My Kindle Told Me It Was Edward de Vere (Part Two)

by Michael Hyde
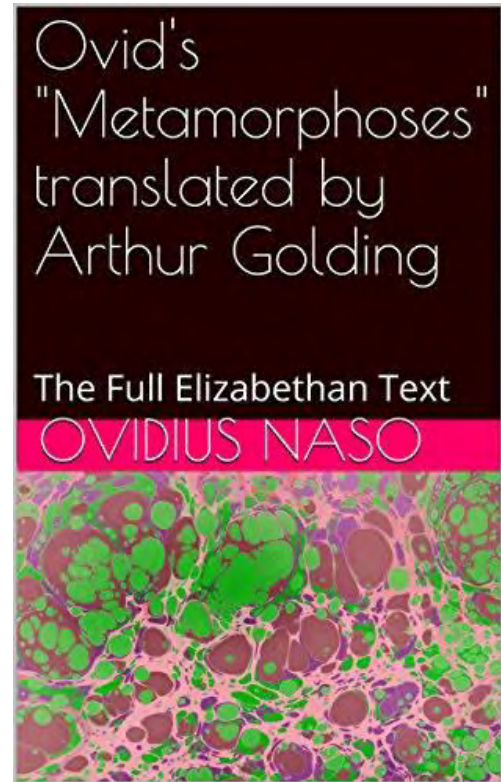
[Part One of this article appeared in the Winter 2022 issue of the *Newsletter*.]

Other Later Oxfordians Assess Golding's Ability to Translate Ovid

The most militant and antagonistic Oxfordian foe to Golding's "Puritanism" is probably Hank Whittemore: "Golding was after all, an uptight puritanical scholar acting as one of Cecil's henchmen" (12). After smiting two Puritans with one blow, he continues: "Edward de Vere, reading his uncle's impotent attempts to put a puritanical face on Ovid…." (14). Puritanism evidently made Golding "uptight" in his "impotent" efforts to translate Ovid. Recall that Arthur Golding was the sixth of eleven children and fathered eight children!

Yet many of Whittemore's observations and citations in his two articles are cogent and groundbreaking. He is the first Oxfordian that I know of to acclaim de Vere as "introducing himself as the long-awaited English Ovid on the title page of *Venus and Adonis*" ("Oxford's Metamorphoses," *Newsletter*, Fall 1996, p. 1). He fully articulates de Vere/Ovid's poetry as "a way of cheating death . . . he claimed Ovid as his route to the Castalian spring . . . on Mt. Parnassus…. He too through the virtue of his pen, would conquer disgrace or banishment or even death itself" (11). He sees Ovid/de Vere in autobiographical terms far surpassing Golding's translation, and thus Golding himself. He extends the new identity of Ovid/de Vere in 1593 to Shakespeare the dramatist: "For those who view the new author of *Venus and Adonis* as Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, it is possible to see him constructing the same kind of Ovidian illusion when he [also] writes as a dramatist; that is, he brings the magic of metamorphosis to the stage" (11). This praise echoes and even amplifies Bate's description of the Shakespeare poet achieving "homophrosyne"—true mystical like-mindedness with Ovid.

Whittemore has anticipated my fourth conclusion below: the metempsychosis of the soul of Euphorbus to Pythagoras, and thence to Ovid/de Vere in their poetry, becomes the crux of Francis Meres's encomium to Shakespeare in *Palladis Tamia* (1598). By 2016, this argument for de Vere/Ovid had become Reason No. 2 of Whittemore's "100 Reasons" why Shakespeare was the Earl of Oxford. I agree with his reposted title: "Shakespeare's Favorite Classical Source was the Translation of Ovid by Arthur Golding, who was Oxford's Uncle." Ovid—not Plutarch or Cicero or Caesar or Virgil—was the favorite classical poet of Shakespeare. This was because Ovid understood and demonstrated in his mock-epic how both mortals and immortals, how Love and Lust, how betrayals and seductions, became the most powerful and dangerous forces in human history; sexuality in its infinitude of modes and guises is the linking thread of Ovid's tales. Here Whittemore is echoing Shakespeare/Ovid orthodoxy, but not for long as we now relate.

As Whittemore first posted in his blog from 1996, "By all logic Shakespeare must have begun translating Ovid in his earliest years." Again, I agree, whether this translating was in school or with a tutor or solus. Fifteen years later Whittemore offers a new blog item, quoting A.L. Rowse on Ovid: "Ovid, the love of Shakespeare's life among Latin poets… haunted his imagination. The bulk of his classical mythology came from the 'Metamorphoses,' which he used in the original as well as in Golding's translation." Whittemore adds, "I've always loved this one. It was one of the first things I'd tell people around the dinner table, whether or not they gave a damn."

Thus, Shakespeare translating Ovid and learning by heart the *Metamorphoses* owes to his "living under the same roof with [Golding at Cecil House], just when the

translating of Ovid's 15-book masterpiece would have been carried out." The key reversion to Whittemore's scathing 1996 critique of Golding as Puritan follows in a 2016 Blog comment: "Golding was 'apparently' translating Ovid because it's far more likely that it was done by the young earl himself."

Whittemore follows the path of other Oxfordians who simply cannot accept that Puritan Arthur Golding really was the Elizabethan era's best translator of Ovid. Once again Golding becomes "a Puritanical sort who translated Calvin's Psalms of David (which he dedicated to Oxford, his nephew) and would not have been crazy about translating Ovid's tales of passion, seduction, lovemaking and incest by pagan gods and goddesses. No, he was in every way incapable of it."

As noted, labeling Golding a Puritan is an anachronism, to which Whittemore adds the twist that Golding's religion renders him "incapable" of translating Ovid, not just "uptight." The killer phrase "Puritanical sort" is offered 400 years later as proof of this lack of capacity. Sadly, Whittemore ignores his own earlier prefatory citation of A.L. Rowse's *Shakespeare The Man* (1973), where Rowse observes that Ovid was "the love of Shakespeare's life among poets … his classical mythology came from The Metamorphoses, which he used in the original as well as in Golding's translation."

Disappointingly, Charlton Ogburn also argues against Golding himself as translator of Ovid (442-449). He has his facts right about the time that de Vere and Golding spent together at Cecil House; he cites and appears to have read Louis Thorn Golding's biography. He is extremely aware of the significance of Ovid throughout the Shakespeare canon. But he relegates Thorn Golding to a long footnote (445) and admits, "How such association would cause an unbending puritan to drink in immorality is not quite clear to me …."

Thereby Ogburn convinces himself to vote against Golding as the translator of Ovid and remakes the "collaboration" of de Vere and Golding at Cecil House into agreement with "D. S. Ogburn that in the circumstances [Golding's Ovid] would have come only from the hand of the boy 'Shakespeare'" (446). Strangely, for one who seems to have read Thorn Golding, Ogburn makes no mention of the posthumous copyright awarded by Privy Council to Golding in 1606, or of the Golding Memorial window ceremony at Belchamp St. Paul in 1934; both of these are discussed below.

Surprisingly, J. Thomas Looney himself—the originator of the Oxfordian movement—was (as far as I know) the first commentator to explicate our theory of Golding being the translator of Ovid, with a final zinger of mutual influence at work between uncle and nephew during their years together at Cecil house. He starts

factually: "His Mother was Margaret (Golding), daughter of John Golding and sister of Arthur Golding the translator of Ovid" (190). He then offers a subtitled section, "Arthur Golding's Ovid," which outlines the facts of Golding entering Cecil house "as Oxford's tutor and receiver of property" (195). On the same page he appears to accept the well-known facts of the importance of Golding to de Vere as a crucial and scholarly influence:

The vital significance of the relationship of Arthur Golding to the man we are putting forward as the author of Shakespeare's plays will be fully appreciated by those Shakespearean students who are also students of the Latin classics, and who are able to trace in Shakespeare passages borrowed from Ovid, which follow the original more closely than do the standard translations. We… again quote from Sir Sidney Lee's *Life of Shakespeare* on this point: "Although Ovid's Latin text was certainly familiar to him [Shakespeare] his closest adaptation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* often reflect the phraseology of the popular English version by Arthur Golding of which some seven editions were issued between 1565 and 1597." That is to say, these editions of Ovid were being issued by Arthur Golding in the very years in which he was Latin tutor to the Earl of Oxford, so that special point is given by the theory we are now putting forward to the biographer's later remark that "Golding's rendering of Ovid had been one of Shakespeare's best-loved books in youth."

But this is not all that Looney has to say; we must give him his due:

To find 'Shakespeare' more exact in some instances than the translator raises an acknowledged difficulty in connection with the Stratfordian view. It has for a long while been one of the vexed questions of Shakespearean authorship, and is discussed at some length in Sir George Greenwood's work on the 'Shakespearean Problem.' What is a difficulty with the accepted authorship becomes transformed into a substantial corroboration of the theory of authorship which we are now advancing, and all mystery immediately vanishes when we assume that Arthur Golding, the Ovid enthusiast and translator, was himself a relative as well as a private tutor and Latin teacher to "Shakespeare," engaged in the latter capacity in the very years in which he was translating and publishing the works of this particular poet. The importance of this little piece of evidence can hardly be over-estimated…. [I]ts value is unquestionable. Ovid is the one Latin poet who has been singled out as having directly left deep traces in Shakespeare's work, at the same time that the dramatist shows an equal intimacy with the translation. This is precisely the result we should expect from the Earl of Oxford's relationship to Arthur Golding. An intimate acquaintance with one particular translation of a classic, and also such an acquaintance with the original… is not a usual combination in a student of the classics. . . . (196-197)

Here British schoolmaster Looney assumes both our knowledge of the classics in original Latin, implies his

own advanced knowledge, and then advances the same theory that I have been advancing of the crucial relationship of de Vere, Golding, Ovid, and the Shakespeare canon. Looney does *not* assert that young Edward de Vere was himself the translator, and he does *not* reject Golding as a Puritan! Rather, he skillfully leads us to his last words in "our chain of evidence" (197), and offers "in conclusion, a suggestion" that de Vere himself, thanks to Golding's tutoring, had enough training in Latin to improve upon the Englishing of Latin undertaken by Golding at this time—as did the Shakespeare author according to both Jonathan Bate and Looney. He wonders if "it may be that what is taken to be the influence of Golding's work in 'Shakespeare' is in reality the influence of the young Earl of Oxford upon the work of Arthur Golding" (197).

Looney's suggestion of mutual influence has been amplified by modern partisans of de Vere and Oxfordian theory into dismissals of Golding as "Puritan" and rejection of him as the first Elizabethan translator of Ovid. This, I believe, sidetracks rather than advances the theory that Edward de Vere's youthful exposure to Latin and to Golding's English translation is our best evidence for de Vere as the Shakespeare author. I believe that Looney understood and cautiously portrayed his "suggestion" of mutual influence of uncle and nephew fairly and accurately. At most Looney suggests that de Vere later improved key passages of Golding's Ovid as he composed what we know today as Shakespeare! As Looney says, "This is precisely the result we should expect from the Earl of Oxford's relationship to Arthur Golding."

Louis Thorn Golding and My Conclusions
Was Louis Thorn Golding an Oxfordian? My reluctant conclusion is that he was not. Yet he essentially makes our case in his recognition of the verbatim borrowing of Golding's translation by the Shakespeare poet! His only mentions of Shakespeare (212-215) occur when he discusses Prospero's invocation to "Ye elves of hills" in Chapter XV on Golding and Shakespeare. He remarks that "Whoever will take the trouble of comparing this whole passage with Medea's speech as translated by Golding, will see evidently that Shakespeare copied the translation and not the original" (214). The chapter begins with Francis Meres's "soul of Euphorbus" encomium from *Palladis Tamia* praising Shakespeare as "sweet witty Ovid." He anticipates by nearly sixty years Bate's claims that "Shakespeare had read Ovid in the original … in his regular (Stratford) school course" (212). He says oddly, "there is no reason to doubt that his familiarity with the poet's work was gained from Golding's translation. By the time he was nine years old, in 1575, the Metamorphoses had become so popular with English readers that a second edition was issued" (212).

Again, this makes the case not for Will of Stratford at age nine in 1574, but for Edward de Vere at age fourteen in 1564! I say "oddly" because there is no mention of the 1562-1564 years at Cecil house described thoroughly in an earlier chapter, when Arthur Golding translated Ovid while tutoring young Edward. In my view, Louis Thorn Golding does not connect the dots or at least misses a terrific opportunity to do so. This seems clear proof that he did not accept the Oxfordian theory of Edward de Vere as the real author of either the Ovid translation or of the Shakespeare works. He knew of Bernard M. Ward's 1928 book on the 17th Earl of Oxford, citing it in a footnote (29), but J. Thomas Looney is never mentioned! My surmise is that the Foreword to Thorn Golding's *An Elizabethan Puritan* by Joseph Quincy Adams—a prominent orthodox Shakespeare scholar and the first director of the Folger Shakespeare Library after 1934—indicates that Thorn Golding, like Bernard M. Ward, was more concerned with getting his book published than with taking up cudgels on behalf of the Shakespeare Fellowship and Oxfordianism. Writing in 1937, Adams graciously praises the book as a "labor of love… by one of [Arthur Golding's] descendants, who already in other ways has laid wreaths at the shrine of this great Elizabethan." The "shrine" is the Golding Memorial window at Belchamp St. Paul, dedicated on May 22, 1934.

Throughout his narrative Louis Thorn Golding cannot resist elaborating on the Veres and the Vere family estates; he notes that Arthur Golding lived at Bloomsters (20), only four miles distant from Castle Hedingham. Appendix 16 is a complete account of the Queen's 1561 visit to Castle Hedingham.

Edward is called "brilliant," but is blamed for selling off his properties and wasting the Earldom. Thorn Golding's only explicit recognition of the Oxfordian theory occurs in Appendix 15, describing the dedication of the Golding Memorial window at St. Andrews Church of Belchamp St. Paul. He welcomes the arrival of "a group from the Shakespeare Fellowship (of London) who were interested in the occasion not only because of the influence of Golding's translation upon Shakespeare, but on account of their belief that Edward de Vere the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, Golding's nephew, was the author of some of the works attributed to Shakespeare" (270). Thorn Golding earlier credits and quotes Percy Allen as recognizing that the Shakespeare poet could both translate Ovid's Latin as well as use Golding verbatim (212 fn):

"Autolycus in 'A Winter's Tale' is Ovidian, so is Titania (another name for Diana), and Oberon, also called by Shakespeare 'King of Shadows,' and by Ovid 'Umbrarum Rex.' Titania is not the form used by Golding, who calls the lady 'Titan's daughter,' and it follows, therefore, that

'Shakespeare' could read, and had read, the original Latin!"—Mr. Percy Allen, Shakespearean student and author, in his address at the dedication of the Golding Memorial Window.

Thorn Golding attended and spoke at the Shakespeare Fellowship's Fifth Annual Dinner in May 1934, just a few days before the event at Belchamp St. Paul. Nevertheless, despite his personal familiarity with Percy Allen and including him as a speaker at the Golding dedication, Thorn Golding appears to have stayed at arm's length from the Shakespeare Fellowship group. He only allows their opinion that de Vere wrote "some of the works." He takes care not to offend the Stratfordian sensibilities of Joseph Quincy Adams, who read *An Elizabethan Puritan* in manuscript before its publication.

Thorn Golding was the patron of the Golding Memorial event, donating the cost of the window and conducting the service that followed. We don't know if he had further contact with the Fellowship group or Vice-President Percy Allen. Perhaps the Golding Memorial window and *An Elizabethan Puritan* were his only two tributes to his illustrious ancestor. Although he lived until 1961 and the age of ninety-five, he disappears from sight in the Golding/Vere narrative and in Oxfordian publications.

Arthur Golding's fourth son, Perceval, is a major figure in Thorn Golding's narrative, but is faulted for mercenary selfish tendencies. Nevertheless Thorn Golding has seen the illuminated manuscript at the Bodleian (Harliean 4189) of Perceval's signed "The Armes, honours, matches, and Issues of the Ancient and Illustrious family of Veer…gathered out of history records and other monuments of antiquity by Persivall Goulding" (144). Perceval's work is denigrated as a "sycophantic attempt to curry favor with a new head of the Vere family and possible successor to the title" (145). This new head of family was Horace Vere, who became heir after the deaths of elder brother John in 1624, and of Henry the 18th Earl in 1625. Perceval is also scolded for having "published as his own his father's translation of John Sleydane's Epitome of Frossard's Chronicles" (144).

The most important documentary evidence in Thorn Golding's book is in Chapter XI, "The Posthumous Copyright," which relates in full how Perceval Golding and partner Thomas Wilson procured from the Privy Council a grant of the ownership of the copyright to all of Arthur Golding's works. How Thorn Golding discovered and obtained this document (evidently in the Public Records Office) is not clarified. It is dated May 15, 1606, shortly after Arthur Golding's death. Thorn Golding observes that it must have been in the hopper with Privy Council some months beforehand. Seventeen works are listed in the grant, but only one is poetry, "The

Fifteene books of Ovids Metamorphosis in English meter" (138). Three are histories—Justine's *Trogus*, Caesar's *Commentaries* and Aretine's *Warres of the Goths in Italy*. One is the completion of Sidney's translation of Phillippe Mornay's *The Trewenesse of Christian religion*. One is pagan philosophy, Seneca's *De Beneficis*. One is legal, vaguely titled "duties of Magistrates." Ten are Calvinist religious works, to which Golding after 1565 devoted most of his labors as a translator, especially the Sermons on Job and Calvin's own French translation of the Psalms. Golding's unpublished translation of *Aesop's Fables,* completed by 1567, is not included, which is a shame as it would add a literary title to the list.

The strangest aspect of the Posthumous Copyright is its inclusion of Thomas Wilson as fellow translator and collaborator with Golding. The two are acknowledged by the Privy Council to: "have with great paines travaile and diligence converted or translated out of divers languages into the English tongue many woorkes of great volume and importance as well as concerning divinities as alsoe concerning humanities, philosophie, poetrie, historie and other good and laudable matters" (*An Elizabethan Puritan*, 138).

Thorn Golding supposes that Wilson may have been given extra credit for having helped Golding to obtain the Posthumous Copyright of seven extra years—evidently to prevent current and future piracies! Thomas Wilson's extensive Wikipedia entry (1560?-1629) describes him as a government agent, MP, Keeper of Records, diplomat, translator and author. Thorn Golding supposes that he only collaborated with Arthur Golding on the Sidney translation of Mornay (published in 1606), and that the extra credit for collaboration in the copyright grant was Wilson's doing. In any case, Thomas Wilson was five and seven years old in 1565 and 1567, when the two Ovid translations were first published, so he was certainly not Arthur Golding's collaborator in translating Ovid!

To me Arthur Golding's output is truly amazing—he tirelessly and often simultaneously completed works of varying difficulty in both Latin and French. He was praised by William Webbe (*An Elizabethan Puritan*, 64), for his "infinite paynes without ceasing, travlleth as yet indefatigably, and is addicted without society, by his continual laboure." For such a workaholic, his being a devout Puritan was no hindrance in his work on "pagan" or divine texts. My only critique of Golding's Ovid is whether his fourteeners were the best choice of verse form to present Ovid's dactylic hexameter. Homer and Virgil are also in dactylic hexameter, the favored meter of narrative or didactic poetry in Greek and Latin.

Barboura Flues anticipated and shared my concerns about Golding's "charming translation" and its fourteener poetics. In her brief discussion on

Title page of *An Elizabethan Puritan* by Louis Thorn Golding (1937)

SourceText.com, she saw Golding's poetry "as far inferior in quality to that of the master he was translating and often inaccurate in rendering the original Latin." She describes Golding's "mad cast of characters closely resembling English country types of the 16th century …. [C]haracters try to respond to situations beyond their comprehension, such as: why am I turning into a deer?" I myself experimented a bit with Golding's fourteeners and found that I could easily turn most lines into hexameter, so why indeed are gallumping fourteeners the best choice?

Here is Golding's 1565 preface describing Ovid's tales as a long chain:

> And both that that went before and that that follows binds
> …Of that that was reherst before, and enters in the bound
> …Of that that folowes after…

"That that" is repeated multiple times in sixteen lines! But "that" is what happens when fourteeners is your scansion. Ezra Pound's remark that Golding's Ovid is the "most beautiful book in the English language" is puzzling and obscure. I agree with Flues that Golding's "robust vitality" is often funny, sometimes clownish, even as Golding denounces the "filthy lusts" of his gods and goddesses in his two Prefaces to the Reader. Yet I find myself reading and rereading the Golding translation, so was Pound right after all? Enjoy these fourteener verses of Salmacis seducing Hermaphroditus:

> But farre above all other, far more blist than these is shee
> Whome thou vouchsafest for thy wife, and bedfellow for to bee.
> Now if thou have aledy one, let me by stelth obtaine

That which shall pleasure both of us. Or if thou doe remaine
A Maiden free from wedlocke bonde, let me then be thy spouse,
And let us in our bridelie bed ourselves together rouse.
           (Book IV)

This erotic poetry is arresting and beautiful in any meter in any era.

Flues gets at once to the key question of de Vere and Golding living at Cecil House in 1562-1564: "this association is especially important to those dedicated to the theory that Oxford was the author of the works of Shakespeare." She warns that the "theory that Oxford worked with Golding on the Metamorphoses, or even composed the entire work, is conjecture" and requires "comparative analysis of the (known) works of Oxford, Golding, and Shakespeare." She observes that the "names inserted into the famed pack of Actaeon are directly traceable to place-names at Castle Hedingham, the Oxford family seat." But this alone "does not prove Oxfordian authorship; the impoverished uncle may well have placed within his epic a device to increase the interest of his wealthy young relative." She concludes: "Whatever the Oxford/Golding relationship, it cannot be doubted that Golding's bumptious, exciting and possibly irreverent masterpiece must have pleased enormously his young nephew and other English youths heretofore exposed to the concept of the classics as dull, drab matter to be studied for … competence in language, history, and rhetorical expertise."

I return to the issue of Golding's fatherly and religious concern for his Cecil house protégé, Edward de Vere. Note his oft-quoted dedication to de Vere in the 1571 translation of Calvin's *Commentaries on the Psalms*. Arthur Golding reminds Edward that "God has placed you upon a high stage in the eyes of all men." While this both alludes to the Earldom of Oxford and to any future role that Edward might play at Court, I also wonder if Golding was alluding to Edward's early playwriting.

Most of all, Golding feared that Edward might still leave Protestantism for Rome and Catholicism, as nearly happened in 1578-1580, before de Vere apologized and begged the Queen's mercy. Golding erupts into hendiadys figures, fearing that de Vere will become a "counterfeit Protestant or a professed Papist or a cool and careless neuter." Golding was seeking to save his nephew's soul, not just to improve his Latin grammar.

The de Vere Geneva Bible at the Folger Library has the Sternhold Psalms bound into the volume as well, as explicated by Richard Waugaman in his article, "Maniculed Psalms in the de Vere Bible," listed in the bibliography. Waugaman clarifies (2) that the "version of the Psalms bound at the end of de Vere's Bible was not in the Geneva Bible's translation of the Psalms . . . but in

a now obscure translation of the Psalms that was phenomenally popular in de Vere's day . . . the translation begun by Thomas Sternhold under Henry VIII…[later] published as The Whole Book of Psalms." Evidently young Edward requested that the most popular English version of the Psalms be bound in his Bible, not Golding's translation of Calvin's Geneva version in French. I also wonder if young Edward was both following his Uncle Arthur's warnings about keeping the Protestant faith and asserting independence in his Geneva Bible and his Sternhold Psalms.

Conclusions

• Edward de Vere's first two years of residence in Cecil House (1562-1564), being tutored in Latin, French, and Law by Arthur Golding while Golding's Ovid translations were being completed, is our strongest evidence for de Vere as Shakespeare. No other Elizabethan author could have had such early exposure to Golding's English translation, the most frequent source of Ovid passages in the canon.

• While Louis Thorn Golding was not an active early Oxfordian, his Arthur Golding biography, *An Elizabethan Puritan*, is the fullest treatment of the relationship between young Edward de Vere and his uncle, especially the posthumous copyright chapter and the appendix on the dedication of the Golding Memorial Window at St. Andrews Church in Belchamp St. Paul, Essex, in May 1934, with Percy Allen and others from the Shakespeare Fellowship in attendance.

• Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible and Sternhold Psalms bound together (now at the Folger Shakespeare Library) are bibliographic proof of the mutual influence of Golding upon de Vere, and vice versa, and they are the versions most frequently used in the Shakespeare canon.

• Edward de Vere, not Will Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon, was the English Ovidian extraordinaire— see the Pythagoras speech in Book XV of *The Metamorphoses*—who completed Ovid's metempsychosis into "sweet witty" Shakespeare as described by Frances Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (1598).

Postscript: Bonner Miller Cutting informed me that she has a private letter sent by Louis Thorn Golding's son, Reverend John Thorn Golding (d. 1994) of Edgartown, Massachusetts, to her mother, Ruth Loyd Miller, dated December 1, 1977. Ruth had made inquiries about *An Elizabethan Puritan*. Rev. Golding wrote that he had "searched father's literary remains" but could not provide answers about the Marston family (Arthur Golding's mother was Ursula Marston, whose portrait

faces us after the title page of *An Elizabethan Puritan*). Rev. Golding recalled working "with my father in gathering material for the book." He closed with a hopeful comment: "The 'Oxford' theory about W. S. makes very good sense to me —but we still lack conclusive evidence. Some day it may turn up."

So at least one modern Golding family member was supportive of the "Oxford theory" and anticipated our determined searches for "conclusive evidence" to prove that Edward de Vere was Shakespeare. Something "may turn up," whether in Essex or London or Edgartown or elsewhere, to settle the question.

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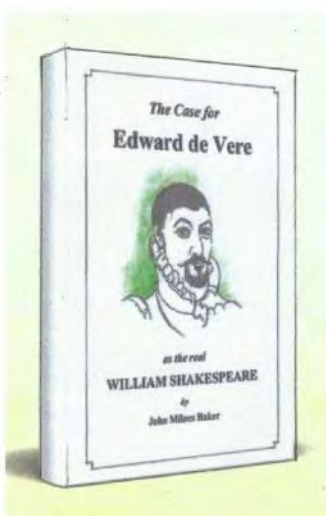
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