

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Another Cryptogram in “Shakespeare’s” Dedication of His Sonnets

**HARALD WALACH**

Pediatric Clinic, Poznan University of the Medical Sciences (PUMS), Poznan, Poland  
Department of Psychology, University Witten/Herdecke, Witten, Germany  
Change Health Science Institute, Berlin, Germany  
[Harald.Walach@uni-wh.de](mailto:Harald.Walach@uni-wh.de)

<https://10.31275/20212019>

Creative Commons License CC-BY-NC

I read with great interest the paper by Peter Sturrock and Kathleen Erickson (Sturrock & Erickson, 2020) on the Dedication of Shakespeare’s Sonnets. I am neither a scholar of literature, nor of Shakespeare, and do not want to enter the fray as to who was the author of Shakespeare’s sonnets and plays. But I must confess that I found the arguments presented by Sturrock and Erickson intriguing. It is in that vein I would like to communicate an interesting finding.

On page 302, Figure 21, of their paper, they present the Dedication of the Sonnets as a grid of 12 x 12 letters. This was done under the assumption that cryptograms can be deciphered better if they are laid out in a certain format. They then present the message they assume is contained there: “PRO PARE VOTIS EMERITER” as a devotion of Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, to his supposed friend, the Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley.

I find this a possible meaning. My experience with Latin texts—based on a translation of a medieval mystical writer from Latin into German and the reading of many original Latin texts, mainly from the Middle Ages and beyond (Hugo de Balma, 2017; Walach, 1994, 2010)—lets another sequence jump out at me:

SI PATET PRO MIRE VERO RETIRO

The translation would read:

“If it becomes miraculously obvious [who I am], I retire.”

That this is a reference of the proposed author, Edward de Vere, to himself would become clear from the double use of “vero.” Vero is a very frequent Latin word. Normally, as an adverb, it means “but.” It is derived from the adjective “verus,-a,-um”, meaning true, with the noun being “veritas—truth.” “Pro” is a preposition that has a multitude of meanings and is necessarily followed by a case that is typical for Latin, called “ablative.” “Pro vero” would mean “for true” or “as true.” “Mire” is an adverbial construction derived from the adjective “mirus—miraculous, fabulous, splendid.” “Patet” is a very frequent construction and means “It is clear, it is obvious.” All scholastic disputations used this to make clear what does not need any argument. A typical scholastic argument would read, for instance, “Patet quod deus mundum creavit—It is clear that God has created the world.”

“Si” is a conditional and means “if, in case.” “Retiro” is clear. It has the same meaning as the English “retire,” and retire is derived from it. It means “I retire.” One would actually expect the future case “retirabo” to be used, but I think this little grammatical lapse is forgivable and would be an instance of colloquial Latin.

If we read the “vero” in a double sense, and perhaps a double meaning, both as “for true” and as “for de Vere,” we would read:

“If de Vere becomes obvious as a truth, by some miraculous circumstance, I retire.”

One could also parse the center words as “pro mi r. e. vero”, which would be bad Latin for “as myself r. Edward de Vere,” with the “r.” possibly meaning “recte—right” or some honorary title such as “reverendus—the venerable,” or something similar.

At any rate, it would be a clear threat to not reveal the identity of the author, else he would [have to] retire and stop writing, or withdraw from the relationship, however that is to be understood.

My guess is: If the Dedication contains a hidden reference to Wriothesley and the author of the sonnets (and plays), Edward de

Vere, and this threat jumps out at the reader at the same time, this strengthens the case for the Dedication being a cryptogram.

Let Peter Sturrock now take out his abacus and calculate the odds of there being not only one or two hidden meanings in the text, but even three, and another quite complex one at that. My guess is: The probability of detecting the Higg's particle or gravitation waves is trumped.

## REFERENCES

- Hugo de Balma. (2017). *Die Wege nach Sion trauern: Viae Sion lugent, auch überliefert unter dem Titel "Mystische Theologie"* [The ways to Sion mourn: Zion mourn, also under the title *Mystical Theology*] (H. Walach, Trans. into German). Vier Türme Verlag [Four Towers Publishing House].
- Sturrock, P. A., & Erickson, K. E. (2020). Behind the mask: Decoding the dedication of Shakespeare's Sonnets. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 34(2), 268–350.
- Walach, H. (1994). *Notitia experimentalis Dei—Erfahrungserkenntnis Gottes. Studien zu Hugo de Balmas Text "Viae Sion lugent" und deutsche Übersetzung* [Knowledge of God through experiment. Studies of Hugo de Balma's text *Zion Mourn.*] In J. Hogg (Ed.), *Analecta Cartusiana*, 98(1). Institute for English and American Studies at the University of Salzburg.
- Walach, H. (2010). *Notitia Experimentalis Dei: Experiential knowledge of God: Hugh of Balma's mystical epistemology of inner experience—A hermeneutic reconstruction.* Institute for English and American Studies at the University of Salzburg.