Thomas Thorpe's Epigram to Edward de Vere

The Poet of the Sonnets

David L. Roper © 2011

Although Thomas Thorpe's preface to **"SHAKE–SPEARES SONNETS"** is written in such outrageous language as to be an affront to grammar, the reason for this was never seriously considered. It is true that many have complained about it. Leslie Hotson even went so far as to call it a cryptogram, and then offered to solve it. The solution he came up with was more pathetic than sensible, but since he was working from the premise that Shakespeare was a literary prodigy, born in Stratford-upon-Avon, one can understand it was the best he could find under such limiting circumstances.

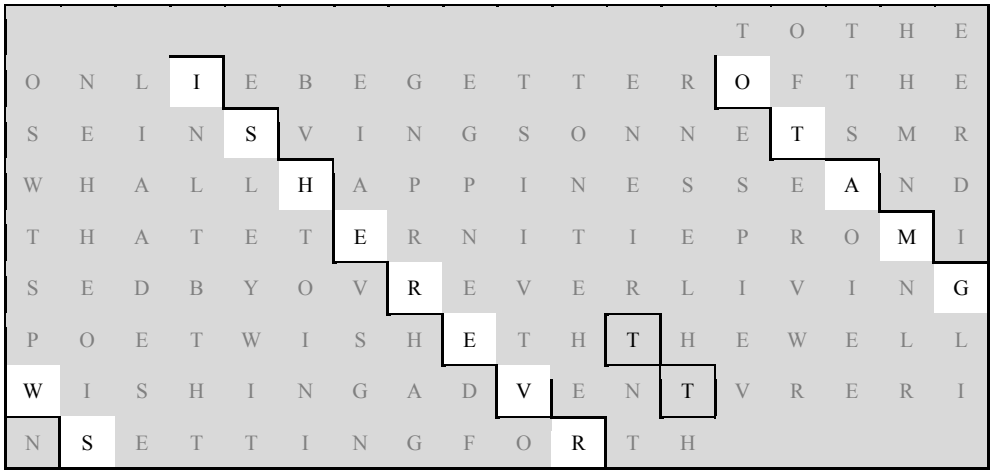
Since Hotson's attempt at a solution, Thorpe's preface has undergone a much closer examination. For an **"awkwardness of phrasing",** such as it demonstrates, is a point commented upon by David Kahn in his book, *The Codebreakers.* Kahn declared such awkwardness was always likely to occur when a cipher of the ELS (Equidistant Letter Sequencing) type has been inserted into a piece of text.

Arising from this study, was Dr John Rollett's double decryption. He discovered that by marking off the sixth, second and fourth words in the preface, which he deduced from the way the preface had been set out in the form of three inverted pyramids consisting of six, two and four lines, the selected words revealed a hidden phrase: **"THESE SONNETS ALL BY E VER THE FORTH"**. He then went further, and discovered that by applying an ELS of 15, the name HENRY appeared; and that with an ELS of 18 it produced HENRY'S surname, WRIOTHESLEY, the 3rd Earl of Southampton.

From these findings, I was able to show that by placing HENRY WRIOTHESLEY onto a single grille, there were two ELSs, both terminating at the same letter 'Y'. The probability that this would occur by chance was calculated to be once in 1,522 attempts. Scientifically speaking, a probability value at this level, occurring from a single trial, especially when it also appears within a piece of text that refers to this youth, would be considered far too improbable to have occurred randomly. But, when this probability value is combined with that of calculating the chance occurrence of the exact letters that spell HENRY and ESLEY, both of which are required to fill the two ELSs terminating at the 82nd letter; any lingering doubts that this may still have happened by chance can be strenuously dismissed, for the probability value decreases into many trillions to one. It would be akin to owning that one had found a specified grain of sand on the beach at the first attempt while wearing a blindfold.

The surprise, however, is not that Thorpe's preface managed to include both encryptions into a piece of text containing just 144 letters, but that he also included another in the same narrative. This other encryption runs the entire length of the preface, thus minimising the probability of chance to a far lesser extent than that calculated for the encryption of Henry Wriothesley. It was discovered using the same mathematical algorithm as that employed for Ben Jonson's statement: **"SO TEST HIM I VOW HE IS E DE VERE AS HE SHAKSPEARE: ME B. I."** And it reads **"TO VERE HIS W. S. GRAM"**.

We can now inspect this encrypted tribute and analyse the way it has been constructed.



The grille is consructed with the same number of rows and columns as before. Note, also the initials of Thorpe's name, T. T. These appear on each of the deciphered messages, although a number of other grilles also include these letters twinned together. Essentially, it is the array of letters that cover the entire text from beginning to end that demand attention. They follow an unbroken sequence of: 9,10,9,10,9,10,9,10,9,10,9,10,9,10,9. The letters they reveal, in the order they appear, are given on the second line of the box below. They can then be compared with the intended message.

T	**O**		**V**	**E**	**R**	**E**	**H**	**I**	**S**	**W**	**S**	**G**	**R**	**A**	**M**
T	**O**	R	**V**	**E**	**R**	**E**	**H**	S	I	S	W	**G**		M	**A**

Although there is a perfectly acceptable objection to treating a string of letters as an anagram, and then deriving from them a phrase or set of words that serve a set purpose, that objection does not apply in the present case. Of the 15 letters, 60% are already in position, (TO VERE H · · · · G · A ·). After '**H**', a simple transposition of '**I**' and '**S**' was necessitated. This was because Thorpe had already used '**S**' in E**S**LEY (part of Southampton's surname WriothE**S**LEY). But he also needed this '**S**' for HI**S**. This forced him to transpose '**I S**' in the word H**IS** in order to leave the '**S**' in E**S**LEY untouched.

A transposition of initials to read S. W. instead of W. S. is inconsequential, since they carry the same meaning either way. It will be recalled that a similar transposition of Ben Jonson's initials, I. B. were also necessitated on the Stratford monument.

Having explained these two transpositions, it remains only to examine the displacement of '**R**' and to move '**M**' to the other side of '**A**', which is conveniently situated immediately by its side. The '**R**' required to fill the cell vacated by '**M**', then completes '**GRAM**'. '**R**' is the only letter divorced from the word to which it applies. It would not be unreasonable for a dispassionate voice to compliment the encoder for his skill at having encrypted three hidden messages in a narrative of just 144 letters.

It now remains to provide quantitative evidence, that this encrypted tribute to Vere does not conform to a chance result. To begin with, the letters cover the whole of the preface, with two unused letters at the end. Hence, there are 8 X 9 'skips' plus 7 X 10 'skips' plus the 2 remaining, which covers the 144 letters. The first question is, therefore: How many possible ways are there to encode these 15 letters, either as an ELS or as an Alternating Letter Sequence (ALS), as with the 9 – 10 alternating sequence above? The table overleaf sets out all the possible outcomes. This leads to the second question: What is the probability that the letters required to fill one of these ALSs (or even an ELS) will actually occur?

1,1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total 1020
2,1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16		904
3,1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15			795
4,1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14				693
5,1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13					598
6,1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12						510
7,1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11							429
8,1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10								355
9,1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9									288
10,1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8										228
11,1	2	3	4	5	6	7											175
12,1	2	3	4	5	6												129
13,1	2	3	4	5													90
14,1	2	3	4														58
15,1	2	3															33
16,1	2																15
17,1																	4

The number to the left of the first column gives the number of the first 'skip'. The numbers that follow along that line: e.g, 1, 2, 3, ... each provide the number of the second 'skip'.
The numbers in the far right column are the total number of possible spaces the 15 letters could occupy for the ALSs that begin with the first number in the first column.

The sum of these individual totals is 6,324. This represents the number of possible spaces that the required 15 letters (TOVEREHISWSGRAM) could occupy. The probability of obtaining these 15 letters solely by chance is, $6{\cdot}714{,}405{,}123 \times 10^{-19}$, (the product of the fractions below):

$T = \frac{17}{144}$; $O = \frac{8}{143}$; $V = \frac{6}{142}$; $E = \frac{23}{141}$; $R = \frac{9}{140}$; $E = \frac{22}{139}$;
$H = \frac{10}{138}$; $S = \frac{10}{137}$; $I = \frac{14}{136}$; $S = \frac{9}{135}$; $W = \frac{4}{134}$; $G = \frac{5}{133}$; $M = \frac{2}{132}$; $A = \frac{5}{131}$; $R = \frac{8}{130}$.

Hence, the expectation that these 15 letters will occur solely by chance is 0·000,000,000,000,004. This is equivalent to one success for every 250 trillion attempts. That is to say, if one attempt was made every second, night and day without ceasing, it would be expected to take eight million years to achieve a single success.

In an age of censorship, and abject cruelty for speaking any truth that might discredit the ruling elite, Thorpe and Jonson resorted to enciphering the truth about Shakespeare's identity, so that a more enlightened future would understand why Oxford was forced to surrender his title to the plays and poetry he had written. Even Oxford, himself, resorted to the same type of cipher in Sonnet 76. Why, then, is Oxford's authorship not embraced? Numbers do not lie, and the probabilities given are text-book accurate. Hence, there can no longer be any reasonable doubt that the 17th Earl of Oxford was William Shakespeare. Moreover, the main characters in his plays are invariably titled, and the action takes place in European cities that he knew and had visited. Great writers write about what they know best. But scholars past and present have been misled by ignoring this. And great reputations have been made based upon error. The truth today, therefore remains just as injurious to present reputations as it did to the ruling classes in sixteenth-century England. They covered-up anything seen as a threat to themselves. And, so it remains in the present day. Witness the reputation-driven scholars who will continue to reassure the public that they know better. Better than Jonson, Thorpe, and Oxford?

Reference

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