

THE MARRIAGE ALLIANCE

Sonnets 1 – 17

1590-1591

Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, issues a thundering imperial command using the royal “we” adopted by English and European monarchs. Speaking for Queen Elizabeth I as well as for himself, he commands their son, Henry Wriothesley, to marry and beget heirs of his royal blood. He establishes Elizabeth as “Beauty” in the phrase “beauty’s *Rose*” (the latter word italicized and capitalized in the 1609 quarto); in the same breath he sets forth as his overall theme the need to perpetuate Elizabeth’s Tudor Rose Dynasty.

The Tudor dynasty was begun in 1485 by her grandfather (Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, who became Henry VII) when he ended the Wars of the Roses by uniting the Houses of York and the Lancaster.

"This peace began by a marriage solemnized, by God’s special providence, between Henry Earl of Richmond, heir of the house of Lancaster, and Elizabeth, daughter to Edward IV, the undoubted issue and heir of the house of York, *whereby the red Rose and the white were united and joined together. Out of these **Roses** sprang two noble **buds**, Prince Arthur and Henry*, the eldest dying without issue, the other [Henry VIII] of most famous memory, leaving behind him three children, Prince Edward, the Lady Mary, the Lady Elizabeth..."

- *Euphues and his England*, John Lyly, 1580, dedicated to Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, his employer and patron

That thereby *Beauty’s **Rose*** might never die Sonnet 1, line 2

Within *thine own **bud*** buriest thy content Sonnet 1, line 11

Oxford uses the opening two lines of the Sonnets to announce he has begun a chronicle leading to the death of Elizabeth, a decisive turning point in contemporary English history. The succession to her throne will determine the fate of her lineage that has continued for more than a century. The succession will determine whether her dynasty lives or dies upon her death.

Sonnet 1 therefore begins a dynastic diary. The verses of the Fair Youth series, numbered in chronological order, lead inexorably to the royal succession. Because of Elizabeth’s failure to name Southampton as her heir by the time of her death on March 24, 1603, however, the diary will continue to the day of her funeral on April 28, 1603, when her dynasty is officially considered extinguished, followed by the farewell envoy of Sonnet 126.

Oxford is referring to a possible marriage between Southampton and Lady Elizabeth Vere, the eldest daughter by his late wife Anne Cecil, daughter of Burghley. It is by no means clear that Oxford was the girl’s father, however. Oxford was in Italy during 1575 when he got word that she had been born; upon his return to England the following year, amid widespread Court gossip that he was not the biological father, he refused to see the child and physically separated from his wife. He remained apart from Anne for more than five years until late 1581, when young Henry

Wriothesley entered Cecil House as a royal ward of the Queen, following the death of his supposed father.

The timing of these events indicates Oxford made a deal with Burghley in 1581; that is, he agreed to reunite with Anne Cecil in return for his father-in-law's future support for the succession of Southampton to the throne. Cecil's backing is conditional upon the younger earl's eventual marriage to his granddaughter and the securing of an heir to solidify the union. Now that time has come and Oxford implores his son to hurry up and complete the alliance.

These first seventeen sonnets are compiled as "numbers" to reflect Southampton's seventeen birthdays (1575-1591) and his reaching the age of seventeen in 1591:

"And in fresh numbers number all your graces" Sonnet 17, line 6

It is also significant that the seventeen sonnets come from the pen of the seventeenth earl.

(Elizabeth, given her popular image as the Virgin Queen, would never proclaim Southampton as her natural son and successor. In reality she never named King James as her successor, even on her deathbed, so it is plain that such a declaration from the monarch was never actually needed. When she died it was William Cecil Lord Burghley's son Robert Cecil, by then the Secretary of State, who stated that the Queen had named James – the son of Mary Queen of Scots, whom Elizabeth had executed in February 1587, because of the machinations of Burghley himself.

(The Cecils aimed to engineer the succession so that they could remain in power no matter who wore the crown. If the proud and hotheaded Southampton had chosen to enter a Cecil alliance-by-marriage and to accept their support, it is probable he would have become King Henry IX of England. The price, however, would have been Cecilian domination – the price Elizabeth had paid for her throne and safety. Southampton would have none of that.)

Southampton is well aware he was born in May/June 1574 as the natural son of Oxford and the Queen. He also knows Oxford denied his paternity of Elizabeth Vere upon her birth in 1575; thus, if he accepted Elizabeth Vere as his wife, he would not be marrying his half-sister. In any case, his opposition to the marriage proposal is based on political judgment and on genuine differences with the Cecils. Southampton is stubbornly refusing the bargain, preferring to ally himself with Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex (1566-1601), in opposition to William Cecil's power to direct England's future.

The two earls are far more committed to military solutions against Spain and its goal of world conquest. Essex and Southampton are also less Puritan-minded and more tolerant of the Catholic population in England. They, like Oxford, are looking forward to further English exploration and discovery. And they are humanists deeply committed not only to learning but also to the developing national identity in the arts including poetry and the drama. By turning his back on the political advice urged upon him by the Earl of Oxford, his father, Southampton ironically shows himself, above all, to be Shakespearean.

"Had the first seventeen sonnets reached us alone and not as part of the conglomerate of the 1609 quarto, their date and purpose would have been universally recognized long ago ... Though Southampton persisted to the end in his refusal to marry Lady Elizabeth Vere, it was not for want of urging of marriage by William Shakespeare." – G. P. V. Akrigg, "Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton", 1968

**THE MARRIAGE
ALLIANCE**

**Sonnet 1
Beauty's Rose
1590-1591**

Edward de Vere commands Southampton to marry Lady Elizabeth Vere – his own daughter of record (but probably not his biological child) and (more importantly) the granddaughter of William Cecil Lord Burghley – and thereby enter into a family alliance with the Queen's chief minister. The young earl's acceptance, which would include begetting an heir to make the marriage a binding one, is the condition upon which Burghley will lend his crucial support to Southampton's claim as Elizabeth's successor – so that "beauty's Rose" (Elizabeth's dynasty of the Tudor Rose) might not die when she does.

Sonnet 1

Translation

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's *Rose* might never die,
But as the ripener should by time decease
His tender heir might bear his memory:

But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial
fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thy self thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel:

Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,
And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
And, tender churl, mak'st waste in
niggarding:

Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave
and thee.

From our royal son the Queen and I command heirs,
So Elizabeth's Tudor Rose dynasty may not perish,
But as you, the older heir, should eventually die,
Your royal heir might continue your bloodline:

But you, wedded to your own royal blood,
Feed its source with its own power,
Creating emptiness where royalty exists;
You your enemy, too cruel to your royal self:

You who are now England's royal prince,
And only successor as king in the new reign,
Are hiding your Tudor Rose within its own bud,
And, royal miser, you waste it by hoarding.

Pity England! Or else be this irresponsible glutton,
To bury England's due [to have you as king] in your
own grave and person.

Sonnet 1

1 FROM FAIREST CREATURES WE DESIRE INCREASE,

“If the favored youth were the Earl of Southampton ... the Sonnets should start about 1590 or 1591.” - G. Wilson Knight, *The Mutual Flame*, 1962, p. 3

FAIREST = most royal; “The king is full of grace and *fair* regard” – *Henry V*, 1.1.222; “Take her, *fair* son, and from her blood raise up issue to me” – the French king to King Henry V of England in *Henry V*, 5.2.340-341; “my *fair* son” – *Richard II*, 5.2.92; also, *Fair* = *Vere* (pronounced *Vair*)

But thou art *fair*, and at thy birth, dear boy,
Nature and fortune joined to make thee great *King John*, 2.2.51-52

O Lord! My boy, my Arthur, my *fair* son! *King John*, 3.3.103

For how art thou a king
But by *fair* sequence and succession? *Richard II*, 2.1.198-199

In the earliest verses, i.e., the Bath prologue of Sonnets 153-154, concerning Elizabeth’s refusal to acknowledge the son born in May/June 1574, the Queen herself was “the *fairest* votary” as in “But in her maiden hand/ The *fairest* votary took up that fire/ Which many legions of true hearts had warmed,/ And so the General of hot desire (the newly born prince)/ Was sleeping *by a Virgin hand disarmed*” – Sonnet 154, lines 4-8; and at the very end of the Dark Lady series to Elizabeth, when all hope for their son is lost, Oxford bitterly tells her: “For I have sworn thee *fair*: more perjured eye,/ To swear against the truth so foul a lie!” – Sonnet 152, lines 13-14; and in the special language of the Sonnets, young Henry Wriothesley has inherited this *fair* quality from his mother the Queen.

That *we*, the *sons* of brave Plantagenet,
Each one already blazing my our meeds,
Should notwithstanding join our lights together,
And over-shine the earth, as this the world.
Whate’er it bodes, henceforth will I bear
Upon my target three *fair*-shining suns. *3 Henry VI*, 2.1.35-40

CREATURES = living or created beings, children; “The *majesty of the creature in resemblance to the mother*” – *Winter’s Tale*, 5.2.36; “I shall see *my boy* again; for since the birth of Cain, the first male child ... there was not *such a gracious creature born*. But now will canker-sorrow eat *my bud* and chase *the native beauty* from his cheek” – *King John*, 3.3.78-83; also “creations” of the monarch, such as earls of the first or second creation; Southampton is therefore a *created* earl or *creature* (servant) of the Queen, in addition to being her child; “Slandering *Creation* with a false esteem” – Sonnet 127, line 12, written in 1601 when Southampton is in the Tower and accusing Queen Elizabeth of preventing her son (her *Creation*) from being able to succeed her on the throne; “That you *create our emperor’s eldest son*” – *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.228; “Most *sovereign creature*” – spoken to Queen Cleopatra (modeled on Elizabeth) in *Antony and Cleopatra*, 5.2.80

Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch
One of her feathered *creatures* broke away
Sets down her babe... Sonnet 143, lines 1-3

“I have heard that guilty *creatures* sitting at a play” – *Hamlet*, 2.2.590-591; “My king is tangled in affection to a *creature* of the queen’s, Lady Anne Bullen” – *Henry VIII*, 3.2.35-36; “This fellow here, Lord Timon, this thy creature” – *Timon of Athens*, 1.1.119; “Your honour has through Ephesus poured forth your charity, and hundreds call themselves your *creatures*, who by you have been restored” – to Lord Cerimon in *Pericles*, 3.2.43-45

FAIREST CREATURES = Most royal children, i.e., Southampton, son of Queen Elizabeth; as her child, he possesses her “beauty” or royal Tudor blood and therefore reflects it as the “fair” young nobleman.

WE = Oxford and Elizabeth, his parents, but also the royal “we” of the monarch; “Once more *we* sit in England’s royal throne” – *3 Henry VI*, 5.7.1; “Have *we* ... taken to wife” – the King in *Hamlet*, 1.2.10,14; “Elizabeth, to the Treasurer and Chamberlains of our Exchequer, Greeting: *We*...” – Privy Seal Warrant signed by Queen Elizabeth on June 26, 1586, authorizing Oxford’s yearly grant in the equivalent of Secret Service funds from the Government Treasury

“**WE** = the plural style is also in use among kings and other sovereigns, and is said to have been begun by King John of England. Before that time, monarchs used the singular number in their edicts. The German and the French sovereigns followed the example of King John in A. D. 1200”
- *Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary*

DESIRE = to order or command; “*Desire* the earl to see me in my tent” – *Richard III*, 5.3.28

WE DESIRE = we, Queen Elizabeth and I, your parents, command with all our authority ... how the said qualification in point of title may be performed accordingly as *we desire*” – Queen Elizabeth to William Davison, April 27, 1586 (*Elizabeth I Collected Works*, 279); “For your intent in going back to school in Wittenberg, it is most retrograde to *our desire*” – the King in *Hamlet*, 1.2.118-120;

INCREASE = offspring, progeny, heirs of your blood; procreation through marriage to perpetuate your lineage; and by having a child, making the marriage a binding one; “Upon the earth’s *increase* why shouldst thou feed,/ Unless the earth with *thy increase* be fed?/ By law of nature thou art bound to breed,/ That thine may live when thou thyself art dead” – *Venus and Adonis*, 169-172, dedicated to Southampton by Oxford as “William Shakespeare” in 1593; while Southampton is being urged to produce “increase” of his own, he himself is the “increase” of Oxford and Elizabeth: “The teeming autumn big with *rich increase*,/ Bearing the wanton burthen of the prime,/ Like widowed wombs after their lord’s decease” – Sonnet 97, lines 5-8

2 THAT THEREBY BEAUTY’S ROSE MIGHT NEVER DIE,

BEAUTY = Elizabeth as Venus, goddess of Love and Beauty, as depicted in *Venus and Adonis* of 1593, dedicated to Southampton; “Touching the beauty of this Prince, her countenance, her personage, her majesty, I cannot think that it may be sufficiently commended, when it cannot be too much marveled at: so that I am constrained to say as *Praxitiles* did, when he began to paint *Venus* and *her Sonne*, who doubted whether the world could afford colors good enough for two such *fair* faces, and I whether our tongue can yield words to blaze that *beauty*” – *Euphues and his England*, John Lyly, 1580, dedicated to Oxford; Arber (1868), 457; “*Sonne*,” “*fair*” and “*beauty*” are in added italics

ROSE = (Italicized in *Q*); The Tudor Rose; the House of Tudor and its Dynasty, combining the red and white roses of the Houses of Lancaster and York; *Rosa Sine Spina* or *Rose Without a Thorn* – one of Elizabeth’s mottoes; “The *red rose* and the *white* are on his face, the fatal colors of our striving houses” – *3 Henry VI*, 2.6.97-98

BEAUTY’S ROSE = Elizabeth Regina’s dynasty of the Tudor Rose:

R ose of the Queene of Loue belou'd ;
E ngland's great Kings diuinely mou'd,
G ave Roses in their banner ;
I t shewed that Beautie's Rose indeed,
N ow in this age should them succeed,
A nd raigne in more sweet manner. – Sir John Davies, *Hymnes of Astraea*, 1599

NEVER = Ever = Edward de Vere, *Ever or Never*; **DIE** = come to an end, i.e., the House of Tudor ending upon Elizabeth's death; "Here burns my candle out; ay, *here it dies*, which while it lasted, gave King Henry light" – 3 *Henry VI*, 2.6.1-2; "The *cease of majesty dies* not alone" – *Hamlet*, 3.3.15-16

3 BUT AS THE RIPER SHOULD BY TIME DECEASE,

THE RIPER = the older, Southampton; "In him there is a hope of government ... and, in his full and ripened years, himself, no doubt shall then, and till then, govern well" – *Richard III*, 2.3.12-15

BY TIME = This diary itself is written according to time, calculated by the ever-waning life and reign of Elizabeth, leading to her death and the succession; and that time itself was indicated by the years of her reign (i.e., regnal years), as in "*the 10th year of Elizabeth*," etc.

4 HIS TENDER HEIR MIGHT BEAR HIS MEMORY:

TENDER = royal, according to Oxford's "invention" or special language; "When he was but *tender-bodied*, and the only son of my womb" – *Coriolanus*, 1.1.5-6; **HIS TENDER HEIR** = Southampton's own royal heir in succession to him; "The king shall live *without an heir*" – *Winter's Tale*, 3.3.16; "beauty's *successive heir*" – Sonnet 127, line 3; "rightful *heir to the crown*" – 2 *Henry VI*, 1.3.26; "But if the *first heir of my invention* prove deformed" – dedication of *Venus and Adonis* to Southampton

"We note that the terms Shakespeare uses here – *succession, heir, issue* – he elsewhere applies to the paramount problems of royalty" – Hotson, 1965

BEAR HIS MEMORY: be a living reminder of the father; "the metaphor is heraldic: the resemblance of the child's face is likened to the bearing of heraldic arms" – Booth; "What holier than, for royalty's repair, for present comfort, and for future good, to bless the bed of majesty again with a sweet fellow to't?" – *Richard III*, 5.1.31-34

5 BUT THOU, CONTRACTED TO THINE OWN BRIGHT EYES,

CONTRACTED = betrothed or wedded to; a play on the marriage contract that Oxford is urging his royal son to make with Elizabeth Vere; "For first *he was contract to Lady Lucy*" – *Richard III*, 3.7.178; drawn together: "and our whole kingdom to be *contracted* in one brow of woe" – *Hamlet*, 1.2.4; **BRIGHT EYES** = royal eyes (suns or stars), reflecting your blood; "Yet *looks he like a king*: behold *his eye, as bright* as is the eagle's, *lightens forth controlling majesty*" – *Richard II*, 3.3.68-70; "those *princely eyes* of thine" – *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.434; "the motion of a *kingly eye*" – *King John*, 5.1.47

6 FEED'ST THY LIGHT'S FLAME WITH SELF-SUBSTANTIAL FUEL,

THY LIGHT'S FLAME = your powerful source of royal blood; "the aspiring *flame of golden sovereignty*" – *Richard III*, 4.4.328-329; of the infant boy, to later become Southampton, speaking of the fire of his royal blood: "And his *love-kindling fire* ... This *holy fire of love*" – Sonnet 153, lines 3 and 5; "his *heart-inflaming brand* ... *that fire* ... *Love's fire* heats water, water cools not love" – Sonnet 154, lines 2, 5, 14; **LIGHT** = the light that shines from Southampton as sun (royal son) or star; his eyes are suns or stars, as in "And scarcely greet me with *that sun, thine eye*" – Sonnet 49, line 6; "when those *suns of glory, those two lights of men* (two monarchs), met in the vale of Andren" – *Henry VIII*, 1.1.5-7

For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,

When *thou thyself dost give invention light?* Sonnet 38, lines 7-8

Nativity, *once in the main of light,*
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being *crowned,*
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight. Sonnet 60, lines 5-7

"I have engaged myself so far in Her Majesty's service *to bring the truth to light*"
- Oxford to Burghley, June 13, 1595

SELF-SUBSTANTIAL FUEL = royal blood's own power; "Fuel of the substance of the flame itself" – Dowden

7 MAKING A FAMINE WHERE ABUNDANCE LIES,

FAMINE/ABUNDANCE = empty of royal blood versus the fact that you have abundant royal blood in you; no royal claim or succession versus a great claim to be king; **ABUNDANCE** = great store of royal blood; "As a decrepit *father* takes delight/ To see *his active child* do deeds of youth./ So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite./ Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth/ ... That I in *thy abundance* am sufficed./ And by a part of *all thy glory* live" – Sonnet 37, lines 1-4, 11-12

8 THY SELF THY FOE, TO THY SWEET SELF TOO CRUEL:

THY SELF = your royal person; "Make thee another *self* (child) for love of me" – Sonnet 10, line 13; "his great self" – *Henry VIII*, 3.2.336; "his *royal self*" – *Henry VIII*, 5.2.154; "thy gracious self" – *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.113; **SWEET SELF** = royal self; "Good night, *sweet prince*" – *Hamlet*, 5.2.385; "And happily may *your sweet self* put on the lineal state and glory of the land!" – *King John*, 5.7.101-105; at the very end of the Fair Youth series, in the envoy of Sonnet 126, Southampton's royal person remains: "O Thou my lovely Boy, who in thy power/ Dost hold time's fickle glass, his sickle hour,/ Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st/ Thy lovers withering, as *thy sweet self* grow'st" – Sonnet 126, lines 1-1

9 THOU THAT ART NOW THE WORLD'S FRESH ORNAMENT

THE WORLD'S FRESH ORNAMENT = England's royal prince with right to succession; Oxford records for posterity that Henry Wriothesley is the Prince of England and stands supreme in succession to Elizabeth as King Henry IX. Later, during 1601-1603 when his son has been reduced to the status of a "base commoner" imprisoned for high treason, Oxford will write of him as "a *jewel* hung in ghastly night" in Sonnet 27, line 11, and declare of him: "As on the finger of a *throned Queen*,/ The basest *Jewel* will be well esteemed" in Sonnet 96, lines 5-6; "our *prince*, *Jewel of children*" – *The Winter's Tale*, 5.1.115-116; "Who heaven itself (Elizabeth herself) for *ornament* doth use" – Sonnet 21, line 3

"I leave it to your Honourable survey, and your Honour to your heart's content, which I wish may always answer your own wish, and *the world's hopeful expectation*. Your Honour's in all duty, William Shakespeare" – Dedication by Oxford as "Shakespeare" to Southampton of *Venus and Adonis*, publicly addressing him in language also meaning "*the world's fresh ornament*" or England's most royal prince

My father is gone wild into his grave,
For in his tomb lie my affections;
And with his spirits sadly I survive,
To mock *the expectation of the world* - Prince Hal, the future King Henry V
2 *Henry IV*, 5.2.123-126

FRESH = Within the chronological diary of the Fair Youth series, "fresh" appears as a marker for three separate time periods: (1) Southampton is "*fresh*" in Sonnets 1-26, during his golden years of opportunity up to 1600; (2) he is no longer "*fresh*" in Sonnets 27-106, during his two years and two months in prison for the Rebellion of February 8, 1601; and (3) upon his release from the Tower on April 10, 1603, Oxford will proclaim in Sonnet 107 that once more "my love looks

fresh”; “And that *fresh blood* which youngly thou bestow’st” – Sonnet 11, line 3; “Since first I saw you *fresh*, which yet are green” – Sonnet 104, line 8, referring to the “first” period of his son’s life; “My love looks *fresh*” – Sonnet 107, line 10; “Thus did I keep my person *fresh* and new” – the King in *1 Henry IV*, 3.2.55

10 AND ONLY HERALD TO THE GAUDY SPRING,

And the chief flower of the Tudor Rose to begin a new, glittering rein on the throne

ONLY = chief, peerless; “One, of which there exist no others of this kind” – *OED*; “The *only ruler* of princes” – Book of Common Prayer, 1559; “the *onlie* begetter of these ensuing sonnets” – Dedication of the Sonnets in 1609; “And left behind him Richard, his *only son*” – *2 Henry VI*, 2.2.18; “And disinherited *thine only son*” – *3 Henry VI*, 1.1.232; “mine *only son*” – *3 Henry VI*, 2.5.83; “When yet he was but tender-bodied, and *the only son* of my womb” – *Coriolanus*, 1.1.5-6

HERALD = heir to the throne; “May one that is a *herald and a prince* do a *fair* message to his kingly eyes?” – *Troilus and Cressida*, 1.3.217-218; an officer who records and blazons the arms of the nobility; proclaimer, harbinger; **GAUDY** = appearing like a jewel, i.e., ornament of the Queen; related to “gauds” or beads of the Rosary, and to Oxford’s conception of these sonnets as hymns or prayers to his royal son as a king or god on earth; **SPRING** = new reign; related to Edward Vere, i.e., spring is Ver in Latin; “This side is Hiems, Winter, this *Ver*, *the Spring* ... Ver, begin.” – *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, 5.2.884-886

11 WITHIN THINE OWN BUD BURIEST THY CONTENT,

BUD = Southampton as the budding flower of the Tudor Rose Dynasty; “Rough winds do shake the *darling buds of May*” – Sonnet 18, line 3; and after the Rebellion, when Southampton is in disgrace in the Tower: “*Roses have thorns*, and silver fountains mud,/ Clouds and eclipses stain both *Moone and Sunne* (Elizabeth & Southampton),/ And *loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud*” – Sonnet 35, lines 2-4; “The canker blooms have full as deep a dye/ As the perfumed tincture of *the Roses*,/ Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly/ When summer’s breath their *masked buds* discloses” – Sonnet 54, lines 5-8; “The *lily* I condemned for thy hand,/ And *buds* of marjoram had *stol’n thy hair*,/ *The Roses* fearfully on thorns did stand,/ One blushing shame, another white despair” – Sonnet 99, lines 6-9, describing the theft or loss of Southampton’s claim to the throne as Elizabeth’s “hair” or heir.

If that be true, I shall see *my boy* again;
For since the birth of Cain, the first male child,
To him that did but yesterday suspire,
There was not such a gracious creature born.
But now will canker-sorrow eat *my bud*
And chase *the native beauty* from his cheek *King John*, 3.3.78-83

THY CONTENT = your royal blood and identity; your substance; “What is your *substance*, whereof are you made” – Sonnet 53, line 1; also a glance at “content” as “contentment”, as in: “Were I a king I might command *content*” – poem attributed to Oxford

12 AND TENDER CHURL MAK’ST WASTE IN NIGGARDING

TENDER = royal; “The *tender prince*” – *Richard III*, 3.1.28; **TENDER CHURL** = royal miser; spoken from Oxford as father to his “tender” son, accusing him of being stingy; “My master is of *churlish* disposition” – *As You Like It*, 2.4.79; **WASTE** = loss of royal succession; the Sonnets will become “the *Chronicle of wasted time*” in Sonnet 106, line 1; **NIGGARDING** = hoarding of royal blood, as opposed to passing it on

13 PITY THE WORLD, OR ELSE THIS GLUTTON BE,

THE WORLD = England; “Wherein I lived *the greatest prince o’th’world*” – Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*, 4.15.56; “I leave it to your Honourable survey, and your Honour to your heart’s content, which I wish may always answer your own wish, and *the world’s hopeful expectation*” –

dedication of *Venus and Adonis*, 1593, by Oxford as “Shakespeare” to Southampton; “And with his spirits sadly I survive to mock *the expectation of the world*” – Prince Hal, now King Henry the Fifth, referring to the death of his father and his own ascendancy in *2 Henry IV*, 5.3.125-126

PITY THE WORLD = take pity on England; “Thou dost beguile *the world*, unless some mother” – Sonnet 3, line 4; “Ah, if thou issueless shalt hap to die,/ *The world* will wail thee like a makeless wife,/ *The world* will be thy widow and still weep/ That thou no form of thee hast left behind/ ... Look what an unthrift in *the world* doth spend/ Shifts but his place, for still *the world* enjoys it;/ But *beauty’s waste hath in the world an end*” – Sonnet 9, lines 3-6, 9-11; “Your name from hence immortal life shall have,/ Though I, once gone, to *all the world* must die” – Sonnet 81, lines 5-6; “Not mine own fears nor the prophetic soul/ Of *the wide world* dreaming on things to come” – Sonnet 107, lines 1-2; “You are *my all the world*” – Sonnet 112, line 5

“This estate (England) hath depended on you a great while, as *all the world* doth judge” – Oxford to Burghley, September 1572

“This might have been done through private conference before, and had not need to have been the fable of *the world*” – Oxford to Burghley, April 27, 1576

“But *the world* is so cunning, as of a shadow they can make a substance, and of a likelihood a truth” – Oxford to Burghley, July 1581

GLUTTON = a greedy devourer of your own royal blood, wasting it and depriving England of your succession to the throne; “Most holy and religious fear it is to keep those many bodies safe that live and *feed upon your Majesty*” – *Hamlet*, 3.3.7-10; indirectly related to the “feasting” of the royal person or blood, as in “Therefore are *feasts* so solemn and so rare” – Sonnet 52, line 5; “and so my state, seldom, but sumptuous, show’d like a *feast*” – the King in *1 Henry IV*, 3.2.55-58

14 TO EAT THE WORLD’S DUE, BY THE GRAVE AND THEE.

THE WORLD’S DUE = the debt of kingship that you owe England

“My gracious lord! My father! This sleep is sound indeed; this is a sleep that from this golden rigol hath divorced so many English kings. *Thy due from me* is tears and heavy sorrows of the blood, which nature, love, and filial tenderness shall, O dear father, pay thee plenteously. *My due from thee is this imperial crown, which, as immediate as thy place and blood, derives itself to me*” – Prince Hal in *2 Henry IV*, 4.5.33-46

So when this loose behavior I throw off,
And *pay the debt* I never promised Prince Hal in *1 Henry IV*, 1.3.203-204
(Declaring he will become king)

Of this proud king, who studies day and night
To answer all the *debt he owes* to you *1 Henry IV*, 1.3.182-183

That *due of many* now is *thine alone* Sonnet 31, line 12

If some suspect of ill masked not thy show,
Then thou alone *kingdoms of hearts shouldst owe* Sonnet 70, lines 13-14

BY THE GRAVE AND THEE = taking this royal gift with you and your mortal body to the grave; “What is thy body but a *swallowing grave*,/ Seeming to *bury that posterity*, which by rights of time thou needs must have” – *Venus and Adonis*, 1593, 757-762, dedicated to Southampton; “to *bury and ensevel* your works in *the grave of oblivion*” – Oxford’s prefatory letter to *Cardanus’ Comfort*, 1573; after the Rebellion of February 8, 1601, Southampton in the Tower will be “the *grave where buried love* doth live” in Sonnet 31, line 9, with *love* referring to his royal blood that he carries within himself and that will die with him if he is executed.

A doubtful choice, of these three which to crave,
A kingdom or a cottage or a grave

Earl of Oxford

1590

April 6, 1590: Death of Secretary of State Francis Walsingham, head of the Secret Service organization dedicated to intelligence gathering. The post will remain vacant for six years while Lord Burghley grooms his son, Robert Cecil, to take over. Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, now attempts to put forth his own candidate, signaling the onset of the great struggle for power between him and the Cecils. At the same time, Southampton is becoming a boon companion to Essex, who also had been a royal ward of the Queen in Burghley's custody, though he had spent little time at Cecil House.

July 15, 1590: The first recorded evidence of William Cecil's plan for Southampton to marry his granddaughter is a letter to Cecil from Sir Thomas Stanhope, who had made an overture for the marriage of the young earl to his own daughter. Upon discovering that Burghley had already made a preemptive bid, Stanhope promptly apologized to the Lord Treasurer for "so treacherous a part toward your honor, having evermore found myself so bound unto you as I have done." He added, "I name it treachery, because I heard (that) before then you intended a match that way to the Lady Vayre (Vere)." (Stopes, 36-37; D.S.S.P. Eliz XXXIII, 11)

September 19, 1590: By now the marriage proposal has been in play for almost a year. The young earl's grandfather, Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague, now writes to Burghley that he and the Countess of Southampton "have laid abroad unto him both the commodity and hindrances likely to grow unto him" if he refuses the marriage. Montague says Southampton recalled that "your Lordship (Cecil) was this last winter well pleased to yield unto him a further respite of one year to ensure resolution in respite of his young years." But Montague reminded him "that this year which he speaketh of is now almost up, and therefore the greater reason for you Lordship in honor and in nature to see your child (granddaughter) well placed and provided for..." (Oxfordian Vistas, 179; D.S.S.P. Eliz. XXXIII.71; Stopes, 37-38)