

# Rough Winds Do Shake: A Fresh Look at the Tudor Rose Theory

Diana Price

The Tudor Rose theory was introduced in the 1930s by Capt. B.M. Ward and Percy Allen, independently advanced by Charlton and Dorothy Logburn in *This Star of England* (1952), and further promoted by Elisabeth Sears, who published *Shakespeare and the Tudor Rose* in 1990. Over the years, the hypothesis has been discussed in *The Shakespeare Fellowship Newsletter* and its descendant, *The Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*.

The theory postulates that Edward de Vere, whom Oxfordians believe wrote the works of Shakespeare, was either secretly betrothed, such betrothal being tantamount to marriage, or indeed actually was married to Queen Elizabeth, and that their union produced a baby in 1574. The theory further supposes that the baby was placed in the Southampton household as a substitute for the son known to have been born to the Southamptons the previous October; that this “changeling” baby grew up as Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton; that Henry was heir to the throne; that de Vere identified himself as Edward VII; and that Southampton relinquished his claim to the throne in a secret meeting with King James on the night that Oxford died. (Some adherents of the Tudor Rose theory also suppose that William Cecil, Lord Burghley, impregnated his own daughter Anne, Oxford’s wife. This adjunct theory of incest on the part of Cecil exonerates Oxford from promoting an incestuous marriage between Southampton, supposedly his own son, and Elizabeth Vere, supposedly not his own daughter.) Proponents believe that the Tudor Rose theory provides the key to solving many mysteries in Shakespeare’s sonnets and plays, and in particular that the pervasive Rose imagery symbolizes Southampton as the rightful heir to the Tudor throne.

Most of the “evidence” supporting the Tudor Rose theory is found in the interpretation of lines selected from Shakespeare’s sonnets and plays, and those lines are quoted to excellent effect. But the Tudor Rose theory is one of many

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conjectural interpretations of the Shakespeare canon, and interpretative evidence does not carry the same weight as documentary evidence. However, the Tudor Rose theory (sometimes called the Prince Tudor theory) appears to have some factual underpinnings, as the Ogburns and Sears have cited reputable historians and documents to support their case. This article examines the principal historical evidence they presented.

### **The royal pregnancy**

The Ogburns and Sears postulated that Queen Elizabeth gave birth to a son in May or June of 1574. Their theory will need to overcome one seemingly insurmountable problem: Elizabeth's proposed pregnancy. One would not reasonably expect to find documentary evidence of a clandestine royal birth, but if one found evidence that precluded the possibility of the alleged final trimester and delivery, then the entire theory would collapse. This section investigates the evidence that has been cited to show that Elizabeth delivered a baby and shows where it is in error. It also presents new evidence to prove that Elizabeth had no opportunity to carry and deliver a baby.

Sears (1-2), relying largely on the Ogburns' research, presented her case:

In May of the year 1574, however, Queen Elizabeth, just starting out on her summer procession, surprisingly interrupted her Royal Progress and dismissed her retinue. Ordering Lord Burghley to remain in London, she retired to Havering-atte-Bowre . . .

. . . The Queen and her favorite, the young Earl of Oxford, retired to Havering. There they remained in seclusion for several weeks before the Queen resumed her Royal Progress early in July.

Although there is no other official record of this period from the end of May to July, there is circumstantial evidence that a child was born to the Queen and the Earl of Oxford at this time.

The Ogburns (834-5) believed that

the child was born in June. The Queen had been "apprehensive" and "melancholy"; she had sent both Hatton and the great court-physician, Dr. Julio, to the Continent; and she refused to see her chief ministers. Of course, one can scarcely expect to find a more definite record than this!

They also quoted a letter written on June 28, 1574 by Lord Talbot to his father, the Earl of Shrewsbury:

The Queen remaineth sad and pensive in the month of June. . . [it seemed] she was so troubled for some important matters then before her. It was thought she would go to Bristow [Bristol.] . . . Mr. Hattoun

(not well in health) took this opportunity to get leave to go to the Spaw, and Dr. Julio [the Queen's court physician] with him, whereat the Queen shewed herself very pensive, and very unwilling to grant him leave, for he was her favourite.

The Ogburns supposed that Elizabeth "feigned" her unwillingness to part with Hatton but in fact wanted to get him out of the way when she delivered.

The Ogburns cited John Nichols (*Progresses*, 1:388) as the source of their information, but Nichols's account is wrong. The same account appears practically verbatim in John Strype's *Annals*. (Strype published the first of several editions of his historical narratives for the years in question in 1735-7. Nichols first published *Progresses* in 1788, and his 1823 edition cites Strype.) Like many historians of their era, Strype and Nichols took liberties with their material, co-mingling original texts with commentary and failing to include punctuation that would make it easy for the reader to tell which words were theirs and which were Talbot's.

Some of what has passed for Talbot's letter is actually commentary by Strype/Nichols. Furthermore, the information about Hatton is found in a letter written, not in 1574, but in 1573, when Francis (not Gilbert) Talbot wrote that

There is some taulcke of a progres to Bristo . . . M<sup>r</sup>. Hattoun be reason of his greate syckenes is minded to gowe to the Spawe for the better recoverie of his healthe.

Strype and Nichols conflated some of the contents of this May 1573 letter with those written in June 1574. Sir Harris Nicolas, in his 1847 biography of Hatton (24), set the record straight concerning Hatton's trip to the Spa. (The Ogburns listed Nicolas in their bibliography but apparently overlooked the relevant footnote.) Hatton's departure for the Continent is a matter of record. On May 29, 1573, the Privy Council granted him permission to travel, and Hatton sent a number of letters to the Queen from abroad; one dated August 10 refers both to his improved condition and to Dr. Julio (Brooks, 98). Hatton did not travel to the Continent in 1574.

The Ogburns relied on Nichols's faulty account of events in May and June 1574 to support their version of the Tudor Rose theory. Here then is that faulty account, with original punctuation retained, but split into separate paragraphs to differentiate the sources:

PARAPHRASE OF FRANCIS TALBOT'S LETTER OF JUNE 28,  
1574

The Queen remained sad and pensive in the month of June:

STRYPE'S / NICHOLS'S COMMENTARY

and so the Earl of Shrewsbury's Son, then at Court, wrote to his Father, as Leicester also had done;

PARAPHRASE OF FRANCIS TALBOT'S LETTER OF JUNE 28, 1574

and that it should seem she was so troubled for some important matters then before her<sup>4</sup>.

STRYPE'S / NICHOLS'S COMMENTARY

But, notwithstanding, that month she began her Progress; which perhaps might divert her.

PARAPHRASE OF FRANCIS TALBOT'S LETTER, MAY 10, 1574

It was thought she would go to Bristow. The gests were making in order thereto.

PARAPHRASE OF FRANCIS TALBOT'S LETTER, MAY 23, 1573

Mr. Hatton (not well in health) took this opportunity to get leave to go to the Spaw;

STRYPE'S / NICHOLS'S COMMENTARY RELATING TO MAY & JUNE, 1573

and Dr. Julio (a great Court Physician) with him: wherat the Queen shewed herself very pensive; and very unwilling to grant him leave; for he was a favourite.

STRYPE'S / NICHOLS'S COMMENTARY

These are some of the contents of a private letter of the Lord Talbot to the Earl his Father;

STRYPE'S/NICHOLS'S PARAPHRASE OF UNKNOWN SOURCE AND COMMENTARY

as also, that the Lord Treasurer [Cecil] intending to wait upon the Queen when she came to Woodstock [July 24-Aug. 2, 1574], as she had appointed him, Secretary Walsingham signified to him, that the Queen now had a disposition, that he, with the Lord Keeper and Sir Ralph Sadler, Chancellor of the Exchequer, should tarry at London; the cause wherefore was unknown to the Lord Treasurer, but seemed to be a surprize to him: but, he said, he would do as he was commanded. The Queen seemed to be apprehensive of some dangers in her absence (which might give occasion to her melancholy), and therefore thought it advisable for those staid Counsellors to remain behind<sup>5</sup>.

4. Unpublished Talbot Papers. 5. Strype's Annals.

Hatton's departure must be deleted from any account of events in 1574, and

with it the Queen's melancholy over his leave-taking ("whereat the Queen shewed herself very pensive, and very unwilling to grant him leave, for he was her favourite").

Yet on June 28, 1574, Francis Talbot wrote a letter from Greenwich (*Talbot* [1984], Mircoform, vol. 3197) reporting that

The Q<sup>M</sup>atie hathe bene malencholy disposed a good while w<sup>ch</sup> should seme that she is troubled w<sup>th</sup> weygti causes. She beginneth hir progres one Wedensday next.

(Francis goes on to write about his wife, who is at Wilton, and about a "nagg" that he hopes his father will find "fit for your saddl." There is nothing in this letter about absentee councilors.) Strype and Nichols mistakenly associated Elizabeth's melancholy of 1574 with Hatton's departure for the Spa in 1573, so if Elizabeth was "melancholy" in June 1574, then we must look for another reason.

Sears (2) quoted the Ogburns (who quoted Nichols who quoted Strype who paraphrased Francis Talbot's letter of June 28) to document Elizabeth's "odd behavior," implying that her "sad and pensive" mood in June was somehow connected to her expectant condition. Other documentation reveals the reason behind Elizabeth's melancholy, and it had nothing to do with clandestine childbirth.

On May 30, Charles IX of France died. On June 3, Francis Walsingham was informed of his death, and Elizabeth referred to the event in her letter of June 4 to the Regent of Scotland (*CSP-F*, 10:509). On June 8, the French ambassador, de la Mothe Fénelon, made his official report to Elizabeth. Fénelon wrote in his dispatch of June 18 that he had duly reported the news to Elizabeth and that she had to be consoled. Five days had then passed without another audience, but Sussex, the Lord Chamberlain, informed Fénelon that Elizabeth would receive him the following morning. By June 21, Fénelon had evidently seen the Queen again, since he was able to report on that date that she had personally given and received expressions of condolence.

According to biographer Anne Somerset (283), "the death of Charles IX threw Anglo-French relations into fresh confusion." His death destabilized Elizabeth's marriage negotiations with the Duke D'Alençon and her related maneuvers to play Spain off against France. Fénelon (6:140-1) reported to the Queen Regent, Catherine de Medici, that by June 13, Elizabeth had convened members of the Privy Council several times to consider the implications for Anglo-French relations and matters of protocol over the King's death:

Madame, at the end of the letter of the 8th that I wrote to you, I mentioned the honorable [office] that that princess caused to be sent to me concerning the passing away of the late king, your son, to advise me

of the sorrow and unhappiness that she felt; which has persisted since then, and continues to demonstrate how infinitely she misses him; and even, my having sent to ask of the said Lady when it would be her pleasure that I might seek her out concerning a communication that I received from Your Majesty, she contacted me to beg me to spare her some of the grief that seeing me she knew well would renew itself, that she feels her heart to be so burdened by the original reception of this tragic news that it would not be possible for her to endure, in addition, this second condolence from Your Majesty. . .

And I shall say nevertheless, Madame, that this princess has several times assembled her council to deliberate what she must do, and how she shall act in her present affairs, following this great accident of the death of the King.

On June 18, Fénelon (6:145) described her “extreme regret at the passing of the late king.” On June 21, he wrote (6:153) that Elizabeth met him “with a face strongly composed in a state of sorrow” over the death of her fellow monarch. On July 1, he reported that she had again “assembled her council.”

According to these dispatches, Elizabeth sought the advice of her council to be sure that she comported herself properly through a period of official mourning. Fénelon reported that there were differing opinions within her council as to how she should behave. Perhaps on June 13, Elizabeth deferred her next audience with Fénelon not so much because she was overwhelmed with grief, but because she needed to buy more time in which to further consult with her councilors.

However, Elizabeth’s intention to sojourn at Havering in May 1574 is documented in a letter by Francis (not Gilbert) Talbot of May 10, 1574 (Hunter, 112):

The queene matie gouethe of Saterdeay cum senight to Havering of the bower and their remeaneth tyle shee begins hir progres w<sup>ch</sup> is to Bristo.

On May 10, then, Talbot was under the impression that the Queen was planning to go to Havering in about a week. Talbot also mentioned that the Queen had spoken with him personally on inconsequential subjects (“The Quenes matie hath spoken to me, and tould me of your Lo.’ letter w<sup>ch</sup> I brought; and howe well shee did accept it; w<sup>th</sup> manie comfortable wourds: but no thinge of anie matter”), but he made no note of her mood nor of anything out of the ordinary with respect to her appearance. According to the Tudor Rose theory, on May 10, Elizabeth would have been in her ninth month.

Sears (2) used Talbot’s letter to claim that the Queen and Oxford remained “in seclusion [at Havering] for several weeks before the Queen resumed her

Royal Progress early in July," that is, from mid-May to the latter part of June. She also informed her readers that

Although there is no other official record of this period from the end of May to July, there is circumstantial evidence that a child was born to the Queen and the Earl of Oxford at this time.

But an official record shows that Elizabeth cannot have been in seclusion on May 18, because on that date she sent two letters on political and military matters to the Lord Deputy of Ireland (*CSP-I*, 23). She sent an official letter on June 4 from Hampton Court to the Regent of Scotland (*CSP-F*, 10:509) and another to Ireland on June 15 from Greenwich (*CSP-I*, 29). She was at Greenwich on June 28, when Gilbert Talbot reported from court that "Her mat<sup>le</sup> styrreth litell abrode," a statement that suggests Elizabeth remained at Greenwich from June 15 until the end of the month. On June 30, the Queen moved with the court from Greenwich to Richmond, and her known progress throughout July rules out delivery after the end of June.

Contrary to Sears's statement that there is "no other official record of this period," there are in fact numerous other records documenting Elizabeth's whereabouts and activities during May and June, the most critical being those written by Fénélon. However, before seeing what more Fénélon had to say, let us look at one of Burghley's papers dated a few months earlier.

Concerning the continuing marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and the Duke d'Alençon, Burghley's papers (Murdin, 2:775) show that on March 16, 1574, "the Queen granted a salve conduct for Mons. D. Alençon to come into England any time before the 21st of May." (In a letter of February 3, 1574 to her ambassador in Paris [Harrison, 121-2], Elizabeth had suggested that perhaps Alençon should come "over in some disguised sort.") The wording of the March 16 Safe Conduct (*CSP-F*, 10:477), i.e. that "he may make his repair to her at a convenient time after she be advertised of his arrival," shows that the Queen expected to meet with Alençon personally, at which time the marriage negotiations might be facilitated, or so the French were led to believe. It further shows that he was granted permission to land at any British port before May 20. Therefore, allowing for additional overland travel time, Alençon might be expected to arrive at court in London or on progress any time after the first of April and before the end of May. (In April, Catherine de Medici placed Alençon under restraint in Paris; he remained under house arrest for some time, fell ill, and did not visit England in 1574. But on March 16, Elizabeth had no reason to doubt that the Safe Conduct would ensure Alençon's personal visit to her.) On the day the Safe Conduct was issued, Elizabeth would have been, according to the Tudor Rose theory, nearly seven months pregnant.

Somerset (101) pointed out that Elizabeth had virtually no privacy, and a pregnancy any time after her accession would have been extremely difficult to

conceal. If the prospective royal consort was invited to come into the Queen's presence any time during the final run-up to her delivery, then historians will have to reconstruct the nature of the marriage negotiations and Elizabeth's weight. If her appetite was modest (Somerset, 350, 377) and her constitution strong and athletic, and if her portraits did not routinely take a hundred or so pounds off of her figure, then Elizabeth was not a good candidate for concealing pregnancy.

As we saw, on May 10 Francis Talbot wrote from court that the Queen had spoken personally with him. As she entered her ninth month, then, she was still freely circulating at court for all to see. Fénélon reported on April 2, 24, May 3, 10, 16, 23, and June 8, 13, and 21 that he had had a personal audience with Elizabeth, so she was repeatedly on display before the French ambassador when she was supposedly in the final trimester of her pregnancy. If Elizabeth gave birth in late May or June, then the ambassador had audience with her no less than 15 days (the longest interval between interviews) prior to delivery. A rather substantial stretch of the imagination is required to envision just how Elizabeth concealed her condition from everybody at court, including Fénélon.

The alternative is to suppose that Fénélon knew full well she was pregnant and edited his reports to the formidable Queen Regent, Catherine de Medici. On May 16, Fénélon seems to have been anxious to re-assure his employer that Elizabeth looked on her prospective bridegroom with favor, even though she was playing hard-to-get. He reported to the Queen Regent that Elizabeth

has no bad impression of Monsieur the Duke, your son.

She replied to me that she did not wish to be so ungracious as to have a poor estimation of a prince who showed admiration of her; but this I tell you emphatically, she broke into a smile, that she would take no husband, even with her legs in irons [shackles].

Everything in Fénélon's dispatches reflect the skilled tactics of a professional diplomat, respectful of the role he played between two powerful women. Fénélon would hardly have run the risk of deliberately concealing critical information from his employer, especially since news of such a visually obvious and sensational impediment to the marriage negotiations might easily reach the French court from an independent source.

Sears tells us that the Queen and Oxford went into seclusion at Havering for Elizabeth's delivery. As we have already seen, the record of official correspondence shows that the intended sojourn to Havering in May was evidently postponed, but Fénélon's correspondence again sheds some light on the matter. In his June 13 letter to the Queen Regent (6:141), he wrote that Elizabeth

was to depart immediately from Greenwich, to relieve somewhat her distress as best she could, in a dwelling of hers by the name of

Havering, in the countryside, to which I could send my secretary three days from now, and that she could summon me there when she shall find time for me to come to see her.

In the postscript to this same dispatch (6:144), Fénelon reported that Elizabeth deferred her trip to Havering because of a political crisis:

I had scarcely signed this [letter], when a communication arrived [just in time] from that court, saying that yesterday evening Doctor Dale's secretary had arrived from one direction, and news from Spain from the other that stated that the Spanish force will undoubtedly depart at the end of this month, with 250 armed ships, the security of her affairs that that princess thought existed has suddenly been converted to new suspicions. And notwithstanding that the baggage was already on its way to Havering, she has ordered it back, and having postponed this trip for three weeks, assembled her council hastily; the outcome of which was a command that the naval officers diligently set about executing the original order; and dispatched the Earl of Derby to muster men and mariners in his area; and . . . milord Sidney to cross promptly to Ireland. . .

According to this dispatch, Elizabeth and her entourage were intercepted at the outset of the trip with disturbing news from foreign courts. These reports put immediate pressure on Elizabeth to further secure the coasts against possible Spanish attack. So she postponed her sojourn to Havering and remained instead at Greenwich to deal with the crisis, even though her staff had already started out with the luggage.

The options facing proponents of the Tudor Rose theory are not good. If Elizabeth granted Alençon a Safe Conduct in March that guaranteed him access to the Royal presence any time over the next 75 days, then either Elizabeth did not know she was pregnant in March, or she did not care if the duke visited her when she was obviously in the family way. Nor did she care if she regularly exposed herself in that condition to the French ambassador. Fénelon's May and June correspondence convey a business-as-usual atmosphere and confirm his regular personal interaction with the Queen. Can we seriously imagine that Elizabeth would have compromised her marital chess game, so vital to her country's security, by recklessly presenting herself as an expectant mother to a potential prince consort or his emissary? Even Sears (9-10) wrote that Elizabeth "used 'marriage negotiations' with the Duc d'Alençon to disrupt relations between France and Spain. . . . Had the French suspected that she had a Consort and an heir, the combined forces of France and Spain might have attacked England." What better way for Elizabeth to jeopardize the very stability and security of England than by appearing pregnant—right up through her final trimester—before courtiers, councilors, and a foreign diplomat

negotiating for her hand in marriage?

Elizabeth's whereabouts in May and June 1574 are amply accounted for. Contrary to claims that Elizabeth "dismissed her retinue" in May and spent June in seclusion, her continuing accessibility to and interaction with members of her Privy Council, the French ambassador, and courtiers are matters of record. There is no realistic window of opportunity in either month that would permit her a confinement and child-bearing interlude at Havering or elsewhere. More to the point, there is no window of opportunity for her final trimester. Dispatches show that she consulted with her advisers on matters of protocol following the death of the French king, and that she consequently observed a period of mourning for her fellow monarch, fully explaining her "melancholy" of June 1574. Her trip to Havering is known to have been postponed due to a crisis in foreign affairs. Anyone wishing to further promote the Tudor Rose theory may wish to propose an alternative timetable for the royal pregnancy and delivery, preferably one unencumbered by letters, state papers or dispatches detailing Elizabeth's activities and official audiences.

### Assumptions and Errors

ROSE IMAGERY. Even if an alternative timetable is identified to accommodate Elizabeth's supposed confinement, proponents of the Tudor Rose theory will still be burdened with many other problems. The meaning attached to the Tudor rose imagery in Shakespeare's sonnets is an example.

The Tudor rose was used to symbolize the British crown (Fox-Davies, 269):

Under the Tudor sovereigns, the heraldic rose often shows a double row of petals, a fact which is doubtless accounted for by the then increasing familiarity with the cultivated variety, and also by the attempt to conjoin the rival emblems of the warring factions of York [the white rose] and Lancaster [the red rose].

Sears assumed that Shakespeare personified Henry Wriothesley as the Rose of the sonnets to signify his royal parentage. Specifically, Sears (8) finds Henry's royal lineage described in sonnet #35, which

introduces the play on "canker" meaning a wild rose, or eglantine, the Tudor rose, that is growing untended by his parents [i.e. Oxford and Elizabeth]. "Sweetest bud" indicates that a child is referred to, an immature Tudor rose.

Later, Sears (51) explained that "Henry, being young, though *representative* of the Tudor Rose, is still only a bud that will burst into full bloom when he becomes King." But it is not necessary to transfuse royal blood into Henry

Wriothesley in order to explain his association with rose imagery. Martin Green, one of many traditional Shakespeareans who have supposed that Henry was the Rose of the Sonnets, showed that the Southamptons adopted the Tudor rose as a motif three generations earlier.

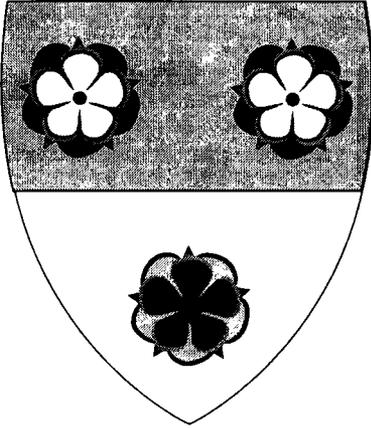
According to A.C. Fox-Davies, author of *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (270, Plate VII), “amongst the scores of English arms in which the rose figures, it will be found in the original heraldic form in the case of the arms of Southampton.” (The Tudor rose was clearly not used exclusively by the monarchy; three roses also appear on the escutcheon for the Darcy family, as published in Christopher Saxton’s 1579 *Atlas of 16th Century Maps*.) The escutcheon designed for the town of Southampton is comprised of three Tudor roses (Fig. 1), and Green (25) discovered that this escutcheon “had an intense personal and dynastic meaning for the man who placed them in his home.” That man was Henry’s great-grandfather, Thomas Wriothesley. Thomas acquired Titchfield Abbey in December 1537 and converted it into his principal residence over the next few years. Although the Abbey is today in ruins, most of the shield of the town of Southampton can still be seen carved over a door on a surviving wall (Green, 23, 170). This carving dates from the conversion of Titchfield c. 1540, and Wriothesley’s reasons for adopting the arms of the town of Southampton relate to his high-powered career under Henry VIII; these reasons are fully detailed by Green.

Those who propose that Henry Wriothesley was the Rose of Shakespeare’s sonnets need look no further than his great-grandfather’s personal appropriation of the coat of arms of the town of Southampton to explain his family’s identification with the Tudor rose. The rose symbolized the political and geographic influence of the Wriothesleys.

**OXFORD’S SIGNATURE.** Sears (3) used Oxford’s so-called “crown signature,” with its crown-like symbol and seven tick marks (Fig. 2), to show that Oxford viewed himself as the royal consort, Edward VII:

there is the even stronger possibility that the Queen and Oxford were married in 1569 when he was nineteen and she was thirty-six. Surely a betrothal would not warrant a royal signature; only an actual marriage would have given him the right to sign his name, (King) Edward (VII) Oxenford, as indicated in the holograph signature.

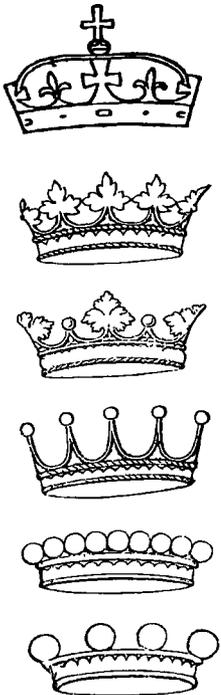
Oxford’s signature would more appropriately be called the “coronet signature,” because it depicts spikes topped with little balls, emanating from the headband, signifying the coronet of earldom (Fig. 3). The name is subscribed with a horizontal bar signifying ten, cut through with seven tick marks, all adding up to Oxford’s rank as 17th earl. Oxford’s personal use of the coronet, an authorized symbol of rank, is not equivalent to an unauthorized use of the



**Fig. 1.** The escutcheon for the arms of the town of Southampton shows three Tudor roses (design shown is approximate).



**Fig. 2.** Edward de Vere's signature is subscribed with a horizontal bar signifying ten, cut through with seven tick marks, adding up to his rank as the 17th Earl of Oxford. The embellishment over the name depicts the coronet of earldom.



**Fig. 3.** The royal crown (top) is distinguished by its shape and ornate design from the coronets of the peerage. The coronets shown (in descending order) signify the ranks of duke, marquis, earl, viscount, and baron. The earl's coronet can be compared to the embellishment in Oxford's signature.

monarch's coat of arms, which is the comparison Sears made in *The Tudor Rose*.

**THE CHANGELING SON.** The Tudor Rose theory has been beleaguered by numerous errors that have been passed off as facts to support it. Sears (10) informed her readers that the son born to the Southamptons in October 1573 died, making it possible for Elizabeth and Oxford's son, born the following May/June, to be substituted in the Southampton household for upbringing. Sears (10-11) cited Charlotte Stopes and G.P.V. Akrigg to confirm her theory about the changeling baby who replaced the Southampton's son:

Though there is no record of this child's death, it has been reported that Henry Wriothesley was the second son. Akrigg reports that Henry's brother died young, before Henry became a ward of the Crown. British historian and biographer of the Third Earl of Southampton, Charlotte Stopes, searched the records carefully but could not solve the mystery.

Mrs. Stopes . . . only compounded the mystery by finding that, though there were two sons born to the Wriothesleys, there was no record of the birth of the second, nor of the death of the first.

Stopes and Akrigg are credible authorities, and Sears lends weight to her argument by citing their findings. But here is what Stopes (2) actually wrote:

Thus was the only son<sup>2</sup> of the second Earl of Southampton born . . .

2. It has always been said that he was "the second son," but there is no authority for that. The error must have begun in confusing the second with the first Henry.

Akrigg (12) made no mention of a mysterious second son, but he did report

that an elder sister, Jane, died at some indeterminate period, perhaps even before young Harry (as he was called) was born, but he had another sister, Mary, a little older than himself, for a companion.

Neither biographer wrote what Sears claimed they wrote.

**ROWLAND WHYTE'S LETTER.** Sears misquoted numerous sources. For example, she probably got the attention of many readers by citing a letter written by an Elizabethan who used a recognizable phrase from *Hamlet* to describe Henry Wriothesley, the alleged Tudor Rose (60):

Rowland Whyte, writing Court gossip in late September of 1595, notes:

My Lord of Southampton doth with to(o) much Familiarity court the faire Mistress Vernon . . . Her friends might well warn her that Southampton was indeed 'a prince out of thy star.'

Sears cited Akrigg as her source. But Whyte wrote only the first sentence; biographer G.P.V. Akrigg wrote the second. Akrigg had quoted the first sentence of Whyte's letter as above, and then went on to comment on the realities of marriage negotiations among the titled classes (48-9):

Mistress Vernon would be lucky if she picked up a knight for her husband. Her friends might well warn her that Southampton was indeed 'a prince out of thy star'. His ardent and all too obvious attentions could only detract from her reputation and spoil her chances of making a reasonably good match elsewhere.

Akrigg had used the phrase from *Hamlet* to illuminate his discussion, but Sears inserted his comment into text presented as Whyte's letter.

THE PEYTON REPORT. A 1603 report by Sir John Peyton, Lieutenant of the Tower of London, has been quoted to show that the Earl of Oxford continued to hold out hope that Southampton would succeed Elizabeth. According to Peyton's report, two days before the Queen died, Oxford told the Earl of Lincoln about a possible power play for the throne. Lincoln then informed Peyton, and Peyton thought that Lincoln should have coaxed more of the details out of Oxford. Sears (98) cited the following passage to show that the peer who "was meant" to overthrow James was Southampton:

Peyton declared that he was at first much disturbed, but when the Earl [of Lincoln] had made him understand what Peer was meant, Sir John was relieved . . .

Sears described this incident as Oxford's "last attempt to have his son proclaimed the Tudor heir," assuring her readers that the "Peer referred to above was, of course, Southampton." In other words, Sears claimed that Oxford told Lincoln that they should help Southampton take the throne. But Lincoln was not talking about Southampton; he was referring to Oxford. And the words quoted above are not those of Peyton. They were written by an historian named Norreys O'Conor, who transcribed and annotated Peyton's report from manuscript in 1934.

Neither Sears nor the Ogburns quoted O'Conor's transcript. They quoted yet another source, William Kittle (160-2), an historian who published some of O'Conor's material in 1942. The Ogburns footnoted Kittle's reliance on O'Conor but apparently investigated the matter no further. Kittle's book was published posthumously, and either he or his editor omitted the essential punctuation that would have distinguished Peyton's report from O'Conor's commentary. Kittle's conflated account was quoted by the Ogburns, and Sears relied on the Ogburns for her citation.

The words that the Ogburns and Sears attributed incorrectly to Peyton include the key passage about "what peer was meant." In fact, O'Conor

commented that Peyton was relieved to know that the peer who “was meant” (i.e., the peer who had approached Lincoln about the power play) was only Oxford, who presented no threat in military terms, no matter whom he might suggest to Lincoln as an alternative king. The alternative king whom Oxford proposed was actually Henry Hastings, Lincoln’s grand-nephew. Reference to *Gode’s Peace* (106-7) allows the reader to differentiate between Peyton’s report and O’Conor’s own commentary. Oxford thought that

#### PEYTON’S REPORT

the Erle of lyncolne ought to have more regard then others, because he [Lincoln] had a Nephewe of the bludde [blood] Riiall, nameing my lorde hasteings, whom he perswaded the Erle of lyncolne to send for; and that ther should be means used to convaye hym over into france, wher he shoulde fynde frends that wolde make hym a partye, of the which ther was a president in former tymes. He also . . . invayed muche agaynst the natyon of scotts! [The Earl of Lincoln] Brake of [off] his discourse, absolutely disavowing all that the great noble man had moved.

#### O’CONOR’S COMMENTARY

Sir John pointed out to Lord Lincoln his folly in silencing the Earl of Oxford before getting all possible information. Peyton declared that he was at first much disturbed, but, when the Earl [of Lincoln] had made him understand what peer was meant, Sir John was relieved for

#### PEYTON’S REPORT

I [Peyton] knewe hym [Oxford] to be so weake in boddy, in frends, in habyltye, and all other means to rayse any combustyon in the state, as I never feered any danger to proseyd from so feeble a fowndation.

#### O’CONOR’S COMMENTARY

This is a delightful comment of the man of action [Peyton] concerning a poet and musician [Oxford].

Peyton’s original report specifically names everyone involved in the incident, and in context, it is obvious that Southampton was not the subject of this report. Readers can easily detect the conflation of texts in *The Tudor Rose* by looking for the shifts between standardized and irregular spelling, or shifts between first and third person.

SOUTHAMPTON’S RELEASE FROM THE TOWER (1603) AND ARREST WHEN OXFORD DIED (1604). When Queen Elizabeth died in March 1603, Southampton was still imprisoned in the Tower of London for his part in

the Essex rebellion. One of James's first official acts upon his accession was to release Southampton; James then restored Southampton's title and fortunes. Southampton was arrested again on the evening that Oxford died in June 1604, and Sears (101) argued that this arrest proves that Southampton was still a threat to King James:

the moment Oxford died, however, [Robert] Cecil must have acted quickly to alert James that Southampton was free to seize his (Southampton's) Throne.

But this is pure speculation. Nobody knows whether Southampton's arrest was related in some way to Oxford's death. Moreover, the underlying assumptions are flawed. Robert Cecil orchestrated James's accession to the throne and is further presumed by Sears (75, 101) to have known about Southampton's royal blood. If Cecil had viewed Southampton as a potential threat to James, would not Cecil have advised James to leave Southampton in the Tower, if not to dispatch him? But at his accession, James released and then empowered his alleged arch-rival.

### **Conclusions**

As attractive as the Tudor Rose theory may be on interpretive grounds, the historical facts plainly refute it. Indeed, the facts concerning Elizabeth's and her councilors' whereabouts in May-June 1574, the matters of state known to have occurred at that time, and Fénélon's documented personal audiences with her preclude any royal pregnancy, confinement, or clandestine delivery. Sears's errors, whether misquoting Stopes and Akrigg on Southampton's birth, or conflating texts (such as Whyte's letter with Akrigg's commentary), or paraphrasing sources to suit her purpose (e.g. the information she footnoted on p. 17) are so numerous as to undermine the legitimacy of the theory.

Adherents have not constructed their case with a single piece of documentary evidence, and the inaccurate arguments advanced to support the theory serve only to discredit it. Since ample documentation contradicts it, the Tudor Rose theory cannot be viewed as having any substance.

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**APPENDIX: The Talbot Letters**

The texts of Francis's letters of May 23, 1573 and May 10, 1574, and Gilbert's letter to the Countess of Shrewsbury of June 28, 1574 are taken from Joseph Hunter's *Hallamshire* (112). Francis Talbot's letter of June 28, 1574 is taken from the original manuscript (*Talbot*, Microform, vol. 3197).

Francis Talbot to the Earl of Shrewsbury: May 23, 1573

Ryght honorable my hu[m]ble deautie reme[m]bred. Meay it please your Lo: I have sent you here inclosed such advertismens as latlie is come oute of France. Oute of Scotlande this is the newes: that Sr George Carye and S<sup>r</sup> Harrie Leaye and Captea[n]e Reade goinge to yowe the castell were almost sleane w<sup>th</sup> a greate pease oute of the castell. The are so feawe w<sup>th</sup>in as it is thoucht the castle wyll be taken verie shortlie w<sup>th</sup>oute ane greate trouble. There is some taulcke of a progres to Bristo; but by reason of the unseasonablenes of the yeare, ther is greate meanes made for hure not goinge of so longe a progres: but hure Mati's greate desire is to gowe to Bristo. M<sup>r</sup> Hattoun be reason of his greate syckenes is minded to gowe to the Spawe for the better recoverie of his healthe. All your Lo.' frinds do well here. My Lord treasurer and my Lord of Leicester do deaylie ascke for your Lo. and howe you have your healthe this springe. This is all that is at this tyme wourthie writinge: wherfore for this tyme I hu[m]blie tacke my leave, cravinge your Lo.' delie blessinge. Fro[m] the couert this XXIII<sup>th</sup> of May.

Your Lo.' lovinge and obedient sonne

Francis Talbot to the Earl of Shrewsbury: May 10, 1574

Ryght honorable my hu[m]ble deautie reme[m]bered: meay it please your Lo: I have steayed writinge because I hoped to have hard su[m]thing of Corker; but I can here nothinge. I have dealt wth my Lord tresoror and my Lord of Leicester boueth, but I can not learne of them anie thinge that he hathe seayed of late, or done; he remeaneth still in close prison in the Flete. The Quenes matie<sup>e</sup> hathe spoken to me, and tould me of your Lo.' letter w<sup>ch</sup> I brought; and howe well shee did accept it; w<sup>th</sup> manie other comfortable wourds: but no thinge of anie matter. The matter of Corker is al[m]ost forgotten here; here is nothinge but of King Philipe cu[m]inge downne in to Flanders; and preparing the Quen's navè to seay; but whether my Lord Admirale goueth himselfe or no it is not given out for serteayne as yet. The quene matie goethe of Saterdeay cum senight to Havering of the bower and their remeaneth tyle shee begins hir progres wch is to Bristo; the gests be not drauen, but shee is deter[m]ined for serteayn to gowe to Bristo. This is all w<sup>ch</sup> is wourthie writinge; but as matter shall happen here I wyll God willinge advertes your Lo: accordinge to my deautie. Thus with my deaylie prear to Almightye God for your Lo.' longe life wth much healthe, I hu[m]blie tacke my leave: cravinge your Lo.' delie blessinge. Fro the couert at Grinwege this xth of Meay 1574.

Your Lo.' lovinge and moste obedient sonne

Gilbert Talbot to the Countess of Shrewsbury: June 28, 1574

My moste hu[m]ble duty remembred unto your good La: To fulfill your La.' co[m]mandement, & in discharge of my duty by wryting, rather then for any matter of importance that I can learne, I herew<sup>th</sup> trouble your La.—Her ma<sup>tie</sup> styrreth litell abrode, and since the stay of the navy to sea, here hath bene all thinges very quieat; and almoste no other taulke but of this late proclamation for apparell, wch is thought shall be very severely executed both here at the cowrte, & at London. I have wrytten to my Lorde of the brute yt is here of his beyng sick agayne, w<sup>ch</sup> I nothing doubtte but y<sup>t</sup> it is utterly untrew: howbeit because I never harde from my L. nor yor La. since I came up, I cannot but chuse but be sumwhat troubled, & yet I consyder the like hath bene often reported moste falcely, and without cause, as I beseche God this be. My lady Cobham asketh daly how your La. dothe, and yesterday prayed me, the next tyme I wryt, to doe her very hartie co[m]mendacons unto your La. saynge openly she remayneth unto your La. as she was wonte, as unto her deereste frend. My La. Lenox hath bene at the cowrte since I came. On Wednesday next I trust (God willing) to goe hence towards Goderidge; and shorteley after to be at Sheffield. And so most hu[m]bly crave[n]g your La.' blessing, wt my wonted prayer, for your honor and most perfite helthe lounge to continew. From the cowrte at Grenewidg this XXVIII<sup>th</sup> June 1574.

Your La.' most hu[m]ble and obedient sun

Francis Talbot to the Earl of Shrewsbury: June 28, 1574

Ryght honorable my hu[m]ble deautie reme[m]bred meay it please your Lo: I have reseaved your letter by my mane, [Cleaton?] and accordinge to my deutie greatlie rejosd therat and that it pleaseth your Lo: so fatherlie to advise me, touchinge my journey to the sea, but I never ment to make serte[n] to gowe, nether to have anie charge savinge for experiens onlie to have accu[m]panied my Lord admiraule at his ernest request, wch after that sort beinge alwes on shipbord would have bene no charge at all but nowe all suche prete[n]ces are dassed and none of hir ma<sup>tie</sup> ships goueth and all speche thereof beinge nowe leayed, all thinges seme quiat at the couert, so as at this present I am unable to advertise your Lo: of anie thinge; The Q ma<sup>tie</sup> hath bene malencholy disposed a good while w<sup>ch</sup> should seme that she is troubled w<sup>th</sup> weygti causes. She beginneth hir progres one Wedensdeay next; because of my wyfe's beinge at Wylton I mene to gowe presentlie thither for anie thinge I knowe yet I thincke not to gowe thens till hir mti<sup>c</sup> come thither [whby?] it had bene my part to have advertised your Lo: before this but that I was uncertayne of the cu[m]linge up of my horses, I wyshe that nagg that your Lo: had of my mane meay be fit for your saddl and then I shall be glad I bought him. I thancke your Lo: hu[m]blie for the other I had for him wth the furniture. / Thus most hu[m]blie cravinge your Lo: delie blessinge, I tacke my leave, fro[m] the couert at Grinwege this xxviij of June / 1574 /

Your Lo: loving and most obedient soun

## Abbreviations used

<i>CSP-D</i>	Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reigns of Edward VI., Mary, Elizabeth 1547-1580
<i>CSP-F</i>	Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1572-74, vol. 10
<i>CSP-I</i>	Calendar of State Papers Relating to Ireland, of the Reign of Elizabeth 1574-1585
<i>SFN</i>	The Shakespeare Fellowship Newsletters

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