence of three striking references, we must concede its confirmation.

Sonnet 33 includes wanton wordplay that is hard to deny and yet many have failed to notice it. First, recall the following lines from Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*.

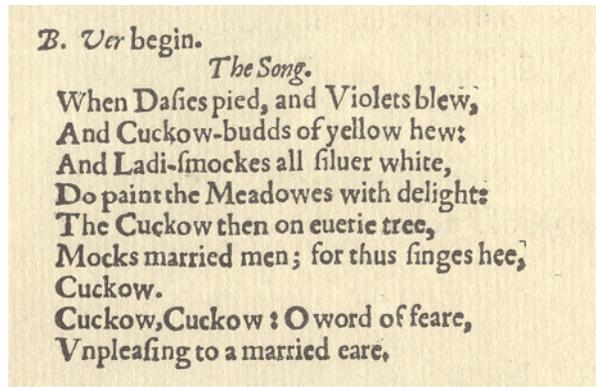
Fondling – she saith – since I have hemmed thee here
 Within the circuit of this ivory pale,
 I'll be a park, and **thou shalt be my deer**:
 Feed where thou wilt, on **mountain** or in dale;
 Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry,
 Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.
Venus and Adonis, 229-34.

The word 'mountain' is clearly a metaphor for a specific female body part. With this knowledge one returns to the initial quatrain of Sonnet 33.

Full many a **glorious** morning have I seen
 Flatter the **mountain tops** with **sovereign eye**,
 Kissing with **golden face** the **meadows green**,
 Gilding **pale streams** with heavenly alchemy;
Sonnet 33, 1-4.

Apart from its literal meaning, brilliant in its own right, this sonnet showcases an erotic interpretation with 'mountain tops' receiving an anatomical meaning consistent with the extract cited from *Venus and Adonis*. This interpretation is clearly supported by the racy reading of Shakespeare's pale streams, one unwittingly unveiled by the orthodox Duncan-Jones [1998: 176] through recognition of the verb 'come' in the original quarto spelling *alcumy*.

Not so obvious are his 'meadows green', but this phrase is clarified by Oxford's incessant play on his family name *Vere*, where 'green' plausibly plays on the Romance root *ver(t)*- found in his favorite languages Latin and French and also by the fact that the word 'meadow' has its counterpart in *Venus and Adonis* as *bottom grass* in the very next stanza to the one cited above. The latter point is supported by two more items of plausible Oxfordian wordplay. To wit, it is the golden or royal face that consummates the kissing, while it is Ed O's green that is so kissed. Clarificatory segmentation of the original 'meddowes' as *edd-owe-s* = *Ed O's* may therefore be warranted, yielding a play on Ed O's grass. Further support for the salacious interpretation of 'meddowes' stems from Oxford's deployment of it in bawdy contexts, one such drawn from the concluding song of *Love's Labor's Lost*, with possible segmentation suggested below in conjunction with the facsimile extract from the quarto edition of 1598.⁸ Looney himself recognized a quibble on the spring *Ver* in this example.



Meadowes = Me-ad-o(wes) = Me, Ed O?

A final example is embedded in *Loves Martyr*, obviously the sole creation of Oxford and established as such in *Never and For Ever*, wherein the Phoenix remarks: *And in my body doth new war commence*, her body, namely the Phoenix Queen’s, then likened to natural topography:

Look round about, behold yon fruitful plain,
Behold their **meadow** plots and pasture ground,
Behold their crystal rivers run amain,
Into the vast huge seas devouring sound,
And in the bowels all her filth is found.

Returning to Sonnet 33, we observe that *glorious* and *sovereign* are so obviously regal in reference, alongside *golden* as the royal color, that we must pause to pose a new question: how comes it that Shakespeare was in a position to witness the sovereign’s mountaintops, to have his meadows kissed by her golden face, and so audaciously to engender pale streams during those many glorious mornings? However critics untutored in Shakespeare’s wanton wordplay may choose to respond, commonsense dictates that the likely outcome of pale streams was a child.⁹ Before rushing to the conclusion that our analysis is unwarranted, detractors should keep these observations in mind when passing to the final quatrain of *Sonnet 33*.

Even so **my sun** one early morn did shine,
With all triumphant splendor on my brow;
But out alack, he was but one hour mine,
The **region cloud hath masked him** from me now.
Sonnet 33, 9-12.

We are here witness to a son disguised as “my sun”, while the masking or stealing of that son from the father is associated with the Queen; by Whittemore’s powerful hypothesis, that son is masked within the Tower. Too many otherwise disparate phenomena come together for our analysis to be fantasy. Too much understanding is advanced for it to be invention. Too much art inheres in the result for it not to be the work and play of genius. We conclude that Sonnet 33 supports both QDarkL and SOxQ. In the same way we are inspired to recall Sonnet 105, which includes the following lines:

Let not **my love** be called idolatry,
Nor my belovèd as an idol show,
Since all alike my songs and praises be

To one, of one, still such, and **ever** so.
Sonnet 105, 104.

Clearly the fair youth is “my love”. Now Shakespeare’s songs and praises are “to one, of one,” where the phrase *to one* must apply to the addressee, namely the fair youth. This, incidentally, provides us with another argument for identifying him as Southampton, since the latter’s motto emphasizes “one”: *Ung par tout, tout par ung*, as also in Sonnet 76. Moreover, as Frances Yates [1975] has taken pains to show, the Queen was eulogized as *Una*, the one universal empress. It therefore makes lovely sense that the one, Southampton, is of the one, *Una*, and ever = E. Vere, whereupon we arrive at the conclusion convergent on that drawn from Sonnet 33 and Sonnet 76.¹⁰ Such convergence militates against detracting claims of fantasy and foul. In this context detractors would be advised to appreciate Shakespeare’s poor flower.

Poor **flower**, quoth she, **this was thy father’s guise**,—
Sweet **issues** of a **more** sweet-smelling sire,—
For every little grief to wet his eyes;
To grow unto himself was his desire,
And so ’tis thine; but know, it is as good
To wither in my breast as in his blood.
Venus and Adonis, 1177-82.

The flower is overtly the “issue” of Adonis’ spilt blood, Adonis being its “father”. The phrase *more sweet-smelling sire* may be deemed overwrought, though not when the sweet-smelling sire is taken to be the Moor, an identification consistent with Oxford-Shakespeare’s identification of himself with Othello. Most arresting is how Venus tenderly takes the flower to her breast.

Here was **thy father’s bed**, here in my breast;
Thou art **the next of blood** and ’tis thy right.
Lo in this hollow cradle take thy rest;
My throbbing heart shall rock thee day and night:
There shall not be one minute in an hour
Wherein I will not kiss my sweet love’s flower.
Venus and Adonis, 1183-8.

The existence of a father implies the existence of a child, the former appearing in the latter as the “guise” of a flower. This interpretation receives support by Venus’ taking the flower child to her breast, and some orthodox critics, including Yates, have recognized Venus as one of the Queen’s poetic instantiations. Clearly Oxford uses it to his own ends in his lyrical masterpiece, and we have suggested elsewhere that the name *Adonis* is a play on the author’s signature *Ed Oxenford*. Indeed, the equation ‘*Ad-o(nis) = Ed O*’ recalls the *meddowes* discussed above.¹¹ All the pieces fit so snugly together with the sonnets as to defy fancy. Moreover, they are supported by the plays, as Shakespeare in that arena exhibits a blood-semen connection, featured for example in the first scene of Act V of *Othello*: *Thy bed, lust-stained, shall with lust’s blood be spotted.*

We sense that the empirical fit is more impressive when we acknowledge that Venus’ flower is the rose. Thus, in Botticelli’s “Birth of Venus”, sometimes called “Venus on a Clam”, the goddess is seen propelled to shore amidst a shower of roses, to be welcomed by a nymph (perhaps one of the three *Horae*) whose offering is a rose. Although Venus’ rose is replaced with the anemone by some authors, we have cogent reasons for concluding that Oxford’s view was consistent with Botticelli’s art. Under his greenest pseudonym he overtly acknowledges the traditional rose and myrtle.

“If Venus,” quoth he, “thou favor me in my loves, I will become thy vowed servant in my life. I will **strew thy altars with roses** and set thee up **shrines at Paphos**. I will bring up my temples **with myrtle bows**, and for the martial garland wear a wreath of flowers.

Ciceronis Amour.

And the link between Venus’ rose and the Tudor rose is explicitly provided in a stanza found in John Davies’ *Hymnes of Astraea*.

R ose of the Queen of love beloved;
E nglands great kings divinely moved,
G ave roses in their banner;
I t showed that Beauty’s rose indeed,
N ow in this age should them succeed,
A nd reign in more sweet manner.

The Queen of love, namely Venus, is linked to the Tudor rose and in turn to Regina. We now recall that Shakespeare refers or alludes to the fair youth in a number of sonnets by reference to a rose. The three dyads cited below are representative, beginning with the very first sonnet wherein we encounter beauty’s *Rose*, with Shakespeare’s capital R and his italics.

From **fairest** creatures we desire increase,
That thereby **beauty’s Rose** might never die,
Sonnet 1, 1-2.

The **Rose** looks **fair**, but **fairer** we it deem
For that sweet odor which doth in it live.
Sonnet 54, 3-4.

For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save **thou my Rose**, in it thou art my all.
Sonnet 109, 13-4.

Many Oxfordians have recognized the additional play on the family name *Vere* via the word ‘fair’ and its derivatives, while all inquisitive minds will naturally seek to understand the reasons for Shakespeare’s rosy terms of endearment consistent with Martha Hale’s remark of 1918:

That Shakespeare should have characterized his friend only tritely and sentimentally is incredible; the ‘rose’ is not an epithet thoughtlessly employed in a series of unsurpassed sonnets, but **a word of some hidden meaning**.

Anyone who truly resonates with the sonnets must surely agree with Hale, who like some later Oxfordians, e.g. Ford [1964: 49], conjectures that Shakespeare’s deployment of the rose correlates with one pronunciation of Wriothesley as “Rosely”. If the conjecture is true, it further confirms the fair youth’s identity as Southampton, even if a second pronunciation corresponds to “Risley”. In fact, Green [1993] has confirmed “rosely” as a bona fide pronunciation by finding spelling variants ‘Wrosley’ and ‘Wrothesley’ among others. He remarks:¹²

The subsequent discovery of the shield at Titchfield which discloses that the Roses of Southampton were in fact employed by the Wriothesley family both as their badge and as a rebus for their name, instantly provides a compelling explanation for Shakespeare’s use

of that metaphor, and ... confirms that Henry Wriothesley is the Rose of Shakespeare's Sonnets ...

Green [1993: 92-3]

The evidence mounts, for the Southampton rose sprang from the Tudor rose, while the Tudor interpretation has been emphasized for many years by Elizabeth Sears, her *Shakespeare and the Tudor Rose* being her most recent statement, wherein she also views the Queen as Beauty. Our desire here has been to establish a connection with *Venus and Adonis* by noting the mythological basis for the rose's presence. Shakespeare's wordplay is often operative on multiple levels, and we find no exception in the merging of the Southampton rose, the Tudor rose, and the rose of Venus within the context of Shakespeare's luminous sonnets.

But let us recall *Venus and Adonis* and ask what more can be said about blood and child? Our personal point of departure remains that Oxford wrote under a range of pseudonyms, the name *Shakespeare* (or *Shake-speare*) being but one of many, including the name *Robert Greene*. When we turn to yet another, whose veracity we vouchsafe in our soon-to-appear *Never and For Ever*, we alight on the following lyrics.

Diana, on a time, walking the wood,
To sport herself, of her fair train forlorn,
Chanced for to **prick her** foot against a **thorn**,
And from thence issued out a **stream of blood**.
No sooner she was vanished out of sight,
But love's fair Queen came there away by chance,
And having of this hap a glim'ring glance,
She put the blood into a crystal bright,

When being now come unto Mount Rhodopé,
With her fair hands she forms a shape of snow,
And blends it with this blood, from whence doth grow
A lovely creature, brighter than the day.

Queen Elizabeth was referred to as Diana in addition to Venus, the latter acknowledged here as "the fair Queen". With the aid of previous observations, readers will easily identify the thorn and the blood. Indeed, in the very next line we learn more about the lovely boy creature who was christened in fair shrine of Paphos as an outgrowth of Diana's pricking. It is paramount that Paphos is the place to which Venus repairs in *Venus and Adonis*, not to be seen following on the spilling of Adonis' blood.

Thus weary of the world, away she hies,
And yokes her silver doves, by whose swift aid
Their mistress mounted through the empty skies,
In her light chariot quickly is conveyed,
Holding their course to **Paphos**, where their **queen**
Means to immure herself and not be seen.
Venus and Adonis, 1189-94.

The rose beckons us back to recall that its budding nature is associated with the fair youth, and thus plausibly to the Southampton rose, but also conceivably to the vernal *Ver*, i.e. the spring with its associated wordplay on the family name *Vere*, as in *Love's Labor's Lost* and elsewhere.

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame

Which, like a canker in the fragrant **rose**,
Doth spot the beauty of **thy budding name!**
O in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!
Sonnet 95, 1-4.

The association of the phrase *budding name* with the name *Wriothesley* makes no good sense if there is not an intimate connection between rosebud and name. Compounding the interpretation is a later line from this same sonnet: *Naming thy name blesses an ill report*. Implicit is the claim that the word ‘Rose’ names a name, namely ‘Wriothesley’, providing cogent confirmation of Hale’s conjecture and adding to Green’s evidence. By Whittemore’s bold hypothesis, the ill report and the shame naturally mesh to relate to Southampton’s incrimination and incarceration.

Only the blind will fail to see a connection between ‘rose’ and ‘name’ in the name ‘Wriothesley’, and its relatedness to Lord S’s dedication found in the Oxford’s *Choise of Valentines*, also known as *Nashe’s Dildo*, cited most recently in Elisabeth Sears [2002: 91] and Paul Altrocchi [2004], but also relevantly in Green [1974: 84; 1993: 91].

Pardon, **sweet flower** of matchless poetry,
And **fairest bud** that **red rose** ever bare;

Of these lines, Green remarked as early as 1974:

These lines so echo Shakespeare’s that one is fortified in the conclusion that both poets were addressing the same person, for either the name of the person addressed inevitably suggested to an Elizabethan poet a pun on the word ‘rose’, or Nashe here was consciously usurping Shakespeare’s pet name for the friend.

Green [1974: 87]

Or, one might emend, *Thomas Nashe* was a pseudonym for Oxford-Shakespeare. Indeed the majority of orthodox critics agree that Lord S is Southampton; he is thus the sweet flower harking back to the flower child of *Venus and Adonis*.¹³ He is also the fairest bud, while the red rose must be the woman who bore him. Interestingly, in unpublished work Nina Green has argued that Nashe is Oxford, and if true we again bear witness to how work written under Oxford’s other pseudonyms clarifies riddles localized within the sonnets proper, including Sonnet 99, to pick one more sonnet exemplifying a spectacular convergence.

The **roses** fearfully on thorns did stand,
One blushing shame, another white despair;
A third nor red nor white **had stol’n of both,**
And to his robb’ry had annexed thy breath,
But for his theft in pride of all his growth
A vengeful canker eat him up to death.
Sonnet 99, 9-12.

If the red rose is the Queen consistent with Nashe’s dedication and the “One” denoting Yates’ Una, we infer that the white rose is Oxford, confirmed by the pun *despair = de Vere*. This choice in turn indicts the fair issue of red and white, the damask rose, as the fair youth, who has stolen, i.e. inherited, from both parents. The phrase ‘annexed thy breath’ confirms this choice, since the fair youth is the addressee.¹⁴

Now Whittemore’s daring hypothesis ushers in, whereby the vengeful canker is pinpointed as the one responsible for Southampton’s incarceration in the Tower, perhaps Robert Cecil, perhaps

the Queen. We conclude that this flower poem, a sonnet denigrated by many orthodox critics, is nothing short of genius.

It is well known that Sonnet 99 relates to a sonnet in *Diana* attributed to Constable. It is less well known that the name *Constable* is another pseudonym for Oxford. Indeed, in *Never and For Ever* we argue that Oxford is responsible for the so-called sonnet craze of the nineties. He was the author of *Diana*, *Diella*, *Licia*, and *Fidessa*, among other sonnet sequences. Significantly, all of these titles are a play on the Queen, either by way of goddess or name. Oxford was also the author of *Emaricdulfe*, a claim we have confirmed in *Shakespeare's Fingerprints* and its sequel, speaking of which we are inspired to note another of Whittemore's claims.

WHITTEMORE TIME CONJECTURE (WTC): In some of Shakespeare's sonnets, *Time* denotes the Queen.

Here we intend to argue neither for WTC nor against it, but we will cite a few lines drawn from *Emaricdulfe*, noting that Oxford speaks of Love as *an eye-bewitching vision thee in seeming*, where the pronoun denotes the woman lurking behind the cryptonym. Love is *more than a god, yet wants a monarchy*, which can only be that of England, i.e. Eliza's. He is most revealingly characterized as a bastard, and one that relates to Time:

Bastard of Nature that to heaven did climb,
To seem the misbegotten heir of Time.
Emaricdulfe, XXXIV, 13-4.

These lines may be related to a line in Sonnet 70: *A crow that flies in **heaven's** sweetest **air***. As clarified by the preceding lines, the crow is a figurative reference to the fair youth's beauty. It follows by parallelism that the phrase 'heaven's sweetest air' also supports a figurative reading and indeed it does, and this result obtains when 'air' is interpreted as a play on 'heir'. This conjecture converges with the figurative reading of 'heaven's sun' in the last line of Sonnet 33 where it was suggested that the word 'heaven' denotes either Elizabeth or de Vere and still further confirmation is found in Sonnet 21 where 'heaven's air' is found not once but twice, in the second and the third quatrains with a most apt comparison with sun and moon and with the word 'fair'.

In view of the convergence of so much potent literary evidence—and there is much more we have not touched on—we conclude that SOxQ is not some Baconian deviation thrust upon the world anew by a rabid clique of Oxfordian noddies for the nonce. Although SOxQ and QDarkL are independent of WH, they are seminal and significant, warranting further study and debate both within and without Whittemore's framework. Our endorsement does not mean that there are no areas where we do not encourage elaboration or revision. Whittemore's ransom thesis, to mention one point, might profitably be tweaked.

WHITTEMORE RANSOM THESIS: "He [Oxford] must sever all ties with him [Southampton] and never claim credit for works attributed to Shakespeare."

This is one possible answer to Gail Paster's question about Shakespeare's identity as reported in the *New York Times*: "Why continue this elaborate literary hoax? Who would need protection at that point?" That some quid pro quo was a condition for Southampton's release from the Tower is more than plausible, but the precise nature of that condition requires amplification. We personally believe that it involved relinquishing all claims to the Tudor throne in favor of the Stuart claim. Thus, we are not at one with refusing credit and would also emphasize that (i) the works written under the *Shakespeare* pseudonym constitute but a fraction of Oxford's total output, even if they are to be seen as a pinnacle and that (ii) Oxford was an insider and hence

unlikely to ever have openly revealed his pseudonyms. Our own answer to Paster's question is independent of any particular pseudonym and is given in *Shakespeare's Fingerprints*. Another area where we urge revision, or rather generalization, relates to the Rival Poet.

WHITTEMORE'S RIVAL POET: "as no other writers in England were seeking or competing publicly for Southampton's attention during his imprisonment, the Rival Poet of the Sonnets can only be the printed name 'Shakespeare' with which Henry Wriothesley was uniquely associated."

We find Whittemore's identification of the rival poet of great interest because it is a special case of a theorem we have independently arrived at. In this connection our hypothesis of multiple pseudonymity comes to the fore in the following conjecture:

GENERAL RIVAL POET HYPOTHESIS: The rival poet of Shakespeare's Sonnets was Oxford himself writing under a range of pseudonyms.

We arrived at this hypothesis through a lengthy and laborious attempt to understand the puzzle of Sonnet 78, whose third line, we believe, provides a key to its solution.

So oft have I invoked thee for my Muse,
And found such fair assistance in my verse,
As **every alien** pen hath got my use,
And under thee their poesy disperse.
Sonnet 78, 1-4.

One quickly grasps that the word 'every' may be another play on E. Vere, reminiscent of Sonnet 76. The remaining hurdle is 'alien pen', which is now comprehensible as "alias pen". We claim that the names contributed toward those aliases were given by "dumb" and "ignorant" name-lenders (in many cases), explaining the next two lines.

Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on high to sing,
And heavy ignorance aloft to fly,

But it is the next line that confirms the hypothesis as smacking of Oxford's genius: *Have added feathers to the **learned's** wing*. In *Secret Shakespeare's Adventures of Freeman Jones* we provided an example of wordplay on Earl Ned via a hyphenation of 'learned' as 'lear-/ned', a special case of what we there called margination wordplay, with 'Ned' an attested variant of Oxford's first name 'Ed'. Here too in the sonnets, the learned earl uses 'learned's wing' to play on Earl Ned's lofty poetic heights. Everything makes harmonious sense when it is further realized that 'feathers' is to be interpreted as analogous to 'weeds' as a guise or mask as in Sonnet 76. Sonnets 82, 85, and 86 further confirm the hypothesis, none of which we will pause to expound other than to remark on the terminal couplet of Sonnet 85.

Then **others** for the breath of words respect,
Me for my dumb thoughts, **speaking in effect**.
Sonnet 85, 13-4.

In other words, Oxford speaks, in effect, through others. Elsewhere we argue that Oxford uses 'other' and 'others' as puns on himself.

Not having seen Whittemore's forthcoming book entitled *The Monument*, it is still premature to speculate on its likely revolutionary character. That said, at this early juncture it appears to us that his approach to the sonnets infuses new life into an old subject by genuinely solving

problems, by unifying facts otherwise disparate and unconnected, and by providing genuine explanations where otherwise we find mere descriptions. This is the hallmark of a right-headed theory. What more could one ask for? An Elizabethan birth certificate, replete with names of mother, father, and son?

NOTES

1. Hilbert's address is reprinted in the appendix to Yandell [2002], a book that is itself an accessible introduction to all of Hilbert's problems. Reid [1970] is an informed well-written account of Hilbert's life.
2. Twenty-five such problems or questions that prove embarrassing for orthodoxy are expounded in Chapter 1 of *Shakespeare's Fingerprints*, to which many more could be added.
3. Another possibility may be envisaged, that the region cloud is the cloud that effectively hides behind Regina, i.e. an effective ruler or regent such as Robert Cecil; this said, we continue to favor the regal interpretation, which has been advanced by many Oxfordians.
4. Since their Shakespeare was a commoner, orthodox critics cannot attain such a result.
5. See page 171-2 of the editorial essay following the main text in *Secret Shakespeare Adventures of Freeman Jones*, where we call *Sonnet 134* the Tower Sonnet. Hotson's well-known Armada interpretation of *Sonnet 107* fails miserably for its inability to explain why Shakespeare's love was supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.
6. We have argued this conclusion at some length in Chapter 5 of *Shakespeare's Fingerprints*.
7. Not only is Southampton the favored fair youth of orthodoxy, the evidence supports that interpretation. The fair youth is addressed as a nobleman in the sonnets; Southampton was the only nobleman to whom Oxford dedicated poetry under the *Shakespeare* pseudonym; the Wriothesley family was overtly associated with the Tudor rose, as discussed at length in Green [1993] and noted below in the main text; and *Sonnet 107* clearly makes reference to the Essex Rebellion of which Southampton was a part. Finally, the only begetter of the sonnets was designated with the reversed initials *W.H.* covertly denoting Henry Wriothesley. Piecing such facts together, one concludes that more than ample evidence motivates the conclusion that Southampton was Shakespeare's fair youth. More evidence for the conclusion will be found in the text below, and still more arguments could be added.
8. Nothing hangs on our segmentation conjecture, as the general argument goes through in its absence. It nevertheless strikes us as plausible in light of the fact that Oxford-Shakespeare employs analogous wordplay elsewhere. For example, upon Romeo's return from a night under Juliet's balcony, his kinsmen cry out:

Benvolio. Here comes Romeo, here comes Romeo.

Mercutio. Without his roe, like a dried herring

As with the initial quatrain of *Sonnet 33*, we may read this last remark on three distinct levels, the literal or pedestrian, the bawdy, and the revelatory. Bawdily, *Mercutio* thinks *Romeo* has expended his roe in *Rosaline*; for the revelatory, removal of *Ro* yields *meo = me O = me Oxford*. These readings are noted in Chapter 0 of *Shakespeare's Fingerprints*, and they invite the interpretation of *meddowes greene* as one in which the *e* is taken as dimorphic, viz. *me eddowe's*. Another idea imputes significance to the sequence *owe* of *meddowes*, viz. *o we(r) = o Ver*, the Oxford Vere. We claim elsewhere that *Rosaline* is modeled on the Queen, here suggested by the resulting isomorphism with the first quatrain of *Sonnet 33*, as well as the name incorporating the Tudor rose, for which see below.

9. This analysis was advanced on pages 166-7 of our editorial essay in *Secret Shakespeare's Adventures of Freeman Jones*, where the added context of Oxford's bawdy novel shows it to be eminently plausible.

10. See the discussion on pages 146-7 in *Secret Shakespeare's Adventures of Freeman Jones*, particularly the Latin poem cited by Yates, which we believe was penned by Oxford.

11. The conjecture is made in Chapter 0 of *Shakespeare's Fingerprints*, where we also expatiate on big O and Will. For a particularly striking play on Will, see our paper on the Stag Sonnet. The Oxfordian significance of this sonnet was remarked in Sears [2002] and Altrocchi [2002]. As an aside, we see the boar as the lusty Vere, consistent with the crest and bearer of his family's achievement, with Adonis' death a metaphor for his passage from chastity to sensuality—death as petite mort.

12. As early as 1974 before he had discovered orthographic evidence, Green had accepted Hale's conjecture in his book on the sonnets, remarking: "Lack of knowledge of the language of Shakespeare's time may make us hesitate to accept this [i.e. the pronunciation 'Rosely'], but sensitivity to the language of Shakespeare's Sonnets permits no other conclusion."

13. The alternative candidate favored by some orthodox critics, including Nicholl [1984], is Lord Strange. Green [1993: Chapter V] argues that Lord S must be Southampton, laying bare the specious nature of Nicholl's argument against Southampton. Green's evidence is reviewed in our forthcoming *Faerie Love* with corrections and additions to Green, where we confirm that Lord S was undeniably Southampton, exactly as Green had concluded, though our reasons differ, at least in part.

14. The senior Ogburns made these identifications in 1952 on page 881 of their massive tome, though it may be added, without motivation. Green [1974: 38-41] gave reasons for making analogous identifications within orthodoxy: the red rose = the dark lady, the white rose = Shakespeare and the damask rose = Southampton. Being orthodox, Green was unable to forge the connection between the white rose and de Vere on the one hand and the red rose and the Queen on the other. Of course he was not privy to Whittemore's revolution, in consequence of which he goes off half-cocked in his own syphilitic interpretation of the terminal couplet of Sonnet 99, as he does more generally throughout his otherwise stimulating study of the sonnets. To arrive at Whittemore via Green in many particular cases, one need only transmute Green's syphilis to Whittemore's Tower!

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