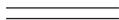




LARA M. CROWLEY



Was Southampton a Poet?

A Verse Letter to Queen Elizabeth [with text]

Not to liue more at ease (Deare Prince) of thee
but wth new merrittes, I begg libertie
to cancell old offences.

So begins a 74-line poem entitled “The Earle of Southampton Prisoner, and condemned. to *Queen Elizabeth*,” found in the miscellany British Library Manuscript Stowe 962, folios 47–48. (A transcription of this poem is provided in an appendix.) The poem appears to be a scribal copy of a verse epistle pleading for the Queen’s mercy, composed by a man currently unknown as a poet—Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton, a man well-known for many reasons, including his literary connections. If attributed correctly, the poem was composed in February or March of 1601 when the earl was imprisoned in the Tower for his leadership in the Earl of Essex’s uprising. Southampton was the only conspirator tried with Essex, and both men were convicted of treason and sentenced to death. Essex was executed soon after, followed by several other participants, but, surprisingly, Southampton was spared. Elizabeth commuted Southampton’s sentence to life in the Tower, where he actually remained only two years until the newly crowned James I pardoned him.¹

I would like to thank the following people for their useful feedback and kind advice during the preparation of this essay: Peter Beal, Timothy D. Crowley, Marshall Grossman, Donna B. Hamilton, Gary Hamilton, Grace Ioppolo, Constance Brown Kuriyama, Steven W. May, and my anonymous readers at *ELR*. If Southampton did compose this poem, then he meets the criteria for an Elizabethan courtier poet, as discussed in May’s important study *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets: The Poems and Their Contexts* (Columbia, Mo., 1991).

1. An extant copy of James I’s letter of release, sent on April 5, 1603, appears in British Library Add. MS 33051, fol. 53. James says of Southampton, “the latte Q. our sister (notwithstandinge his faulte towards her) was moued to exempte [him] from the stroke of Iustice,” although James does not say why. Southampton was pardoned fully on May 16, and his title and properties were restored on July 21.

Why did the Queen change her mind regarding Southampton, dedicatee of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, Shakespeare's only recognized (likely) patron? Southampton's biographers have credited the intervention of Robert Cecil, Elizabeth's most influential counselor at that time, although Cecil had numerous reasons not to pursue the earl's pardon vigorously.² In fact, Arthur Wilson, an acquaintance of Southampton, later assigned blame for the earl's inability to advance under James I to Cecil alone: "*Salisbury* [Cecil] kept him at a bay, & pinched him so by reason of his relation to old *Essex*, that he never flourished much in his time."³ It seems possible, even likely, that someone or something else influenced Elizabeth's decision, making one wonder if, at his time of greatest need, Southampton—a "dere louter and cherisher" of poets—composed what could be his lone surviving poem.⁴ During a period in which condemned prisoners regularly composed verses to implore Queen Elizabeth for clemency, as Essex did from the Tower in 1601, it would be no surprise to discover that Southampton originally wrote this heartfelt petition. If so, the poem contributes to modern understanding of the circulation and the significance of Elizabethan courtier verse and presents evidence of a hitherto unrecognized poet.

To investigate the poem's authorship we first need to consider the text and potential explanations for its composition other than Southampton's authorship, such as the possibility that another poet adopted the persona of the condemned earl. Because British Library MS Stowe 962 provides the only known copy of this verse epistle, we also need to analyze that context closely, for this manuscript's high level of accuracy regarding attributions enhances the likelihood that this ascription proves accurate as well. Finally, because references in the

2. A. L. Rowse attributes Cecil's eagerness to help Southampton in part to Cecil's desire to maintain friends while attempting to maneuver the transition between monarchies. *Shakespeare's Southampton: Patron of Virginia* (London, 1965), p. 164. Also see G. P. V. Akrigg, *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* (London, 1968), p. 152.

3. Arthur Wilson, *The History of Great Britain* (1653), p. 161. Edmond Malone also blames Southampton's problems on Cecil (in quite animated language): "By the machinations of lord Essex's great adversary, the earl of Salisbury, (whose mind seems to have been as crooked as his body,) it is supposed King James was persuaded to believe that too great an intimacy subsisted between lord Southampton and his queen; on which account, (though the charge was not avowed, disaffection to the king being the crime alleged), he was apprehended in the latter end of June, 1604; but there being no proof whatsoever of his disloyalty, he was immediately released" (*The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, ed. Edmond Malone, [S.L., 1821], XX, 443).

4. Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traueller* (1594), sig. A2–2v.

poem point to its author's familiarity with specific, intimate details of Southampton's career, health, even writing style, we will discuss relevant matters from his life prior to the commutation of his death sentence. The earl's four extant Tower writings of February 1601 and the level of public awareness regarding his relationships with Elizabeth I and Cecil (to the extent such knowledge can be assessed) prove particularly significant when considering alternative authors.

II

Multiple references in this verse petition identify the speaker's circumstances as Southampton's appeal to Elizabeth I for a pardon. The poem emphasizes themes one might expect in a prisoner's plea for life and freedom: repentance, commitment to crown and country, and a longing for mercy. The iambic rhythm of the pentameter couplets varies infrequently and effectively. The initial trochee in the first line ("Not to liue more at ease (Deare Prince) of thee") calls immediate attention to the speaker's desire to prove himself worthy of forgiveness, and the second line's enjambment establishes momentum as the poem hastens toward what a treasonous prisoner might expect the Queen to be most desirous to hear: that he yearns "to cancell old offences" (l. 3). Additional trochees stress central concepts: the speaker bemoans "prisons" (l. 25) and "cleauinge to walls" (l. 32)—language that might evoke the Queen's sympathy, for such concerns seem wildly incongruent with the typical lifestyle of an earl, especially a former favorite. The latter, jarring phrase occurs in an unusual but effective comparison of shellfish to prisoners awaiting execution: "prisoners condem'd, like fish wthiⁿ shells lie / cleauinge to walls, which when they're open'd die" (ll. 31–32). Only "a pardon" (l. 33) can alter a prisoner's fate.

This desperate, broken speaker seems to bombard his sovereign-reader with metaphors while making a case for freedom from various angles, with the hope that some element of the poem will move her to action. When the speaker attests, "had I the leprosie of Naaman / yo^f mercie hath the same effectes as Io^u[^]rdan" (ll. 17–18), he associates the Queen with the miracle worker Elisha who cured Naaman's condition.⁵ Here and elsewhere the speaker apparently aims to elicit pathos through mentioning ailments, a common result of Tower

5. The biblical story of Naaman appears in 2 Kings 5.

imprisonment. In mentioning the river Jordan, he also links Elizabeth with the ultimate exemplar of “mercie,” Christ, a connection emphasized throughout the poem. Although unpolished, the poem proves lyrical, powerful, and persuasive—regardless of its author.

One possibility is that the poem was composed in 1601 to mollify the Queen, but by a more practiced poet who composed the verses for Southampton to offer Elizabeth as his own. Certain lines might even encourage speculation about specific “ghost writers.” In ll. 9–12, for example, the speaker continues to celebrate a ruler’s god-like mercy:

if faultes were not, how could greate Princes then
 approach soe neare god, in *pardoninge* men?
 wisdome & valour, *common* men haue knowne,
 But only mercie is the Princes owne.

The speaker cleverly appeals to the Queen’s vanity as God’s powerful representative on earth, the sole being capable of offering the earl salvation through answering his “faultes” with Christ-like “mercie.” One might recall Tamora’s plea for her son’s life in *The Tragedie of Titus Andronicus*: “Wilt thou draw neere the nature of the Gods? / Draw neere them then in being mercifull. / Sweet mercy is Nobilities true badge.”⁶ Yet, the notion that Shakespeare, or any other poet, provided Southampton with the poem proves improbable. Access to the earl early in his imprisonment was restricted, with his Tower guard and members of the Privy Council seeming to comprise the only visitors.⁷

One might also speculate that the poem is merely a persona piece, written sometime after the event by a poet invoking the voice of the doomed earl. Some Renaissance poets, including John Donne, projected their voices onto famous figures ranging from Sappho to Sidney for literary effect. This possibility cannot be quickly dismissed,

6. *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (1623), sig. 2C4v.

7. Elizabeth granted Southampton’s mother and estate representatives permission to visit in August 1601, when the earl appeared to be dying, and granted his wife permission to visit in October (*Acts of the Privy Council of England, 1601–1604*, XXXII, 175, 256). One might expect the earl to have been attended in the Tower by one or more servants, who could have been the means by which copies of this verse epistle were made public, but so far I have found no mention of a servant. Another possible source could be Robert Cecil, to whom Southampton appealed for help. Perhaps Cecil’s aid took the form of carrying the earl’s verse epistle to the Queen. Cecil served as messenger for courtiers such as Essex and Raleigh, who apparently sent his “Cynthia” poems to Cecil “to dispose of as he saw fit.” See May, p. 132. Their discovery at Hatfield House makes one wonder if Elizabeth ever beheld them. For more on prison compositions in this period, see “Prison Writings in Early Modern England,” ed. William H. Sherman and William J. Sheils, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, special issue 72.2 (2009).

although we currently have no additional extant copies with competing attributions. The extant attribution in MS Stowe 962 seems more likely when one considers the level of accuracy for ascriptions throughout the manuscript.

III

If this poem is an ascribed persona piece, it comprises the sole example in British Library MS Stowe 962's 254 folios. Like most scribes of manuscript texts, those who prepared this miscellany remain anonymous. Since many manuscripts were prepared by unknown scribes and have uncertain provenance, scholars traditionally have afforded less weight to attributions made in manuscripts than to those made in print. Yet as Scott Nixon argues, "Manuscript ascriptions, especially in miscellanies, have been unjustly stigmatized as unreliable for the purpose of determining authorship."⁸ Based on his extensive study of Thomas Carew's manuscript poetry, Nixon concludes, "the ascriptions in [manuscript] verse miscellanies of the 1620s and 1630s have a rate of accuracy as high as ninety-five percent" (p. 2). Apparently, early modern works were misattributed in printed miscellanies and in early (and mostly posthumous) printed collections of individual authors as much as, if not more than, in manuscripts. The level of accuracy of printed attributions seems to parallel that of printed texts, as discussed by Ernest W. Sullivan II: "a printed text (with authorial intervention at zero) has no more inherent authority than would any other transcription and might, as a second-hand manuscript, generally have less."⁹

As we continue to explore the significance of ascribed manuscript works that were copied during a period of collaborations, answer poems, and verse sharing, we require better methods for evaluating the quality of manuscript attributions. One method is to investigate various facets of certain miscellanies in depth in order to evaluate their general levels of attention and accuracy, bringing a range of possible evidence to bear on complex questions of attribution. These elements include

8. Scott Nixon, "A Reading of Thomas Carew in Manuscript" (PhD diss., St. John's College, Oxford, 1996), p. 2. While Nixon argues that manuscript evidence is generally more dependable than evidence based upon posthumous printed editions, he asserts, "rather than accepting either manuscript or print ascriptions as authoritative, all evidence should be viewed as relative and weighed in the balance when determining canon" (pp. 55–57).

9. Ernest W. Sullivan II, "1633 Vndone," *TEXT* 7 (1994), 298.

provenance and marginalia, of course, but also features such as paratexts, connections of theme or subject among contents, material details like watermarks and scripts, and “contexture”—a term coined by Neil Fraistat for the arrangement of the book itself and each poem’s relationship to its surrounding verse.¹⁰ Such study enables us to evaluate a manuscript’s general level of accuracy and use an artifact’s reliability to illuminate its contents.

Study of “The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned” as a manuscript throws considerable light on its authorship. British Library MS Stowe 962 is a quarto miscellany containing 254 folios, prepared mainly in the 1620s and 1630s. Primarily a collection of poems from the time of James I and Charles I, the volume also contains prose works such as speeches and letters, as well as Elizabethan verse. The miscellany offers generally sound texts of works composed by John Donne, Thomas Carew, Ben Jonson, and many other poets, although most poems lack ascriptions. At least three hands appear in the composite manuscript, which seems to contain four distinct stocks of papers and consists of two primary sections: 1) folios 1–37, containing Donne’s prose paradoxes and problems, characters composed by Donne and by John Earle, and a first-line index, followed by a few additional poems and prose works by other authors; and 2) folios 38–254, primarily consisting of poems, many in the form of song lyrics, and a detailed first-line index for nearly the entire manuscript, prepared in several hands (fols. 244–54). The manuscript leaves, measuring approximately 144 × 187 mm, contain folio numbers, the second section paginated separately such that folio 38 is labeled folio “1,” which indicates that the second section was paginated before being bound with the first.

Although little can be claimed about the manuscript’s provenance with certainty, some elements are known, and others can be surmised. The Stowe collection once belonged to the first Marquess of Buckingham (1753–1813), who acquired many manuscripts from the antiquarian Thomas Astle (1735–1803). Although Astle bought some manuscripts through the London salerooms, he inherited others from his father-in-law, Philip Morant (1700–1770), an Essex historian. Peter Beal suggests that Morant might have owned MS Stowe 962. Because many of its poems are attributed to Oxford authors, Arnold Hunt

10. Neil Fraistat, “Introduction: The Place of the Book and the Book as Place,” *Poems in Their Place: The Intertextuality and Order of Poetic Collections*, ed. Neil Fraistat (Chapel Hill, 1986), p. 3.

believes that the compiler was probably, although not certainly, an Oxford student or professor. Mary Hobbs has agreed, suggesting that MS Stowe 962, “One of the most interesting literary manuscripts containing song lyrics,” emanates from Christ Church, Oxford.¹¹

MS Stowe 962 shows attention to detail, particularly in its indices and marginal comments. The manuscript’s compiler took great care in cataloguing its contents in two meticulously prepared indices, even noting repeated versions of poems such as “ffor godes sake hold yo^r peace & lett me loue,” listed as “54. & 151” (fol. 246v). Within the body of the manuscript, scribes record connections between poems accurately. They note, for example, the inclusion of answer poems for verses located elsewhere in the manuscript and add marginalia, such as “with the Calme fol: 121” (fol. 56v), which recalls the connection between Donne’s “The Storme” and “The Calme.” Numerous verse revisions and additions also appear; even a traditional manicule indicates where missing lines, added in the margin, should have appeared within an original poem (fol. 131). Similarly, folio 234 offers additional stanzas for an incomplete poem on folio 203v and provides an explanatory comment. Such precise marginal directions complicate determination of the collection’s appropriate scribal publication category, according to those established by Harold Love: “entrepreneurial publication” or “user publication.”¹² Or perhaps the elevated sense of organization and precision suggests that the compiler intended to distribute copies of the collection via scribal publication or print.¹³

Confidence in the artifact’s compiler and scribes proves important when considering ascriptions in MS Stowe 962. The volume only attributes fifty-four works, a small fraction of those included. Like many seventeenth-century miscellanies, its ascriptions consist of full names, surnames, or initials. Although names or initials can designate the scribe, the person who originally supplied the poem, the intended recipient of a verse letter, or the verse’s subject (particularly in ele-

11. Mary Hobbs, *Early Seventeenth-Century Verse Miscellany Manuscripts* (Aldershot, 1992), p. 94; also see pp. 87–90. I am grateful for the assistance of Arnold Hunt, Curator of Historical Manuscripts, British Library, regarding the miscellany’s provenance.

12. Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993), p. 47.

13. This possible plan is implied in notes such as “This to be sett before. When by thy scorne O murdresse I am deade. in pag. 90” (fol. 210v) and “To be placed after (Take heed of loueinge me in pag. 128” (fol. 212), although such remarks could merely supply guidelines to the manuscript’s readers.

gies).¹⁴ For example, all ascriptions in MS Stowe 962 to recognizable names indicate the poem's author or suspected author. Whenever a name refers to a poem's subject instead of its author, the careful scribe clarifies the distinction: "Vppon" elucidates that "Vppon the Kinge of Sweden. A° 1632:" (fols. 32v–33) elegizes the King, while "A farewell to the world *per* Sir Kenellm Digby. 1635" (fols. 33–34) is claimed to be "*per*" (or "by") Digby.¹⁵

The vast majority of authorial assertions in MS Stowe 962 prove correct. Of its fifty-four attributions, only one is almost certainly inaccurate.¹⁶ The other probably incorrect ascription is for a poem that, according to Charles B. Gullans, presents "one of the most severe problems" in seventeenth-century verse attribution studies.¹⁷ "The Lord Walden to y^e princesse Elizabeth" (fol. 185–185v) probably refers to Theophilus Howard, called Lord Walden until he inherited the title of second Earl of Suffolk on May 28, 1626; thus the verse was likely composed prior to this date. Various manuscript and printed collections assign the poem, which begins "Wronge not deere mistresse of my thoughtes ^hart^," to at least three other authors: Sir Robert Ayton, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Sir Benjamin Rudyerd. Gullans argues for Ayton's authorship, although more extant manuscripts assign the poem to

14. See H. R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558–1640* (Oxford, 1996), p. 160.

15. The manuscript contains only one potentially questionable ascription, a poem entitled "On a greate mans fall: L: C: Lo: Tr: 1624" (fol. 146–146v); however, Lionel Cranfield, Lord Treasurer, first Earl of Middlesex, almost certainly qualifies as the poem's likely target, not its author.

16. Although Ben Jonson composed "Howerglasse" (fol. 144), as the autograph copy given William Drummond of Hawthornden insures, the poem is mis-assigned in MS Stowe 962 to Wotton. Yet the mistake probably results from a later reader, not the original copyist. This version also does not constitute the only misattributed version, for the poem is assigned to Donne in other collections. See Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, I, part 2 (London and New York, 1980), 258.

17. Charles B. Gullans, "Raleigh and Ayton: The Disputed Authorship of 'Wrong Not Sweete Empress of My Heart,'" *Studies in Bibliography* 13 (1960), 191. Also see Beal's discussion of the poem in *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, I, part 2, 366. Gullans dismisses Benjamin Rudyerd offhand, calling the younger John Donne's printed edition of Pembroke's and Rudyerd's poems "a carelessly edited anthology of seventeenth-century poems": "the mere presence of any poem in this volume constitutes evidence of nothing but the taste of the editor" (p. 195). In the printed collection, the lyric is headed "P," which suggests that Donne, junior, actually assigned the poem to Pembroke, not Rudyerd. *Poems Written by the Right Honorable William Earl of Pembroke Lord Steward of his Majesties Houshold. Whereof Many of Which are Answered by Way of Reparte, by Sr Benjamin Ruddier, Knight* (1660), sig. D2–D2v.

Walden than to Ayton. Clearly, MS Stowe 962's scribes made their only attribution "mistakes" with ample justification, not through carelessness.

Thirty-six attributions are almost certainly accurate.¹⁸ Many of these works, including prose paradoxes and verse satires, are correctly attributed to Donne. Other accurately attributed verses composed by familiar poets, including Thomas Carew, Richard Corbett, and Ben Jonson, appear alongside poems by little-known versifiers such as Thomas Goodwyn, George Morley, and George Rodney, most of whom were associated with Oxford University. Compositions by university wits and divines accompany poems correctly attributed to courtiers and monarchs, including one of few extant copies of Queen Elizabeth's lament for her separation from a suitor, most likely Francis, Duke of Anjou. Other works include the prose piece "Cuffe his speech at the time of his Executione" (fol. 31v), which repeats the famous death oration delivered by Henry Cuffe, Essex's secretary, executed for his role in the 1601 uprising. The miscellany also contains two correctly attributed elegies by Francis Beaumont on the Countess of Rutland—wife of Essex conspirator Roger Manners, fifth Earl of Rutland, and stepdaughter to Essex himself. These elegies, Cuffe's speech, and the Southampton poem might suggest the compiler's special interest in and perhaps knowledge of Essex's uprising and its participants.

The compiler's inclusion of so many accurate and reasonable ascriptions, combined with the attention afforded the manuscript overall, makes MS Stowe 962's additional fourteen ascriptions more convincing. Six of the assigned verses appear in other manuscripts. Although their authorship has sparked controversy, MS Stowe 962's attributions seem plausible, even likely. Questions surround, for example, the brave author extolling "Courage" in the untitled epigram "Cowardes feare to dy: but Courage stout / Rather then liue in snuffe will be put out" (fol. 132), although seventeenth-century manuscripts proffer only one author: Raleigh. Justifiable skepticism surrounds Raleigh's complex

18. For a detailed analysis of the contents and structure of this manuscript, including an analysis of the six manuscript poems with debated attributions and of the eight attributed works extant only in this manuscript, see Lara M. Crowley, "Manuscript Context and Literary Interpretation: John Donne's Poetry in Seventeenth-Century England" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2007). Although some of these poems appear infrequently, attributions in manuscript and in some cases in print suggest that the poems are assigned accurately in MS Stowe 962.

canon, as Michael Rudick demonstrates,¹⁹ yet this ascription seems to reflect one of several informed attributions by MS Stowe 962's compiler. In addition, the miscellany's "A farewell to the world per Sir Kenellm Digby. 1635" (fols. 33–34) probably was composed by Digby. While the poem is assigned to Donne in various manuscripts, it is absent from early and later printed editions of Donne's verse, and "A farewell" resembles in subject, theme, and style an autograph poem found among Digby's own papers, one composed in response to the death in 1633 of his wife, Venetia. The multiple ascriptions to Digby in manuscripts such as Stowe 962 appear legitimate.²⁰ Eight additional attributed pieces, including "The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned. to *Queen Elizabeth*," appear to be extant in this manuscript alone. Not only do we have no reason to doubt these seemingly unique manuscript attributions, but we already know one to be correct: Hobbs notes that George Morley's elegy for John Pulteney, who died in May 1637, is also inscribed on his Leicester tomb.²¹

Considering this single known copy of "The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned. to *Queen Elizabeth*" within its manuscript

19. *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh: A Historical Edition*, Renaissance English Text Society, 7th series, XXIII (Tempe, 1999).

20. The poem reflects Digby's choice to eschew his country in 1635 for Paris, desiring what he imagined as intellectual and religious freedom. The poem also is assigned to Henry King, Raleigh, and Wotton, although most manuscripts ascribe the poem to Digby or Donne. Editor Henry A. Bright calls attention to the connection between the poem and a Digby autograph poem beginning "My thoughts and holy meditations." *Poems from Sir Kenelm Digby's Papers in the Possession of Henry A. Bright* (London, 1877). Another autograph poem found in the family collection, beginning "Buri'd in the shades of horrid night," also echoes connections to "A farewell to the world," further supporting MS Stowe 962's attribution. See Crowley, "Manuscript Context," pp. 129–35, for more on the debated authorship of this poem, "Cowardes feare to dy," and four others: "In prayse of ons M^{tes}" (fol. 62), which begins "Dearest, thy tresses are not thredes of gould"; "An Elegie on the death of the famous acto^r Rich: Burbage, who died 13^o martij A^o 1618" (fols. 62v–63v); "Woman" (fol. 64v), which begins "Oh heauenly powers why did you bringe to light"; and "A paradox on a paynted face" (fols. 49–50).

21. Hobbs, p. 94. In addition to "The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned," the works are as follows: "A young gentleman to his father beinge offended at his marriage she beinge poore" (fols. 59v–61v), assigned to yet unidentified author "Iohn Alford"; two verses that begin "I woo'd my mistris on a time" (fol. 219v) and "Behold a prodegie" (fol. 219v), assigned to the unidentified poet "E:W:."; an epistle "To the kinges most excelent Ma^{tes}" (fols. 37–39v) from "Fran: Phillips" that begins "Most dreade Soveraygne. If the thrones of heven & earth were to be sollicit on & the same"; "Verses made vppon the death of Henry Prince of Wales & c^o per Ar: Manneringe kt: & sent to his deare freinde E:V: kt:" (fols. 151v–55), which begins "To thee as knowinge best my hart"; and two elegies composed for "Io: Pulteney," almost certainly Sir John Pultney (or Poultney) of Misterton, Leicestershire, one by "Io: Crowther" that begins "How sway my tro^ubled thoughtes tweene greefe & glee" (fols. 34v–35v) and the other by

context provides the clearest picture of its history currently available. The poem received ample attention from the copyist (and perhaps a subsequent reader), for minor mistakes have been corrected.²² In addition, the compiler's interest in the Essex conspirators seems to have fallen on Southampton, for "Vpon the degradinge of Chancello^r Bacon parliament: A^o 1621" denounces the 1621 Parliament, in which Southampton's remarks led to another brief imprisonment. Although many contemporary manuscripts suggest interest in Essex and his men, such attention to Southampton in particular could explain this compiler's inclusion of a rare poem by (or supposedly by) the earl—one of only four verses afforded special attention in margins of the carefully prepared index.²³

The manuscript also seems to lack any identifiable persona piece, though such pieces can be found in other contemporary manuscripts and printed books. Persona poems such as "Worthy Instructions to his Sonne now Earle of Essex" in Northamptonshire Record Office I.L. 4344 give voice to Essex. In addition, an essay entitled *Valour Anatomized in a Fancie* that is normally attributed to Donne is attributed to Sidney in University of Kansas MS E205, fols. 59v–63, and in *Cottoni Posthuma*. Dennis Flynn suggests that this "mistaken" attribution to Sidney was in fact a purposeful and playful attribution to the ultimate model of "Valour" and that the essay is appropriately followed in *Cottoni Posthuma* by *Sir Francis Walsingham's Anatomizing Of Honesty, Ambition, and Fortitude*, also attributed ironically.²⁴ Although Donne's prose paradoxes, problems, and two characters, which frequently cir-

George Morley. Although I have attempted to locate copies of these poems in other British and American archives, using various first-line indices for manuscript and print, thus far I have found none, but I continue to search for copies.

22. For example, "stumbley" has been corrected to "stumbled" in "the horses may, / that stumbled in the morne, goe well all day" (ll. 7–8).

23. On folio 250, "+Lrd Southampton" has been added beside the entry for the poem; the name's final "n" probably does not appear due to page trimming. The scribe also calls attention to poems attributed to Sir Kenelm Digby, Lord Walden, and King James, seeming to highlight verses composed by poets of a certain rank and station. The scribe fails, however, to draw attention to Queen Elizabeth's poem, perhaps because he did not realize that the accompanying initials ("E.R.") represent Elizabeth Regina.

24. Dennis Flynn, "Three Unnoticed Companion Essays to Donne's 'An Essay of Valour,'" *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* LXXIII (Sept. 1969). The essay was printed as Sidney's in *Cottoni Posthuma* (1651), pp. 321–40, although it was printed elsewhere as Donne's. *John Donne Paradoxes and Problems* (ed. Helen Peters [Oxford, 1980]) relegates the work to dubia, but I argue in a study in progress that extant manuscript evidence supports Donne's authorship.

culated with this essay in manuscripts, appear in MS Stowe 962, the essay on valor does not. In addition, a reader might expect that, if the Southampton epistle were a persona poem, it would be followed by a so-called reply from Queen Elizabeth in the form of the supposed verse exchange between Sidney and Penelope Rich in Bodleian MS Eng. poet. f. 9 (fols. 224–36).²⁵ Yet no such “reply” has been uncovered in MS Stowe 962 or any other manuscript. Granted, the compiler and scribes of MS Stowe 962 could have included “The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned” without recognizing it as a persona poem, but as discussed, they prove particularly careful and knowledgeable in their ascriptions, only attributing select poems and almost always correctly.

Although the manuscript’s general accuracy, especially regarding ascriptions, points to Southampton’s likely authorship, one could argue that the relative obscurity of the poem adds credence to the persona poem argument. It seems likely that a verse epistle composed by such a famous public figure for such a famous recipient in such famous circumstances would appear in multiple manuscripts. Yet limited copies remain of many lyrics that once circulated in manuscript. Essex’s poetry, for example, “was confined to a most exclusive court circle, so exclusive it would seem as virtually to smother his reputation as a poet.”²⁶ In other cases we lack manuscript copies altogether of poems known to have circulated, such as Shakespeare’s “sugred Sonnets,” which passed “among his private friends.”²⁷ Were it not for scant and in some cases singular manuscript copies of poems, some versifiers, especially courtier poets, would be unknown. Elizabeth apparently kept a tight hold on some personal writings, particularly poems composed by her favorites, a practice which could account for lack of public awareness of the Southampton epistle. The earl wrote Queen Elizabeth at least one direct petition in 1601 (now lost), perhaps because she kept it close: in August, the earl enclosed with the Tower Lieutenant’s letter to the Council a personal request for his mother and estate supervisors to attend him. This handwritten plea was granted, affording proof that

25. See Josephine A. Roberts, “The Imaginary Epistles of Sir Philip Sidney and Lady Penelope Rich,” *English Literary Renaissance* 15.1 (Winter 1985), 59–77.

26. May, “The Poems of Edward De Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford and of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex,” *Studies in Philology* 77.5 (1980), 21.

27. Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia* (1598), fol. 281v.

at least one of Southampton's personal petitions to the Queen was delivered successfully and that his request was honored.²⁸

Currently we have only this single copy of "The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned," and there are no extant competing claims for its authorship. If other ascriptions surface, we must bear in mind that "A single ascription of a poem's authorship may still stand against all others if the manuscript in which it occurs can be shown to have authority."²⁹

IV

Extant material evidence seems to support Southampton's authorship of this poem, but, because references in the verse epistle point to the author's familiarity with intimate biographical details, we must also consider the earl's career, his relationships with Cecil, the Queen, and others, and his writings prior to the death sentence commutation. An absence of additional poems by Southampton for comparison makes this difficult, although previous studies have attempted to assign many of Shakespeare's sonnets to the earl in spite of this deficiency.³⁰ In addition, we will explore the level of common public awareness by the 1620s and 1630s (when MS Stowe 962 was compiled) regarding Southampton's life and imprisonment. The abundance of references to the earl in print and in manuscript, as well as our inability to know what details passed via word of mouth, makes a comprehensive account of contemporary knowledge impossible; however, examining reports of the period is critical for evaluating the poem's deeply private issues with regard to public awareness.

In spite of his financial constraints, the Earl of Southampton was sought as a patron of the arts, particularly in the 1590s when the young courtier seemed a rising star. Southampton, who spent much of his youth at Cecil House as a ward in Lord Burghley's care, frequented the

28. Sir John Peyton sent a letter to the Privy Council on August 18; in their reply of August 19, the Council refers to a petition that Southampton composed for the Queen, in which he requests to see his mother and others. Apparently, the petition was enclosed with Peyton's August 18 letter, yet both this letter and the reply are preserved while Southampton's letter to Elizabeth is not. See Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, *The Life of Henry, Third Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's Patron* (Cambridge, Eng., 1922), p. 245.

29. Hobbs, p. 140.

30. See Walter Thomson, *The Sonnets of William Shakespeare & Henry Wriothesley Third Earl of Southampton* (Oxford and Liverpool, 1938).

theater and appreciated music and art, as illustrated by his numerous portraits (more than any contemporary save Queen Elizabeth, it seems).³¹ Southampton also admired literature, as Sir John Beaumont's elegy for the earl attests:

I keepe that glory last, which is the best;
 The loue of Learning, which he oft exprest
 By conuersation, and respect to those
 Who had a name in Artes, in verse or prose:
 Shall euer I forget with what delight,
 He on my simple lines would cast his sight?
 His onely mem'ry my poore worke adorne,
 He is a Father to my crowne of thornes.³²

Southampton made generous donations to the library of his alma mater, St. John's College, Cambridge, and to the Bodleian Library, and the laundry list of printed dedications, commendatory verses, and verse epistles to Southampton suggests that authors eagerly sought his favor by association. Thomas Nashe's dedication to Southampton in *The Unfortunate Traveler* (1593) compliments the earl's love of the arts, possibly alluding to his status as a poet: "Incomprehensible is the heighth of your spirit both in heroical resolution and matters of conceit" (sig. A2–v). While Shakespeare's flattery in *Venus and Adonis* (1593) reflects typical contemporary dedicatory discourse, his language in *Lucrece* (1594) seems intimate and affectionate: "VVhat I haue done is yours, what I haue to doe is yours, being part in all I haue, deuoted yours."³³ Southampton biographer G. P. V. Akrigg contends that Shakespeare

31. Park Honan, "Wriothesley, Henry, third earl of Southampton (1573–1624)," *ODNB* (2004). I also have gleaned biographical information about Southampton from Akrigg, Rowse, and Stopes. Lord Howard of Effingham bought Southampton's wardship but chose to transfer the earl's custody and marriage arrangements to Lord Burghley, into whose care Southampton came in late 1581 or early 1582 (Akrigg, pp. 22–23). We do not know when Southampton began to attend the Queen regularly, but he was at court by 1592 because John Sanford mentions him in a poem marking the occasion of the court's visit to Oxford. Southampton was also considered (although not chosen) as a Knight of the Garter in 1593, a significant honor for one so young.

32. John Beaumont, *Bosworth-field* (1629), sig. N1v. Henry Goodyer calls Southampton the "great example" of the union of the arts and military prowess in *The Mirrour of Maiestie* (1618), sig. E2.

33. *Lucrece* (1594), sig. A2. Shakespeare also testifies, "The loue I dedicate to your Lordship is without end," adding "The warrant I haue of your Honourable disposition, not the worth of my vntutord Lines makes it assured of acceptance," further implying a personal connection. Nichol Smith remarks, "There is no other dedication like this in Elizabethan literature," *Shakespeare's England* (Oxford, 1916), II, 201; quoted in Akrigg, p. 198. Many scholars point to these lines as evidence that Shakespeare wrote most sonnets about and for Southampton.

composed Sonnet 107 to congratulate the earl upon his release from the Tower, which suggests that their relationship remained intact during and after Southampton's imprisonment, highlighting the earl's sincere and ongoing interest in poetry.³⁴

Whether or not Southampton knew many of the poets who sought his attention in print, he was connected intimately with at least a few versifiers, including his mother. Bodleian MS Add. B. 105 contains "The Resolve by Lady Mary Wriothesly" (fol. 101), which seems to reject the "Thirst of Praise, & vain Desire of Fame" that (according to the poem) most women relish from suitors, although the speaker's catalogue of trivial flirtations reveals her knowledge of such desires. The Countess' second husband Sir Thomas Heneage, the first of Southampton's two stepfathers, modeled success in acquiring and maintaining Queen Elizabeth's favor through, among other things, verse composition. For example, Heneage composed "Madam, but marke the labors of our lyfe" in reply to a melancholic verse written by Elizabeth. Scribal copies of both poems are extant in only one manuscript, Pierpont Morgan Library 7768, with Heneage's autograph signature. Although Heneage probably showed his intimate verse to the Queen, he did not encourage its circulation.³⁵

Generally, authorship by a famous person did not guarantee a poem's extensive distribution, for Robert Cecil's only known poem remained lost until discovered by Katherine Duncan-Jones in 1992.³⁶ The verse metaphorizes a known event, Queen Elizabeth's theft of his niece's

34. Akrigg, p. 236. Perhaps Beaumont's 1624 elegy even alludes to a direct connection between Southampton and the playwright whom, just the previous year, Jonson immortalized as "not of an age, but for all time":

My verses are not for the present age;
For what man lives, or breathes on Englands stage;
That knew not braue Southampton, in whose sight
Most plac'd their day, and in his absence night? (sig. M8v)

Although Shakespeare and Thomas Heywood have been suggested as potential secretaries for Southampton, no substantive evidence currently suggests that Southampton employed either man, or any man regularly, as a secretary.

35. See May's discussion of Heneage, and editions of his poems, in *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets*. According to May, "All six of Sir Thomas's known poems exist in unique copies which saw little or no manuscript circulation, nor was he referred to as a poet by contemporaries" (p. 61). One might wonder if Southampton followed his stepfather's example in attempting to limit the circulation of his compositions.

36. Katherine Duncan-Jones, "'Preserved Dainties': Late Elizabethan Poems by Sir Robert Cecil and the Earl of Clanricarde," *The Bodleian Library Record* 14.2 (April 1992).

miniature of Cecil in order to wear it on her shoe buckle, as a study of the role of a servant to the sovereign. The extant manuscript copy that Duncan-Jones uncovered lacks ascription; she based her authorship claim on Sir William Browne's description of the event in a letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury, which originally accompanied a copy of the poem. Browne calls these verses, sung at court by Robert Hales, "very secrett," which probably explains their lack of circulation in manuscript. However, Joshua Eckhardt's recent discovery of an additional manuscript copy ascribed to "R. C." lends considerable weight to the attribution.³⁷ Only a minority of Elizabeth's courtiers seem to have been poets, but several members of this small group—Cecil, Heneage, and of course Essex—were connected closely to Southampton.

We lack evidence that Southampton flattered his sovereign with verses in the 1590s, yet he desperately, and at first successfully, sought her favor (and its accompanying financial rewards). In fact, the Queen's growing fondness for this young favorite threatened Essex, who in early 1595 apparently composed verses (also performed by Hales) to curtail her affection: "And if thou shouldst by Her be now forsaken, / She made thy Heart too strong for to be shaken."³⁸ Southampton's absence from court by October suggests that the Queen's favor had passed, possibly because of jealousy when he showed attention to Elizabeth Vernon, one of her maids of honor and Essex's cousin.³⁹ The Queen refused Southampton's request to accompany Essex to Cádiz in 1596, a choice that might reflect a desire to keep a fond one close by, as with favorites during previous battles. But in 1597 Southampton commanded a vessel to the Azores that captured another ship, offering one of the few successes of the expedition and earning the earl knighthood.

All efforts to impress Elizabeth were overshadowed in 1598 by a series of events that led to what proved arguably to be his greatest error

37. Joshua Eckhardt, "'From a Seruant of Diana' to the Libellers of Robert Cecil: The Transmission of Songs Written for Queen Elizabeth I," *Elizabeth I and the Culture of Writing*, ed. Peter Beal and Grace Ioppolo (London, 2007).

38. May, *Elizabethan Courtier Poets*, pp. 133, 251.

39. Akrigg, pp. 47–48. Rowland Whyte seems to find the Queen little moved by Southampton as of September 23, 1595; he writes to Sir Robert Sidney, "My Lord of *Southampton*, doth with to much Familiarity court the faire Mrs. *Varnon*, while his Friends observing the Quenes Humors towards my Lord of *Essex*, doe what they can to bring her to fauor him, but it is yet in vaine." Arthur Collins, *Letters and Memorials of State* (1746), I, 348–49. Paul E. J. Hammer suggests that Southampton may have maintained an additional relationship (or at least a flirtation) with Lady Mary Howard. *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585–1597* (Cambridge, Eng., 1999), p. 319n. 17.

with the Queen, for which she likely harbored resentment in 1601. When Elizabeth failed to reward Southampton's service in the Azores, he was forced to sell several properties. Probably in part to avoid financial problems, Southampton appealed to Cecil for permission to join his embassy to the court of Henri in Paris. Despite her reluctance to let Southampton go, the Queen finally granted him permission on February 6, just four days prior to Cecil's departure. Cecil returned to London in April, but Southampton remained in France, probably in part to enjoy the company of his long-banished friends Henry and Charles Danvers. But Elizabeth Vernon was with child, and Southampton faced the choice of abandoning her or returning to England to marry her in spite of sure objections by his mother and his Queen. Southampton returned. In August the Danvers brothers traveled to London with a letter from Southampton to Cecil indicating that the earl awaited the return of one of the Danvers brothers to Paris, at which time they would travel to Italy. Meanwhile, Southampton secretly returned to England for his clandestine wedding. That Southampton lied to Cecil suggests that perhaps their friendship was not quite as secure as some have supposed.

Once the Queen discovered the marriage, her response was swift and furious. Southampton had departed again for Paris, but the Queen demanded his return and sent Elizabeth Vernon to the Fleet. Somewhat reluctantly and perhaps in disappointment, Cecil wrote a letter ordering his friend to return to Court. The papers of Sir Thomas Edmondes, the English Agent at Paris 1592–1599, paint a vivid portrait of subsequent events. After informing Edmondes, "my L. of Southamptons comming hither is knowen, and what he hath done, for w^{ch} the Queene is much offended," Cecil expresses concern that Southampton might exacerbate his own problems; Cecil offers his wish "that his Lo: should take heed to make it worse wth any contempt."⁴⁰ Edmondes also received a signed warrant from the Queen: "we haue vnderstoode that the Earle of Southampton hath been in England prively, and is passed ouer again without o^r knowledge contemptuously, And . . . behaued him selfe in other thinges contrary to his duety and to the dishouno^r of our Court" (fol. 40). Edmondes informed Southampton of the Queen's command, to which the earl "readelie yealded to submitt him self thereunto, promising to vse all possible hast to depart" (fol. 46).

40. British Library MS Stowe 167, fol. 38.

However, because of “some impediments he could not instantlie remoue,” Southampton lingered, gambling and probably hoping that the Queen’s anger might dissipate with time (fol. 46). The earl also wrote Cecil, saying that, while he wished to obey his Queen, Southampton must “attend the receipt of some money which was to be made over to me to carry me further . . . till then I have no means to stir from hence. This is unfeignedly true.”⁴¹ This concern that Cecil might doubt Southampton’s honesty seems justified since the earl was caught so recently in a lie. Southampton, seeming nervous, even begs Cecil, “Do not withdraw your love from me, with the growing of my unhappy fortune” (p. 101). When the earl returned to England in November, Queen Elizabeth immediately sent him to join his wife in the Fleet, where they had a daughter, Penelope (named for Essex’s sister and Sidney’s Stella). Although Essex tried to procure their immediate freedom, Southampton remained in prison until the month’s end.

In marrying against the Queen’s wishes, Southampton joined a prestigious club of favorites that included the Earl of Leicester, the Earl of Essex, and Sir Walter Raleigh. But Southampton’s seemingly unforgivable error arguably lay not in his decision to marry his mistress or in his choice to do so in secret, but in his behavior toward the Queen. After challenging her authority by sneaking home (and then leaving again) and by remaining in Paris in spite of her command, he probably erred most when he apparently failed to put pen to paper to beg her forgiveness. No record of Southampton’s penance remains—not a letter entreating her mercy, not a poem extolling her greatness, not a contemporary comment suggesting such a gesture.

Personal protestations, specifically in verse, were employed by other favorites who incurred Elizabeth’s wrath for unwelcome marriages. Essex apparently composed “Muses no more but mazes be your names” to assure the Queen that, although Frances Walsingham became his bride, Elizabeth remained his love. After the Queen discovered Raleigh’s marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton, he probably composed the “Cynthia” poems for his sovereign. Although his verse was popular and eagerly sought, only four poems remain extant of “Ocean to Cynthia”—originally a much longer composition, it seems. Although out of favor for quite some time, Raleigh eventually regained a significant role at court. Unlike Raleigh and Essex, who left a substantial

41. *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1598–1601*, p. 100.

canon reflecting “utilitarian poetics,” Southampton wrote Queen Elizabeth no such verses.⁴² And, unlike Raleigh and Essex, Southampton found no forgiveness.

The Queen admitted her lingering grudge the following year during Southampton’s service in Ireland when she refused to grant Essex’s request to make Southampton General of the Horse. During a private meeting at Richmond, she forbade Essex to grant Southampton any command in the army, but Essex unwisely assured Southampton that they merely would wait until Essex obtained his commission and could appoint whichever officers he deemed worthy. After Essex became viceroy and commander-in-chief on March 12, 1599, and received the sword of state in Dublin on April 15, he promptly appointed Southampton to General of the Horse. On June 10, the Privy Council sent Essex a letter demanding on behalf of the Queen that he retract the command and offer it to someone else, “her M^{tie} esteemeing it a verye vnseasonable tyme to conferr vpon [Southampton] any so great place, having so latelye giuen her cause of offence towardes hym.”⁴³ Essex refused. He informed the Council that he had taken the Queen’s remarks at Richmond as a suggestion, not a command, and that he found it imprudent to demote Southampton after the service that Southampton already had shown to Queen and country. Addressing Elizabeth’s intense resentment toward Southampton, Essex adds, “was it treason in my L of S. to marrye my poore kinswoman, that neither longe imprisonment, nor no punishment besydes (y^t hat benn vsuall in like cases) can satisfye & appease?” (fol. 17). On July 19, the Queen sent a frustrated response, calling Southampton “such a one whose counsel can be of little, and experience of less use.”⁴⁴ Essex reluctantly recalled the appointment but chose, perhaps recklessly, to abolish the post altogether.

Evidently Southampton never participated in this exchange, although at least one close friend believed that the earl should take a more active role to improve his relationship with the Queen. Charles

42. May argues that among Essex’s extant poems, “there is little evidence of composition for its own sake or as a function of passive retirement from courtiership;” his verses constitute part of his crusade for “self-promotion at court.” Thus Essex follows Raleigh in “adapting his poetry to self-serving, political ends.” See *Elizabethan Courtier Poets*, p. 125; also see *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh, A Historical Edition*.

43. British Library Add. MS 4129, fol. 16v. Granted, Queen Elizabeth objected to many of Essex’s appointments, a product of their ongoing struggle for dominance.

44. *Calendar of State Papers (Ireland), 1599–1600*, p. 100.

Danvers, who would credit his participation in the coup that would cost his life to his “love to the Earl of Southampton,” offered his friend this advice:⁴⁵ “use your own pen in such a style as is no less fit for this time than contrary to your disposition, it being apparent that her Majesty’s ill conceit is as much grounded upon the sternness of your carriage as upon the foundation of any other offence.”⁴⁶ Danvers urged the earl to take up his “own pen” to acknowledge his contrition and loyalty to the Queen in order to begin to regain her favor. However, yet again, Southampton apparently ignored his opportunity to write Elizabeth a letter of apology in verse or in prose.

In “The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned” the poet employs a metaphor involving a horse: “the horse may, / that stumbled in the morne, goe well all day” (ll. 7–8). One might wonder why Southampton (or another poet invoking the earl) would mention horses, reminding the Queen of a situation involving both Southampton and Essex that recently enraged her as a means to plead mercy. Yet the metaphor seems apt, for the comparison draws attention to Southampton’s recognition of past wayward actions: although he, sometime General of the Horse, “stumbled in the morne” of the February rebellion—or, more generally, throughout his youth—he promises to “goe well” hereafter.

But Essex and Southampton “stumbled” yet again when they left Ireland in 1599 against the Queen’s wishes. During Essex’s subsequent captivity in York House, Southampton remained in residence at Essex House, and he and the Earl of Rutland supposedly “passed away the Tyme in London merely in going to Plaies euery Day.”⁴⁷ When Essex’s trial was eventually canceled, Southampton and friends celebrated, but Essex remained under strict house-arrest. Southampton and company blamed this fate on an anti-Essex faction, consisting of Cecil, Raleigh and others, which increasingly concerned them.

In an effort to return to the Queen’s good graces, Southampton asked in March 1600 for permission to resume his duties in Ireland. Although he repeatedly requested to appeal to Elizabeth in person,

45. *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1598–1601*, p. 571.

46. *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, K. G. preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire*, ed. S. R. Scargill-Bird et al. (London, 1883–1976), IX, 246. Emphasis added. Referred to hereafter as *Salisbury MSS*.

47. Collins, p. 132 (in a letter from Rowland Whyte to Sir Robert Sidney, dated October 11, 1599).

Southampton received only her written permission to leave, and he did on April 21. He proved a fine warrior for England yet again under his friend Lord Mountjoy, who requested in a letter of June 8, 1600, that Southampton be granted governorship of Connaught, hoping that “these sacrifices may expiate great sins.”⁴⁸ Southampton appealed to Cecil for assistance in the scheme, but apparently Cecil’s efforts (if any were made) proved unsuccessful, for yet again the Queen denied the earl’s request. Thus, frustrated and disappointed, Southampton wrote on July 22 to inform Cecil that, “sorry Her Majesty thinks me so little able to do her service,” he intended to leave for the Low Countries in the hopes of better fortune (p. 328). By late September the earl had returned to London, soon to make the error that nearly would cost his life.

The events leading up to and comprising Essex’s failed coup on February 8, 1601, are well documented, as is Essex and Southampton’s trial on February 19 in Westminster Hall. But a few elements of the trial, as reported in manuscript and later printed accounts, demand special attention. Particularly relevant are Southampton’s language and attitude, such a marked contrast to his prior haughty demeanor that one might wonder if Attorney-General Edward Coke intended the pun when criticizing Southampton’s “misdemeanour” of late, for which “it hath pleased [Queen Elizabeth] to thinke worse of him.”⁴⁹ Essex proclaimed his innocence, insisting that he only had wanted to “make his passage to the Queene, to prostrate himself to her Ma^{tie} to informe her of the mallice & practices of his enemies,” whereas Southampton tried another tactic: claiming ignorance.⁵⁰ He somewhat disingenuously maintained that he was unaware of a planned march on the palace and that he only accompanied Essex to preserve his friend from adversaries. After being convicted unanimously of treason, Southampton and Essex were offered opportunities to speak before sentencing. Essex announced his Protestantism, loyalty, and remorse, but he accepted his doom; he did not expect, or adamantly implore, the Queen’s mercy. Southampton, by contrast, passionately entreated

48. *Calendar of State Papers (Ireland), 1600*, p. 223. Southampton writes Cecil the following day, requesting assistance, “whereby to recover Her Majesty’s good conceit, which is my only end and all the happiness I aspire unto” (p. 231).

49. Stopes, p. 208.

50. British Library Add. MS 4155, fol. 96. This manuscript contains one of many contemporary accounts.

his judges “to inform the Queen of my penitence, and be a means for me to her Majesty to grant me her gracious pardon. I know I have offended her; yet if it please her to be merciful unto me, I may, by my future service, deserve my life. I have been brought up under her Majesty, I have spent the best part of my patrimony in her Majesty’s service, with frequent danger of my life, as your Lordships well know. . . . But since I am found guilty by the law, I do submit myself to death, yet not despairing of her Majesty’s mercy; for I know she is merciful, and if she please to extend mercy to me, I shall with all humility receive it.”⁵¹ His regret and self-loathing, his adulation of his “merciful” sovereign, his promise to make himself a model servant of the Queen—all of these elements appear in “The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned”:

life w^{ch} I now begg, wer’t to proceede
 from els whoso’er, I’d first chowse to bleed
 but now, the cause, why life I doe Implore
 is, that I thinke you worthy to giue more. (ll. 67–70)

The speaker acknowledges that his crimes merit the justice of his death, but he begs forgiveness, for the Queen is “worthy to giue more,” mirroring the earl’s declaration that he would “with all humility receive” mercy (if offered) and “by my future service, deserve my life.”

Southampton’s trial speech, extant in a number of seventeenth-century manuscript and printed sources, evoked mixed reactions. Contemporary historian John Speed reported that the combination of Southampton’s “sweet temper . . . well deseruing life” and Essex’s resolve “did breed most compassionate affections in all men.”⁵² John Chamberlain, on the other hand, offered qualified criticism of Southampton’s meekness: “The earle of Southampton spake very well (but me thought somewhat too much as well as the other) and as a man that wold faine live pleaded hard to acquite himself, but all in vaine, for yt could not be, wherupon he descended to intreatie, and moved great commiseration, and though he were generally well liked, yet me thought he was somewhat too low and submisse, and semed too loth to die before a prowde ennemie.”⁵³ But becoming “low and submisse” seems to have been what the Queen desired. According to Charlotte

51. Akrigg, p. 126.

52. *The Historie of Great Britaine* (1631), p. 1213.

53. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure (Philadelphia, 1939), I, 120.

Carmichael Stopes, during the following year Elizabeth even admitted to an envoy of King Henri, “if Essex had only taken the advice of his friends and fully submitted and entreated pardon, [Elizabeth] would have forgiven him.”⁵⁴ In truth such forgiveness seems unlikely, for whatever their motives or intentions, the Essex rebels committed actions deemed treasonous, and Essex led the charge. As second-in-command, Southampton stood in great danger, but his desire to live prevailed over his pride, for the earl humbly recognized (like the poem’s speaker) that “perseuerance in ill, is all the ill” (l. 7).

During the following month, Southampton took up his “own pen” at least four times in the Tower to reiterate and expand on his courtroom pleas in two letters addressed to the Council, a confession, and a letter to Robert Cecil, all extant in the papers of Hatfield House.⁵⁵ Quite unlike Southampton’s previous, rather impersonal epistolary style, his writings from this period reflect a desperate and (quite rightly) frightened penitent. Surely these anxious, earnest outpourings were fueled by the executions of Essex and fellow conspirators and by the persistent whispers surrounding Southampton’s impending doom.⁵⁶ When the poet’s speaker encourages the Queen to pardon Southampton to “deceiue the sprightes / of people, curious after roofull sightes” (ll. 35–36), he probably alludes to the mobs that gathered on various days in response to rumors of the earl’s execution, such as the crowd that swarmed Tower Hill on Lady Day. Southampton was for all practical purposes a dead man or, as the speaker suggests, a man “dead in law” (l. 28): contemporary documents, which follow the common practice regarding condemned prisoners, refer to him as “the late Earl.” In its regretful, anxious tone, its topics, and even its language, “The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned” recalls Southampton’s writings of February 1601—apparently known at the time only to the Queen and her Council.

54. Stopes, p. 246.

55. Stopes reproduces three documents: a letter to the Council, a document called Southampton’s confession, and a letter to Robert Cecil, each labeled as “after Feb. 19th 1600–1” in *Salisbury MSS* (pp. 225–31). Another letter to the Council is printed in full in *Salisbury MSS*, XI, 73.

56. Essex was executed in the Tower courtyard on February 25, 1601. Henry Cuffe, Sir Christopher Blount, Sir John Davies, Sir Charles Danvers, and Essex’s steward Gelly Merrick also were found guilty and, apart from Davies who was reprieved, were executed (Akrigg, p. 128).

In his Tower statements Southampton naturally reiterates themes from his trial speech, although his language appears more repentant and distressed. Like the poem's speaker, the earl lowers himself, announcing "I . . . with so humble and greeued a spirit prostrate my self att her royall feete and craue her pardon."⁵⁷ He repeatedly promises that a pardon would result in his lifelong, faithful service and assures the Council that he never would solicit the Queen's pardon had he ever allowed "unreverent thoughts towards her Majesty"; Southampton Claims, "God that knows my heart is my witness that it is loyal and faithful towards her, and therefore I cannot but be confident in her *mercy*," a word repeatedly mentioned in his Tower writings and in the poem.⁵⁸

Southampton's written petitions for "mercy" often point to the Queen's singular ability to substitute mercy for justice, an act that Southampton attests will raise her in God's favor—an issue absent in his public trial speech but highlighted, as previously mentioned, in the poem. "Beleuee that God is better pleased with those that are the instrumentes of mercy," Southampton says in one Tower document, "then with such as are the persuaders of severe iustice, and forgett not that hee hath promised mercy to the mercifull."⁵⁹ In another letter Southampton assures the Council that forgiveness will not cause Elizabeth to appear weak or the crime to appear insignificant to the public: "The law hath hetherto had his proceedinge, wherby her iustice and my shame is sufficiently published; now is the time that mercy is to be shewed" (p. 226). Similarly, the poem's speaker repeatedly pairs the Queen with Christ, champion and embodiment of mercy—the "antidote to iustice" (l. 13).

Also like the poem's speaker, Southampton plays upon the sovereign's vanity in his Tower writings. He praises her "harte, which I know is apt to receaue any impression of good."⁶⁰ And, in a phrase that reveals aptitudes for creating metaphors and for displacing blame,

57. Stopes, p. 225.

58. *Salisbury MSS*, XI, 73, emphasis added. In another statement Southampton echoes this thought: "O lett her neuer sufer to bee spiled the bloud of him that desiers to live but to doe her seruice, nor loose the glory shee shall gaine in the world by pardoninge one whose harte is without spott, though his cursed destiny hath made his actes to bee condemned, and whose life, if it please her to graunte it, shallbe eternally redy to bee sacrificed to accomplish her least comandement" (quoted in Stopes, pp. 225–26).

59. Stopes, p. 225.

60. Stopes, p. 226.

Southampton asks the Council to “be a mean to her Majesty to be merciful to him upon whom in his own conceit the sun never shined since he was banished her presence; for if it had been permitted unto me to have lived so as I might but sometimes have seen the light of her eyes, I know this misfortune could never have befallen me.”⁶¹ He assures the Council, “her anger . . . towards an humble and sorrowfull man . . . alone hath more power to dead my spirites then any iron hath to kill my flesh.”⁶² The comparison with “iron” is echoed by the poem’s speaker, who equates the debasing of his celebrated eyes with an iron blade cooling:

mine eyes when they
stand full like two nine-holes, where at boyes play
and so theire fires went out like Iron hott
and put into the forge, & then is not. (ll. 39–42)

The Queen, aware of her own aging body, surely could identify with the speaker’s concern for his fading youth and beauty. Southampton, man of many portraits, must have mourned his “*partes afflicted*” (l. 38), particularly his handsome face: “And in the wrinckles of my cheekes, teares lie, / like furowes filed wth rayne, & no more drie” (ll. 43–44).

Yet like the earl’s Tower writings, the poem maintains a sense of hopeful expectation for both parties. The speaker acknowledges decay and death in the line “the Ma^{tie} of a Prince, where all thinges end” (l. 62), simultaneously observing that the Queen is the all-powerful “end” but that her life, like “all thinges,” will “end.” However, the speaker jars the reader in the following line with “and beginn” (l. 63). He reiterates that, although “the Prince” can punish, “the Prince” can forgive, and Christ (from which all things “beginn”) rewards such mercy. The speaker then clarifies the worldly prince’s “sacred” duty, for the prince “by whose sacred prerogatiue / he as he list, we as we ought liue” (ll. 63–64). The word “sacred” here flatters the sovereign and connects “the Prince” with the Prince of Peace. As Southampton similarly remarks to the Council, “it is more honor to a prince to pardon one penitent offender, then with severity to punish mayny.”⁶³

In addition to topical and thematic connections, some specific verbal echoes of Southampton’s Tower writings surface in the poem.

61. *Salisbury MSS*, XI, 73.

62. Stopes, p. 226.

63. Stopes, p. 226.

Southampton throws himself “att her Majesties princely feete, with a trew penitent sowle for my fau[l]tes past, with horror in my conscience for my offences.”⁶⁴ The prisoner-speaker is also filled with “horror,” especially during sleepless nights: “horroure, & feare, like cold in ice, dwell heare; / and hope (like lightninge) gon ere it appeare” (ll. 57–58). The speaker’s desire for “new merrittes” (l. 2) also reflects Southampton’s contemporary writings, and the title, “The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned. to *Queen Elizabeth*,” includes a term that Southampton employs: “I beseech your Lordships bee pleased to receaue the petition of a poore *condemned* man” (p. 225, emphasis added). Admittedly, “horror” and “condemned” might seem commonplace in a poem depicting Southampton’s dire circumstances, and one should not make too much of verbal echoes. But the cumulative connections between the poem and the prison writings appear more than coincidental.

Far from commonplace is the speaker’s mention of his ailing legs. In a March 22 letter to Sir John Peyton, Lieutenant of the Tower, the Council states, “wee doe understand that the Earle of Southampton by reason of the continewance of his quartern ague hath a swellinge in his legges and other partes”; thus, “you maie admytt Doctor Paddy whoe is acquainted with the state of his bodie in your presence to have accesse unto him, and to conferr with him.”⁶⁵ The letter recalls the Queen’s severe restrictions on Southampton’s visitors; neither his wife nor his mother was permitted to visit for many months, and then only because of to his failing health. Southampton’s poor health was recognized publicly, which arguably could account for the speaker bemoaning his suffering body and failing appetite. However, in calling attention to Southampton’s failing “legges” in “I’ue left my goinge since my legges strength decayd / Like one, whose stocke beinge spent giue ouer trade” (ll. 49–50), the speaker highlights an issue apparently not widely known. Not even poets who professed to know the earl—such as John Beaumont, Gervase Markham, and Henry Goodyer—mention this ailment in printed verses on Southampton. This reference reflects awareness of a medical concern probably known

64. Stopes, p. 229. Connecting his monarch and his Maker, Southampton prays that “the God of Mercy . . . will moue her Majestie to pyty mee, that I may lyve to make the world know her great merritt and serue her.”

65. *Acts of the Privy Council of England, 1600–1601*, XXXI, 237–38.

only to Dr. Paddy, the Privy Council, Queen Elizabeth, and Southampton, enhancing the case for the earl's authorship of the poem.

Southampton's letter to Cecil proves particularly intriguing among his Tower writings, for its language reveals anxiety regarding his old friend's intentions. After the earl acknowledges, "I receaved a charge from you and the rest of the Lords, when I last spake with you, that I should conceale the matter which was in hand," which indicates that Cecil did converse with Southampton in the Tower, the earl adds that he discovered that "the Lieuetenant" knows a good deal about "the matter" (most likely Mountjoy's role in Essex's uprising).⁶⁶ Apparently terrified that suspicions could damage his relationship with Cecil, Southampton avers that he told the lieutenant nothing. He then acquaints Cecil with other elements of the "coup" that he claims to have remembered recently, acknowledging that "my cheef hope is in your desier to effect my good, next vnto the fauor of God and the mercy of her Majestie" (p. 230). Southampton further claims, "I doe rely so much vppon your fauor that I doute not but you will make vse of them for my aduantage, and I shall continew bound vnto you, as I protest I doe account my self alredy, more then to any man lyuinge, which whether I liue or dy I make the world know to your honor" (p. 231). These remarks could contribute to arguments that Cecil aided his friend. Or this profession of devotion, which seems uncharacteristically intimate, nervous, and perhaps disingenuous considering the earl's recent actions, could reflect his fear that the Queen's closest advisor may not do all in his power to assist Southampton. Whether Cecil later helped or not, the worried earl had cause to put his own pen to paper.

Cecil had various reasons to encourage the Queen to spare Southampton. In addition to being a ward of Cecil's father and a long-time friend, Southampton was a popular public figure, particularly admired by his correspondent James VI of Scotland. Based on Southampton's joyous reaction to news of the Queen's death, the earl apparently expected that James eventually would free him.⁶⁷ Cecil might have hoped that intervention would earn the respect and appreciation of the people and of their future monarch, who might

66. Stopes, p. 230.

67. See Duncan-Jones, "'Almost always smiling': Elizabeth's Last Two Years," *Resurrecting Elizabeth I in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Elizabeth H. Hageman and Katherine Conway (Madison, N.J., 2007), p. 45.

otherwise bear a grudge against Cecil for Essex's demise. Lord Henry Howard adds weight to this possibility by declaring that Cecil saved Southampton's life "out of respect to his affection to King James, though it were neither ancient nor very meritorious."⁶⁸ However, Cecil also had reason to worry that, if Southampton lived, he might oppose Cecil under James.

Whatever his motivation, Cecil probably did intervene in some way for Southampton.⁶⁹ Perhaps Cecil felt moved by pleas from the earl's wife: her letters circa February 19 betray nervousness regarding Cecil's intended course. She flatters Cecil, "easily in your wisdom can you look into my woeful condition, which *if* you be pleased to do, I doubt not but you will pity me, and allow of this I do," seeming as insecure as her husband about Cecil's intervention.⁷⁰ Yet, after the Queen's death, Southampton's mother writes Cecil, "no alteration of time or fortune (that is far from you) can make me forget my bond to you for me and mine, who under God breathe by your means."⁷¹ Other "evidence" of Cecil's involvement comes from his own letters, although most comprise epistles sent by the politically savvy Secretary to Southampton's friends. For example, when discussing Cecil's intervention, biographers refer to his lament that "the man that grieveth me to think what may become of him, is the poor young Earl of Southampton, whom, merely for love of the Earl [of Essex], hath been drawn in to this action."⁷² Yet Cecil makes this remark in a letter to Lord Mountjoy, Southampton's close friend and fellow conspirator in some Essex activities; surely Mountjoy would have been relieved that Cecil appears conciliatory. Cecil does remind Mountjoy that, although hope remains, Southampton probably will die, for "most of the conspiracies were at Drury House, where he was always chief;" thus "those that would deal for him, of which number I protest to God I am one, *as far as I dare*, are much disadvantaged of arguments to save him" (p. 201, emphasis added). Even while easing back into favor with one of Southampton's dearest friends, Cecil admits hesitation in pleading

68. *The Secret Correspondence of Sir Robert Cecil with James VI, King of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1766), p. 189 (from Letter XII, "Lord Henry Howard to King James").

69. While Cecil might have intervened for purely benevolent reasons, he likely expected some sort of compensation for his assistance, perhaps in the forms of information, assurance of position under James I, or even money.

70. *Salisbury MSS*, XI, 71. Emphasis added.

71. *Salisbury MSS*, XII, 562.

72. *Calendar of State Papers (Ireland), 1600-1601*, p. 201.

adamantly for the earl. Cecil seems less concerned about Southampton in other letters that lack apparent remorse, including one addressed to George Carew prior to the trial: “I thinke by the tyme my *lettres* shall come vnto you, both [Essex] and the Erle of Southampton, with some other of the principals, shall haue lost their heads.”⁷³

Cecil had many motives for tempering his intervention on behalf of Southampton. First, relations between Cecil and Southampton’s family were strained. In a letter of August 1595 concerning Heneage’s debt to the Crown upon his death, the Countess calls Cecil a great “enemy” who she believes “took the present occasion to pour forth your malice, which we must bear and desire no better.”⁷⁴ Cecil also might hold a grudge regarding Southampton’s treatment of Cecil’s cousin Sir Henry Neville, for Southampton’s confession that Neville knew of the coming rebellion and consented to involvement sealed Neville’s fate: he was arrested and remained in prison until released alongside Southampton. But beyond family frustrations, Cecil doubtless remained furious about Southampton’s public accusations during the trial that Cecil intended the Spanish Infanta to succeed the Queen.⁷⁵ Discussing succession at all was dangerous under Elizabeth, but discussing a Spanish succession and possibly even accepting Spanish gifts of gold could have cost Cecil everything had he not convinced the court of his innocence. Thankfully for him, the accusations of traitors carried little weight. As the trial progressed, the conspirators’ goal to remove Cecil and company from Elizabeth—possibly through force, even death—became clearer, and likely incensed Cecil further against his sometime comrade. In his confession Southampton even admitted that Essex sent Charles Danvers to Ireland to persuade (unsuccessfully) Lord Mountjoy to help “remooue from about her Majesties person those which weare bad instrumentes.”⁷⁶ Whether or not Cecil actively intervened for Southampton in prison, the earl had reason to fear that Cecil—one of

73. *Letters from Sir Robert Cecil to Sir George Carew*, ed. John Maclean (1864), p. 66 (written “From the Court at Whytehall this 10 of February, 1600”).

74. *Salisbury MSS*, V, 475.

75. Essex and his supporters became convinced that Cecil, Raleigh, and Cobham were in league with the Spanish to put the Infanta on the throne. Essex claimed at the trial that Southampton had told him that a privy councilor informed Southampton of Cecil’s plans for the Infanta. When Cecil insisted that Southampton name the accuser, the earl named William Knollys, who was summoned and denied the accusation. See Stopes.

76. Stopes, p. 228.

the primary “bad instrumentes”—would not help, offering ample motive for Southampton to compose his own poetic appeal.

If Southampton composed “The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned” while in prison, he followed the example of past prisoners such as Raleigh and Essex in occupying his time and consoling himself through composing verse addressed to the Queen. Even Elizabeth once kept busy by versifying on a wall while imprisoned by Queen Mary in Woodstock Palace, writing “Fortune, thy restless, wavering state” in 1555 as a “remonstrance against fortune.”⁷⁷ In 1580, Sir Arthur Gorges composed a lyric while imprisoned at Marshalsea for fighting with Lord Windsor in the Presence Chamber in order to move Elizabeth to pardon his mistake (p. 106). Prisoners condemned to death, in particular, frequently composed lamentations in the form of poems and passionate letters during the night before execution, and this literary convention proved popular in manuscript collections. Babington plot conspirator Chidioc Tichborne composed a poem before his 1586 execution that was widely copied in manuscripts, in which he laments, “My glass is full, and now my glass is run / And now I live, and now my life is done.” Raleigh was credited with several pre-execution poems as well, although only “Even such is Time who takes in trust” seems legitimate. And with Southampton in a cell nearby, Essex spent his last days, supposedly even his final evening, in the Tower writing “The Passion of a Discontented Minde,” presenting the Queen with a last assurance of devotion in “straightforward, unembellished expression of personal sentiment,” his characteristic style among poems addressed to her.⁷⁸ Southampton easily could have been informed of his friend and leader’s endeavor and chosen to follow Essex’s example yet again.

In writing a petition to Queen Elizabeth, Southampton also would have followed the example of his own father. In 1573, the second Earl of Southampton composed a personal plea to Elizabeth to secure his own release from prison. As his son would appeal to Robert Cecil for assistance, the second Earl appealed to William Cecil, Lord Burghley. In a letter of February 13, 1573, Southampton begs Burghley, “for God his safe [sake] to continue the same your honorable and charitable goodnes towards me,” enclosing a petition that the earl asked

77. May, *Elizabethan Courtier Poets*, p. 121.

78. May, p. 125. May says that Essex composed the poem, by far his longest, at some point during his final four days of life (p. 250).

Burghley to alter as needed and to present to Elizabeth.⁷⁹ The following day Southampton wrote to the Privy Council that he was “carefull and studious to leave no meane vndune by all humble and therwth faythfull submission, and attestation of loiall obedience, to recover her Ma^{ties} good grace, opinion and favor towards me” (fol. 48). The earl’s direct, “humble” pleas for Elizabeth’s “good grace, opinion and favor” resulted in his release from the Tower. But when imprisoned again in 1581, the second Earl failed to write Elizabeth another personal petition. This time he was not released, and his prison-time accelerated the decline of his health, leading soon after to his death—a fate that must have haunted his son as the third Earl of Southampton awaited his execution with no means to beg for mercy but his “own pen.”

V

While extant data offers no indisputable answer as to whether this verse epistle constitutes a persona poem or a Southampton poem, the earl’s authorship seems likely. One hopes that additional copies of the prison petition will be uncovered, perhaps throwing additional light on its authorship. But until other versions are found (if any exist), we can safely say that the only recognized copy appears in a manuscript of considerable authority. British Library MS Stowe 962’s compiler and scribes—rarely inaccurate—never proffer attributions without sound justification and even call special attention to the poem in the manuscript’s first-line index. The contextual artifact alters the argument, for if the poem proves misattributed, it also proves anomalous.

Seventeenth-century manuscript miscellanies are filled with equally intriguing poems that have received little if any critical attention because they were never printed and cannot be incorporated with certainty into the canon of a known poet. Study of such manuscript poems, as well as dramatic and prose works, can provide more than simply additional examples of contemporary writings. Some prove to be rich literary texts. Investigating texts such as “The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned. to *Queen Elizabeth*” within their manuscript contexts also can afford valuable insights into the

79. British Library MS Lansdowne 16, fol. 48.

composition and circulation of literary works and can offer discoveries, including “new” Renaissance authors.

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APPENDIX

The following poem is printed by permission of the British Library from MS Stowe 962 (fols. 47–48). The transcription from secretary script is mine. Some abbreviations have been expanded. The letters I have added appear in italics.

The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned. to *Queen Elizabeth*
 Not to lue more at ease (Deare Prince) of thee
 but wth new merrittes, I begg libertie
 to cancell old offences; let grace soe
 (as oyle all liquor els will ouerflow)
 swim about all my crimes; In lawne, a stayne 5
 well taken forth may be made serue agayne.
 perseuerance in ill, is all the ill; the horses may,
 that stumbled in the morne, goe well all day.
 if faultes were not, how could greate Princes then
 approach soe neare god, in *pardoning* men? 10
 wisdom & valour, *common* men haue knowne,
 But only mercie is the Princes owne.
 mercie's an antidote to iustice, & will
 like a true blood-stone keepe them bleedinge still⁸⁰
 where faultes weigh downe the scale, *one* grayne of this 15
 will make it wise, untill the beame it kise.
 had I the leprosie of Naaman
 yo^r mercie hath the same effectes as Io^uardan.
 As surgeons cut & take from the sound part
 that w^{ch} is rotten, & beyonde all art 20
 of healinge, see (w^{ch} time hath since reve^lld)
 lim^{bes} haue beene cutt, w^{ch} might els haue bin heald.
 While I yet breath, & sence, & motion haue
 (for this a prison differs from a graue)
 prisons are lueinge mens tombes, who there goe 25
 as *one* may fith [sith] say the dead walke soe.
 there am I buried quicke: hence *one* may draw
 I am religious because dead in law.

80. The manuscript text clearly reads “keepe them bleedinge still,” implying that a “true blood-stone” will continue the process of “bleeding”—a surprising simile to accompany the speaker’s identification of mercy as “an antidote to iustice.” Quite likely, the copyist misread “their” in his copy-text as “them,” an easy mistake if he misunderstood the poet’s use of “still;” a “blood-stone” was believed to halt the flow of blood (to keep “bleedinge still”), not to promote it.

one of the old Anchorites, by me may be exp[r]est: 30
 a viall hath more roome layed in a chest:
 prisoners condem'd, like fish wthin shells lie
 cleauinge to walls, which when they're open'd die:
 so they, when taken forth, vnles a pardon
 (as a worme takes a bullett from a gunn)
 take them from thence; & soe deceiue the sprightes 35
 of people, curious after roofull sightes.
 sorrow, such ruins, as where a floud hath bene
 on all my partes afflicted, hath bene seene:
 my face w^{ch} greife plowed, & mine eyes when they
 stand full like two nine-holes, where at boyes play 40
 and so theire fires went out like Iron hott
 and put into the forge, & then is not
 And in the wrinkills of my cheekes, teares lie,
 like furowes fild wth rayne, & no more drie:
 mine armes like hammers to an anviel goe 45
 vpon my brest: now lamed wth beateinge soe
 stand as clocke-hammers, w^{ch} strike once an hower
 wthout such intermission they want power
 I'ue left my goinge since my legges strength decayd
 Like one, whose stocke beinge spent giue ouer trade. 50
 and I wth eatinge doe no more ingrosse
 then one that playes smale game after greate losse,
 is like to gett his owne: or then a pitt
 w^{ch} shovels emptied, & hath spoones to fill it.
 and soe sleepe visites me, when night'es halfe spent 55
 as one, that meanes nothinge but complement.
 horroure, & feare, like cold in ice, dwell heare;
 and hope (like lightninge) gon ere it appeare:
 wth lesse then halfe these miseries, a man
 might haue twice shott the strayghtes of magelan 60
 better goe ten such viouages, then once offend,
 the Ma^{tie} of a Prince, where all thinges end,
 and beginn: by whose sacred prerogatiue
 he as he list, we as we ought liue.
 All man kind liues to serue a few: the throne 65
 (to w^{ch} all bow) is sewed to by each one.
 life w^{ch} I now begg, wer't to proceede
 from els whoso'er, I'd first chowse to bleed
 but now, the cause, why life I doe Implore
 is, that I thinke you worthy to giue more. 70

the light of yo^r countenance, & that same
morninge of the Court favour, where at all ayme
vouchsafe vnto me, & be moued wth my groanes
ffor my teares haue already worne these stones.