

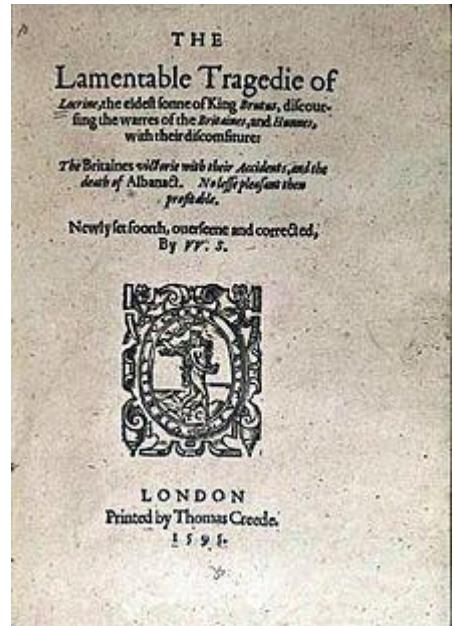
The following paper indicates the research that Michael le Gassick was conducting about Oxford's hand in plays of the period 1576-1599.

'Newly set fourth, ouerseene and corrected, By VV.S.'

So states the title page of *The Lamentable Tragedie of Locrine*, printed by Thomas Creede in 1595. Warning of the consequences of a failure to maintain proper succession of the monarchy and through that the stability of the nation, the date of writing of this play might be judged as almost a companion piece to *Gorboduc (or Ferrex & Porrex)*, which was played about 1560 at the Inns of Court, after Elizabeth had succeeded Mary Tudor in 1558. There is evidence that *Locrine* has been updated, just taking the short 'epilogue' as an obvious example in its praise of Queen Elizabeth, who by then had reigned for at least thirty-seven years, and the question of succession was again ever-present:

*So let us pray for that renowned mayd,
That eight and thirtie yeares the scepter swayd,
In quiet peace and sweet felicitie;*

It is among the numerous plays which arrived at the printers between 1590 and 1610, often described as 'old plays', presumably because the manuscripts had been released for printing to satisfy a demand for plays for performance or for reading. It may be significant that Elizabeth Trentham, having married the Earl of Oxford, was busy preparing for their move from Fisher's Folly to King's Place in 1592, when a certain amount of clearing out is likely to have taken place.



Included in *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*, edited by Tucker Brooke, Oxford Clarendon Press 1918, *Lochrine* does not appear to have been recorded for performance. In spite of many linguistic similarities to the works of Shakespeare, critics will not generally accept that it might be by the Bard. However, if, as we maintain, the 17th Earl of Oxford wrote the plays, *Lochrine* sits neatly as an early play in the *Damon & Pithias* and *Gorboduc* mould, to be revisited later in *King Leir*, when the succession problem arises again. A rubric similar to the one above appears on other plays of the period, for example:

- *Loves labors lost* - quarto 1598 - 'Newly corrected and augmented by W. Shakespere',
- *Romeo and Juliet* - quarto 1609 (anonymous) - 'Newly corrected, augmented and amended.' An undated (1622) quarto states: 'Newly corrected, augmented and amended by W. Shakespere.'
- Similar notations also appear on title pages of *Hamlet* (Q2 1604) and *Henry IV* (Q 1599), which states: 'Newly corrected by W. Shake-speare', after the quarto edition of 1598 had been printed anonymously without comment.
- *The Puritaine or VViddoVV of Watling-streete*, printed in 1607, was 'Written by W.S.'. Classed as *Shakespeare Apocrypha*, it finds no place in the Canon. Neither does another: *The True Chronicle Historie of Thomas Lord Cromwell, Written by W.S.*, printed in 1602.
- *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, printed in 1608, is stated as: 'VVritten by VV. Shakespeare.' The events upon which the play appears to be based occurred on 23 April 1605, nearly a year after the Earl of Oxford's death. The story of death by falling down stairs has affinities with the death in 1560 of the Earl of Leicester's first wife, Amy Robsart, so there is just the possibility that the play started off at an earlier date, but became *The Yorkshire Tragedy*, centred on the later events in Yorkshire. The play is also assigned to *Shakespeare Apocrypha*, many of which plays do not, admittedly, seem to be sufficiently stylistically close either to early 'anonymous' plays by Edward de Vere or to later 'Shakespeare'.

Then there is another belonging to *Shakespeare Apocrypha*: *Sir John-Oldcastle, the good Lord Cobham*, was printed anonymously in 1600, although a second edition appeared in the same year as being by 'William Shakespeare'. The play seems to have been written to restore the good name of the contemporary Lord Cobham, after the appearance of his ancestor of the same name, portrayed 'detrimentally' in early anonymous plays: *The Famous Victories of Henry the fifth* and *Henry IV*. 'Old-Castle' was changed to 'Falstaff' in about 1598, for later versions of *Henry IV*. There is also evidence that the Sir John

Falstaff of *Merry Wives of Windsor* had replaced Oldcastle by the time the first quarto of the play, by William Shakespeare, was printed in 1602.

Introducing William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby:

A few scholars, such as the late John Rollett believe that William Stanley wrote the works of Shakespeare. Born in 1561, he lived to 1642, and married in January 1595 Elizabeth de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford's oldest daughter, when she was twenty years of age. Their relationship at the start was described as stormy, with claims that Elizabeth was having an affair with the 2nd Earl of Essex, but they subsequently settled down to have five children.

His titles, including that of Baron (or Lord) Strange, were inherited after his elder brother, Ferdinando Stanley, the 5th Earl, died a few months after inheriting them from their father in 1594. Ferdinando had a claim to the throne, but was associated with the Catholic 'Hesketh Plot', so his sudden death is considered to be suspicious.

He had been a leading patron of the arts and maintained Lord Strange's Men, an acting troupe, from the 1560s: under the 6th Earl they became Derby's Men. William Stanley would have been twenty-one years of age when he left Oxford and began a series of travels, which included university towns in France and Henri de Navarre's Academy.

After a brief return to England in 1585, he went back to France as part of an embassy to Henri III in Paris. He subsequently travelled extensively to Italy and probably to Egypt, Moscow and even Greenland. There may have been exaggeration in the report that he had been away for twenty-one years, but he was in England to marry Elizabeth in 1595. He is therefore most unlikely to have been the author of the earlier Shakespeare works or of any of the anonymous plays from 1570 to about 1590.

It is commonly believed that *Midsommer nights dreame* (Q 1600), may have been written specifically for performance at the wedding of Derby and Elizabeth. However, there are many indications that the play was written much earlier, about 1583-4, to judge only by the topicality of the Queen Elizabeth/Duc d'Anjou marriage plan failure, evidenced by the Titania/Bottom scenes. In fact, there is every reason to suppose that the play might have been revised (by Shakespeare) from an earlier Court play and then performed at the wedding, given the matching celebratory themes.

Ten years younger than the 17th Earl of Oxford, Derby was clearly in a position to see at first hand the work of his father-in-law and to appreciate the skill of the man who had been describing himself as 'William Shakespeare' from 1593. Derby, in maintaining

his own troupe of theatrical players, clearly showed his interest in the theatre. Like Oxford, he would wish to avoid the social stigma of writing for public playhouses, but he needed plays for his players to play.

Derby was reported in 1599, four years after becoming the Earl of Oxford's son-in-law, as 'busy penning plays for the common players'. This leads to the proposition that W.S., (William Stanley), could conveniently hide behind the pen name of his senior and amend, augment, correct or even write plays, without fear of being publicly revealed.

Neither a Reviser, nor a Correcter Be

When people say that Shakespeare never revised his plays, there may be some truth in this: maybe Shakespeare did not - and given the 'impetuous' character of the Earl of Oxford, (eager to engage in the Northern Rebellion in 1569, rushing off to the Continent without permission from time to time, eager to set off for Italy, and pressing the Queen to permit his involvement in the Armada campaign, to the extent of commissioning his own warship), he does not seem like a person who would patiently go through his old plays carefully revising and improving them for later performance and publication, given the likely total volume of his output.

At least several works do stand out as Oxford/Shakespeare revisions or re-writes:

- the Henry histories (*Famous Victories, Contention between Yorke and Lancaster*)
- *The Taming of A Shrew* to *The Taming of The Shrew*
- *King Leir* to *King Lear*
- *Romeus and Juliet* to the final version of *Romeo and Juliet*
- *Damon & Pythias* to *Two Gentlemen of Verona*
- *The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll* to *Midsummer Night Dream*

Re-writing of a number of plays first acted at Court under an earlier title and the most obvious of all, the autobiographical play *Hamlet*, which appears to have been first drafted in about 1583, when the author was thirty-three, through to the early 1600s, when he was fifty. And so we come to an interesting example in particular.

The Tempest

Thought by many to be the Bard at the top of his game, *The Tempest* certainly contains evocative, often amusing scenes, with, generally speaking, language and dialogue readily associated with the other works. Although the Epilogue ‘sign off’ leads critics to assume that Shakespeare is taking his leave of the stage, it appears as the first play in the *Catalogue* of the *First Folio 1623*, before the *Comedies* of *The two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Merry Wives of Windsor* and so on - a curious position for a ‘late play’, suggesting that it was added at a late stage of print preparation. Incidentally, *Two Gentlemen* is generally considered a short ‘early’ play, but *The Tempest* is actually virtually the same length.

We have no early quarto versions, although it is ostensibly one of the ‘Italian’ plays, set on an island somewhere between Tunis in North Africa, and Italy. The small fleet, including the ship carrying Alonso, King of Naples, Sebastian, Ferdinand, Gonzalo and the others is on its way from Tunis, (a name specifically identified in the play), to Naples (which is also emphasised).

The ‘shipwrecks’ occasioned by Prospero’s magic take place just off the island, which is likely to be one of those off the coast of Sicily, which the Earl of Oxford is documented as having visited in 1575. Richard Paul Roe in *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy* (Harper Perennial 2011) convincingly identifies Prospero’s Island as Vulcano, the largest off the north-east coast of Sicily. This island is clearly on the shortest and most obvious route from Tunis to Naples. All quotations are taken from a facsimile copy of the *F1 1623*, specifically to avoid editorial ‘corrections’ by ‘scholars’ in later editions of the play.

In the second scene of Act I, Ariel vividly describes to Prospero the way in which he carried out the latter’s bidding:

*I boarded the Kings ship: now on the Beake,
Now in the Waste, the Decke, in euery Cabyn,
I flam’d amazement, sometime I’ld diuide
And burne in many places; on the Top-mast,
The Yards and the Bore-spritt, would I flame distinctly,
Then meete and ioyne. Ioues Lightning, the precursors
O’th dreadfull Thunder-claps more momentarie
And sight out running were not; the fire, and cracks
Of sulphurous roaring, the most mighty Neptune*

*Seeme to besiege, and make his bold waues tremble,
Yea, his dread Trident shake.*

He reassures Prospero that no mariner has died and that the vessels, including the King's ship, are:

*Safely in harbour
Is the Kings shippe, in the deepe Nooke, where once
Thou calldst me vp at midnight to fetch dewe
From the still-vest Bermoothes, there she's hid;*

The name 'Bermoothes' is frequently 'translated' by critics and their editors as 'Bermudas', who then by extension assume that this must refer to a shipwreck in the West Indies in 1609, experienced and documented dramatically by William Strachey, whose account would have been available to readers in London by about 1612, after his return to London in late 1611. This has led on to the assumption that *The Tempest* could not have been begun before 1609 at the earliest, reflecting both Shakespeare's view towards the New World and supplementing his lack of knowledge of ships and shipwreck. The first recorded performance of *The Tempest* was at Whitehall Palace on November 1, 1611.

The 'Bermoothes'

Correct reading of Ariel's lines shows that the vessel is not moored in the Bermoothes, but in a Nook(e), where Ariel was when Prospero sent him one night to the Bermoothes.

To live in the 'Bermudas' meant in some out-of-the-way place for cheapness. The shabby genteel hired a knocker in a West-end square for letters to be left for them, whilst living 'in the Bermudas' — narrow passages north of the Strand, near Covent Garden. (*Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* 1894 E. Cobham Brewer I.2, ll.228-230).

The practice continues to this day, whereby people (or companies) pay for 'brass plates' in expensive fashionable parts of west London to provide them with a good 'address'. The playwright is joking that Ariel complains of being woken at midnight, to go all the way to the *Bermoothes*, just to find a particular potion (dew) Prospero decides he needs, and available in these sleazy parts of town. A London audience would have been much amused, particularly given the time of night, the distance involved and the introduction of a shady part of London, by implication.

As for the description of a shipwreck involving lightning, thunder and stormy seas, no playwright would have had to go far in those days to find one, any more than

today's playwright would be short of a description of, say, a plane crash. In any event, it is obvious that the Earl of Oxford had first-hand experience of ships and shipping - and he did, after all, take part in the fleet assembled to defeat the Armada, by commissioning his own ship, the *Edward Bonaventura*.

***The Tempest* Date of Composition**

Critics seem to be more divided over the possible date of composition of *The Tempest* than perhaps of any other of Shakespeare's plays. The Epilogue, 'spoken by Prospero', produces a problem, in that it invites the audience or readership to conclude that the playwright is 'signing off':

*Now my Charmes are all ore-throwne,
And what strength I haue's mine owne.
Which is most faint: now 'tis true
I must be heere confinde by you,
Or sent to Naples, Let me not
Since I haue my Dukedome got,
And pardon'd the deceimer, dwell
In this bare Island, by your Spell,
But release me from my bands
With the helpe of your good hands:
Gentle breath of yours, my Sailes
Must fill, or else my proiect failes,
Which was to please: Now I want
Spirits to enforce: Art to inchant,
And my ending is despaire,
Vnlesse I be relieu'd by praier
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy it selfe, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your Indulgence set me free.* Exit.

J Thomas Looney in his "*Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*", (Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York 1920), devotes Appendix I to a discussion based on the likelihood that parts of *The Tempest* were written by a hand or

hands other than Shakespeare, although he suggests no name. Including the Epilogue, he gives examples of text that fail to conform to normal standards of Shakespeare's ability, concluding that *The Tempest* suffers from 'late play' revision by others, in companion with *Pericles*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon* and *Cymbeline*, as well *King Henry VIII*, of course. Nevertheless, he is inclined to date the play basically between 1596 and 1604.

Accepting that the writing was probably about the time of the wedding of William Stanley and Elizabeth de Vere, Mark Anderson in "*Shakespeare*" by *Another Name*, (Gotham Books 2005), suggests that *The Tempest* was written from 1596 as a reflection on the early stormy relationship of the couple. It is not difficult to see the marriage of Prospero's daughter Miranda to Ferdinand, matching Elizabeth (first daughter of three = 'a third of mine own life') and Ferdinand/William Stanley, whom Oxford has finally accepted as his daughter's choice of husband, after failed attempts at other marriage proposals. As Prospero says to Ferdinand at the beginning of Act IV, Scene 1:

*If I haue too austere'ly punish'd you,
Your compensation makes amends, for I
Haue giuen you here, a third of mine owne life,
Or that for which I liue: who, once againe
I tender to thy hand: All thy vexations
Were but my trials of thy loue, and thou
Hast strangely stood the test: here, afore beauen
I ratifie this my rich giuft:*

The word 'strangely' is slightly odd in this context, but then the word 'strange', whilst appropriate to the island and events of the play, occurs no less than twenty-nine times - surely an indication of the influence of the Lords Strange on the playwright. Gonzalo, 'an honest old Councillor', recognised by Prospero as the provider of his 'books', when he was exiled, can readily be seen as the seventy-five year old Lord Burghley, who had a fine library which Oxford could use, when he became a ward in the house of the then William Cecil, some thirty-four years earlier.

Oxford, worried about his daughter's welfare in marriage, what with rumours of affairs, wrote letters to Lord Burghley from 1596 in an endeavour to secure her financial stability, in negotiation of a marriage settlement on her by her husband. Two of these letters were written from his son-in-law's house in Cannon Row in the City of London, where Oxford is recorded as staying, not infrequently, well into the late 1590s.

Anderson comments that one topic sorely in need of research is the possibility that William Stanley, Lord Derby, recognised by contemporaries as a Court poet and

playwright, may have been responsible for adding scenes, or adding to scenes, in various plays. This may well have been the case with *The Tempest*.

Into Scene 1 of Act V, Prospero 'discouers Ferdinand and Miranda, playing at Chesse'. Looney is amazed at this, saying it is a far cry from the usual teasing banter between lovers in Shakespeare's plays. Georges Lambin in *Voyages de Shakespeare en France et en Italie*, (Librarie E. Droz, Geneva 1962), states his conviction that the plays of Shakespeare were written by William Stanley, quoting examples of correspondences between the events in *The Tempest* and those leading up to the marriage in 1600 between Marie de Medici of Florence and Henry IV of France. He cites much historical evidence, before, during and after the marriage, which appears to be reflected in the play, including that of the game of chess as being one of Henry's favourites and that Marie also played it:

Miranda: *Sweet Lord, you play me false.*
 Ferdinand: *No my dearest loue, I would not for the world.*
 Miranda: *Yes, for a score of Kingdomes, you should wrangle,*
 And I would call it faire play.

Whilst this is not unlike a Shakespeare joke, it has to be said that William Stanley had first-hand experience of the French Court during his trips abroad.

'Late Plays' and Revision

The *Histories* listed in the *Catalogue* of the *First Folio*, collected posthumously, appear in 'chronological' order, but it is not at all certain that they were written in that order. *The Famous Victories of Henry the ffifth* were entered in the Stationers' Register in 1594, printed in 1598, and again in 1617. All editions were anonymous, but they are included in the *First Folio*, reworked (through Quarto editions) as *Henry IV, (Parts 1&2)*, and *Henry V*.

Famous Victories includes an ancestral Lord Oxford and Sir John Oldcastle, plus a Gad's Hill robbery scene, which closely resembles historical events in which the 17th Earl's men were involved in 1573. To judge from the literary style, the play would appear to have been written by Oxford early in his writing career, not long after the Gad's Hill incident. Unlike *Henry IV* and *Merry Wives of Windsor*, the name 'Oldcastle' was not changed to 'Falstaff', so that critics are presented with a dating problem, (not least because most of them persist in trying to fit the writing of the plays to the life-span of Shaksper of Stratford). *Merry Wives* shows every appearance of having been written during or shortly after Edward de Vere's convalescence in Windsor in 1569-70,

and is therefore closer to *Famous Victories*, but the character (change to) 'Falstaff' has led critics to presume a writing close to or shortly after *Henry IV*.

Turning to the *Tragedies*, there appears to be no logical date ordering at all, so the reader is left with the conclusion that the compilers of the *First Folio* were not even trying to follow a writing-date sequence, excepting that the *Histories* offer their own historical sequence.

As Eva Turner Clark says in *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*, Kennikat Press 1974, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, printed in 1609 as 'by William Shakespeare', could have started life as a Court play 'before the Queen' in December 1577, and as '*A pastorell or historie of A Greeke maide*' at Richmond at New Year 1578/9. *Pericles* is not included in the *First Folio*, but most critics concede that it is substantially by Shakespeare.

Similarly, Clark identifies *Cymbeline King of Britaine*, the last *Tragedie* in the *First Folio*, as the play in December 1578 at Richmond - '*An history of the crueltie of A Stepmother*'.

Clark also traces *Timon of Athens* back and, like the others cited, indicates that another hand or hands has been at work, trying later to bring the play 'up to date'.

John Fletcher is stated as the collaborator with 'William Shakspeare' on the title page of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, printed in 1634, although Ben Jonson is also thought to have had a hand in it (particularly in the Prologue). Critics have tried to separate the sections between Shakespeare's involvement in the writing and those of others.

Otherwise any collaboration is not expressed, apart from the possibility of '*enlarged by W.S.*', being an arrangement with the printers to combine William Stanley with William Shakespeare to encourage sales. Without evidence that William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby ever wrote or revised a play, we are faced with the problem of unevenly written, 'late' plays. Any argument in favour of Stanley, the Earl of Oxford's son-in-law, and acknowledged enthusiastic poet/playwright, must rely on language and style and comparison to anything he can be identified as having written. There is no reason to say that he would not have been in a position to browse through Oxford's manuscripts, revising and updating those which appealed to him, particularly during the late 1590s, when he needed plays for his acting troupe, and on into the first two decades of the seventeenth century, Oxford having died in 1604.

Incidentally, another word on the characters in *The Tempest* might be given to Charlton Ogburn in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, (Dodd, Mead and Company, New York 1984). He suggests that Stephano, who drunkenly intends to usurp Prospero to become king of the island, is another incarnation of Christopher Sly of *The Taming of A/The Shrew*, aka William Shakspere of Stratford.