Robert Prechter Replies to Roger Stritmatter

My two-part case for Oxford's authorship of George Peele's January 1596 gift note to Lord Burghley (*Newsletter*, Winter 2022 and Summer 2022) comprises ten solid elements:

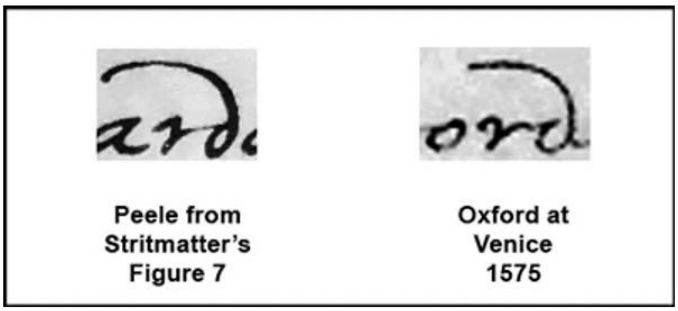
1. Peele's gift note is packed with Shakespearean language. (So is the ms. of *Anglorum Feriae*.)
2. The addressee of the note was the Earl of Oxford's father-in-law.
3. The note was delivered by the writer's "eldest daughter." Peele's father's records show that George was childless through 1585, rendering the orthodox scenario virtually impossible.
4. Oxford had the required three daughters; his eldest, Elizabeth, age 20, was old enough to be an emissary.
5. Elizabeth was on hand for the task. She was visiting Oxford at Hackney in August 1595, while her husband stayed behind with Lord Burghley.
6. The note's salutation plays on the Latin word for *grandfather*. The addressee was Elizabeth's grandfather, to whom she would have delivered the note upon her return home.
7. Peele's note states that he was ill and unable to travel. In personal letters dated August 1595 and June 1599, Oxford stated that he was ill and unable to travel.
8. Oxford's handwriting matches Peele's in numerous ways, most notably their letters *E*, *sT* and *L*, whose distinctive constructions are rare to nonexistent in the other 140 handwritten items reproduced in W.W. Greg's *Literary Autographs*.
9. The signature on the note is the same as that on Peele's receipt for producing *Dido* for the entertainment of Count Laski in 1583, a performance to which Will Shaksper would never have been admitted. Shakespeare's Hamlet reminisces about that very performance.
10. In 1575, the Earl of Oxford signed a permission slip (discovered in 2015) to visit the Doge's palace in Venice. He decorated it with a signature flourish resembling a tornado. Peele's receipt for *Dido* and his note to Burghley feature that same unique flourish.

Roger Stritmatter's rebuttal addresses only element #8, leaving the rest of them undisturbed. He accuses me of "sweeping generalizations," yet the list above comprises one straightforward fact after another.

In his challenge, Stritmatter alleges that less-than-pristine reproductions from old documents equate to the dreaded argument from authority. Then he presses an argument from authority, declaring that editor W.W. Greg came to a "conclusion" about the authorship of Peele's letter. Like everyone else, however, Greg simply took the signature at face value and made no effort whatsoever to examine the matter.

Stritmatter's charge that my argument is "unsupported by visual evidence" is strange given that my articles present twenty-three images, fourteen of which directly serve the argument. Oxfordian Geoff Williamson has since pointed out that on a document signed in 1603, Oxford penned another version of the distinctive tornado-shaped flourish that he used in 1575 and which Peele used in 1583 and 1596.

Stritmatter complains that I cherry-picked pictures, then cherry-picks his own. Let's examine some of them. In his Figures 6 and 7, Stritmatter correctly observes that Oxford usually employed a straight-backed *d*; he then



Peele from Stritmatter's Figure 7 | Oxford at Venice 1575

states that Oxford never used the "sweeping…reversed-loop *d*" whose leftward arc terminates one to three letters to the left. On the contrary, the permission slip that Oxford filled out in Venice—reproduced in full in my second article—displays that very form. As you can see in the illustration above, Peele's *ard* and Oxford's *ord* are very close to identical. (The mark to the right of Oxford's *d* is not a tail, but the start of the next letter, *e*.)

Stritmatter's argument for *k* in his Figure 8 is likewise based on forms that are similar except for an elongated stroke at the bottom. Oxford made elongated strokes at the bottom of letters when writing grandly, as in the Venice slip (*Newsletter*, Summer 2022). In Stritmatter's Figure 3, the *s*'s in the center pictures are identical. His Figure 4 is misleadingly selective, ignoring the array of compatible *sT*'s that I showed in Figure 4 of my second article. In his Figure 5a, although only one set is of the cursive variety, Peele and Oxford both use the "long and short" double *s* as opposed to the "double short" or "double long" form. Their second *s*'s are virtually the same, but different from the one in the generic example provided in Stritmatter's Figure 5. So, Peele's and Oxford's second *s* differs from the experts' standard *in the same way*. These proffered counterexamples, then, are either null or equivocal.

To be sure, there are some differences among the samples. So what? A person's handwriting can differ depending on the purpose—such as business correspondence versus gift notes and poetry—as several examples in Greg's *Literary Autographs* demonstrate. A pertinent example is the crabbed lettering in Oxford's tin

letters versus the decorative hand displayed in the Venice permission slip. Moreover, in the case at hand, Oxford (I submit) was deliberately posing as someone else. Playing the role of a lofty court poet might well incentivize a person to craft a few compatibly elaborate letter forms.

As Stritmatter himself conceded, George Peele's handwriting (purportedly along with Lyly's) "*correspond[s] more closely to Oxford's than any others in Greg's book*." As my second article demonstrates, Peele's language from the 1590s also *corresponds more closely to Shakespeare's* than one finds even in Oxford's early poems. These two observations fit together.

After reading my work on Peele's note, a fellow Oxfordian wrote cheerfully to say, "Case closed!" You are invited to review my two articles and see if you agree. You are also welcome to view "George Peele, His Only Surviving Letter," presented to the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable, posted on YouTube and recently augmented. If you care to explore further, the 71-page George Peele chapter in my online book, *Oxford's Voices,* reviews Peele's suspect biography and discusses all seventeen of his extant compositions.