



*Book review / commentary*

## And in this corner... The Sanders Portrait *Shakespeare or not?*

By Paul H. Altrocchi, M.D.



*The Sanders portrait shows a fairly young man. The right-hand panel of the portrait is, curiously, missing.*

*"Nothing is easier than self-deceit. Whatever each man wishes to be true, he also believes to be true."*

*Demosthenes, ca. 340 BC<sup>1</sup>*

Julius Caesar was more succinct than Demosthene: "Men willingly believe what they wish to believe."<sup>2</sup> In yet another tribute to the power of Conventional Wisdom, attribution of a newly-emerged painting from underneath Granny's bed in Ottawa as the only existing portrait of Shakspere of Stratford painted from life, has not only made worldwide headlines but has led to a book, *Shakespeare's Face*, published by a major publishing house, Alfred A.

Knopf of Canada.

Despite the high likelihood that the book's title is in error and that the so-called "Sanders Portrait" does not justify a book, Stephanie Nolen has done an admirable job of investigative reporting. She has done her homework well, writes very competently and spins an intriguing tale.

In May 2001 Ms. Nolen entranced Stratfordians with her article in Canada's national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, announcing the discovery of a probable portrait of William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon. With the help of a coterie of academic experts, her book tells the story of the mysterious portrait, claimed to have been owned for 400 years by the Sanders family of England and Canada, who affectionately call the portrait "Willy Shake." Stratfordians now refer to the painting as the Sanders portrait.

As readily admitted by Nolen's experts, Stratfordians would love to bury, once and for all, Droeshout's First Folio face of the Man from Stratford, described by Sir George Greenwood as "a leering

*(Continued on page 23)*

## The Ashbourne Portrait: Part IV *Oh, what a tangled web...*

By Barbara Burris



By permission, Folger Shakespeare Library

*The outline of this small shield around the three coat of arms heads (as shown in one of the 1979 restoration photos) was not present in either the Barrell or Folger x-rays. Where did it come from? See pages 12-13 for further details.*

My investigation of the Folger's Ashbourne files, photos and 1948 x-rays,<sup>1</sup> the *Scientific American* photos of Barrell's 1937 x-rays,<sup>2</sup> and other information about the painting from 1910 to 1989, reveals six stages of alterations to the portrait. Four of them occurred after the Folger acquired the painting in 1931, and appear to involve attempts to "prove" Hugh Hamersley is the sitter in the portrait and to remove evidence for Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. These alterations will be the focus of this part of our examination of the Folger Ashbourne files.

To give an overview of what has been done to the portrait, I will outline all six stages of the alterations. It is especially important to understand changes made during the second stage. These changes, made when the portrait was transformed into "Shakespeare"—mainly by altering the head area and the coat of arms—will assist in comparing what was later added or removed from the painting.

### 1932 Cleaning

The Ashbourne portrait was acquired by the Folger in 1931 and cleaned soon after, circa 1932. The cleaning revealed the full gold color under the darkened book and exposed the reddish-auburn tones of the hair and most of the original paint in the hands and face, although the overpainting of the nose was not fully removed. The cleaning did not remove the overpainting of the ear and the hair

*(Continued on page 9)*

## Letters:

To the Editor:

Reading your Summer 2002 issue, I was astonished by certain aspects of the article "The Maiden and the Mermaid" by Carl Caruso. To all appearances Mr. Caruso has borrowed heavily, without attribution, from my 1999 book, *The True Story of the Shakespeare Publications*, and from my article on Thomas Creede's emblem in the Fall 1999 issue of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* (Vol. 35 no.3). I coined the phrase "Wounded Truth" to describe the Creede emblem in my 1995 paper and address to the SOS convention in Greensboro, NC.

I am informed that the omission of credit was an oversight, and that Caruso had footnoted his sources in the original version of his paper. Caruso was incorrect about the wording of the Mary Queen of Scots Motto—it actually reads: "Virescit Vulnere Virtus," not "Vultus." "Virescit Vulnere Virtus" (i.e., "Virtue—or Courage—is renewed by a wound") is a classical phrase which was adopted by the Stuart family as their motto.

Caruso's source, Antonia Fraser's biography of Mary Queen of Scots, botched the quote. If you perform a web search, using Google, Yahoo, or AltaVista, on the phrase: "Virescit Vulnere Virtus" [use the quotation marks too] you will discover a wealth of confirmation including an image of the pillow slipcover embroidered by Mary. The actual precursors to the Creede emblem lie elsewhere, and will be explained by me, in detail, in a forthcoming publication.

Robert Brazil,  
Ithaca, NY  
(robertbrazil@juno.com)  
10 September 2002

*Response:*

*Robert Brazil is correct in noting that Carl Caruso's article is built upon his work on Shakespeare's printers, and both the author and editors regret that this important information was inadvertently dropped in one of the final edits of the article in preparation for publication.*

*Mr. Brazil is also correct in noting that Antonia Fraser's book reported the Latin quote incorrectly, and the one he provides in his letter is the correct phrase, as found on the pillow Mary made for Norfolk.*

To the Editor:

Mr. Rollett [letter, Summer 2002] claims he has found one sitter in a 1610 portrait—Sir Edward Cecil—wearing wrist ruffs, which he claims invalidates the entire evidence about the costume of the Ashbourne sitter presented in part II of *Shakespeare Matters*. Even if Cecil were wearing wrist ruffs in 1610 it still would not invalidate the costume evidence in the portrait, including the 1570s doublet and jerkin, proving that this is a late 1570s painting. But Mr. Rollett is mistaken about the wrist ruffs, Cecil is wearing wrist ruffles.

The wrist ruff change to wrist cuffs in England in the early 1580s is fully recognized by costume experts, and was accepted as a matter of common knowledge by Ms. North, head of Textiles and Dress at the Victoria & Albert Museum, who responded to my queries about the portrait. The transition to cuffs in England included a phase where a ruffle or ruffles replaced the ruff and a cuff was worn above this ruffle. Eventually cuffs alone were worn. But at some times ruffles were also worn alone as shown in a circa 1585 portrait of Burghley.

Why would Sir Edward Cecil, dressed very richly in the latest English fashion of circa 1610, be the only one to wear the wholly outdated wrist ruffs? Well, he isn't

wearing ruffs, but ruffles as a close examination of a 3/4 length circa 1610 portrait of Sir Edward Cecil in Karen Hearn's *Dynasties, Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530-1630*, shows. Ruffs are usually in a figure 8 configuration and stiffened with starch to hold their shape on top of the sleeve regardless of the position of the hand or arm.

Ruffles, which are stiffened less, hang down from the sleeve and are likely to hang loose in folds. If the ruffles are layered in many layers like Edward Cecil's, the folds can appear at first glance to look like the outlines of ruffs. In the circa 1610 portrait of Edward Cecil in Hearn's book Cecil has his left arm up, his hand resting on his hip, and his wrist ruffle in this position looks much like a ruff. But his right arm is down at his side and there one can see the heavily layered ruffle structure hanging from the sleeve.

Perhaps Mr. Rollett has not studied enough styles of the times and the differences between ruffs and later ruffles to distinguish these differences. In regard to ruffles it is interesting to note that Spielmann in his 1910 article on the Ashbourne made a point of mentioning that the Ashbourne sitter is wearing wrist ruffs not ruffles. And of course that is why the wrist ruffs on the portrait were darkened and the

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The purpose of the Shakespeare Fellowship is to promote public awareness and acceptance of the authorship of the Shakespeare Canon by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), and further to encourage a high level of scholarly research and publication into all aspects of Shakespeare studies, and also into the history and culture of the Elizabethan era. The Society was founded and incorporated in 2001 in the State of Massachusetts and is chartered under the membership corporation laws of that state. Dues, grants and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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left one almost eliminated in the first place—because they didn't fit a 1600s costume.

Barbara Burris  
Royal Oak, Michigan  
10 September 2002

To the Editor:

Owing to the carelessness on my part, a horrendous typographical error has survived for twenty years. In my July 11 letter, printed in your Summer 2002 issue, I discussed Helen Cyr's discovery of a typographical error in the heraldry book she consulted in connection with the Hugh Hamersley birthdate of 1565. In the *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter* of Summer 1979, I had written that the type "showing this date as '1687'" momentarily confused her.

Ms. Burris could well wonder why a 122 year discrepancy in Hamersley's birthdate wouldn't have set off alarm bells! Well, I can happily ---as a living witness to the events in question--- now offer this belated clarification: What Mrs. Cyr saw was "1567" --- a mere two years' difference. I apologize to Ms. Burris and all other Oxfordians for this long-lived misunderstanding.

On a related matter, I cannot agree with John M. Rollett that the one example (out of hundreds of portraits he looked at) showing an early 17th century painting of a wrist-ruff-sporting Edward Cecil in any way negates Barbara Burris's thesis that Hamersley would not be posing in an item of clothing that had gone out of fashion after 1583. The fact that Sir Hugh was a haberdasher by trade strengthens her contention considerably.

Another interesting coincidence: the figure "8" pattern Ms. Burris notices in the Ashbourne wrist ruff is remarkably similar to the neck ruff pattern of the Welbeck portrait of Oxford. A similar match can be seen in the portrait of Thomas Pead (Ashbourne II, *Shakespeare Matters*, Winter 2002, p. 20). This raises two questions: 1) Has any research been done on possible correlations between wrist and neck ruffs of that period? and 2) Should Oxfordians pressure the Folger to make more modern techniques of underpainting discovery applied to the overpainted neck ruff area? The little lacy dots still visible on the bottom of

(Continued on page 4)

## From the Editor:

### Editorial changes

As we begin our second year of publication, there are some significant changes in our editorial staff that may interest our readers.

First, Roger Stritmatter has decided to resign as co-editor of *Shakespeare Matters*. He will continue his work for the Shakespeare Fellowship as a member of our distinguished Editorial Board and coordinator of the Fellowship website. Roger has just completed an exotic assignment teaching English Lit to US Navy sailors on a ship in the South Pacific and expects more such assignments in the future.

Even with modern day miracles of the

Internet and email, such a distance does not lend itself to easy communication or collaboration. Roger wants to focus his energies on developing the Fellowship website and supporting and directing the Fellowship essay contest.

Time permitting, Roger expects to remain active in *Shakespeare Matters*, contributing essays, commentaries and book reviews on a regular basis. In this he will join with our other regulars (Mark Anderson, Hank Whittemore, Chuck Berney, Richard Whalen and Dan Wright) to bring our readers the best in up-to-the-minute commentary on all matters Shakespearean and Oxfordian.

### Books and book reviews

Everyone has undoubtedly noticed the growth in self-publishing ventures on the Internet. What was once an expensive proposition just a few short years ago has now blossomed into a thriving industry whereby authors can publish their own books through any number of Internet based publishing companies. The good news, as they say, is that these authors can reach audiences they never could have reached before; no more having to sell your work to a publisher first, and suffer the whims and scorns of the publishing industry.

However, the bad news is that a "filtering" effect that traditional publishing had imposed on authors—forcing them to defend and revise their work, and to work with editors—is now gone. So while one Internet published book may be a diamond in the rough, many others may be—in fact are—just rough. And in the authorship debate, there are many who want to get their word out, and now can.

In our letters section John Gove, a successful non-fiction writer, makes a suggestion about all this. He asks whether Oxfordians—as a group—should consider setting up some kind of *ad hoc* review panel to read these books, and give some initial feedback to authors on how they're

doing, and/or advise readers everywhere on which books have undergone even an informal review process by experts, and how they fared. But, of course—authorship studies being what they are—anyone taking on such a role could quickly find themselves in a "no win" situation.

Already, some of our regulars, apprised of Gove's suggestion, have pointed out the obvious pitfalls. If a reviewer says no, he/she could be called biased against that particular author.

But if yes is the answer, he/she could then become responsible for the work, and be blamed by the author if some major mis-statement or wrong fact later came to light, and the author says, "But I showed it to so and so, and he/she didn't say anything."

We have no ready answers here to this evolving phenomenon. To review or not to review? A long or short review? Ads for some books, or ads for all books? In the coming years there will be more and more such books, and we need to strike some reasonable middle ground. How can we avoid promoting flawed research or facts that have not been tested by others, but still allow a free exchange of new ideas and controversial theories. We invite our readers' thoughts on this topic.



*Letters (continued from page 3)*

Ashbourne's neck ruff seem to suggest a French type worn by one of Oxford's rank rather than the board-like contraption Hamersley wears.

Gordon C. Cyr  
Baltimore, Maryland  
31 August 2002

To the Editor:

Christopher Paul, in his review of Paul Streitz's *Oxford, Son of Elizabeth I* (Summer 2002), touched on a problem that has developed in our movement that deserves more extended attention, namely the proliferation of self-published Oxfordian books by independent writers. I have read four of these in recent months. Though the authors are thoughtful and often impressive in their scholarship, all four books are riddled with typos and at least two are crawling with factual errors, or at least statements that contradict what I have read in "established" Oxfordian literature, like the works of Ogburn, Whalen, and Sobran. Soon the Oxfordian bookshelf will be dominated by independently created works.

These self-published books deserve to be read, because they have much original research and fresh insights. But the writers should know that they risk bringing embarrassment and ridicule to the cause by carelessness. If Oxford catches fire with the public, these books will sit side-by-side on Barnes and Noble shelves with Stratfordian books, written by writers who subjected their works to rigorous peer review, and which were published by name houses with their staffs of editors, fact checkers, and proofreaders.

Could we create a review board that would, at an author's request, peer-review the draft before it is published? Think how much better Paul Streitz's book would have been if he had had such help available to him. If such a board is formed, I would volunteer to participate.

John Gove  
Sun City Center, Florida  
10 August 2002

*The points Mr. Gove raises are both interesting and relevant. We have spoken with some of our editorial board members about them, and have provided some thoughts of our own under "From the Editor."*

To the Editor:

Christopher Paul's random summary of *Oxford: Son of Queen Elizabeth I* (Summer 2002) is an exercise in denial and offers no refutation of the premise of the book. Instead of concentrating on the main argument of the book, Mr. Paul diverts his energies into a fact correcting exercise to avoid facing a reality he wishes to deny. In short, Mr. Paul has no argument that either refutes the notion that Oxford was the son of Elizabeth or confirms that Oxford was the son of John de Vere.

Ironically, while he complains about errata in the book, he makes a number of significant gaffes. He says, "Streitz is apparently unaware that the 'Lord Chamberlain' and the 'Lord Great Chamberlain' were two different royal offices..." yet in his rush to skewer, he apparently did not read page 209, "There were two Lord Chamberlains in English society." Hoisted on his own petard is the applicable expression for this.

In addition, we have areas where Mr. Paul is unusually dense. He comments on a section that gives a list of the spellings of the recorded names of the man from Stratford, almost exclusively "Shaksper." The purpose of this section is to show that the name "Shakespeare" on all the printed works is uncritically applied to the man, who spelled his name differently. Here is the book, "Contrary to popular belief, William Shakespeare was not born on April 24, 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon. The man born on that date was named Gulielmus Shaksper." Here is Mr. Paul, "Does he not comprehend that such Latin entries were commonplace, and that Gulielmus is merely the Latinized form of William, or I am missing a joke here?" No, Mr. Paul, you are not missing a joke; the issue is between "Shakespeare" and "Shaksper." Let's try this one to improve your reading skills, "How many letters in c-l-u-e-l-e-s-s?"

Another of Mr. Paul's misrepresentation concerns a rumor of Elizabeth having a child, "Streitz chooses to accept as authentic the entire tale except for the slight detail that the child was 'miserably destroyed.'" Here is the book, "It can be only described as a rumor, but it does reveal what might have been believed in the court about the Catholic Mary, and its detailed description gives it credibility." While the book is restrained, Mr. Paul purposefully exaggerates.

On and on it goes, random comments and misrepresentations having no bearing on the principal theme of the book. Mr. Paul is correct that the book needed a more careful proofing and thoughtful editing, which it has received for the next printing. My inexperience as a publisher shows too clearly. Production of a book is a much more painstaking task than I realized and I made the mistake of committing myself to a deadline, rather than let the book take the time as required. A grievous sin and grievously have I paid for it.

Mr. Paul is also concerned with the process of bringing new ideas to light. "At the very least, as one determined to air the theory publicly rather than explore it through ongoing private research with other Oxfordians, Streitz should have employed a different approach, one that kept the material to a fair level of speculation, and one that laid out all the evidence both pro and con." This is dead wrong. The ideas of the book were debated for a two-year period on the internet site Phaeton. It became apparent that there was an Oxfordian faction that did not care what the facts were; they did not want any change in the gospel according to J. Thomas Looney. For them it was not that the PT Theory [Prince Tudor Theory] was not true, it was that it could not be true as a matter of either religious or political belief.

After this rancorous debate, it was obvious that this faction neither could refute Oxford was the son of Elizabeth nor was willing to admit their lack of evidence. There was no more evidence to bring forth and I went on to write the book. Second, it would be interesting to know what of "all the evidence both pro and con" I have omitted concerning the fundamental premise of the book. At best, Mr. Paul in his random comments can only point out a few references that were left out which have bearing only on secondary topics of the book. Before Mr. Paul runs amok accusing others of "not having a jot of intellectual honesty," he might better have his own house in order.

Mr. Paul's main concern seems to be that in Oxford "nothing is sacred." He seems unwilling to critically examine the hackneyed dogmas that exist about the Virgin Queen and Oxford. Preserving the sacred religion around Oxford is more important for him. In other words, the traditions of the believed-to-be-true historical-cultural past

*In the News*

## Elizabethan history and the “Bag of Secrets”

In a story that is a bit old, but nonetheless very important to those researching the authorship mystery, Fellowship member John Rollett sent a post to the De Vere Studies Conference Listserv last summer about an article first printed in London last fall. The article, by Professor John Guy of St. Andrews University, was written for the *Sunday Times* (11 November 2001) as a prelude to a TV program, “Conspiring against the Queen.”

In the article Guy introduces the new evidence by saying that although historians generally regard Elizabeth as the arbiter of policy, and the privy counsellors her servants (whom she disciplined like naughty children if they became strident or insistent), what is striking is not how Elizabeth controlled her ministers, but how often they controlled her. “Historians have suspected this,” Guy wrote, “but the evidence wasn’t sufficient. There were examples, but they didn’t form a pattern.”

Some excerpts from the article:

...New evidence has turned up, in documents known as the “Bag of Secrets” in the Public Record Office, that proves there is a pattern after all. This evidence concerns the Lopez Plot. In 1594, the Earl of Essex, Elizabeth’s last favourite and the rival of Lord Burghley, her chief minister, accused Roderigo Lopez, her Portuguese-Jewish doctor, of plotting to poison her. By accusing Lopez, Essex was tilting at Burghley, who had employed the doctor as an informant. Lopez never intended to harm Elizabeth. He was greedy and wanted money. The Queen knew this, and stopped his

execution. But Lopez was hanged. Nobody knew who was responsible, until now.

Historians had guessed that Elizabeth reversed her decision to stay his hanging and signed an execution warrant, but the new evidence proves she never did. To circumvent the “problem” of Elizabeth’s intervention, Lopez was tried for a second time in a different court. The records of this second trial are in the Bag of Secrets. When convicted, he was hanged straight away.

The prime mover in Lopez’s execution was Burghley. Why? Because Essex had discovered that Lopez had been bribed by Manuel d’Andrada, a Portuguese spy in the service of Philip II of Spain, the Catholic power against whom Protestant England was at war.

Three years earlier, Burghley had recruited d’Andrada as a double agent. It was a smoking gun. And if Essex were to find it, Burghley might himself be accused of treason. What makes it all fit is that this had happened before. When Burghley decided on his own authority to summon the Privy Council and dispatch a warrant to execute Mary Queen of Scots in 1587, he had gone against the known wishes of Elizabeth and muddied the waters to obfuscate the fact that he and his fellow counsellors acted clandestinely.

It was a blatant act of defiance for which Elizabeth sought to hang William Davison, her secretary, for allowing the death warrant to leave his possession.

On this occasion, too, Burghley covered his tracks in the archives, removing crucial documents. He lied to Elizabeth about his actions and he sent false evidence to the court of Star Chamber so that Davison would take all the blame.

We should no longer talk about Elizabeth and Burghley in the same breath. Queen and minister had different political creeds. Elizabeth believed she had an “imperial” sovereignty, but Burghley believed her

monarchy was limited by the advice of the Privy Council, and the assent of Parliament. When push came to shove, he held that the Privy Council and Parliament could override royal sovereignty.

The key to Burghley isn’t deference to monarchy, but quasi-republicanism. He bulldozed Elizabeth into a military strike in Scotland to assist the Protestant Lords in revolt against the Catholic regent. And then conspired with the rebels to exclude Mary from returning to her throne. He was an outright republican because he not only sought to exclude Mary, but also plotted to subvert her rule. His constitutional schemes were breathtaking. If Elizabeth died, the Privy Council and Parliament were to stay in power to safeguard the Protestant succession. Burghley’s drafts envisaged an Interregnum at which time the “Council of State” would govern England and settle the succession.

The facts no longer support the familiar story. Nor was Burghley the model citizen he liked to appear. Later in life he looked after number one, fiddling his taxes and building expensive houses. He was the Queen’s puppeteer, pulling strings to a greater degree than Elizabeth ever knew. To a large extent England was his fiefdom, governed by his “assured” Protestant clique. He wasn’t the power behind the throne but the power in front of it.

The gap between popular and academic history must be closed. History must always be accessible but the complexities, the depth, the feel, the ongoing debate, should not be stripped out.

Rollett commented in his posting—and we heartily concur—“One wonders what else might be lurking in the ‘Bag of Secrets.’”

Indeed. We should all have a look.

should prevent us from seeing the actual-historical truth. Yet, it is this historical-cultural past that has prevented us from truly seeing the autobiography written in the works of Shakespeare. Put differently, if one had no historical-cultural knowledge of Stratford, Oxford or the Virgin Queen, and one simply read the works from a naïve autobiographical viewpoint, one would conclude that the Author was not simply one of the wolfish earls, but a Prince of the Realm.

Oxfordian scholars must endure slander because their Stratfordian critics have nothing to refute their arguments. Mr. Paul’s

review follows this egregious tradition with misrepresentations, errors of fact, a concern for trivia and character assassination. Mr. Paul must resort to this low level of discourse because he cannot deny Elizabeth’s involvement with her stepfather. He cannot deny that Elizabeth was mysteriously confined for a period of months. He cannot deny that there were rumors of Elizabeth being pregnant. He cannot deny the bizarre marriage of John de Vere to Margery Golding. He cannot deny the early and continued interest of William Cecil in Edward de Vere, including marrying his daughter to this so-called

wastrel. He cannot deny the literature, wherein the Author presents himself, not as merely an aristocrat, but as a noble, a person of royal blood (Hamlet, Bertram, King Earl, Prince Hal, King of Naples, etc.).

Mr. Paul’s failure to mount any defense for the Earl of Hamlet Theory or to bring any salient facts to bear against the premise of Oxford is a de facto concession that the Prince Tudor Theory is correct, backed by irrefutable historical and literary evidence.

Paul Streitz  
Darien, Connecticut  
20 August 2002

*In the News*

# Commemorating Marlowe

By Nathan Baca



*Christopher Marlowe*

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, Professor Daniel Wright of Concordia University attended a ceremony at Westminster Abbey at which a memorial window to

Christopher Marlowe was unveiled. The window is positioned directly above Chaucer's tomb and directly below another window memorializing Oscar Wilde in Poets' Corner. The ceremony was extensively covered in the British press.

Dr. Wright, a patron of the Shakespeare Fellowship, is also a member of the Marlowe Society of Great Britain. He was one of 100 invited guests for the ceremony, as he, in recent years, had participated in a campaign by the Marlowe Society to secure a fitting memorial to the great Elizabethan poet and playwright who, for centuries, has been denied recognition of his achievements by the Church due to his supposedly debauched lifestyle and politically subversive writing. Following Dr. Wright's assis-

tance in securing academic and ecclesiastical support for Marlowe's inclusion among literature's immortals in Westminster Abbey, the Dean of Westminster Abbey announced that approval for Marlowe's inclusion among England's literary greats was being granted, and a ceremony for the memorializing of the great poet was marked for 11 July.

The ceremony began at 5:00 p.m. with a service of Choral Evensong in the Abbey Choir and was followed by the unveiling and dedication of the Marlowe memorial in Poets' Corner, a service presided over by The Very Rev'd Dr. Wesley Carr, Dean of Westminster. Musical tributes were offered by the Choir of The King's School, Canterbury, and a choral setting, by Julian Slade, of Marlowe's "Come Live With Me and Be My Love" was performed by Stephen Carlile, Christopher Dickins and Gary Carpenter. A memorial wreath of marigolds (Elizabeth I's favourite flower and the Queen's legendary nickname for Marlowe) was laid on Chaucer's tomb, beneath the Marlowe window, after the window was unveiled by Sir Antony Slater. Michael Frohnsdorff, Chairman of the Marlowe Society, read an address for the occasion and Colin Niven, President of the Marlowe Society, read additional tributes from persons unable to attend the ceremony.

Among the eminent persons present at the event was Mark Rylance, Artistic Director of the Globe Theatre, and Patron of Britain's Marlowe Society.

While some members of the Marlowe Society (most notably, perhaps, the late Dolly Walker-Wraight) are persuaded that Marlowe may have been the writer who called himself Shakespeare, it is worth noting that most current members of the Marlowe Society do not subscribe to this view. In fact, some who revere Marlowe as one of the consummate artists of the Elizabethan Age are open to the suggestion that the writer who called himself Shakespeare may have been Edward de Vere.

That Christopher Marlowe knew Shakespeare (perhaps before Oxford assumed that sobriquet to acquire even deeper cover for his pre-1593 anonymity), and that Marlowe and de Vere collaborated and admired one another is, for most Oxfordians, beyond doubt. Shakespeare even utilizes some of Marlowe's material in his plays. And many Oxfordians believe that it was Marlowe's real (or, perhaps apparent) assassination in Deptford that spurred Edward de Vere to cloak his identity behind a pseudonym that would afford him the kind of protection that Marlowe lacked, and for which Marlowe, an openly dangerous writer, may have paid with his life—or at least his continued life in England. To reflect the questionable end of Marlowe's life, the window in Westminster Abbey reads:

Christopher Marlowe 1564 - ?1593

With the aid of the Shakespeare Fellowship and some members of the Marlowe Society, Dr. Wright is now attempting the daunting task of attempting to secure the Abbey's approval for a memorial to Edward de Vere. Members of the Fellowship who would like to be part of this process should contact Dr. Wright at [dwright@cuportland.edu](mailto:dwright@cuportland.edu) for instructions on how they may serve this endeavor to commemorate the great Elizabethan courtier poet and playwright who may also have been the writer that we know by the name of Shakespeare.

## Justice Stevens honored by alma mater

US Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens was honored by the University of Chicago's Alumni Association last June with the Association's 2002 Alumni Medal.

Stevens is, of course, well known to Oxfordians for the role he played in the 1987 Moot Court debate on the authorship, and for his subsequent public statements on the issue.

In an August 2002 *University of Chicago Magazine* article about the award (written by his former law clerk Edward Siskel) it was therefore of some interest to note this paragraph towards the end of the article:

Despite his busy schedule on the Court,

Stevens has never abandoned his love for literature. There is a part of the jurist that still wants to be an English professor. He continues to pursue his love for Shakespeare, choosing to celebrate the end of the Term this year by visiting the nearby Folger Shakespeare Library. But always the iconoclast, Stevens is not content to accept the received wisdom with respect to the authorship of Shakespeare's works. He is part of that small but growing group of scholars who contend that Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, is the true author of the Shakespeare Canon.

And, of course, the public support of individuals such as Justice Stevens is an immeasurable aid to that "small but growing group of scholars."



*Commentary*

## Is Oxford buried in Poets' Corner?

By Stephanie Hopkins Hughes

The fog that hides so much of the life of Edward de Vere is particularly thick around the matter and manner of his death and place of burial. Although we can be sure that he died 24 June 1604, our information on where he was buried comes from the will of his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, c. 1612: "I joyfully commit my body to the earth from whence it was taken, desiring to be buried in the Church of Hackney, within the county of Middlesex as near unto the body of my said dear and noble Lord and husband as may be . . ." going on to request that her executors provide funds for a suitable tomb for both of them. As always with de Vere, however, there is a conflicting report: this from Percival Golding (fl. 1624), youngest son of de Vere's uncle Arthur, who stated flatly in his manuscript about the Vere family that the seventeenth Earl "lieth buried at Westminster."

With this in mind, Oxfordians have conjectured that Oxford was reburied at some point in the tomb of his cousin, Sir Francis Vere, a gorgeous monument still to be seen in the north transept of the Abbey, built sometime after Francis's death in 1609. According to Charlton Ogburn, both the eighteenth earl and Horatio Vere, Francis's brother, were subsequently buried here. Beside this tomb a plaque in the floor states: "STONE COFFIN BENEATH," which has led some to conjecture that Oxford is buried there. I think we can be certain that this is not the case. It seems more likely that the terse wording of this plaque refers to a coffin discovered during an earlier rearrangement of underground coffins, marking one that contains unidentified bones. The Abbey has been a burial site for many centuries and the earth beneath the floor is stuffed with ancient coffins.

While standing in Poets' Corner in the Abbey in 1999, it struck me that if Oxford was "Shakespeare," the names mentioned in Jonson's ode might be a clue to his whereabouts. After some introductory quibbling on envy, when Jonson finally gets around to praising Shakespeare he begins

by stating: "I will not lodge thee by Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie / A little further, to make thee a room : Thou art a monument without a tomb . . ." (He doesn't mention the tomb in Stratford at all.) It is a classic ruse in dissimulation to state a positive as a negative. Think of Brer Rabbit's plea: "Oh, please don't throw me in that briar patch!" Jonson's comment is odd and its placement at the very outset of his soaring praise even odder. His point appears to be that although Shakespeare isn't buried in Poets' Corner, it doesn't matter since his true monument is his works. But if that is Jonson's point, then why waste words on an elaborate conceit involving a very specific series of actions that have not, in fact, taken place?

If one studies the site itself, it's clear that the plaques in Poets' Corner commemorating Spenser, Chaucer and Beaumont are so positioned that, if a group of "well-willers" had wished to rebury Oxford with his true peers, England's greatest poets, the maneuver described by Jonson would have been exactly what was needed to make room for another coffin.

On June 19 of this year, Oxfordian scholar Christopher Paul posted to the cyber-salon Phaeton a poem by Sir John Denham lauding the poet Abraham Crowley upon his burial in Poets' Corner. This contains the lines:

By Shakespear's, Johnson's, Fletcher's  
lines,  
Our Stages lustre Rome's outshines:  
These Poets neer our Princes sleep,  
And in one Grave their Mansion keep. . .

Thus it seems evident that, in 1668, Sir John Denham regarded Shakespeare's final resting place to be the Abbey, not Trinity Church in Stratford.

I submit that during the period between the death of Oxford in 1604 and 1623 when the First Folio was published, an ad hoc committee formed, whose purpose was to see that England's greatest poet was given the honors due him. This required that a cover story be prepared so that his works

could be published in such a way that the interests of his family were protected. This committee consisted of the "incomparable brethren": William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, who probably paid for the First Folio, and his brother, Philip, Earl of Montgomery, and his wife, Susan Vere, Oxford's daughter; their mother and mother-in-law, Mary Sidney, Dowager Countess of Pembroke; Court poet Ben Jonson, by the year of William Shakspeare's death closely allied with Pembroke, who had acquired the post of Lord Chamberlain in late 1615 or early 1616, giving him oversight of the Court stage and to some extent what got published; probably also Oxford's cousin, Sir Francis Bacon (the second most influential writer produced by the Shakespearean era); Oxford's son, the eighteenth Earl; and possibly the Earl of Southampton. I submit that Leonard Digges the Younger was also involved, based partly on his contribution of a dedicatory poem to the Folio and of another to "Shakespeare's Poems" in 1640 that reinforced the false concept of Shakespeare as ignorant of Greek, essential to the cover story. Admittedly, this would have been an awkward group; some members detested other members, which may help to explain why it took so long to get the folio project completed. Apart from the central core group—those who owned manuscripts or were involved in some way with collecting them for publication—others were included, men and women who knew the truth, loved the author, and wished to see him properly honored.

I suggest that after arrangements were made on the QT with the vicar of the Abbey, a place was made for Oxford's coffin in exactly the manner described by Jonson (Beaumont had died in 1616), and that one evening after hours when the great cathedral was empty and silent, this group gathered, and, by candlelight, in hushed tones and with proper observance, including the traditional casting of farewell poems and the pens with which they were written onto the casket as it was lowered, "Shakespeare" was buried with his true peers.

# First annual Oxfordian Institute

The Institute for Oxfordian Studies at Concordia University inaugurated the first of what is to be an annual seminar on the university campus each August that will focus on close study, for an entire week, of the Oxfordian authorship thesis. This year, from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, participants studied the latest research in the Shakespeare Authorship Question and probed arguments for Edward de Vere's authorship of the Shakespeare canon that have been advanced by many of Oxfordianism's leading scholars. Studies focused on the Shakespeare history plays, although such topics as Renaissance perspectives on history, the continental sources for Shakespeare's comedies, Edward de Vere's youthful years, and Shakespeare's classical learning were pursued as well.

The seven-day seminar was led by Concordia University Professor of English Dr. Daniel Wright, but a number of major Oxfordian scholars contributed their respective expertise during the week as well. Some of those who participated in leading sessions of the seminar included Dr. Kevin Simpson, Professor of Psychology at Concordia University; Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, Editor of *The Oxfordian*; Seattle scholar and CU graduate Andrew Werth; and physician and writer Dr. Merilee Karr.

After informal gatherings over the weekend, seminar participants gathered on campus on Monday to begin a week of study that

started with an examination of *Henry the Fifth* and continued, during the week, with study and discussion by seminar participants and seminar leaders of *Richard the Third*, *Henry the Eighth*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Twelfth Night*, *King Lear* and other Shakespearean works and topics. Seminar participants also enjoyed the Kenneth Branagh film, *Henry the Fifth*, and a moot court debate that argued for the guilt or innocence of Richard III of the murder of the young king, Edward V, and his brother, Richard, Duke of York.

Participants enjoyed other activities as well. A day's outing took several participants to the Portland riverfront and aboard the yacht, *Portland Spirit*, for a luncheon cruise down the Willamette River, followed by a trip to Powell's City of Books before enjoying dinner in the city at the Brasserie Montmartre. Another day trip took participants to Portland's famous Japanese Gardens and the Washington Park Rose Gardens. Saturday morning closed with a final



Seminar participants enjoying a river cruise on the *Portland Spirit* include (l-r) Andrew Werth, Prof. Daniel Wright, Oxfordian editor Stephanie Hughes, John Varady, Wenonah Sharpe, and SOS Board member Susan Sybersma.

session on campus, and while some participants departed for home after a picnic lunch, others enjoyed an afternoon soccer game at the university and an outdoor performance of *Twelfth Night* at nearby Fernhill Park.

Next year's seminar is scheduled for the week of August 17-23. For information, or to register, contact Dr. Wright at Concordia University ([dwright@cu-portland.edu](mailto:dwright@cu-portland.edu)). The \$995 tuition includes a room for six days and nights (with linen service), all breakfasts and luncheons, day trip costs, all books, class supplies and other amenities.

## Shakespeare Oxford Society meets in Washington, D.C.

The 26th annual conference of the Shakespeare Oxford Society convened in Arlington, Virginia, over Columbus Day weekend (October 10th to 13th). It was the Society's first conference in the Washington, D.C. area since 1987 and the landmark Moot Court authorship debate featuring three Supreme Court Justices.

In addition to the usual schedule of papers, the conference also included a play (*The Winter's Tale*) and a tour of the Folger Shakespeare Library. The major news story at the conference was the election for the Society's Board of Trustees. In a contested election, current President Aaron Tatum (Memphis, TN) lost his Board seat to Ramon Jimenez (San Francisco, CA), who had been nominated by petition. Re-elected to the

Board were Dr. Frank Davis (Georgia), Gerit Quealy (New York), James Sherwood (New York), and Edward Sisson (Virginia).

At the new Board's meeting on Sunday, October 13th, Dr. Jack Shuttleworth was elected to serve as President of the Society in the coming year. Dr. Frank Davis was elected Vice-President. New Board member Edward Sisson will serve as Secretary and Joe Peel (Nashville, TN) will continue as the Society's Treasurer.

Another story that came to light over the weekend concerned the Ashbourne portrait. During the tours conducted for Society members at the Folger the docents (tour guides) mentioned that the portrait had recently been subjected to x-ray and other scientific analysis by the same experts who

had examined the Sanders portrait (story, page one). This came as news to those of us at *Shakespeare Matters* and researcher Barbara Burris. Phone calls to the Folger on October 15th confirmed the story. For more on this development see the sidebar story on page 10.

Among the papers presented was one from SOS Board member Katherine Chiljan on "Dating the Ashbourne," touching on a subject we've been covering in *Shakespeare Matters* for the past year (including this issue). Chiljan presented a case for the Ashbourne's having been painted in 1592 (still by Cornelis Ketel, and still with Oxford as the sitter). However, Chiljan could offer no hard evidence that Ketel had ever visited London in the 1590s.



*Ashbourne (continued from page 1)*

above the forehead. This pre-1979 state of the painting, which exposed the original paint of a master portrait painter in the area of the face, is the truest of all the versions to the original portrait and it will be one of the guidelines in our investigation. It can be seen most clearly in the full-page color photograph of the painting (taken by a professional photographer) reproduced in volume II of Ruth Loyd Miller's 1975 reprint of J. Thomas Looney's *Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford*.<sup>3</sup>

The Folger has no color photographs of the Ashbourne prior to the current state of the portrait after the 1988/89 restoration, although it has a 1961 black and white photo. But there are excellent "before" color photos of the painting, including a close-up of the face, taken by Peter Michaels prior to his 1979 restoration work. Incidentally, the portrait has been cut down in size from its original dimensions.<sup>4</sup>

### The Six Stages of Alterations to the Ashbourne

#### Stage 1. Coat of Arms Added to Painting (early 17th century)

The first alteration to the original portrait began with the removal of some verse or other lettering which was below the original identifying inscription, to the left of the head and above the shoulder. The artist had signed his "CK" monogram (which all evidence indicates was that of Dutch painter Cornelis Ketel) below this verse or lettering. As we noted in part III, a coat of arms replaced whatever was removed and the "CK" monogram was incorporated into the ribbon below the motto scroll at the bottom of the arms.<sup>5</sup>

#### Stage 2. Changing the Portrait into "Shake-speare" (early 17th century)

The second stage of alterations, massive in scope, involved changing the portrait into "Shake-speare."<sup>6</sup>

These changes included painting over the full head of hair on top of the head and raising the forehead to an unnatural height. The high rounded shape of the original forehead and the outline of the hair are clearly visible in the x-rays. The reddish or auburn hair retained on the sides of the head was darkened, fuzzied and lengthened to cover the ear, leaving only part of the lobe exposed. The x-rays reveal the full ear and show an attempt to change the shape of the back of the ear by drawing a line up the helix. The attempt seems to have been abandoned, leaving a small part of the back of the ear still attached but hanging outside this line, as the tamperer simply covered all but the lobe with hair. The reconstructed lobe looks fuzzy, in strong contrast to the clarity of the rest of the features of the face. In the x-rays a dark area reveals a well-defined opening or dip in the lobe, close to the face and just below the distinctly low tragus. It has been painted over. In the ear of the Welbeck portrait of de Vere a dip may be seen in the same spot, below an equally low tragus (see the graphics on page 14 for comparisons).

The x-rays reveal alterations to the nose. The nostril shape was changed, and the original tip of the nose was shortened, rounded and narrowed with crude dark shadowing, in contrast to the refined painting of the other facial features. The altered nose still strongly resembles the nose in the Welbeck portrait. The nose exposed by

the x-rays is an exact match, including the unique curl in the columella at the bottom of the tip of the nose that was eliminated in this stage (see page 19 for further discussion of these changes).

Further alterations were made at this stage. The shape of the lower lip was changed, the beard darkened, and the face and hands painted over. The original inscription was scraped out and replaced with the age "47" and "1611" date to fit the Stratford man. The identifiers on the book oval and the thumb signet seal ring were covered over and the gold book darkened. Much of the original large circular ruff was painted over and the reminder was transformed into the muddied, scamped 1611-era ruff now visible. The wrist ruffs (which in their original state showed the portrait was painted before the early 1580s) were overpainted with dark gray paint to make them less visible, and the doublet was painted over.

Barrell's x-rays show that the tamperer scraped out certain portions of the coat of arms, removing only specific identifying aspects before painting them over. The tamperer's decisions about what to remove implies that he knew by the configuration of crest and shield who the sitter was, and that he wanted to make sure that the sitter's identity was removed from the coat of arms.

The lettering in the motto scroll under the arms was also removed, leaving only a few indecipherable remnants clustered near the middle of the right side of the scroll. Almost all of the gold bird figure above the wreath in the crest area was scraped away, most heavily on the left side, leaving an off-center ghostly remnant of a birdlike figure facing left and some gold (likely gold leaf) remnants. The three red heads on the shield (known as "charges" in heraldry) were left relatively intact, although parts of the ears may have been scraped away when the gold (or gold leaf) on the shield was scraped off completely.

From this evidence of selective alterations to the coat of arms, the crest and the motto on the scroll appear to have been far more threatening to the tamperer than the shield. Apparently the tamperer did not regard the heads on the shield as an identifying aspect of the sitter. If the coat of arms were all of one person's family, the heads would be as important a means of identification as the crest, and they too would have been scraped away. Thus this selective removal suggests that the coat of arms was not of one family, but rather a crest of one family over the shield of another—as in the combination of a husband's and wife's family arms.<sup>7</sup>

These changes to the coat of arms are documented in Barrell's 1937 x-ray photos (published in *Scientific American* in 1940) and confirmed by the Folger's 1948 x-rays. Barrell's x-rays provide a key point of comparison between the coat of arms as it existed after this second Shake-speare stage of alterations and subsequent alterations to the arms—the first of which show up in the 1948

*(Continued on page 10)*

*"This pre-1979  
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painter ... is  
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Ashbourne (continued from page 9)

Folger x-rays.

### Stage 3. Attempt to Remove "CK" Monogram and Changes to the Charges in the Shield (after 1937 and before 1948)

In Part III we discussed the post-1940 attempt to remove the full "CK" monogram deep in the canvas (fully visible in the Barrell x-rays), documented by the remaining partial "CK" lettering visible in the 1948 Folger x-rays.<sup>8</sup> The Folger x-rays disclose that the "CK" was not the only area where alterations were made after 1937. They provide evidence that the heads in the shield area were also altered after 1937.

To Stratfordians, the two major areas of concern raised by Barrell's examination were the evidence of Ketel's monogram<sup>9</sup> (a direct connection to his known portrait of Oxford) and his identification of the three heads on the shield as the griffins of the Trentham family arms. The Trenthams were the family of Oxford's second wife and widow, Elizabeth Trentham.

In Barrell's x-rays of the coat of arms we noted that gold remnants are visible only in the crest area, not in the shield area. But the 1948 Folger x-rays show distinctly bright remnants of gold in the front of all three heads and at the bottom of the necks; the existence of these gold remnants is verified in Michaels's 1979 photos. How did they suddenly appear in the painting as shown in the 1948 Folger x-rays? The answer to this question will provide clues as to what the shield heads looked like when Barrell x-rayed them before they were altered.

An extremely common technique used by artists is to lay down first the larger background color of an area (such as the shield) and to paint details in that area (such as the heads) on top of this background color. For example, Spielmann noted in 1910 that the skull on the table in the portrait has some red showing through it from the large area of the red tablecloth underneath that had been painted first. The red showing in the skull is a result of the loss of original paint in the skull, mainly from successive rubbings of the skull during cleanings of the portrait.

Similarly, the basic color of the entire shield area in the coat of arms would have been laid down first and the red heads painted on top of it. (The coat of arms itself was painted on top of the original paint of the portrait in stage one of the alterations.)

As noted, during stage two of the alterations into Shakespeare, the paint of the entire shield area had been scraped away. This scraping apparently extended all the way down to the underlayment area of the canvas, leaving reddish-orange lines on the canvas outlining the shield's original size and shape (the lines can be seen very clearly in Michaels's photos).<sup>10</sup> Although the color of the shield was scraped away in the change to Shakespeare, the red heads painted on top of the shield were not scraped away—the scraping was done around them. So if there were any subsequent alterations to the heads, we should expect to see spots of the shield color revealed from beneath the heads—just as the red tablecloth showed through in the skull after repeated cleanings.

In fact, the 1948 Folger x-rays show bright thick lines on areas in the beaks and bottom neck areas of the heads on the shield, bright areas which are not there in Barrell's x-rays. These bright areas, exposed from underneath the red heads, are gold, as verified in Michaels's color photos, proving that the original color of the

## Recent developments

Just as this issue of *Shakespeare Matters* was about to be printed we learned some significant news about the Folger's current handling of the Ashbourne portrait. First, Arthur Page (who worked on the painting in 1988-89 under the direction of William Pressly and the Folger) has claimed a personal copyright on slides still in the Folger's possession which he took documenting his work on the painting, and requested that they not be released for publication. None of these slides have been used in Part IV.

Second, the painting itself was sent to Canada to undergo the same forensic testing recently performed on the Sanders portrait by the Canadian Conservation Institute (story, page 1). The painting left the Folger on September 3rd and was returned on October 9th. Except for the time in transit, it was at the CCI the entire time.

Among the tests done were: x-radiography, ultraviolet fluorescence, infrared, and pigment analysis. As of mid-October Folger Curator of Art Erin Blake informs us that the forensic results should be ready by mid-November, and will be announced during the November 15th to 16th "Picturing Shakespeare" seminar on the campus of the University of Toronto (the initial focus of this seminar had been the Sanders portrait, but it has since been expanded to cover all "purported" Shakespeare portraits). Blake will be present, speaking on "Picturing Shakespeare," including—obviously—the Ashbourne. Among others at this Toronto event will be Prof. Alan Nelson and David Kathman, names familiar to anyone who has been following the authorship debate these past few years. Barbara Burris is scheduled to speak on her Ashbourne research in a related event (also on the University of Toronto campus, though separate from the seminar) on November 17th.

Blake has informed us that the only documentation sent to the CCI were the Ashbourne entry in *A Catalogue of Paintings in the Folger Shakespeare Library* (the 1993 Yale University Press book prepared for the Folger by William Pressly), and the 1940 *Scientific American* article by Barrell. These two documents, Blake told us in an email, were sent along as "a guide to the questions that have been raised about the painting, and [the CCI] based their scientific analysis accordingly." Interestingly, William Pressly's 1993 Ashbourne article in *Shakespeare Quarterly* was not sent to CCI, nor were the 1948 x-rays, or the Folger files and photos.

Burris was especially disappointed to learn about this testing after the painting had already been sent out and returned. Burris's sentiments (echoed by the *SM* editors) is that it would have been useful if the "opposing point of view" about this painting could have been better represented in this testing, especially with suggestions for particular areas to be tested for scraping and repainting. As Blake's email makes clear, the CCI was not informed about any of Burris's analysis of the two Folger restoration projects of 1979-1981 and 1988-1989.

We have learned through phone calls to the CCI that this examination was restricted—at the Folger's request—to paint analysis of only the gold paint in the inscription, book, ring and gauntlet. Only the top layer of paint was analyzed in the second numeral "one" in the "1611" date, while a lower layer was taken only from under the "S" in "Suae"—simply to determine whether the varnish was below the letter or not. Both of these areas of limited examination raise crucial problems concerning any claims that might be made about the inscription given the evidence of alterations already shown in our Ashbourne series.

This limited analysis appears to us, in fact, to raise more questions that can only be resolved by a thorough and complete examination of the painting, including equal Oxfordian input, oversight and analysis of the results. Such an examination would include—but not be limited to—an examination of any resurfacing of the inscription area going down to the canvas; an analysis of all layers of paint and underlayment in the numeral "one" and all other areas of alteration and over-painting; a thorough paint analysis of many specific paint areas in the coat of arms; a comparative analysis of the paints examined; an analysis of techniques, methods and paints in comparison to Ketel paintings; and comparative analysis from other fields, including costume, etc.

We will report on this seminar and the results of the forensic analysis of the Ashbourne in our Winter 2003 issue. —BB/WEB

shield was gold (likely gold leaf). Moreover, these gold remnants show up exactly where we would expect to find them if someone had been trying to remove evidence of the Trentham arms. Since these bright areas are not visible in the Barrell x-rays, they must have been uncovered between 1937 and 1948.

The Trentham arms comprise three red griffin heads with black beaks. In the 1948 Folger x-rays and Michaels's 1979 photos all three heads show a longish remnant of gold in the front area of each face (see Figs. 1 & 5 on pages 12-13 to see how these remnants appeared on one of Michaels's 1979 photos of the uncovered coat of arms). Their presence makes each head look like it has a partially gold beak. Someone removed the paint *only* from the three beak areas, exposing some of the original gold of the underlying shield (Michaels's photos show red paint outlining the area in the front of the face from which the paint had been removed). Thus we can deduce that this beak area in each head was of a different color from the red heads. Might we not presume that what led the alterers to remove the paint in this area on each head was the presence of a different beak color, such as the black beaks of the Trentham griffins—which Barrell had predicted, but are now erased?

The 1948 Folger x-rays provide further proof that the heads are those of the Trentham griffins. The x-rays reveal thick bright streaks (verified as gold again in Michaels's color photos) at the bottom of two of the necks, showing that attempts were made to cut off the jagged necks and make them straight ("couped" in heraldic terms). The Trentham griffins have jagged necks ("erased" in heraldic terms). The Barrell x-rays show jagged necks, some evidence of which still remains in Michaels's photos. The upper left neck is the most distinctly jagged in Barrell's x-rays. The Folger x-rays and Michaels's photos reveal that someone cut off this neck with a straight line and painted the lower neck area in with dark paint. A dot of gold from the shield underneath still shows in this area. Clearly the pre-1948 alterers found the Trentham jagged necks too revealing.

Despite the alterations to the beaks and necks, the red heads still remained those of griffins, which explains why attempts were made to rub out the details of the faces so as to make them extremely difficult to distinguish. Evidence of this rubbing is the peculiar color of the heads, where the red paint was rubbed down close to the gold, making the heads look orangish. In this process some slight gold lines in the face area—especially of the bottom head—were exposed, again verified by Michaels's photos. But some of the original red paint, identical to the color of the wreath and mantling, is still visible in spots on the heads.

We note here that, in response to Part III of this series, Folger officials have attempted to avoid the evidence that the heads on the shield are not the Hamersley gold rams heads by denying that the heads are red (as in the Trentham arms). They maintain that the original artist applied a background (or "underlayment") of red paint to much of the canvas, and that the red heads on the shield are simply pieces of this red paint now showing through.<sup>10A</sup>

This is an unsatisfactory and inaccurate response. A color showing through during a restoration process that takes off layers of overpaint must be an underlayment, a base color laid down in wide brush strokes on the canvas over which the picture is painted. There may be different underlayments in the same painting—particularly in the face of a portrait. A general red underlayment color showing through in spots could not create the distinctly

painted-in red heads on the shield with their structural details (however fuzzied those details were made by later alterations). The attempt to obscure the details of the heads, resulting in an orangish color due to red paint being rubbed down close to gold, also invalidates this claim. Further, the remnants of the original red on the heads are of the same color as the very detailed mantling that is most visible on the right side of the arms. Does the Folger claim that the highly detailed painting of the red mantling is simply the red underlayment color showing through also?

#### Stage 4. Changes to the Coat of Arms and Inscription Before 1979

The fourth stage of alterations involves differences between the 1948 Folger x-rays and restorer Peter Michaels's file photos of the coat of arms and inscription, taken after these were uncovered in 1979. Michaels's photos show further changes to the coat of arms after the 1948 Folger x-rays. These alterations, which do not appear in Barrell's or the Folger's x-rays, include the redrawing of the shield to make it smaller, more changes to the heads (particularly the necks), the addition of pinkish-red circles in the crest intended for a cross crosslet fitchy, the addition to the scroll of light surface "MORE" lettering (to incorporate part of Hamersley's motto), and changes to the crest.

Also, a change was made to the last numeral in the false "1611" inscription (itself added in stage two) showing a large scraped "2" behind this numeral. These changes were made primarily to provide evidence for the Folger's claim, first asserted in 1979, that Hugh Hamersley is the sitter in the portrait.

#### Stage 5. The Portrait in Limbo—Alterations Between 1982 and 1988

The fifth stage of alterations is apparent from the Arthur Page file photos taken prior to his conservation work in 1988-89. These photos reveal things that were not there before Michaels's 1979-82 work, and are not in Michaels's file photos. These changes must have occurred during the six-year period when the portrait sat in limbo after Michaels's untimely death in 1982, probably after 1984 when the painting was taken back to the Folger and stored until the completion of the restoration in 1988-89. They include the disappearance of all detail on the left wrist ruff (all that's left is a blob), and a strange griffin in the crest on a coat of arms photo that does not appear in any of Michaels's photos. In other areas, especially the forehead and ear, it is hard to tell whether changes occurred at this stage or the next.

(Continued on page 14)



# A History of Alterations to the Coat of Arms

In part III we noted that in May 1979 conservator Peter Michaels removed the overpaint on the coat of arms. Two months later Hamersley was “discovered” by the Folger, based on an interpretive sketch purportedly based on this coat of arms. We questioned the accuracy of this sketch, showing that it was not a true representation of what was on the painting and that it relied instead on elements of the 1911 Ducat-Hamersley arms.

Further questions arise: What actually was on the coat of arms when Michaels uncovered it in 1979? (Fig. 1 is from one of Michaels’s 1979 photographs of the uncovered coat of arms, and Fig. 2 is the coat of arms on the painting today).

How does the 1979 uncovered coat of arms differ from what the x-rays showed on the painting prior to Michaels’s removal of the overpaint?

And how could elements of Hamersley get into this coat of arms since we have shown by costume dating, iconography, the coat of arms and the lack of facial resemblance, etc., that this portrait is not Hugh Hamersley?

We can begin to answer these questions by looking at Michaels’s photos of the arms in the Ashbourne portrait file. They show far more detail than what is now visible on the coat of arms after “inpainting” in 1988-89 that covered over some important details and some of the changes that show up in Michaels’s photos.

## Alterations to the Coat of Arms between 1948 and 1979

The major alterations that show up in Michaels’s photos involve the shield area, the motto scroll and the crest. I suggest that Barrell’s death in 1975 precipitated this stage of the alterations to the coat of arms and the ensuing proclamation of Hamersley only four years later, almost 40 years after Barrell’s *Scientific American* article suggested that Oxford was the Ashbourne sitter.

## The Shield in Michaels’s Photos

The shield was reduced in size by crudely painting a black outline of a smaller shield around the heads (see the comparisons on page 13 between Figs. 3 and 4—the coat of arms as it appeared in the 1940s, and Fig. 5—the coat of arms uncovered by Michaels in 1979).



Fig. 1

By permission, Folger Shakespeare Library



Fig. 2

By permission, Folger Shakespeare Library

*In comparing the coat of arms as uncovered by Michaels in 1979 (Fig. 1) and its present state (Fig. 2) it is interesting to note that two of the gold streaks present on the front of each head in 1979 have disappeared from the heads in the upper left and bottom by the final restoration.*

This alteration was so poorly done that the right side of the new, smaller shield edge directly touches the neck and head of the top right head, rendering the heads off-center. The helmet no longer fits over the shield and appears to float above it. The creation of the smaller shield also cuts off the long jagged edge of the bottom head. This appears to have been the principal reason for drawing a new shield—to remove evidence of “erased” (i.e. cut off with a “jagged” line) heads and to suggest that the heads were “couped” (i.e. cut off with a straight line).

This smaller shield is not in the Barrell or Folger x-rays. In the x-rays the mantling that falls from the crest and surrounds the shield outlines a wider and longer shield shape that goes all the way down to the top of the scroll. The mantling outline in the x-rays shows that the original shield extended beyond it; the mantling itself defined the outline shape of the shield that appears on the x-rays.<sup>12</sup> (See Fig. 3, author’s drawing from 1948 Folger x-rays.) In addition, vestiges of orangish lines in Michaels’s photos

show an outline of the original shield that extended beyond the mantling and down to the scroll.

The shield area was, of course, crucial to the Hamersley attribution as the Folger claimed that the heads were the Hamersley rams. Despite all these alterations, overlays show that the rams heads on the 1716 Haberdashers portrait of Hamersley, the 1911 Dulcat-Hamersley rams heads and the rams heads of the Folger sketch still do not match the heads on the shield.

## The Crest in Michaels’s photos

The same black paint used to create the new shield was also used in the crest area to outline the bottom of a griffin wing on the bird figure at the top of the crest in order to create evidence for a griffin on the crest. Also, thin red paint was used to outline feathers in the wing and orangish paint was applied to create the outline of a griffin.

Reddish, pink circles were added to the top left of the crest, precisely where a cross crosslet fitche would appear on the Hamersley arms. However, the circles are the wrong shape for the squared tips of a cross crosslet.

This apparently explains why Michaels’s assistant “incorrectly” drew a cross bottonny (which has rounded tips) in her interpretive sketch of the arms. These circles do not appear in the x-rays. In the x-rays there are indistinguishable blotches all along the left side of the crest from the mantling to the head of the bird figure; they are easier to see in the Folger x-rays, on which I counted six.

## The Motto Scroll in Michaels’s Photos

Very faint “MORE” lettering was added to the scroll in an orange-red color. This can be seen with difficulty in enlargements of the Michaels photos. Michaels dismissed this as original paint. The x-rays reveal no “MORE” lettering. Of course “MORE” was the ending of

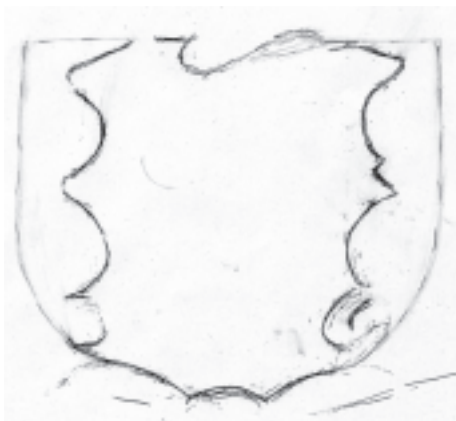


Fig. 3 By permission, Folger Shakespeare Library



Fig. 4 Scientific American



Fig. 5 By permission, Folger Shakespeare Library

The most clearly visible change to the coat of arms between the 1940s and 1979 involves the mysterious appearance of the smaller shield visible in the 1979 Michaels's photos (Fig. 5). As can be seen in the author's drawing from the 1948 Folger x-rays (Fig. 3) and the 1937 Barrell x-rays as published in *Scientific American* in 1940 (Fig. 4), the smaller shield was not present in the 1940s.

Hammersley's motto "HONORE ET AMORE," a crucial piece of "evidence" in the Folger's "identification" of the arms as those of Hammersley.

#### Alterations to the Coat of Arms after Michaels 1982 —1989

A struggle seems to have developed between restorer Michaels and director Hardison not long after the Folger's July 1979 proclamation that the sitter was Hammersley. The conflict concerned painting over uncovered paint—particularly the coat of arms that the Folger wanted completely painted over again. In a July 24, 1980, letter to Ann Skiff, his contact at the Folger, Michaels stated that "*I do not consider it ethical to cover over original paint and would withdraw from further conservation if that course is chosen.*"<sup>13</sup> (Emphasis added).

That course was chosen and carried out in 1988-89 after Michaels's death, though not to the extent of covering the entire arms as Hardison had originally wanted. We presume from Michaels's stance on this and other issues that the coat of arms was left as he uncovered it when he died in January 1982. The photo evidence and Pressly's later comments about inpainting the arms confirm this.

#### Portrait in Limbo: Fifth Stage of Alterations to the Coat of Arms

In its present form, the coat of arms is the result of two more stages of alterations. The fifth stage (the earlier of two post-1979 stages of alteration) occurred while the painting sat open and unfinished for six years after Michaels's death. These changes can be seen in Page's photos, taken before he began work on the portrait. It is hard to discern the order of the

1988-89 Page photos in the Ashbourne file. One photo (#C28) shows the highly detailed, painted-in feather structure of the griffin wing in the crest that is neither on Michaels's photos nor on the painting now. In the other coat of arms photos in the Page file the coat of arms has already been inpainted, as it is on the portrait now. But one other photo (#D37) shows a strange and clearly delineated griffin perched atop the round area above the wreath that appears to have been partially painted in. These appear to be alterations that were aborted as being too obviously phony.

#### Pressly/Gundersheimer and the Sixth Stage of Alterations to the Coat of Arms

The second post-1979 stage of alterations to the coat of arms (the sixth stage of alterations overall) occurred in 1988-89, and was directed by William Pressly in conjunction with Folger director Gundersheimer. The result of this final stage of "restoration" is now visible on the painting. Apparently, after Michaels's resistance the Folger decided it was not politic or advisable to cover the arms entirely as Hardison's 1979 memo had advised. The best alternative was an inpainting of the arms, which resulted in covering over some of the alterations and enhancing certain aspects that had been added to "prove" Hammersley. This selective covering over contrasts strikingly with the far more detailed coat of arms in Michaels's photos.

#### The Inpainted Coat of Arms on the Painting Now

The most glaring change to the coat of arms as it now appears is the painting over of the gold previously exposed in the beaks of two of the

three heads on the shield. This overpainting makes the remaining gold on the beak of the upper right head look like an anomaly. Someone apparently noticed the problems presented by areas of gold in all three heads and tried to minimize the damage (but without overpainting all three heads!). But without Michaels's photos showing the gold on all three heads, it would be impossible to understand the significance of the gold remaining on the third head. These gold areas were a tip-off that the heads were most likely bird heads with different color beaks, and as such they posed a danger to the Hammersley rams heads claim.

The inpainting of the background color encroaches into the coat of arms at many points, particularly in the shield and crest area. This inpainting removed altered aspects visible on Michaels's photos, such as the scraped area that showed a larger original shield. It also enhanced aspects that had been added to the arms, such as the circles supposedly representing the Hammersley cross crosslet fitchy. The background inpainting also removed details in the scroll as well as large scraped areas showing that there was a far bigger and different object in the crest.<sup>14</sup> Other alterations were also made.

Under Pressly's ostensible objective of keeping the picture "an aesthetic whole,"<sup>15</sup> major evidence in the coat of arms, uncovered by Michaels in 1979, is no longer visible. Furthermore, alterations to the arms visible in Michaels's photos have been covered over. Not only is the painting-over of this original paint unprofessional and, in these circumstances, unethical as Michaels asserted, no true aesthetic purpose is involved. The real purpose of the highly selective inpainting was ideological, to direct the viewer to the conclusion that the arms are those of Hammersley.



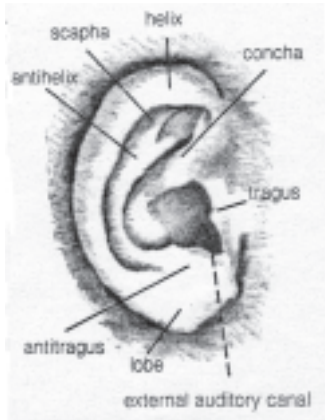


Fig. 6



Fig. 7, Folger x-ray (1948)



Fig. 8, Ashbourne (2001)

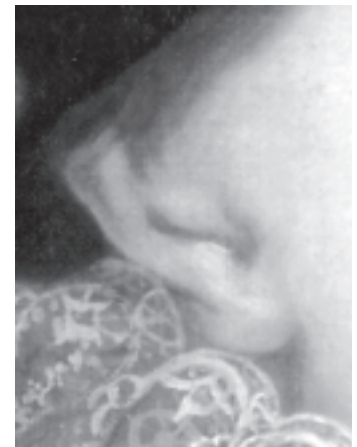


Fig. 9, Welbeck (1575)

Fig. 7 shows the ear as it appeared in the 1948 Folger x-ray, Fig. 8 is the restored ear as it now appears on the painting, and Fig. 9 is the ear from the 1575 Welbeck portrait of Oxford. Fig. 6 is provided to identify the anatomy of the ear for reference. It is readily apparent that the restored ear (Fig. 8) is very different from the ear revealed on the x-ray (Fig. 7, author's drawing). Two key points of similarity between the Welbeck ear (Fig. 9) and the x-ray ear (Fig. 7) have been altered: the gap between the tragus and antitragus has been filled in (see Fig. 6, ear anatomy), and the extended open vertical structure of the upper ear has also been filled in. The restored ear (Fig. 8) thus presents the viewer with a small half-moon shaped structure that is completely at odds with the x-ray ear. (Figures 7-8 by permission, Folger Shakespeare Library. Figure 9 by permission, National Portrait Gallery, London).

Ashbourne (continued from page 11)

### The Altered Ear

#### Stage 6. Incorporating “Elements of Hamersley”—Alterations in 1988-89”

The sixth stage of alterations occurred during the completion of the restoration under the direction of William Pressly, who, together with Folger director Werner Gundersheimer, controlled the final outcome of the 1988-89 restoration work of Arthur Page. In a 1988 memo Pressly recommended to Gundersheimer that “elements of Hamersley” be incorporated into the design of the painting.<sup>11</sup>

The major areas of alteration were to the hairline, the ear, the inscription, and the shield, including the removal of the gold streaks in the beak area on two of the three heads, along with other inpainting covering some of the changes that had been made to the coat of arms before Michaels—all to accentuate “elements of Hamersley.”

#### The Uncovered Ear and the Michaels-Hardison struggle over the forehead

In addition to the alterations in the coat of arms (see the separate sidebar on this history, pages 12-13), there are two other key areas in Michaels's restoration that deserve our close attention. In both cases we find evidence of changes that again appear to be more ideological than aesthetic, with an eye to denying the original sitter was Oxford and attempting to prove that it was instead Hamersley. First we will look at the right ear, which Michaels uncovered with the Folger's approval, and then at the overpainted hair on the head, which he wanted to uncover—and which he likely did uncover in opposition to the Folger's wishes.

We say here “likely did uncover” because there is contradictory evidence (in both the Ashbourne files and in the recollections of Dr. Gordon Cyr) about what Michaels said he did regarding the hairline and what the existing files and photos document that he did.

Like fingerprints, ears are individually distinct. Aware of the importance of the ear, Pressly quotes Barrell's observation that “the large ear with wide anterior opening” in the Ashbourne matched Oxford's long, open ear.<sup>16</sup> The 1948 Folger x-ray of the head also exposed an ear with a low tragus and the area above it open up to the concha, forming a “wide anterior opening” exactly like the ear in the Welbeck portrait of de Vere. The x-rays also reveal a dark area showing the indent in the lobe close below the low tragus, which is identical to that in the ear in the Welbeck (see Fig. 7, author's drawing of the ear whose outline was traced directly from the Folger x-ray). In fact, the ear revealed in the Folger x-ray (minus the visible changes made in the second stage of alterations into “Shakespeare”) is a remarkable match to the Welbeck ear (Fig. 9).

In his 1993 article in the *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Pressly referred to the 1948 Folger x-rays to make the false claim that the “CK” monogram was not visible, but he mentioned none of the other Folger x-rays of the Ashbourne showing the hairline, nose, ear, etc.—all of which corroborate Barrell. In addition to omitting evidence in the Folger's possession, Pressly impugned Barrell's evidence and integrity, and what he asserts are Barrell's interpretations.

Pressly referred in a footnote to the May 1940 *Scientific American* editorial follow-up article on Barrell's investigation, which included two photos of Barrell's x-ray of the head that were not in the original January 1940 article—both showing the ear. One is a partial photo of the head showing all but the top of the ear, the other is a close-up photo of the ear taken from the first photo. The ear from the Barrell x-ray photo is identical to the ear on the Folger x-ray of the head (Fig. 7, drawing). The full ear is visible in the Folger x-ray, in slightly more detail than can be seen in the *Scientific American* photo. It is interesting to note that the editors of *Scientific American* noted the remarkable likeness of this ear with its “wide anterior opening” to Oxford's ear (Fig. 9, detail from the Welbeck).



We should expect to see this same ear, with its distinctive low tragus and long unenclosed opening that is in both sets of x-rays, even if the overpainted lobe is not uncovered. But, incredibly, that is not what is now on the painting. The ear has been altered to be unrecognizable as the ear of the original sitter as shown in the x-rays. The original low tragus has been painted over, and a new tragus imposed above to form a small and enclosed, roundly curved opening to the ear. Where did this ear come from?

Both Pressly and the Folger files note that Michaels fully uncovered the ear. In the change to Shake-speare (stage two), only the altered lobe was visible after the rest of the ear had been painted over with hair. As most of the ear was not tampered with at this stage, we should expect to see this shape (confirmed by x-rays) in the uncovered ear in Michaels's files. But, significantly, there are no pictures of the uncovered ear in the Michaels files on the Folger Ashbourne microfilm.<sup>17</sup>

Pictures of the ear, either with a partially covered tragus area or fully exposed, show up in the Page file photos in 1988-89. The fully exposed ear in the Page files resembles the altered ear on the portrait now with its higher tragus and small, rounded enclosed opening.

What happened to the ear after Michaels uncovered it? Why does it no longer reflect the x-ray evidence of what the original ear looked like? Pressly may help provide some answers to these questions.

In his article Pressly commented that Barrell, supported by the *Scientific American* editors, maintained that "the shape of the head [shown in the x-rays]... and even 'the large ear with the wide anterior opening'" were all characteristic of Oxford.<sup>18</sup> Pressly then diverted attention from this important piece of evidence. First, after omitting the Folger x-ray evidence that confirms Barrell, he tried to undermine the x-ray evidence itself by alluding to the "indistinct details revealed by the x-rays" (referring to Barrell's x-rays—which show clearly in the photos) that "were made to conform to the Oxford iconography."<sup>19</sup> The implication is that Oxford was read into the x-ray evidence—not that the evidence itself (including the Folger's own x-rays) supported the Oxford attribution. Contrary to Pressly's assertions, the 1948 Folger x-ray of the head area showing the nose, the hairline and the ear fully support the Barrell x-ray evidence and they are clear and distinct. Detailed drawings and photos can be made from the Folger x-ray of the head as can be seen in the author's drawings in Fig. 7 (page 14), Fig. 10 (page 16), and Fig. 11 (page 19). The Folger has refused permission to photograph the x-rays, though they are lent out to scholars.

Ignoring the x-ray evidence, Pressly concentrated on attacking Barrell. He called Barrell's study "pseudo-scientific" and criticized his choice of publication, asserting that because the *Scientific American* has nothing to do with art, neither it nor Barrell was qualified to say anything about an art object. Barrell, a photographic expert, writer and picture director for Western Electric for fifteen years, was in fact highly qualified to oversee the nationally renowned experts in x-ray and infrared photography who undertook the examination of the portrait. This is a surprising attack from an art historian who should understand the importance of scientific investigations of paintings that are routinely employed by all art museums.

The editors of the May 1940 *Scientific American* follow-up article anticipated that kind of attack. They observed that the idea

that Oxford was the real Shake-speare was not a "crank" view (as Pressly deliberately quoted from a Stratfordian partisan), but a view that had been advocated by many respected scholars even then.<sup>20</sup>

Noting the many volumes of research into Oxford's long-hidden career as a poet and dramatist since his "discovery" in 1920, the editors continued, "These facts are mentioned to make clear the point that, while the *Scientific American* is not a literary or historical magazine, Mr. Barrell has substantial corroborative backing for the conclusions that he drew from his x-ray and infrared dissections and discussions of the ancient Shakespeare portraits."<sup>21</sup>

Pressly further attacked Barrell for being "extremely literal"<sup>22</sup> in using the x-ray evidence to draw conclusions about the ear and forehead. Pressly exhibits his own "objectivity" by relying on unnamed art historians and an obscure 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher and medical man, Giovanni Morelli, who uttered the vacuous statements that "portraits are seldom completely accurate images" and "hands or ears function as a signature of the artist."<sup>23</sup>

Pressly latched on to this latter notion about ears, but cited no examples of painters using "signature ears" in any period, let alone the Elizabethan or Jacobean period. In the case of Ketel, during his lifetime his works were considered "good likenesses."<sup>24</sup> Karen Hearn has described the effect of his portrait of Robert Smythe (a newly attributed Ketel) as "one of vivid realism when compared to the shadowless icons of contemporary painters in England."<sup>25</sup> In all his portraits where ears show (Wackendorff, 1574, Frobisher, 1577, Pead, 1578, Smythe, 1579-80), Ketel has painted them very distinctly and individually.

Elsewhere, Pressly virtually admitted that the ear as it now appears on the painting has been altered from its appearance in both the Barrell and Folger x-rays. In his 1988 memo to Gundersheimer, he wrote, "Whatever Arthur Page does to the ear, the inscription, and the coat of arms can always be changed in the future."<sup>26</sup>

### The Struggle over the Forehead

We turn now to another piece of evidence that does not fit Hamersley but is a perfect fit for Oxford—the shape of the forehead.

The struggle in 1979 between Michaels and the Folger about uncovering the hair that had been painted over above the forehead was primarily about the shape of the forehead. Barrell had noted that his x-rays showed a full head of hair above a high, rounded forehead. In the Folger files David Piper, then of the National Portrait Gallery, London, is reported as stating from his examination of the Folger x-rays that there are "alterations to the head, old hair line is visible (lower), right ear visible, ruff altered."<sup>27</sup> (The existence of an original hairline and changes to the ruff are things the Folger has denied.) Michaels repeatedly said he wanted to uncover the forehead area, and yet the Folger insisted that all the hair had been scraped away and nothing but the overpaint was left. Pressly repeated the Folger claim in his 1988 memo to Gundersheimer and in his 1993 article. Why did they insist that there was no hair under the overpainting and no hairline visible, when even a glance at their own x-rays shows the hair and hairline so clearly and unmistakably?

(Continued on page 16)

*Ashbourne (continued from page 15)*

To answer that question, we must consider the threat of the Oxford identification in the hair and hairline and the concomitant lack of resemblance of the hairline to Hamersley. Because of the Folger's opposition to uncovering the hair above the forehead, a battle developed between the restorer and the Folger director about the restoration, with Michaels insisting on a full restoration of the head area and the Folger forbidding him to uncover the head area. Things had reached an impasse by 1981.

In January Michaels wrote to the Folger, "Since July 1980 I have heard no further word from you regarding further conservation treatment on the 'Ashbourne'... The conservation treatment remaining to be done includes *removal of the remaining overpaint in the area of the forehead* and background adjacent... I think it is high time to make a decision about the Ashbourne picture."<sup>28</sup> (Emphasis added)

The Folger responded by holding a meeting on January 16, 1981, to decide how to instruct Michaels. Those present, including "L. Lievsay, S[amuel] Schoenbaum, F. Mowery, A. Skiff, J. Miller and Ly [Laetitia Yeandle]," agreed, according to Skiff's handwritten notes, to ask Michaels, "(1) To *finish removing 'overpainting' in areas of head*, 2) In paint flawed areas just where necessary to enhance overall effect. This to include arms but not to add anything that cannot be gathered (deduced) from the painting itself, 3) to leave '2' changed to '1' as is."<sup>29</sup> (Emphasis added)

Within ten days, however, someone had decided to change that approach. On January 26, 1981, Skiff was given instructions to relay to Michaels. Her handwritten note states, "Tell Peter Michaels we want to: remove some of the 'halo varnish'—Not remove forehead paint." This is in direct opposition to the committee's earlier recommendation.<sup>30</sup> The committee didn't say to simply remove the varnish, it said to "finish removing the 'overpainting' in areas of [the] head"—which meant uncovering the painted-over hair. But those in charge did not want the hair or hairline uncovered.

It appears, however, that at some point Michaels did remove the overpaint covering the hair above the forehead. There are two sources of evidence for this, former Shakespeare Oxford Society Executive Vice-President Gordon Cyr and photos in the Page restoration file. In a 1997 letter to the *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter* Cyr stated that, "Although Michaels told me that there were several layers of over-painting, the only layers his cleaning took off were those retouches hiding the identification of the sitter: overpainting of the coat of arms, the date, and the fuller head of hair."<sup>31</sup> We should note here that there are no photos showing the hair uncovered in the Michaels file (or in the Folger's cold storage files).

The 1988-89 Page file photos show a huge white area (actually tissue paper) covering much of the head except the ear and a large area around the head, but there are no photos of the fully uncovered hair. It appears from gaps in the numbering sequence that some photos are missing at this crucial point. However, several significant photos (e.g., #C23, #C25, etc.) show the hairline above the right temple with the same rounded shape as in the Folger x-rays. This exposure of the hairline is consistent with Cyr's statements about Michaels having uncovered the "fuller head of hair." The fact that the uncovered right hairline area was mostly painted over again leads to an inference that the rest of the uncovered hair was also

painted over after Michaels's death.

Further evidence that the hairline was uncovered and painted over again is the fact that the shape of the head is now different from the pre-1979 head shape. The over-painted head area is now more rounded, the likely result of the difficulty of restoring the shape of the head after painting over the hair.

The x-rays show the head of hair and a well defined hairline—a high, rounded forehead with hair that curves down very slightly onto the middle of the forehead and a high, rounded area visible above the right temple that would also be visible above the left temple if the sitter were facing the viewer head on (see Fig. 10, drawing of x-ray). The high rounding of the left forehead area in the x-ray is exactly the same shape as that in the Welbeck portrait. A hat drawn over the x-ray head in the same position as the hat in the Welbeck shows an identical forehead outline.

As the portrait now appears, the distinct dark shadow of a hairline has been added to the overpainted area above the forehead, a shadow which wasn't there in the stage two alterations into Shakespeare. One wonders how this hairline was conceived, as the Folger has maintained that there was no hair under the painted-over forehead. But a close look at the 1716 Hamersley portrait suggests an answer. The shadowed-in hairline is lower and more squared and resembles Hamersley's hairline, a clear example of the "elements of Hamersley" that Pressly advised be added to the painting.

What does Pressly say about this forehead? Omitting the Folger x-ray evidence and Folger overpainting of the forehead in his article, he asserts that, "We have also allowed the expansive original forehead to remain with the original hairline still faintly perceptible beneath."<sup>32</sup>



Fig. 10

*The author's own drawing from the 1948 x-ray gives an idea of how the remaining evidence of the original hair and hairline underneath the over-painted forehead might have looked if the restoration project had proceeded with attempting to restore the painting to its original appearance.*

### Michaels's death

The last document in the Michaels file is an undated note, apparently written after the January 26, 1981, memo relaying the revised Folger instructions to Michaels that had countermanded the committee decision to uncover the overpainting in the head area. It says simply, "Peter Michaels—will do what we want."<sup>33</sup> The file on Peter Michaels' restoration work ends here.

After Michaels's death in January 1982 the painting was stored for the Folger by his friend and fellow restorer Geoffrey Lemmer, senior conservationist for the Baltimore Museum of Art. Lemmer offered to finish the restoration (Michaels had been in the process of rebacking the painting when he died), but the Folger declined his offer for unstated reasons. Instead, the Folger let the portrait sit until June 1984, when they then took it back. There it sat open and unfinished for another four years until July 1988, when the restoration was taken up again. In the meantime Hardison left the Folger, and in 1984 Werner Gundersheimer became director. It was apparently during this time of limbo (stage five) that more alterations were made.

### Pressly's Options

The Ashbourne sat open and unbacked for six years, until the Folger finally agreed upon a plan, formulated by art history professor William Pressly. It appeared to provide a rationale for not performing a normal professional restoration of the painting, as well as for incorporating "proofs" of Hamersley into the painting.

Apparently having learned its lesson from Michaels's resistance to what he termed their unethical demands, the Folger this time laid down strict guidelines for the completion of the restoration before the restorer even made an examination report on the painting. Here is where Pressly enters this story.

Professor Pressly's exact relationship to the Folger or to Director Gundersheimer is not clear since the Folger has informed the author he was never hired by the Folger or on staff. But, in addition to writing the 1993 *Shakespeare Quarterly* article promoting Hamersley as the Ashbourne sitter, Pressly was given the plum of cataloguing all the paintings at the Folger in a book published by Yale University Press in 1993 (*A Catalogue of Paintings in the Folger Shakespeare Library: As Imagination Bodies Forth*). Whatever his connection to the Folger, Pressly was a key player in the sixth stage of alterations to the portrait. His story begins with a memo he wrote to Folger Director Gundersheimer about the restoration "choices" for the Ashbourne.

In his June 28, 1988, memo, Pressly advanced an unusual plan for the "restoration" of the Ashbourne, one that fit perfectly with the Folger's own plans for the painting.

Blending his concept of the portrait's "final aesthetic appearance" with a concept that involved retaining only selected elements of what he determined were aspects of "Shakespeare," Pressly offered Gundersheimer a choice of only two "possible" options for handling the restoration, neither of which was a full open and documented restoration.

Before offering the choices, Pressly reiterated the Folger position about there being no hair beneath the overpainted forehead, stating, "In the important feature of the forehead, the head should remain as a portrait of Shakespeare. Whoever transformed Hamersley into Shakespeare scraped out Hamersley's original hairline before extending the forehead upward...The transformation of Hamersley into Shakespeare, for better or for worse is a permanent one."<sup>34</sup>

Pressly's conception of the "Shakespeare" aspects of the portrait is so inconsistent as to be illogical. For instance, he stated that, "In the case of the ear Michaels has already removed the overpaint. I see no point in putting in the lower hairline a second time."<sup>35</sup> Yet

we have seen that the area exposed above the right temple in the Page photos is mostly covered over again on the painting now. And we have reason to believe that more of the hairline uncovered by Michaels was covered over again. But Pressly mentioned none of this.

Pressly seemed quite aware of what the Folger wanted done, telling Gundersheimer that, "There are two possible ways to proceed from this point: one could either return the canvas to how it appeared from 1847 to 1979 when it was solely a portrait of Shakespeare or one could incorporate elements of Hamersley into the design."<sup>36</sup> (Emphasis added).

That statement incorporated two unproved assumptions upon which Pressly was advising the Folger to alter this painting. The first is the assumption that Clement Kingston changed the painting into Shakespeare in 1847, against which there is much evidence, including Kingston's own contradictory statements and eyewitness accounts of students at the school (I will delve into these issues in the future when I take up the provenance of the painting). The second and more important assumption is that this is a portrait of Hugh Hamersley—a contention that the Folger did not publish officially until five years later in 1993 (although, through the Shakespeare Oxford Society, the Folger had announced the Hamersley identification in 1979). We have shown this to be false through costume dating, Hamersley's appearance, and the coat of arms, the latter of which was the Folger's sole means of linking the painting to Hamersley.

Pressly continued, "I would recommend the second option, retaining those elements that have been uncovered that point to Sir Hugh."<sup>37</sup> (Emphasis added). Here is the clear statement of purpose—that the "restoration" is about "proving" Hamersley is the sitter (thus disproving Oxford). This is the thread that runs throughout our examination of the Folger's treatment of the portrait, from the attempt to remove the "CK" monogram through Pressly's "options" for "restoring" the Ashbourne.

In Pressly's advice about how to deal with the coat of arms we can see the new tack the Folger is taking. Instead of covering over the entire coat of arms as Hardison had originally wanted, the new plan is to selectively cover over the arms, the Folger's supposed best and only evidence for Hamersley as the sitter.

Pressly continued, "One could leave this area [coat of arms] as it now appears. This would give the viewer *the unaltered evidence* as to why the original sitter has been identified as Sir Hugh Hamersley. Unfortunately, though, such a solution would ignore the painting as a work of art, turning it into only a historical document."<sup>38</sup> (Emphasis added). Yet the coat of arms now on the

(Continued on page 18)

*"...one could either  
return the canvas to ...  
when it was solely a  
portrait of Shakespeare  
or one could  
incorporate elements  
of Hamersley into  
the design."*

(William Pressly, 1988)



*Ashbourne (continued from page 17)*

painting is still incomplete, but important evidence showing alterations and pointing against Hamersley have been removed—apparently because they do not have “aesthetic” value.

Pressly went on, “At the opposite extreme one could inpaint the coat of arms as a seamless whole [how one could do this he does not explain]. This insures that the picture is entirely unified and is the normal procedure. Yet it leaves the library open to the accusation that it has *recast the evidence to fit what it thought it saw in the original paint and not necessarily what was actually there.*”<sup>39</sup> (Emphasis added).

*“The restoration issues*

*surrounding the*

*Ashbourne are further*

*exacerbated by the fact*

*that one party to the*

*dispute about the*

*sitter has complete*

*control of the painting.”*

Now Pressly comes to the new plan: “A compromise solution might be best. Strengthen only what is clearly visible and extend the background color into other areas. This leaves intact the evidence and, unlike the first solution [leaving the uncovered coat of arms for all to see everything that is there] insures that the picture remains an aesthetic whole.”<sup>40</sup>

Based on our examination of the coat of arms, this “strengthening of what is clearly visible” involved the enhancing of alterations to the arms such as the circles for the cross crosslet, or covering areas such as the scraping that shows the outline of a larger shield in order to make the smaller shield seem original—all done of course for “aesthetic purposes.” We have also seen, and will explore later in our series, how everything on the uncovered arms (including all of the scraped away areas visible on Michaels’s photos) are important pieces of evidence in determining what was originally on the coat of arms.

In contrast to Pressly’s unorthodox approach is the advice to the Folger of David Piper, then of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England, who advocated the normal professional view of painting restoration in the art world. In a July 19, 1979 letter Piper advised that, “...there is no purpose whatever in trying to put back the removed re-paint so that the coat of arms is once again obscure.” He went on to state that it was desirable to clean the entire figure “...in order to bring back the painting as near as possible to its original condition, unless the advice of your restorer indicates otherwise.”<sup>41</sup>

### Pressly/Page restoration

On July 15, 1988, Pressly sent a memo to Folger conservationist Frank Mowery and Arthur Page, who would be hired to finish the restoration, but had not yet examined the painting. Pressly informed them that, “Dr. Gundersheimer felt it would be best to

follow the second option [“incorporating” elements of Hamersley] in the attached copy of the memorandum of June 28 ... In the case of the date [1611 in the inscription] we decided to have both years appear ... the ‘2’ of the 1612 should be brought out but not to the point that it will compete on equal terms with the ‘1.’”<sup>42</sup>

The instruction about the numerals was to tone down the obvious scraping of a huge “2” shape near the “1” that showed up in Michaels’s file photos and is not on the x-rays. The “2” seems to be an enhancement of a loop that looks like a “2,” but the Michaels photo shows a similar loop nearby. The Barrell x-rays show a broken line that could be interpreted as the bottom “foot” of a “2” but it is unclear. The Barrell x-rays show a dark area on top and to the right of the “1” so it appears something was done in this area and there may have been a “2” originally. But because the entire inscription is not the original inscription anyway (having been added during stage two), and because the painting is dated to c. 1579 by the costume and the “CK” monogram, the Folger’s explanation for the rubbed out “2” as fitting Hamersley’s age must be incorrect. There are other plausible explanations for a possible mistaken “2” here which we will explore later in the series.

These instructions concerning the new restoration were put in place by Pressly and Gundersheimer before Page did his initial examination of the painting on July 20, 1988. Page’s examination report reflected these instructions in all key areas.

At the start of his June 28 memo to Gundersheimer, Pressly commented that Page wanted to take the painting to his studio, “so that he can make recommendations as to whether one should begin where Peter Michaels left off or *redo some of Michaels’ work if it proves unsatisfactory.*”<sup>43</sup> (Emphasis added).

Michaels had had a problem with backing the painting onto a honeycomb panel and had taken it off the stretcher in November 1981 to find another method of backing. The painting was still in this state when he died less than two months later. Confusion about whether Michaels fully restored the painting itself may result from the use of the term restoration to include the rebacking rather than the completion of the painting restoration itself.

At the beginning of his examination report to the Folger Page says the painting was “left open in mid-restoration.” Yet at the end of this report he observed that “Michaels varnish layer was probably removed with the excess wax resin” at the time Michaels was attempting to reback. Page notes that the “painting is presently dull overall except for the inpainted areas which are very glossy.”<sup>43A</sup> This clearly implies the painting restoration itself was completed but it was in “mid-restoration” because it was “open,” i.e., it had not been rebacked. This is further verified in a telephone conversation between Arthur Page and *Shakespeare Matters* editor William Boyle on June 20, 2002, during which Page stated that the painting was “fully restored” when he got it.

After commenting negatively on Michaels’s work and the state of the painting in his report, Page stated, “In summation—it is our recommendation that the existing Michaels restoration be removed entirely and the painting properly cleaned, lined and inpainted with known materials in a much more careful manner.”<sup>44</sup>

Why did Michaels’s work need to be redone entirely? In this regard two significant comments in the examination report are worth mentioning. Apparently understanding from Pressly the Folger’s interest in the all-important head area, Page noted that “any cleaning of the face and hair will be done in close co-

By permission, Folger Shakespeare Library



Fig. 11, 1948 Folger x-ray

Courtesy, National Portrait Gallery, London



Fig. 12, Welbeck (1575)

By permission, Folger Shakespeare Library



Fig. 13, Ashbourne (1961)

By permission, Folger Shakespeare Library



Fig. 14, Ashbourne (2001)

Another interesting point of comparison between various states of the portrait involves the nose. As can be seen in Fig. 11 (the author's drawing of the nose from the 1948 x-ray), the original nose (including the nostril) was changed (i.e. overpainted) in the change of the portrait into Shakespeare (Fig. 13, from a 1961 Folger print) and that change was more or less retained in the final restoration (Fig. 14). However, a comparison of the original nose as revealed in the x-rays shows a remarkable similarity to Oxford's nose in the 1575 Welbeck portrait (Fig. 12). In particular, note how the columella (see Fig. 15, nose anatomy) in the Welbeck is visible and its attachment to the lip can be seen. In both Figs. 13 and 14 the tip of the nose is rounded and extends downward, hiding the columella. However, a distinct feature of the original nose revealed in the Folger x-rays (Fig. 11) is the visible columella extending back to the lip. A decision that could have been made in the final restoration might have been to restore the nose to its original state, as revealed in the Folger's own x-rays.

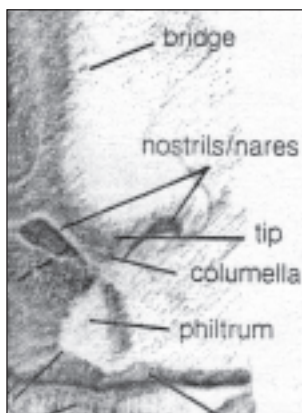


Fig. 15

ordination with the curator and/or Director of the Folger." He added, "On the three ambiguous elements of the uncovered right proper ear, the partially scraped off coat of arms and the dual dates, we will follow the July 15, 1988 Memo of Dr. Bill Pressly. The ear will remain uncovered. The coat of arms will only be strengthened where the design is unambiguous and the rest will be filled in with background color. The "2" will be slightly reinforced, but not up to the level of the '1'."<sup>45</sup>

What does the painting now look like after this 1988-89 restoration, directed by Pressly under the auspices of Folger Director Gundersheimer? It is a huge disappointment to anyone who has seen the Miller or Michaels's photos of the portrait before the 1979 restoration.

It appears that some original paint of the face has been painted over. The forehead has been redone and a dark shadow of the Hamersley hairline added. The nose had been narrowed, shortened and rounded, and the nostril widened in the stage two change to Shakespeare, but this overpaint was partially uncovered by Finlayson's 1932 cleaning, revealing a nose similar to the x-ray nose and the Welbeck Oxford nose. Instead of removing the rest of the overpaint to fully uncover the original nose shown in the x-rays, the 1932 cleaning has been reversed. The tip of the nose has again been rounded and narrowed and the nostril shape changed. The uncovered ear has been enormously altered so as to be unrecognizable as the ear documented in both sets of x-rays. The reddish-auburn tones that 1932 cleaning had revealed in the hair (similar in color to the Welbeck portrait) have now been overpainted almost black to fit Hamersley's dark hair, making an absurd contrast with

the reddish-gold beard. The inscription has a greatly reduced "2" now. The ruff is reduced on the left side and muddled. The left wrist ruff is invisible now and replaced with a blob. The right wrist ruff has been darkened more than in the 1910 photograph that accompanied Spielmann's article in *Connoisseur*. Heavy overpainting (described as "inpainting") has changed the coat of arms drastically from Michaels's photos of the uncovered arms. However, as Pressly described it in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, "The coat of arms appears as Michaels left it, with some inpainting of the ground in a neutral tone to bring this area into harmony with the rest of the composition."<sup>46</sup>

A magnificent portrait by a master portrait painter, which has come down to us as the largest and most beautiful of all the Shakespeare paintings, has not been uncovered and restored to its original paint, but instead has been overpainted into a new Folger hybrid of Shakespeare/Hamersley.

### Schoenbaum Rejects Hamersley

Not even Samuel Schoenbaum would bite on the Hamersley attribution, although the Folger hoped he would put in a word for Hamersley as the Ashbourne sitter in the portrait section of his upcoming book, *Shakespeare's Lives*. Perhaps Schoenbaum, having been on the 1981 committee that agreed to instruct Michaels to do a full restoration of the head area (later countermanded by the Folger), decided that the Hamersley attribution was too shaky. In the 1991 edition of *Shakespeare's Lives* (reprinted in 1993) Schoenbaum remarked, "It is a pity that the sitter—a physician? A philosopher? Shakespeare? cannot be traced."<sup>47</sup> Later he states—incorrectly, and with the usual Stratfordian sarcasm—that the portrait cannot be of Oxford because experts have dated the costume to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. In part II we proved from costume evidence that the painting was from the late 1570s. With

(Continued on page 20)

*Ashbourne* (continued from page 19)

Schoenbaum's bailout it was left to Pressly to push Hamersley in 1993 in the Folger's own publication, the *Shakespeare Quarterly*.

### Pressly's Re-dating of the 1716 Hamersley Portrait

Before we leave Pressly's involvement in the Ashbourne restoration it will be instructive to take up one more point in his 1993 article: his unsubstantiated dating to circa 1627 of the 1716 Hamersley full-length portrait (owned by the Haberdashers' Guild). Under a dark reproduction of this portrait, showing Hamersley wearing his Alderman robes and Jewell of office of Lord Mayor of London, with the "1716" date faintly visible, the Pressly caption reads, "Anonymous. Sir Hugh Hamersley...c. 1627. The Haberdashers Company, London."<sup>48</sup>

On what basis has Pressly changed the date of the Hamersley portrait? In the Folger Ashbourne file is a two-page history from The Reynolds Gallery of England, owner of the 1592 head and shoulders portrait of Hamersley, which they note is the only contemporary portrait of Hamersley. They also note that the full-length Haberdasher's Hall portrait of Hamersley was "... presented to the Company by his great-grandson, Sir Harcourt Masters, in 1716. The head and shoulders are identical with this earlier [1592] portrait and must be a copy, with trunk, legs and arms added in a baroque posture which smacks of an artist of around 1716."<sup>49</sup>

This information causes a problem in identifying the Ashbourne sitter as Hamersley. If the only contemporary portrait of Hamersley was a 1592 head and shoulders painting, how could there be the nearly full-length Ashbourne portrait of him in 1611-12 when he still had many years to live? And if the Ashbourne really was of Hamersley, why didn't the great-grandson give it the Haberdashers' Guild or have a copy made for the Guild instead of having an artist use the 1592 head and shoulders that needed a body added to it? Perceiving the problem, Pressly solved it by denying the Reynolds Gallery evidence without having seen the 1592 painting. Then he proceeded to use instead the 1627 date when Hamersley became Lord Mayor of London, thus completely misrepresenting the fact that this 1716 portrait was based on a 1592 portrait, and neither the date of the painting itself nor the age and physical appearance of the sitter has anything to do with 1627.

In a footnote Pressly stated,<sup>50</sup> "This [Hamersley] exists in at least two other versions that portray only the sitter's head and shoulders." Actually, one is an engraving of the original head and shoulders portrait. He then mentioned what he calls the Reynolds Gallery's 1976 "promotional literature" on the head and shoulders portrait stating it is dated 1592, but without mentioning that this is the only contemporary portrait of Hamersley. The Gallery notes that the red Alderman's robes and the Mayoral pendant and chain were later additions to the 1592 head and shoulders, as Hamersley had neither of these honors when the portrait was painted. Pressly wrote that the Reynolds Gallery "...goes on to argue that the Haberdashers' portrait is an eighteenth century enlargement on this earlier image." He then makes the astonishing statement that, "Although I have not seen the Reynolds Gallery picture, I suspect its date is inaccurate (Hamersley was surely older than twenty-seven at the time the portrait was painted), and it, like the New York version [the engraving], is based on the Haberdashers Portrait."

Pressly has now completely reversed not only the sequence of



Fig. 16

By permission, Folger Shakespeare Library

*The restored Ashbourne which now hangs in the Founders Room is, in fact, nothing more than a hybrid "Shakespeare/Hamersley" which denies any Oxford connection and must be considered a disappointment to anyone who has seen the pre-restoration portrait as reproduced in Miller's 1975 edition of Looney's "Shakespeare" Identified.*

the portraits but the derivation as well. Thus he has "solved" the problem of the 1592 head and shoulders painting being the only contemporary portrait of Hamersley by claiming that it is derived from the 1716 Haberdashers painting. But in order to assert this claim he also had to re-date the 1716 portrait within Hamersley's lifetime. He does this by inserting "c. 1627" into the caption under the painting, the year Hamersley became Lord Mayor of London, providing no evidence for this dating. In 1627, however, Hamersley would have been 62 years old, far too old for this picture.

### Tainted Evidence

The Folger restoration was a restoration in name only. Their position on each step of the restoration is well documented in their own files. We have already noted David Piper's comment that the painting should have been returned "as near as possible to its original condition," which is the standard professional practice. But this is clearly not what happened in the Ashbourne restoration.

As early as July 1979 Douglas Lewis of the National Portrait Gallery advised the Folger to "proceed very carefully in the technical side and have documentation of the restoration. The painting should be considered as an object to be subjected to the most careful of laboratory scrutiny, so that we would have a firm basis for any questions or criticisms about what is being done."<sup>51</sup>



The Folger report on Lewis's comments adds, "He [Lewis] said we should make no announcement of this discovery [of Hamersley] until we could produce about a fifty page article giving exact details on every step of restoration or change. This would require the painting to be in a laboratory for at least a year—and at great expense." Dr. Lewis suggested getting help from Amherst College (which administers the Folger Trust) stating that a number of art museums have labs there and if Amherst took over the painting they could avoid the high cost of a private lab.<sup>52</sup> But losing control of the painting restoration was the last thing the Folger directors wanted, and none of these art experts' advice was followed.

In fact there is no report on the restoration under Michaels other than the one-page interim report. There were files and photos from Michaels's studio noted when the painting was transferred to Lemmer in 1982 and back to the Folger in 1984. But all we have in the Michaels file are letters he sent to the Folger, the examination report, the one-page interim report and the sheet showing hours worked on various stages of the restoration—mostly involving technical work. We also have photos—almost exclusively of the coat of arms, but none of the original uncovered ear, or of the uncovered forehead.

In the Page file there are photos without any comments about what changes have been made and they provide no documentation about what was done to the portrait other than technical work. There is no documentation whatever of the changes done to the portrait. There is the July 20, 1988, examination report, a "Key to Conservation Photodocuments" listing nothing but numbers of the photos (1-32) under headings like "Pre-Treatment," "Partially cleaned," "Before Inpainting," and "Final State," but these do not show the course of changes made or what was done. There is no comment on any of these photos or what they represent, many of which are partial or obscured and some are apparently missing. In addition to these reports there is what is called a two-page "Treatment Record." The first page is numbered 1-17 and is mostly one-sentence snippets of technical work done with nothing about any inpainting (other than a sentence about filling in losses) or, most importantly, any changes to the painting itself. The second page notes the hours for the work. That's all that is available on this drastically changed painting.

The restoration issues surrounding the Ashbourne are further exacerbated by the fact that one party to the dispute about the sitter has complete control of the painting. That situation was dramatically emphasized in a memo following the July 1979 meeting with the Cyrs at the Folger. It states, "Guard our picture and x-rays. No other pictures [or] tests without our permission."<sup>53</sup>

### Conclusion

Through x-rays, the Folger files and photos, and various known states of the Ashbourne painting between 1910 to 1989, we have documented that in four separate periods between 1940 and 1989 the Ashbourne Shakespeare portrait was altered while under the control of the Folger Shakespeare Library. Carried out during at least three different Folger administrations, they were not a one-time effort perpetrated by a maverick Stratfordian. They involved a number of persons over a long period of time.

Stratfordians sometimes argue that it doesn't matter if Oxford is the real sitter, because this does not prove he wrote the Shake-

speare works. If that is so, then why did the Folger go to such lengths to obliterate evidence for Oxford and create evidence for the hitherto unheard of Hamersley? Their actions suggest that they do realize the danger presented by this portrait. A letter intended for Geoffrey Lemmer, with instructions about the portrait after Michaels's death, states that, "...the portrait is an important document in the controversy over the true authorship of Shakespeare's works."<sup>54</sup>

For Oxford, the person for whom overwhelming evidence has accumulated substantiating his authorship of the Shakespeare canon, to be the original sitter in one of the best and most respected "putative" portraits of the Bard is wonderfully corroborative physical evidence. The odds are phenomenally against this being pure chance.<sup>54A</sup>

Thus, there exist strong ideological reasons for the Folger's alterations to the Ashbourne portrait. The main reason was to deny evidence for Oxford and the secondary reason was to provide evidence for Hamersley, no matter how absurd the attribution. The Folger certainly did incorporate "elements of Hamersley" into the painting.

In the 1988 memo sent to Director Gundersheimer Pressly noted that "it is comforting to remember that none of these steps are irrevocable. Anything Arthur Page does as regards the ear, the inscription and the coat of arms can always be changed in the future."<sup>55</sup>

Unfortunately it appears that some of these post-1940 changes are irrevocable, particularly those in the shield area. But hopefully many alterations can be reversed in the future. The Folger owns a great painting of the true Shakespeare—not of Sir Hugh Hamersley. It is the largest, finest and most expressive painting of the poet-playwright by the hand of a master Dutch portrait painter and it is a priceless heritage for future generations.

*The next article in this series will focus on the evidence for Oxford in the portrait, including exciting evidence linking up Edward de Vere's eagle crest and mantling with the painting and additional evidence for the Trentham griffins in the shield. Future articles will explore the fascinating history and provenance of this painting that brought it to the Ashbourne School. We will explore some possible explanations regarding the who, when, and why of the changes that transformed the Ashbourne—and other Oxford portraits—into "Shakespeare." These explanations may help open up a window on the implementation of a phase of the Shakespeare fraud.*

*"...it is comforting to remember that none of these steps are irrevocable. Anything [done] as regards the ear, the inscription and the coat of arms can always be changed in the future."*

*(William Pressly, 1988)*

*(Continued on page 22)*

Ashbourne (continued from page 21)

### References:

- 1 Ashbourne Portrait x-rays, 1948. Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.
- 2 Charles Wisner Barrell, "Identifying 'Shakespeare'" and Editors, "Who Was Shakespeare?" (*Scientific American*, January and May 1940), 4-8 and 43-45, 264 and 299-300.
- 3 Ruth Loyd Miller, "Lord Oxford and the "Shakespeare" Portraits," in *Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere 17th Earl of Oxford*, Vol. II. (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 405-429.
- 4 Ashbourne Portrait Files, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. Michaels File. In his February 1979 Conservation report checking off aspects of the painting from his examination of the painting, Michaels notes under "Original Edges," "None." This means all the edges of the painting were cut at some point, reducing its size.
- 5 The author believes that the coat of arms (which is actually Edward de Vere's eagle crest—which he created and used in place of the boar crest in the frontispiece of two books dedicated to and published by him—above the Trentham shield of his wife's family) was added by Oxford's widow sometime after his death in 1604. The eagle crest will be explored at length in the next article in the series.
- 6 The author's theory, that the Ashbourne was the first of a number of portraits of Oxford changed into Shake-speare and that these changes to the Ashbourne were done in 1612 by Oxford's surviving family, will be explored at length later in the series.
- 7 The significance of this selective tampering will be explored further in this series when we show how de Vere's eagle crest fits over the Trentham family shield in Michaels's photos of the coat of arms. In this configuration of a husband's crest over a wife's father's shield the husband's motto would be used. We will also compare de Vere's eagle crest helmet and mantling with these photos and find a remarkable match.
- 8 Incidentally, Ketel was an innovator and one of the few painters in the late 1570s who used canvas for many of his paintings—especially his larger paintings and portraits. "Ketel played an important part in the development of Dutch portrait painting." (Hearn, p. 105) Hearn also mentions the recently discovered fragment of a very large 1580 oil on canvas painting by Ketel called Allegory (p.110). (Hearn, Karen, Editor, *Dynasties, Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530-1630*, London: Tate Gallery, 1995). Sir Roy Strong displays in his book the existing life-size 1577 Sir Martin Frobisher full-length Ketel oil on canvas that was "one of a [now lost] series of canvases commissioned by the Cathay Company." Sir Roy Strong, *The English Icon, Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraiture*, New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1969, under "Signed and Dated Works," 154.
- 9 The Folger has claimed that Clement Usill Kingston, the schoolmaster and amateur artist at the Ashbourne School who first brought the portrait to the attention of the art world, forged the portrait into Shake-speare, and inexplicably painted what they claim are his CK initials and then covered them up. See part III of this series for evidence that the CK was the monogram of the original artist, Cornelis Ketel. But Kingston used the monogram CUK, as is evidenced in a book of engravings of baptismal fonts in 1844. The Folger file lists the three variations of Kingston's CUK monogram taken from this book. They are found in Paley, F.A., *Illustrations of Baptismal Fonts*, London, 1844. Also they are found in Nagler, G.K., *Die Monogrammisten*, Munchen & Leipzig. We will discuss Kingston's role later in this series (in an article on the Ashbourne's provenance).
- 10 From the x-rays it looks like most of the ears sticking out from the heads were also removed in this scraping. Part of one ear clearly shows on the top right head as well as ghostly remnants of other ears especially on the bottom head—all in the exact spots where the griffins have ears in Barrell's photo of the Trentham monument arms.
- 10A In June 2002 the Folger art curator advised SM editor William Boyle, in response to a question about the heads, that their red appearance could be the result of the red underlayment.
- 11 Ashbourne Files, June 28, 1988 memo Pressly to Gundersheimer.
- 12 To prove that the original shield was larger, one can take a pen and follow the outline of the mantling around the shield in Michaels's photo and compare it with the outline of the shield on the x-rays. These outlines match almost perfectly—proving that the mantling over the larger shield created the shield shape that is on the x-rays, which show a wider shield area extending all the way down to the top of the scroll. In addition, vestiges of orangish lines (left when the gold was scraped away) in Michaels's photos show the original shape of the shield as it extended up and out from the top of the scroll beyond the mantling on either side.
- 13 Ashbourne Files, Michaels Restoration.
- 14 This larger object is confirmed in Michaels's photos by the area scraped away beyond and under the doctored griffin wing, the larger area scraped away on the left side of the crest, and the rounded area just above the wreath that does not fit a griffin. What has been done with inpainting the scroll is most interesting. The scroll is fairly smooth on both sides in Michaels's photos although the doubly tampered right side (where the "MORE" lettering was claimed) is scraped down to a silver-white color and is only faintly bumpy. But the scroll as it now appears on the painting does not have this faint "MORE" lettering on a fairly smooth surface—the scroll on this side has been made more bumpy with inpainting that appears to create what looks like the bumpy letters "O" and "R". The ribbon underneath has been covered over more and darkened and the look of the "CK" gap changed.
- 15 Ashbourne Files. June 28, 1988, Memo from Pressly to Folger Director Werner Gundersheimer.
- 16 Pressly, *Looking Glass*, 60.
- 17 Recently the Folger brought to my attention a few "extra" Michaels photos in its cold storage file that were not on the microfilm I acquired from the Folger. There is an extra "before" photo of a close-up of the face and two extra full figure photos. One of the latter photos has what appears to be different handwriting from all other Michaels photos, noting "after filling" and shows the uncovered ear. The ear appears to be the altered ear in this photo—when it was done is a question since Michaels's work was left open for years. The photo most resembles some photos in the Page file, notably #C23 before inpainting. Michaels cleaned the painting and said he only removed overpaint in those areas that exposed the identity of the sitter. Perhaps this shows the ear was altered also during the six year interim before Page began work on the portrait in 1988-89 although we know from Pressly's comments work was definitely done on the ear in 1988-89.
- 18 Pressly, *Looking Glass*, 60.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 The editors reported that, "Mr. Looney's [pronounced Loney, the "discoverer" of Oxford in 1920] work won the endorsement of such scholars, historians and students of the Elizabethan period, as Dr. Gilbert Slater of Oxford University; Dr. Gerald H. Rendall, former Headmaster of the Charterhouse School; Alan Gordon Smith, author of *William Cecil, the Power Behind Elizabeth*; Sir Geoffrey Callender, historian of the Tudor Navy and knighted for his writings on the Elizabethan Age; Dr. Sigmund Freud...and John Galsworthy, the novelist, who helped distribute the book for Looney." *Scientific American* (May 1940), 264.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Pressly, *Looking Glass*, 61.
- 23 Ibid.

*Sanders portrait (continued from page 1)* hydrocephalic simpleton,” as well as the face of the country-bumpkin grain merchant depicted on the remodeled bust in Stratford’s Holy Trinity Church. Both of these unattractive faces have long been held by Stratfordians to be authentic, notwithstanding that each was created after the death of their Bard.

So it is no wonder that Stratfordians have a powerful initial impulse to leap on the bandwagon and eagerly clutch a new face claimed to be their idol, especially when the small (sixteen and one-half by thirteen inches) portrait displays a handsome visage, intelligent quixotic eyes and an enigmatic Mona Lisa smile.

### The book itself

Stephanie Nolen was educated at the University of King’s College in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and the London School of Economics. She is a respected foreign affairs correspondent for *The Globe and Mail*.

In her 330-page book, Nolen gets into trouble only when she herself becomes too Stratfordian and when she interrupts her interesting narrative with eight often-intrusive chapters by her experts. Her Stratfordian professors are a distinguished group, including Jonathan Bate of the University of Liverpool, Tarnya Cooper of University College, London, Marjorie Garber of Harvard, Andrew Gurr of the University of Reading, Alexandra Johnston of the University of Toronto, Robert Tittler of Montreal’s Concordia University, and Stanley Wells, formerly of University Col-

lege, London, and now Chairman of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. All add luster and spice, liberally sprinkled with intriguing pearls, but not infrequently with material of dubious relevance to the tale at hand.

Only a few stoop to the usual ill-conceived dogmatic Stratfordian mythology, e.g., Jonathan Bate, who states that he will “here and now put to rest for good the image of Shakespeare as an ill-educated

matter is that Shakespeare (of Stratford) did write the plays.”<sup>4</sup> Bate then confidently predicts that Alan Nelson’s forthcoming biography of “the wretched Earl” will cause “the case for Oxford as Shakespeare to die in the early twenty-first century.”<sup>5</sup>

Did someone say, “Piffle!”? The words of Hamlet come to mind: “There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”<sup>6</sup>

### Initial problems with the Sanders family legend

The Sanders family tradition holds that their direct ancestor, John Sanders, born in 1576 in Worcester, England, moved to London as an actor and joined “William Shakespeare’s acting company,” the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. He also “dabbled” in oil painting and in 1603 painted the portrait of his friend and colleague, William Shakspeare. For reasons unknown, he kept the painting. According to family lore, the portrait has been passed down through at least twelve generations in the family, one branch of whom migrated to Canada in the early 1900s along with the painting. Each of the Canadian generations has been told that the painting—sometimes hanging from a wall, sometimes wrapped and stored—is an original of the great playwright. The portrait has been treasured as a valuable family heirloom for 400 years.

In 1908 the painting was analyzed by Marion Henry Spielmann, the world-renowned art critic who had published a detailed analysis of *Portraits of Shake-*

(Continued on page 24)

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**“... it is no wonder that**

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**eagerly clutch a new face**

**... to be their idol ...”**

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country bumpkin.”<sup>3</sup> He overstates that “We’ll never find an alternative candidate for the authorship, since the plain fact of the

24 Karen Hearn, *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530-1630* (London: Tate Gallery, 1995), “Elizabethan Painters and Patrons,” 109.

25 Ibid. 109.

26 Ashbourne Files, Pressly memo, June 28, 1988.

27 Ashbourne Files, Coat of Arms file.

28 Ashbourne Files, Michaels file.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Cyr, Letter to the Editor, (*Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*, Fall 1997), 24-26.

32 Pressly, *Looking Glass*, 69.

33 Ashbourne Files, Michaels Restoration.

34 Ashbourne Files, Pressly memo, June 28, 1988.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ashbourne Files, Restoration Issues.

42 Ashbourne Files, Pressly memo, July 15, 1988 (to Mowery and Page with attached June 28 memo).

43 Ashbourne Files, Pressly memo, June 28, 1988.

43A Ashbourne Files, Page Restoration.

44 Ashbourne Files, Page Restoration.

45 Ashbourne Files, Page Restoration.

46 Pressly, *Looking Glass*, 72.

47 S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare’s Lives* (Oxford, New York: Oxford U. Press, 1991, 1993), 336.

48 Pressly, *Looking Glass*, 67.

49 Reynolds Art Gallery, as cited in:

Ashbourne Files, Hamersley Portraits.

50 Pressly, *Looking Glass*, 66.

51 Ashbourne Files, Restoration Issues.

52 Ibid.

53 Ashbourne Files, Michaels Restoration.

54 Ashbourne Files, Lemmer file.

54A And the evidence is against these portraits of Oxford having been “found” by a number of different people and somehow all changed into “Shake-speare” simply to sell them because of a “demand” for “Shake-speare” pictures. The vast majority of the altered portraits, long considered the finest and most authentic of the “Shake-speare” paintings, are of a nobleman and came down through the nobility, and had nothing to do with the “Shake-speare” trade.

55 Ashbourne Files, Pressly memo, June 28, 1988.



*Sanders portrait (continued from page 23)*  
*speare* in 1907. Spielmann concluded that the portrait was indeed painted in Jacobean times but was later altered and the right side “trimmed” immediately adjacent to the red-painted “1603” in the upper right corner. He described as “not believable” a paper label on the back proclaiming the portrait as Shakspere with his birth and death dates (*vide infra*). He published his opinions in the February 1909 issue of *The Connoisseur*.<sup>7</sup>

The present owner, Lloyd Sullivan of Ottawa, spent ten years and much money subjecting the portrait to all available modern forensic analysis techniques, which he believes have validated his family’s traditional beliefs. He has been honest and open throughout his search for the truth, despite the enormous potential worth of the portrait if it is indeed Willy Shake. Sullivan exhaustively researched his family’s genealogy in England and Canada but was unable to fill a gap between John Sanders in 1605 and the first entry in the Sanders family Bible made in 1790.

As to the portrait’s provenance, there is no mention of it in family records until 1908, when Sullivan’s great-grandfather loaned it to Spielmann for analysis. He told Spielmann that the painting had been in his family for *nearly a century*, implying that it didn’t come into Sanders family possession until the early 1800s. Does that mean, contrary to Sanders family tradition, that the portrait was not in the family for the first 200 years after 1603? Lloyd Sullivan has not been able to discover information which bridges the vital gap in Sanders’s genealogy and the portrait’s provenance.

### The paper label

The paper label on the back of the portrait, now readable only with special enhancement techniques but easily read and recorded by Spielmann in 1909, states:<sup>8</sup>

Shakspere  
 Born April 23 = 1564  
 Died April 23 -- 1616  
 Aged 52  
 This Likeness taken 1603  
 Age at that time 39 ys.

For several reasons, the label immediately raises suspicions:

1. It is a strange label, too complete, too explanatory, protesting too much.<sup>9</sup> The anti-dissimulation hairs on the back of one’s neck transmit a tingling signal of disease.

2. If the label was made by the painter in 1603, how would the labeler have known the date of death? It reminds one of an archaeological potsherd dated 232 BC.

3. As the experts point out, the exact date of Shakspere’s birth is not known, only the

or Jacobean eras.

5. Nolen’s paleography experts conclude that the handwritten script is in a style of the late 1700s, not the early 1600s.

These data suggest that the label was most likely written in the late 1700s. Accelerator mass spectrometry studies on the paper label, made from linen rag, yield a radiocarbon date between 1475 and 1640. Why, then, was 150-year-old paper chosen for the label? Was this an initial effort by the then owners to deceive and, if so, why? Was the painting about to be sold, perhaps to the Sanders family, as an “authentic” portrait of the great playwright?

The date of the late 1700s agrees closely with Lloyd Sullivan’s great-grandfather telling Spielmann in 1908 that the painting had been in the family’s possession for “nearly a century,” i.e., since the early 1800s. Obviously, this contradicts what the Canadian branch of the family has been taught to believe in recent generations, namely that they have owned the painting since 1603.

Nolen’s paleographers appear a bit too cooperative with the central theme of the book when they conclude at the end of their chapter, after providing compelling evidence *against* the label’s authenticity, that “we believe there is nothing in the label that disproves the ascription” of the Sanders portrait as being of Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon.<sup>11</sup>

Nolen accepts their final conclusion and does not seem to recognize the label’s potentially disastrous significance for the Sanders family theory. Several experts, as well as this reviewer, believe the portrait shows a man significantly younger than 39 years, most likely in his 20s—another huge problem for the portrait’s validity as Shakspere.

### Other forensic evidence

Nolen competently guides the reader through the detailed forensic analyses of the portrait, all of which agree that the age of the portrait is quite consistent with the large red date of 1603 in the upper right corner and that it is an original portrait, not a paint-over of a pre-existing painting. Nolen’s descriptions of advanced scientific techniques are clearly explained as the story unfolds and will be discussed more fully in Part II of this article.

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***“As to the portrait’s  
 provenance, there is  
 no mention of it in  
 family records until  
 1908, when Sullivan’s  
 great-grandfather  
 loaned it to Spiel-  
 mann for analysis.”***

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date of his baptism on April 26. The birthdate of April 23 was chosen in the mid-1700s to accord with the feast day of England’s patron saint, St. George, and to coincide with his April 23 death. According to Nolen’s label experts, who cite Samuel Schoenbaum, the April 23 date for Shakspere’s birthday did not become commonly accepted until after the publication of a volume of Shakespeare’s plays by George Steevens *in 1773*.<sup>10</sup> Therefore the label itself cannot have been written until more than 170 years after the painting was done.

4. Several experts express concern that the phrase “this likeness taken” is not consistent with word usage in the Elizabethan

### A clever book technique

Nolen notes that some of her experts equivocate in their impressions of the painting. Others seem biased by the book's title and their own eagerness to extirpate the unpleasant, "authentic" village-idiot faces of the Droeshout engraving and Holy Trinity Church bust. Some experts consider it "a very strong likelihood" that the Sanders portrait is indeed Shakspeare, or "it looks the part" or "it well may be."

In the book's final chapter, Nolen asks each expert to stop waffling and answer definitively the following questions:

1. Do you think the portrait is authentic to 1603?
2. If so, is it a portrait of William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon?
3. Does it really matter and, if so, why?

Of the seven experts, one still equivocates and another says the Sanders family "might just possibly be correct." Nolen, as a self-admitted non-expert, leaves it up to the reader to decide. The other five members of the distinguished panel, however, state strongly that they do NOT believe the portrait is of Shakspeare of Stratford.

This is a rather impressive statistic and one wonders about the appropriateness of the book title, *Shakespeare's Face*.

### Comments on Nolen's book

*Shakespeare's Face* can be ordered for \$34.95 from Amazon.com, including shipping, or from any bookstore. It is recommended because of its competent whodunnit approach, its readability and its instructional content, including seven chapters by Shakespeare experts. The book is particularly relevant because of the many recent Oxfordian articles on the remarkable amount of information which may be gleaned by precise portrait analysis.<sup>12</sup> De Vereans may easily overlook the usual Stratfordian biases and derive a great deal of useful information from Stephanie Nolen's well-illustrated book.

### First set of conclusions

This reviewer sides with the majority of Nolen's panel that the Sanders portrait does not represent William Shakspeare (and certainly not William Shakespeare!) because:

1. Except for Sanders family tradition, there is absolutely nothing to suggest that the portrait represents William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon. There is a major gap in Sanders genealogy, despite diligent search, and a cavernous vacuum in provenance. The evidence suggests that the Sanders family may not have owned the portrait for the first 200 years of its existence, from 1603 until the early 1800s. These represent immense, even insurmountable, defects in

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***"[Roy Strong] responded***

***that [without] documenting***

***ownership of the portrait***

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***valid representation of***

***Shakspeare."***

---

essential evidence required to prove portrait authenticity, and fatally wound Lloyd Sullivan's honest but flawed argument.

In 1966 Sir Roy Strong, esteemed senior art critic of England, was consulted about the Sanders portrait by the National Gallery of Canada. He responded that without a proven pedigree documenting ownership of the portrait to the early 1600s, there was no point in even considering the portrait as a valid representation of Shakspeare.<sup>13</sup>

2. For all of these reasons the paper label, with its several incongruities, is considered evidence *against* the portrait being Shakspeare. It suggests a deceptive origin

and invalidates itself, contributing significant evidence against the Sanders family hypothesis.

3. Several experts and this reviewer agree that the portrait shows a man in his twenties, not aged 39, which was Shakspeare's age in 1603. If any younger than 39, the portrait cannot be that of Shakspeare.

4. The forensic analysis of the painting merely confirms that the portrait is genuine for the date of 1603 with no evidence of tampering.

5. There is nothing in the portrait itself which lends credence to the hypothesis that the sitter is Shakspeare.

If the portrait is not of William Shakespeare, the question is then, "who is it?" I will now attempt to answer that question, using material from Nolen's book and from other sources. (See "Probable identity of Sanders portrait" beginning on page 26.)

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2. Julius Caesar. *De Bello Gallico*, part III, p. 18.
3. Stephanie Nolen. *Shakespeare's Face*. Alfred A. Knopf, Canada, 2002, p. 110.
4. Nolen. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
5. Nolen, *Ibid.*, p. 124.
6. Edward de Vere. *Hamlet I*, v, lines 168-169.
7. Marion Henry Spielmann. "The 'Grafton' and 'Sanders' Portraits of Shakespeare." *The Connoisseur*, February, 1909.
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10. Alexandra F. Johnston, Arleane Ralph, and Abigail Anne Young. In Nolen, *op. cit.*, p. 278.
11. Nolen, *ibid.*, 279.
12. For example, see recent articles in *Shakespeare Matters* by Barbara Burris on the Ashbourne portrait (Fall 2001, Winter 2002 and Summer 2002), and articles by Paul Altrocchi on the First Folio Droeshout engraving in the *De Vere Society Newsletter* (July 2001) and on portraits of William Cecil in *Shakespeare Matters* (Fall 2001 and on the "Elizabeth Pregnancy Portrait" in *Shakespeare Matters* (Winter 2002)
13. Sir Roy Strong. In Nolen, *op. cit.*, 153.

# The probable identity of the Sanders Portrait:

*“All’s Well That Ends Well”*

By Paul H. Altrocchi, M.D.

## The missing third oak panel

Both Marion Henry Spielmann in 1909<sup>3</sup> and Tarnya Cooper (one of Nolen’s experts) in 2002<sup>4</sup>, point out that a third panel is missing on the right which would have included the left shoulder, rendering the

portrait between 1603 and the early 1800s. In fact, the current owner’s great-grandfather specifically told Spielmann in 1908 that the family had owned the portrait only for “nearly a century.” Could the third panel, therefore, have been conveniently “lost” in the late 1700s, at the same time that the portrait was marked as “Shakspeare” by a spurious label and then sold to the Sanders family in England?

There is nothing to suggest that it was the Sanders family who did the deed, i.e., discarded the third panel. If a previous generation had been involved in creating a fraudulent painting by labeling it as Shakspeare when knowing otherwise, why wasn’t it sold at that time? Why create an expensive fraud and then store it? It doesn’t make sense.

The present generation, represented by Lloyd Sullivan, has made every effort to bring the portrait into the light of day and honestly validate it or not, using the most modern scientific techniques.

The two remaining oak panels have suffered the vicissitudes of time only at the margins, including woodworm burrows, nail-holes from previous crude framing, and adhesive tape marks. The rest of the wood is in remarkably good shape.<sup>6</sup>

## Further analysis of the Sanders painting

Tarnya Cooper, an authority on Elizabethan portraiture, analyzes the portrait in precise and elegant detail.<sup>7</sup> A crudely applied coat of yellow varnish has blunted and changed the original portrait colors. The painting itself, however, is expertly done by a polished, experienced painter, quite consistent with an era in which non-noble, non-courtly paintings became popular with England’s emerging middle class in the early 1600s. Cooper, whose specialty is non-courtly art of the 16th and 17th centuries, describes features of the painting’s high quality:

The soft handling of the facial features and the delineation of the hair and beard

*“Skepticism is the scalpel that frees accessible truth from the dead tissue of unfounded belief and wishful thinking.”*  
Peter Skrabanek and James McCormick<sup>1</sup>

The genuine efforts of Stephanie Nolen and Lloyd Sullivan of the Sanders family led to an extensive examination of the Sanders portrait with the most modern available analytic techniques (reported on in Nolen’s book *Shakespeare’s Faces*, reviewed on page one in this issue).

The results of this examination were as follows<sup>2</sup>:

1. Peter Klein, the leading world expert on dendrochronology (tree-ring dating), analyzed 264 rings from the wood on which the portrait is painted and declared its origin from a Baltic oak tree which emerged from the ground in 1323 and was felled in 1595. The painting itself shows the date of 1603 painted in red in its upper right corner. Adjusting for necessary aging of the wood prior to painting, and removal of most-recently added years of wood not suitable for painting, Klein validated 1603 as perfectly reasonable for the painting.

2. X-ray analysis showed no evidence of any other portrait or painting underneath the Sanders portrait, and no evidence of alteration in the portrait since it was first painted.

3. Ultraviolet fluorescence photography also confirmed that there had been no major retouching of the portrait. A few minor retouches were found in background paint.

4. Radioisotope-excited x-ray energy spectrometry used on the painting itself, plus x-ray diffraction and polarized light microscopy used on tiny samples of paint, all confirm that all chemical ingredients in the pigments were known to have been used in 1603.

Thus all forensic analytical studies confirmed the painting’s authenticity as an original portrait dating from 1603.

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*“Professor Jonathan Bate*

*[of the University of*

*Liverpool] ... gets the award*

*for Most Original Idea*

*by asking himself,*

*“Where have I seen*

*that face before?”*

---

painting symmetrical, which was the style of non-courtly paintings in the 1600s.

More importantly, as emphasized by Cooper<sup>5</sup>, the missing panel would have contained the sitter’s age after the painted date of “AN, 1603” in the upper right corner of the second panel. The phrase “Aetatis Suae” (his age) or its shorter form, “AEt,” would have been followed by the sitter’s actual age.

It is difficult not to conclude, especially when the sitter looks so much younger than 39, that the right panel was intentionally removed precisely because the stated age was younger than 39 and would have ruled out the man from Stratford-on-Avon. If the missing panel had come off by itself (with or without the help of woodworms or trauma), wouldn’t the owners have saved such a key piece of a priceless heirloom?

It should be recalled that there is no evidence that the Sanders family owned the



suggest that the painter of the face was a practiced professional. Across the face and parts of the hair, the paint appears to have been delicately applied, probably in a series of thin pigmented glazes that build up a depth of colour after repeated applications, providing an illusion of light, lustrous, gingery hair or palpably soft, flushed cheeks.

The craftsmanship of the portrait is at variance with Sanders family oral tradition that the painter was an actor who merely “dabbled” in painting. Also difficult to explain is the family’s belief that their supposed painter-relative kept the painting himself. This was not the usual practice of portrait painters at that time, who made their rather meager livings by painting, and usually requested commissions before beginning a portrait.

Spielmann<sup>8</sup> and Cooper<sup>9</sup> believe that the lesser craftsmanship of the sitter’s apparel suggests a different artist from the painter of the face, probably a lesser artist of the same studio. The apparel itself, however, according to Sir Roy Strong, is “absolutely correct” for 1603.<sup>10</sup>

### If not Willy Shake, whom does the portrait represent?

Obviously the forensic studies validate only the authenticity of the painting as an original dating to 1603, and do not reveal the identity of the man featured in the portrait. No hidden name, family crest, or other identifying mark or symbol was revealed by any of the techniques utilized.

Then whose face is it?

Professor Jonathan Bate, King Alfred Professor of English Literature at the University of Liverpool, not only redeems himself for his anti-Oxfordian pugnacity in Nolen’s book, but also gets the award for Most Original Idea by asking himself, “Where have I seen that face before?”

Yes, it finally comes to him—it is the talented playwright John Fletcher (1579 - 1625), who may even have collaborated with their Stratford Man on *The Two Noble*



Fig. 1 Courtesy, National Portrait Gallery, London



Fig. 2

*A side-by-side comparison of the Sanders (Fig. 2, right) with the National Portrait Gallery’s 1620 portrait of John Fletcher (Fig. 1, left) clearly shows a number of similarities in the eyes and eyebrows, high forehead and the overall shape of the head. Also strikingly similar is the hair color—reddish-orange in both portraits.*

*Kinsmen as well as Cardenio and Henry VIII.*

### Portraits of John Fletcher

There are several portraits of John Fletcher, including one miniature, all of which appear to portray the same gentleman. They are easy to find on the Internet. One portrait is at Knole House, home of the Sackville Family (Earls of Dorset) since Queen Elizabeth gave the house and property in 1566 to her cousin, Thomas Sackville, a writer and friend of Edward de Vere.

The most colorful portrait hangs at Montacute House in Somerset, which is part of The National Trust and a satellite of The National Portrait Gallery. It is a half-body portrait, 29 inches by 14 1/2 inches, by an unknown artist, painted about 1620 when Fletcher was 41. It is listed as NPG 420. He is wearing a bright scarlet doublet and is holding a plant with green leaves (Fig. 1).

Let us now compare the Montacute portrait of Fletcher to the Sanders (Fig. 2):

1. Fletcher was twenty-four in 1603, when the Sanders portrait was made; the sitter’s appearance is much more compatible with that age than with an age of 39 for the Stratford man. The Montacute portrait shows Fletcher at mature middle-age, seventeen years older than in the Sanders.

2. The ears are not well-shown in the Montacute and a larger mustache and beard hide the lateral mouth and the chin, so these features cannot be well compared.

3. The following characteristics are similar in both portraits:

(a) High, “generous” forehead as part of a long, narrow face.

(b) Intelligent, thoughtful eyes which are greenish-brown.

(c) A slight enlargement and “beaking” of the mid-nose.

(d) Reddish-orange hair in both portraits; nowhere is it recorded that Shakspere of

Stratford had red hair.

(e) The eyebrows are similarly arched in both portraits and there are similar “bags” under the eyes.

(f) The overall facial appearance is very similar in the two portraits; the resemblance is impressive. It is easy to visualize the two portraits as the same man, at the age of twenty-four in the Sanders portrait and forty-one in the Montacute portrait.

4. The central “V” of the hairline has evened out in the Montacute, consistent with an older age. One factor against the two being the same man is that the lateral margins of the hairline appear somewhat more recessed in the younger portrait.

On the Shakespeare Fellowship website —(<http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/htdoc/sanders.html>) — there is a reproduction of an engraving of John Fletcher said to have been done in 1625 when he was 46 (Fig. 3, on page 29). The engraving was originally depicted by John Baker on his website (<http://www2.localaccess.com/marlowe/portrait.htm>). It bears a striking resemblance to the Sanders portrait and to the X-ray of the Sanders in Nolen’s book (Fig. 4, on page 29). It is hard to deny that the Sanders is indeed a portrait of a young John Fletcher.

Little is known about the life of John Fletcher, except for his literary works. His

(Continued on page 28)

*Sanders (continued from page 27)*

father became Bishop of London, chaplain to Queen Elizabeth, was a stern accuser of Mary, Queen of Scots at her trial, and presided at her execution. Other family members had wealth and social position but were not noble. Some had literary talent.

John was born in December 1579, began attending Cambridge University at the age of twelve, and took his B.A. in 1595 and M.A. in 1598. Nothing is known of his activities until 1606, when he produced his first play, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, which was not a critical success. He collaborated with his close friend Francis Beaumont between 1606 and 1613, both achieving justified fame for a series of popular plays at The Globe and Blackfriars theaters produced by The King's Men, of which Fletcher became principal dramatist.

Some of their best plays were *Philaster*, *The Maides Tragedy*, *A King and No King*, *The Woman Hater*, *The Coxcombe*, *Cupids Revenge*, and *The Scornful Ladie*.<sup>11</sup> Plays written by Fletcher alone include *Monsieur Thomas*, *Bonduca*, *The Mad Lover*, *The Loyall Subject*, *Women Pleas'd*, *A Wife for a Month*, *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, *The Island Princessse*, and *The Humorous Lieutenant*.

After Beaumont, Fletcher collaborated with Philip Massinger and possibly with Ben Jonson. Shakespeare scholars believe Fletcher probably collaborated with the Man from Stratford on *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Henry VIII*, and *Cardenio*. Fletcher was amazingly productive, writing either alone or participating with others in more than 52 plays. His most successful genre was tragicomedy. He was a master of stagecraft, humor, intricate plot design, sudden twists in plot, and tricks designed to keep the audience both intrigued and amused. He was not known for development of character or for lofty themes.

In the 1600s and 1700s, Fletcher's plays were produced much more frequently and were more popular than those of Shakespeare. At times, Fletcher's language achieved nobility of expression but he is primarily credited with taking Elizabethan language out of the restricted ranks of the Royal Court and popularizing it among the middle and lower classes.<sup>12</sup>

He rhymed many of his lines and achieved a reputation as a poet. Here are brief examples of his poetry:

To His Sleeping Mistress

Oh, fair sweet face! Oh, eyes celestial bright,  
Twin stars in heaven, that now adorn the  
night!

Oh, fruitful lips, where cherries ever grow,  
And damask cheeks, where all sweet beau-  
ties blow!

Oh, thou, from head to foot divinely fair!  
Cupid's most cunning net's made of that  
hair . . .

Upon an Honest Man's Fortune

Man is his own star; and the soul that can  
Render an honest and a perfect man  
Commands all light, all influence, all fate.  
Nothing to him falls early, or too late.  
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,  
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still . . .

He achieved a reputation as the best songwriter of his day, composing both the music and lyrics for the songs included in his plays. Fletcher's song titles sound remarkably modern, reminiscent of Rodgers and Hammerstein, or Lerner and Lowe: "O How My Lungs Do Tickle"; "Hence All You Vain Delights"; "Cast Our Caps and Cares Away"; "Tell Me, Dearest, What Is Love?"; "Beauty Clear and Fair"; "Take, Oh Take, Those Lips Away."<sup>13</sup>

At the time, Ben Jonson was regarded as the best writer of classical plays, Fletcher and Beaumont as the best of romantic playwrights. Their plays written together were regarded more highly than what either wrote alone.<sup>14</sup> As Martha Bellinger says, "Both of these men were poets of a high order, and their work was superior in invention, scholarship, and charm to anything else in the Elizabethan age except the best of Shakespeare. . . Their command of phrase was unsurpassed; they avoided foolish conceits and violent metaphors, at the same time achieving a sort of gorgeousness of language."<sup>15</sup> John Fletcher died in 1625 at the age of forty-six when he delayed leaving London during a plague epidemic in order to be fitted for a new suit.<sup>16</sup> He was buried in Southwark in August 1625.

Although Fletcher achieved the greater reputation, his close friend and most famous collaborator, Francis Beaumont, was buried in Westminster Abbey. Perhaps it was Fletcher's death by plague which kept him out of the Abbey, since it had been the law in England since the 1540s that plague

victims could not be buried inside churches.<sup>17</sup>

### Further commentary on the Sanders portrait

Quite understandably, the Sanders family believes strongly that the portrait is of William Shakspeare. They rely on their family's oral tradition, and they think that the paper label on the back confirms their theory, as do all of the forensic analyses. The several potentially fatal flaws in their concept have been pointed out in Part 1.

Just as Stratfordian experts leaped on the now disproved *Funeral Elegy* bandwagon as "valid Shakespeare" in 1995<sup>18</sup>, many overly eager Stratfordians have grasped hold of the Sanders portrait as a golden opportunity to unload the doltish-dullard faces of the Droeshout engraving and the bust in Stratford's Holy Trinity Church which they have heretofore accepted as "authentic."

Conventional Wisdom must be upheld at any cost and authorities often "leap from a false premise to a foregone conclusion,"<sup>19</sup> attempting to validate their basic myth by any available means and often in a hurried, later-regretted manner. A myth is an unfounded belief held uncritically. The basic belief is wrong from the very beginning and is never reanalyzed in an unbiased fashion for its correctness. As Cohen and Rothschild said:<sup>20</sup> "Once a hypothesis is generally accepted, further investigation is considered perfidious."

What Oxfordians should find commendable is that five of Nolen's seven experts, all committed Stratfordians, were able to rise above the fray and take a stand that the Sanders portrait is NOT William Shakspeare. This is not common in dominant theory debate because, as pointed out by Karl Popper, all of us at any moment "are prisoners caught in the framework of our theories, our expectations, our past experiences."<sup>21</sup>

So, Professors Stanley Wells, Andrew Gurr, Tarnya Cooper, Jonathan Bate, and Alexander Leggatt should all receive our accolades.

### Final conclusions regarding the Sanders portrait

1. The modern scientific analytical techniques applied to the Sanders portrait, sum-



marized in this article, confirm the 1603 date in the upper right hand corner and confirm the painting itself as an original, not painted over a pre-existing painting or significantly re-touched.<sup>22</sup>

2. Nothing in the painting itself confirms the Sanders family oral tradition for 200 years that the portrait represents William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon painted from life. Nor does analysis of the portrait itself confirm any other identity.

3. Just as this author thinks that the painting's label is fraudulent, he also believes that the painting's missing third oak panel most likely confirmed the sitter's age as significantly younger than thirty-nine years, thus consistent with the sitter's appearance as in his twenties. Since the younger age would have ruled out Shakspeare as the sitter, the author believes that the third panel was intentionally removed from the portrait and destroyed. That most likely occurred in the late 1700s or early 1800s when the fraudulent attribution of the painting was concocted, the false label fabricated on early 1600s paper, and the portrait sold to the Sanders family as an authentic likeness of Shakspeare painted from life.

4. During the past 200 years of ownership, the Sanders family has not added a single falsity to the painting. They have passed the portrait and its supposed attribution as Shakspeare as a legitimate family heirloom from one generation to the next. In recent years, the present owner, Lloyd Sullivan, has been completely open and forthright in trying to learn the truth about the portrait.

5. The author agrees with Professor Bate's suggestion that the portrait most likely represents the poet, songwriter and playwright John Fletcher (1579-1625). The known portraits of Fletcher, especially the Montacute portrait belonging to the National Portrait Gallery of London and an engraving done in 1625, bear a marked, almost undeniable, resemblance to the



Fig. 3

Another interesting comparison of the Sanders and a Fletcher image can be seen in this side-by-side view of a 1625 engraving of Fletcher (Fig. 3) and a negative reversal image of the Sanders (Fig. 4) used in Nolen's book.

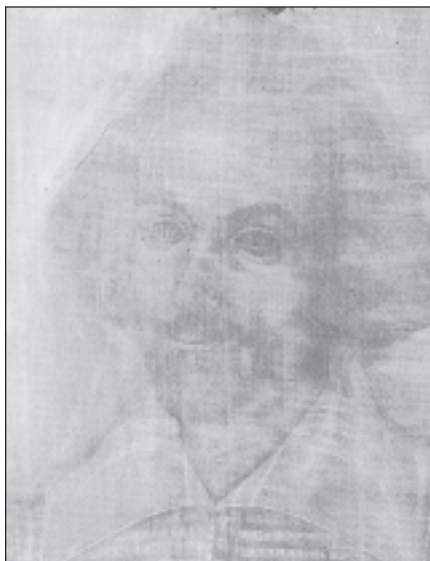


Fig. 4

Sanders.

6. If not Fletcher, there is no reliable evidence to validate the Sanders portrait as representing William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon, and there is evidence suggesting that there has been fraud in the painting's history to make it appear to be Shakspeare.

7. Ardent Oxfordians may confidently argue that whether or not the portrait is Shakspeare of Stratford matters not one whit with regard to the authorship debate, because the illiterate grain merchant and real estate speculator had absolutely nothing to do with Shakespeare's plays except to serve as a front for the true author at the paid insistence of William Cecil.

8. If indeed the portrait is of a twenty-four year-old John Fletcher, then all's well that ends well for the Sanders family. Despite its having been "trimmed"<sup>23</sup> of its important age-documenting third panel, this is the only portrait showing him as a young man near the beginning of his highly productive playwriting collaboration with Francis Beaumont.

A new portrait of Fletcher should be worth a pretty penny to Lloyd Sullivan and his relatives, which may mitigate somewhat their painful disappointment in not owning a painted-from-life original of William Shakspeare. From an Oxfordian viewpoint, in the long run the new Fletcher portrait should prove more valuable than a

portrait of an inconsequential, illiterate grain merchant from Stratford-on-Avon.

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**The Real Shakespeare. By Marilyn Savage Gray.** (Writers Club Press, an imprint of iUniverse.com, 2001. ISBN: 0-595-19191-6) \$21.95 (\$35.95 in Canada). 394 pages.

By Steven M. Aucella

The Shakespeare authorship issue has never burned so fiercely as it burns today, setting off a torrent of investigation of the hidden meanings and allusions contained in the canon. Edward de Vere's life experience illuminates his work, and most scholars agree today that *Hamlet* is the most autobiographical of all the plays. When you read *Hamlet* critically, it's easy to see why. From the death of the king, to the hasty remarriage of the Gertrude, to the attacking pirates, *Hamlet* nearly shouts "de Vere!" throughout. In short, one can learn a lot about "Shakespeare" by reading *Hamlet*. By that, we mean, of course, that one can learn a lot about Oxford.

In *The Real Shakespeare*, Marilyn Savage Gray presents her view that Oxford revealed his name in *Hamlet* not once, but over three hundred times. Her method translates what she calls "imbedded signatures" from English into French, where each French word begins with "ver."

The book is arranged in four parts, beginning with a preface. Book One presents a "historical novel" which makes up the bulk of the work. It's not a novel as much as it is a chronological juxtaposing of Oxford's life with the sonnets and with the plays. In this manner, Gray provides many interesting insights. Laid against the backdrop of Elizabethan current events, the "novel" makes for entertaining and informative reading.

Book Two presents the *Ver* words from five "Ancient Dictionaries", one of which is partially reproduced at the front of the book. The dictionaries range from Claudius Hollyband's 1580 *Dictionary French and English* to Randle Cotgrave's 1611 *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*. The Cotgrave was available in a pre-1604 edition but a copy of that particular edition was not available to Gray. Each *Ver* word appears in some way in the speeches and action described in *Hamlet*, according to Gray.

Book Three then presents the *Ver* words as Gray finds them in *Hamlet*. It is possible to read too much into Oxford's use of language and how it can be twisted back into French. For example, Francisco's command

in Act 1, Scene 1, to "Stand, and unfold yourself" seems jarring. Gray claims that one would stand and identify himself, not "unfold" himself. Having watched Kareem Abdul-Jabbar rise from a seated position on the floor of the Los Angeles Forum, we tend to mildly disagree. Gray explains that 'vernation' is "the disposition or method of arrangement of foliage leaves within the bud," and in due time they unfold themselves.

Gray's writing style is certainly enthusiastic, but taken in one sitting can be wearing. Her presentation of Oxford's life beside his work is innovative and indicates a great investment in time and care that went into this book.

The same cannot be said of the book itself, however. For starters, there is no table of contents, nor is there a bibliography save what one can glean from the dedication page and from the preface. More troubling than that, though, is the high number of typographical errors and plain errors of fact. On page xix, for example, Gray names Edward's father as the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford when elsewhere on the same page she correctly labels Edward as such twice.

These problems can easily be corrected before the next printing. In general, *The Real Shakespeare* presents its material in a fresh and entertaining manner, and with passion. Its approach to the authorship question is unique and worthy of more than a passing glance.

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**Discovering Shakespeare. By Edward Holmes.** (*Mycroft Books*, 2001. ISBN 0-95407191-3) £14.

Employing a sort of Socratic dialogue, Edward Holmes of County Durham, England, a former teacher and theater researcher, presents the case for the 17<sup>th</sup> earl of Oxford as Shakespeare in his book *Discovering Shakespeare: A Handbook for Heretics*.

The dialogue is between Holmes, who takes the part of the pupil, and a tutor named Mycroft. Mycroft Books is also the publisher.

In his preface to the 350-page book, Holmes reminds the readers "that these imagined conversations, which I will not dignify with the label 'Socratic dialogues', constitute a device designed to permit some relaxation of style and tone; Mycroft (who is, after all, my 'alter ego') consumes fictitious cream-cakes but his information is authenticated. You should take him seriously."

Holmes's alter ego is indeed well-read and well-versed in the arguments for Oxford as the author. The bibliography lists about two hundred authors, although neither Charlton Ogburn's major work nor Ruth Loyd Miller's collected articles is mentioned.

—RFW

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*A Year in The Life*

## 1581: reckonings and reconciliation

By Hank Whittemore

From 1580 onward Philip II of Spain had aimed at invading England, with the Pope announcing in December that God would reward anyone who assassinated “that guilty woman (Queen Elizabeth) who is the cause of so much intriguing to the Catholic faith and loss of so many million souls.”<sup>1</sup> On the day before Christmas Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, accused his cousin Lord Henry Howard (son of the executed poet Earl of Surrey and brother of the Duke of Norfolk, executed in 1572), Charles Arundel and Francis Southwell of conspiring to depose Elizabeth and replace her with Mary Queen of Scots. The three fled to the home of Spanish ambassador Bernardino de Mendoza, who wrote King Philip of “the danger in which they found themselves of losing their lives, unless I would hide them.”<sup>2</sup>

Such was the prelude to 1581, a fateful year for Oxford, who had lived up to Castiglione’s advice to the “ideal courtier” that he should tell his prince “the truth about everything he needs to know, without fear or risk of displeasing him.”<sup>3</sup> In this case the Queen ordered Howard into the custody of Christopher Hatton, Vice Chamberlain, who was already hostile to Oxford; and soon both Howard and Arundel, as prisoners of state, attempted to save themselves by portraying Edward de Vere as the most dissolute and disloyal of all Elizabeth’s subjects – charges borrowed to this day by many arguing against Oxford’s authorship of the Shakespeare works.

Let us review some of the unfolding events:

**January 12:** The government issues a Proclamation ordering the return “of the Queen’s Majesty’s subjects remaining beyond the seas under the colour of study, and living contrary to the laws of God and the Realm” and outlawing “the retaining of Jesuits and Massing Priests, sowers of sedition and other treasonable attempts...”<sup>4</sup>

“This Proclamation marks the turning point of Elizabeth’s policy towards her Catholic subjects,” Ward writes. “For twenty-three years she had striven to win their loyalty by leniency and tolerance. But Lord Oxford had opened her eyes.”<sup>5</sup>

**January 22:** Oxford, at a jousting tournament to celebrate the accession of Henry Howard’s nephew Philip Howard to the earldom of Arundel,<sup>6</sup> is the victorious defender. Dressed in “rich gilt armour” as the Knight of the Tree of the Sun, he “mounted

gentlewoman the selfsame night she was delivered was conveyed out of the house and the next day committed to the Tower. Others that have been found in any ways party to the cause have also been committed. Her Majesty is greatly grieved with the accident, and therefore I hope there will be some order taken as the like inconvenience will be avoided.”<sup>9</sup>

Anne Vavasour, a Maid of Honor to the Queen, is also a relative of the very men who have become Oxford’s deadly enemies. Had the earl failed to realize that Howard and Arundel would make sure Elizabeth learned of this scandal, which could only turn her against him? If Oxford had anticipated the birth all along, why did he make no attempt to arrange for a clandestine delivery? That he now planned to flee from England would seem highly doubtful; if so, as Charlton Ogburn Jr. observes, he surely would have had “the wit ‘to have withdrawn himself’ before Anne was actually brought to bed of the child.”<sup>10</sup> Is it possible that Oxford saw no choice other than to allow this new storm to break over him? In short order he is following her to the Tower.

**April:** The long-awaited delegation of high-ranking French commissioners arrives at Whitehall to conclude negotiations for the marriage of Elizabeth, now forty-seven, and the Duke of Alençon, nineteen years her junior at age twenty-eight. Given the English government’s alarm over the Spanish threat, on top of heightened concern over Jesuit-inspired plots at home, the Queen begins the final act of her grand deception to maintain an alliance with France. When she goes to dine with Drake aboard the *Golden Hind* at Deptford and to knight him, Elizabeth brings the French commissioners along to watch the show. At one point she holds up a sword, laughing, and exclaims she will use it to “strike off” King Philip’s head.

Oxford remains imprisoned.

**May:** The French commissioners are treated to dinners, plays, masques, pageants and various other festive events (including an early masque version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*?), with the Queen apparently doing everything possible to

(Continued on page 32)

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*“Anne Vavasour, a  
Maid of Honor to the  
Queen, [was] also a  
relative of the  
very men who  
[had] become  
Oxford’s deadly  
enemies.”*

---

on his Courser, verie richly caparisoned, when his page ascending the stairs where her Highness stood in the window, delivered to her by speech this Oration following, etc.”<sup>7</sup>

**March 18:** A new and stricter Statute of Recusancy is passed, raising fines for non-attendance at Anglican services, imposing a year in prison for attendance at mass and branding anyone who converts to the Roman Catholic faith as a traitor. Other crimes include predicting how long the Queen will live and forecasting her successor, with penalties ranging from having both ears cut off to being executed.<sup>8</sup>

**March 23:** Sir Francis Walsingham, head of the Secret Service, writes the Earl of Huntington: “On Tuesday at night Anne Vavysor was brought to bed of a son in the maiden’s chamber. The E. of Oxford is vowed to be the father, who hath withdrawn himself with intent, as it is thought, to pass the seas. The ports are laid for him and therefore, if he have any such determination, it is not likely he will escape. The

Whittemore (continued from page 31)  
drag out negotiations for her marriage.

Oxford remains imprisoned.

**June 9:** A Privy Council letter indicates Oxford was released from the Tower “by Her Majesty’s commandment” the day before. The letter notes he had not been committed there “upon any cause of treason or criminal cause,”<sup>11</sup> but nonetheless he remains in the Queen’s disfavor and under house arrest.

**June 11:** Elizabeth allows the French commissioners to draw up a marriage treaty, but then insists that Alençon (now fighting Spanish interests in the Netherlands) must come to England to give his endorsement in person. The weary delegates, stunned and disgruntled, return to France.

**July:** Oxford writes Burghley to thank him for “how honorably you had dealt with Her Majesty as touching my Liberty.” He has learned Elizabeth “made promise to your Lordship” to free him from restraint, but fears “she will forget me” amid the accusations against him. “For she is nothing of her own disposition, as I find, so ready to deliver as speedy to commit,” he goes on, “and every little trifle gives her matter for a long delay.” Whether Oxford considers the Howard-Arundel charges or the matter of Vavasour as a “little trifle” is unclear; but after discussing other matters he spontaneously delivers this Shakespearean sentence: “But the world is so cunning, as of a shadow they can make a substance, and of a likelihood a truth.”<sup>12</sup>

**July 14:** “I dealt very earnestly with the Queen touching the Earl of Oxford’s liberty,” Burghley writes Walsingham, “putting her in mind of her promise made both unto your Lordship and to the Lady his wife.” (It would seem the chief minister has brought his daughter Anne into the fray, hoping the Queen will pressure his son-in-law into reuniting with her.) The current problem, Burghley continues, is that Elizabeth wants Oxford to confront Howard and Arundel face-to-face; but the earl “hath made humble request to be set at liberty before he be brought to charge them, as he was at the time he first gave information against them.” Oxford will not stoop to the level of those he has accused of treason, but “Her Majesty, notwithstanding the reasonableness of the request ... cannot as yet be brought to yield.”<sup>13</sup>

**July:** Burghley writes Hatton to thank

him for “dealing with Her Majesty in the case of my daughter of Oxford” and warns against leading Edward de Vere to “suspect that I regard myself and my daughter more than he is regarded for his liberty.” In view of Arundel’s letters to Hatton signed from his “fast and unfeigned friend,” however, Ward concludes that “the obviously genuine attempt by Burghley and Walsingham to get Lord Oxford restored to royal favour was very likely frustrated by the double-

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*“Oxford’s reply  
has disappeared ...  
supporting the  
notion that William  
Cecil [had] been  
carefully editing  
the historical  
record.”*

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dealing of Master Vice-Chamberlain.”<sup>14</sup> In any case, the earl’s house arrest continues and he will remain banished from Court until June of 1583.

**July:** Edmund Campion, a leader of the Jesuit mission in England, is arrested and grilled by Leicester and members of the Privy Council, who marvel at his “virtue and learning” despite his being a papist. He is tortured on the rack three times but still refuses to recant his faith or name his associates. Campion is hanged, drawn and quartered, for which he is viewed by the Roman church as a martyr and later made a saint.

**August:** The English government obtains information that Henry Wriothesley, Second Earl of Southampton (who had previously spent time in the Tower for acting as a Catholic in sympathy with Spain), had been communicating with Campion through Thomas Dymock, a gentleman of his bedchamber. The Countess of Southampton has already accused Dymock of taking control over her husband and

causing their marital separation, which occurred at least four years ago; and now, because of this same man, Southampton is in trouble again and his health will rapidly deteriorate.<sup>15</sup>

**October 1:** Explorer Martin Frobisher, writing to Leicester about plans for another expedition across the Atlantic, includes information that “my L. of Oxford ... will buy the *Edward Bonaventure*.”<sup>16</sup>

**October 4:** The Second Earl of Southampton dies two days before his son, to whom “Shakespeare” will dedicate *Venus and Adonis* in 1593, reaches his eighth birthday. To what extent, we may ask, might the second earl have been driven to his death?

**November 2:** Elizabeth’s blatant sanctioning of Drake’s piracy, her new draconian laws against Catholics and her execution of Campion have provoked Philip into making open threats of war again. In turn Alençon, desperately needing the Queen’s financial help for his campaign in the Netherlands, seizes the opportunity. He leaves his troops in winter quarters and makes his way to England, arriving at Richmond.

**November 11:** The English Queen and the French Duke have slipped into their roles as adoring sweethearts, with Elizabeth calling him her “Prince Frog” and “Little Moor” while exclaiming he has been “the most constant of all my lovers.”<sup>17</sup> She brings Alençon, a Catholic, to a service at St. Paul’s, the better to allay fears on the part of her own subjects; and then she kisses him in full view of the congregation.

**November 22:** Elizabeth stages an “astonishing charade” at Whitehall by publicly declaring that Alençon “shall be my husband.” After kissing him on the mouth, she initiates an exchange of rings constituting a formal betrothal.<sup>18</sup> By the next morning, however, she has changed her mind and announces she cannot marry him right now. Alençon determines to stay in England until Elizabeth helps pay for his fight against the Spaniards in the Netherlands.

**December 7:** Anne Cecil writes to her husband about “in what misery I may account myself to be” and reminds him of “your favour that you began to show me this summer.”

In other words, the wheels of matrimonial reconciliation have been turning ever since Oxford’s release from the Tower in June and during his continued banishment from Court. (He also may be still under



house arrest.) Anne, distressed because she has heard “that your Lordship is entered into for misliking of me without any cause in deed or thought,” begs him to tell her “what you would have me do in my power to recover your constant favour.”

She signs this letter “from my father’s house at Westminster,” perhaps an indication that Burghley himself has been dictating her words. Oxford’s reply has disappeared, along with every other communication to his wife, supporting the notion that William Cecil has been carefully editing the historical record.<sup>19</sup>

**December 12:** Anne Cecil, thanking her husband for his prompt letter in return, is “most sorry to perceive how you are unquieted with the uncertainty of the world” and begs him to allow her to share in his adversity. She assures him that “no man can wish better to you” than her father, although “the practices in Court I fear do seek to make contrary shows;” and she is “desirous above all the world to please you, wishing that I might hear oftener from you until better fortune will have us meet together.”<sup>20</sup>

In her surviving letters the Countess makes no mention of the Vavasour affair, which must have caused her no little pain. Apparently she and her husband will be reconciled by Christmas, with the Queen lifting his house arrest but continuing his banishment from the Court. From here on, until Anne Cecil’s death in 1588, Oxford and she will attempt to produce a male heir to his earldom.

**December:** Alençon still refuses to leave. He will remain until early next year, with Elizabeth promising him a loan of 60,000 pounds for the Netherlands campaign in order to hasten his departure. Meanwhile, an impoverished Devon gentleman named Walter Raleigh arrives at Court and the Queen promptly adopts him as her new favorite.

**December:** Young Henry Wriothesley, the future Third Earl of Southampton, is now entering Cecil House in London. Oxford himself was the first of the Queen’s nine royal wards raised in Burghley’s custody; and Southampton thus becomes the final member of that elite group. Can it be that the simultaneous occurrence of Oxford’s marital reunion and Southampton’s emergence as a royal ward is merely coincidental?

By the end of the decade Cecil will

begin pressuring the younger earl to marry his granddaughter, Elizabeth Vere, the eldest of Oxford’s three daughters; and if we are correct about the authorship of the Shakespeare works, Oxford himself will compose seventeen private sonnets urging Southampton to marry and beget an heir. Edward de Vere will also dedicate “the first heir of my invention” to Southampton, thereby linking him uniquely to “Shakespeare” for all time.

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**“The many  
allegations against  
Oxford by  
Howard and  
Arundel are  
colorful, wild  
and often  
downright funny.”**

---

To what extent, we may ask, will this subsequent history of the great poet-dramatist have its roots in the reckonings and reconciliations of 1581?

Postscript 1: Oxfordians have ventured guesses as to what Shakespeare plays Oxford may have written originally during his imprisonment and house arrest in 1581. Eva Turner Clark believes he had written *3 Henry VI*, which may have been given at Court on Dec. 27, 1580, to further enlighten Elizabeth about the Howard conspiracy. She feels he next wrote *Richard III* while in the Tower, to warn the Queen against further leniency toward those conspiring against her. Clark also includes *Coriolanus* and *Measure for Measure* as relating to current events.<sup>21</sup> Ogburn Jr. believes both *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III* were possibly written during 1581, while agreeing with Clark that Oxford had begun *Romeo and Juliet* about now.<sup>22</sup>

Postscript 2: Anne Vavasour’s uncle Thomas Knyvet, a Howard relative, will nearly murder Oxford by early March of

1582—just two months after the earl’s reconciliation with his wife and when he is no longer under house arrest. Because of his charges against Howard and Arundel, which will prove correct, he was certainly in danger during the year 1581; and we may wonder whether Elizabeth had been restricting his liberty not primarily to punish him, but rather to protect him. After Oxford revealed a treasonous conspiracy by these men of high standing, they attempted to turn the tables with their own accusations. When the Queen continued to stand by him, they undoubtedly made sure she would learn about Vavasour; but given the circumstances and timing of that scandal, we may wonder what the truth of it really was in the first place.

The many allegations against Oxford by Howard and Arundel are colorful, wild and often downright funny. Most of their ammunition had come from the earl himself, to the point where it may occur to us that he may have been criticizing Elizabeth deliberately, so they might loosen their own tongues. Do we really believe he had been so reckless in his speech out of naïve trust in their friendship? Oxford would have been well aware of the potential of his Catholic associates for conspiracy against the Protestant state of England; and if he had been deliberately behaving with more irreverence toward the Queen than even they dared to be, he couldn’t have found a better way make them drop their guard and confide in him. If such were the case, when Howard and Arundel awakened to his trickery there would have been no limit to their desire for revenge.

Oxford was a fool? Or was he just playing the fool?

The bottom line is that he was in extreme danger during 1581. If he had gone right back into the Queen’s high favor, moving back and forth between home and Court, his enemies might well have seized the chance to kill him at that point. To what degree was his public humiliation, not to mention his acquiescence in the return to his marriage, part of the price he had to pay for loyal service to the Crown? To what extent, to cover the truth of his role, was he then “hung him out to dry”?

These questions do not reflect the usual thinking about Oxford’s fall from the Queen’s high favor and grace. That view stems from the assault on his character by

*(Continued on page 36)*

*Confidential Video Bard**Titus Andronicus:**The Jane Howell and Julie Taymor versions*

By Chuck Berney

**A**writer for *The Boston Globe* once wrote a column advancing the proposition that, as currently used, the adverb “arguably” meant “not.” The example he gave was “*Titus Andronicus* is arguably Shakespeare’s greatest play.”

*Titus Andronicus* is the play in which Titus’s daughter, Lavinia, is raped and mutilated by the sons of the Empress Tamora. In revenge, Titus kills the sons and bakes their remains into a pudding, which he serves to the Empress. While it is probably not Shakespeare’s greatest play, I believe the Grand Guignol aspects of the plot have caused it to be underrated—at its best it deals with the great themes treated in later, more respectable plays: Roman politics, madness (real or feigned), motiveless malignancy, interracial coupling, crushing losses, father-daughter relations, and revenge (justified or unjustified). And as usual, the players are the brief abstract and chronicles of the time—the play is rich in references to Elizabethan events and personalities, though not all of these references are clear or consistent.

**The BBC video**

The BBC video was produced in 1985, and directed by Jane Howell. It opens with the camera contemplating a skull. We then see the face of a bespectacled young teenager whom we will later find is Young Lucius, the grandson of Titus Andronicus. The scene then opens up to show lines of masked, armored warriors. We are in a crypt, awaiting the ceremonial interment of those who fell defending Rome against the invading Goths.

The first words spoken are the Captain’s welcome to the victorious Titus: “Romans make way!” Scene one continues through Titus’s speech (“Kind Rome, that hath thus lovingly reserv’d . . .”), then shifts to a public square where Saturninus and Bassanius each appeal to the crowd to be named emperor. In the text, the political speeches begin the play; Howell’s transposition of scenes is an unusually bold move for the

BBC series, which tends to be quite conservative in its treatment of the plays.

**Elizabethan subtext**

Eva Turner Clark dates the play to 1576, regarding it as Oxford’s reaction to “the

Then, Aaron, arm thy heart and fit thy thoughts,  
To mount aloft with thy imperial mistress,  
And mount her pitch, whom thou in triumph long  
Hast prisoner held, fettered in amorous chains . . .  
Away with slavish weeds and servile thoughts!  
I will be bright, and shine in pearl and gold,  
To wait upon this new-made empress.  
To wait, said I? To wanton with this queen  
. . .

Leicester was famous for his ornate clothing. And Elizabeth always assigned him apartments adjoining her own.  
But Aaron is not only Leicester. For those willing to consider the hypothesis that Henry Wriothesley, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton, was Oxford’s son by Elizabeth, Aaron is Oxford as well. In Act IV, scene ii, a nurse enters, carrying a child Tamora has just given birth to, whose color reveals that Aaron is the father. Instructed to destroy the child to avoid scandal, Aaron (who has hitherto been evil incarnate) defends his son with his sword, and praises him in terms reminiscent of the Sonnets (“Sweet blowse, you are a beauteous blossom sure”). He defies Tamora’s older sons:

Stay, murderous villains, will you kill your brother?  
Now, by the burning tapers of the sky,  
That shone so brightly when this boy was got,  
He dies upon my scimitar’s sharp point,  
That touches this my first-born son and heir!

Oxfordian Fran Gidley (from Baytown,

---

*“While it is probably  
not Shakespeare’s  
greatest play,  
I believe the  
Grand Guignol  
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to be underrated”*

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Spanish Fury,” the rape of Antwerp by the Spanish army in that year. She identifies the emperor Saturninus as Philip of Spain, Tamora as Mary, Queen of Scots, and the archvillain Aaron the Moor as Charles Arundel, a Catholic traitor who was denounced by Oxford and who denounced him in return. This may all be true, but I believe there are other levels.

As played by Eileen Atkins, Tamora looks a lot like portraits of Elizabeth. And who was Elizabeth’s illicit lover? The low-born, dark-complected Robert Dudley, whom she had created Earl of Leicester. (It has long been accepted that in *Hamlet* Claudius represents Leicester. Hamlet, in his mother’s chamber, at one point com-

Texas) has suggested that “the burning tapers” is a reference to the supernova which first appeared in November 1572, and which some have identified as “yond same star that’s westward from the pole,” mentioned in the first scene of *Hamlet*. Wriothsesley is thought to have been born in October 1573, so presumably he was “got” in January 1573, when the supernova was only two months old, and still fresh in everyone’s mind.

The author chose well when he named his villain Aaron. The biblical Aaron, Moses’s brother, was a high priest who created a calf of gold, leading his tribe down the path of idolatry. Aaron the Moor is also associated with gold: he buries a bag of it in the forest to produce as “proof” when he later levels false accusations.

**The motion picture**

Julie Taymor has become known for her theatre work, culminating in her imaginative staging of Disney’s *The Lion King* on Broadway. *Titus*, released in 2000, is her first movie. The first half hour is brilliantly conceived. The camera discovers a boy in a kitchen, his head covered with a paper-bag mask. The TV emits sounds of cartoon conflict while the boy hurls toy soldiers against each other and squirts them with catsup. A wall of the kitchen explodes, and a burly thug runs in, picks up the boy, and carries him down a long flight of stairs. They emerge into an open area which is

evidently the center of the Coliseum, and the crowd roars as the thug lifts the boy triumphantly into the air. Armored figures march robotically onto the field—are they Roman soldiers, or are they the boy’s action figures grown large? Titus appears, crusted with the dust of battle, and speaks the first words of the film, “Hail, Rome, victorious in thy mourning weeds!”

This opening is extremely effective in its sociocultural implications, and in establishing the nonrealistic atmosphere required, as noted in the discussion of Adrian Noble’s version of *Midsummer Night’s Dream* in our previous column. In fact, the two opening sequences could be described in the same way: a young boy in a modern domestic setting is taken through a long hallway and experiences dramatic events in an ambiguous era. Wait a minute—it’s the same boy! In both films, the boy is played by Osheen Jones, Britain’s answer to Macaulay Culkin. Julie Taymor has evidently been studying the work of Adrian Noble, and has found it good. And in transposing the opening scenes of the play proper, Taymor shows she has been studying the work of Jane Howell as well.

Taymor does a masterful job of mixing eras—lumbering tanks and snarling motorcycles accompany the armored soldiers—suggesting the unchanging primal nature of the militaristic impulse. The contest between Saturninus and Bassanius for the crown is wittily staged as a 1930s political campaign—the candidates harangue

the crowds through loudspeakers mounted on sleek convertibles. But after Saturninus becomes emperor and chooses Tamora as his bride the movie descends into cliché—your standard Roman orgy, with cocktails, jazz band, and lots of leering. A few minutes after that, Taymor inserts a shot which is appalling in its heavy-handedness: Titus and Tamora, separated by flames, glaring at each other from opposite sides of the screen, while the severed limbs and torso of Tamora’s sacrificed son gyrate between them. A similar faux pas occurs almost halfway through the film. Titus’s plea to the Roman judges (“Be pitiful to my condemned sons”) is movingly filmed as being addressed to a crowd of citizens hurrying heedlessly past him; but the mood is broken by a silly sequence involving an angel hovering around a sacrificial lamb with the face of another of Titus’s sons.

**The Actors**

Jessica Lange, an established Hollywood star, plays Tamora in the Taymor production. She is effective, but tends to be overwhelmed by the elaborate costumes and hairdos provided, and perhaps takes the play too seriously—she doesn’t seem to be having much fun. Eileen Atkins, on the other hand, is having a wonderful time—with her kohl-rimmed eyes and lopsided wolfish grin she completely inhabits the part of the Empress, and is one of the

*(Continued on page 36)*

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Whittemore (continued from page 33)

traitors, combined with the less-than-clear Vavasour story, both of which have stuck to his biography from then to now; but in this column we put forth such questions because, as the saying goes, "There may be a lot more going on here than meets the eye."

## References

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5. Ward, B. M., *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*. (London: John Murray, 1928; reprint by Ruth Loyd Miller, Jennings, LA), 214.
6. Not to be confused with the untitled Charles Arundel.
7. Ogburn, Dorothy and Charlton, op., cit., 304.
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10. Ogburn, Charlton, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. (MacLean, VA: EPM Publications, 1984; 1992 edition), 646
11. Ward, op. cit., 211 (The letter was to Sir William Gorges, Yeoman Porter of the Tower).
12. Ward, op. cit., 223-224.
13. *Ibid.*, 224.
14. *Ibid.*, 225.
15. Akrigg, G. P. V., *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 15 (Akrigg notes the second earl had been re-imprisoned in January 1581, but fails to say for how long. No doubt he was brought in for questioning about Catholic recusants, but the methods used to elicit his answers are unknown).
16. Ogburn, Charlton, op., cit., 648-649.
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20. *Ibid.* ; Ward, op. cit., 226-227.
21. Clark, Eva Turner, *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*. (Jennings, LA: Minos Publishing, 1974), 393-460.
22. Ogburn, Charlton, op. cit., 775.

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Video Bard (continued from page 35)

reasons for watching the BBC production. Of the two Aarons, the BBC's Hugh Quarshie may seem overmatched by the older, stronger Harry Lennix, but he brings a fresh charm and ready smile to the role that makes his presence welcome, and underlines the comedic aspects of the play. Alan Cumming plays Saturninus as a selfish, spoiled, degenerate, androgynous brat—exactly the kind of emperor we've seen in every sword-and-sandal epic Hollywood ever churned out (maybe for Taymor that's the joke). I much prefer Brian Protheroe's performance in Howell's version—someone who's in over his head, and is easily led by his vengeful wife.

Of course, the crown jewel in any production of this play is the title role. Trevor Peacock has been one of the mainstays of the BBC Shakespeare series, performing roles as diverse as Talbot in *1 Henry VI*, a bawd in *Pericles*, and Feste in *Twelfth Night*. He gives us a gravel-voiced, blue-collar Titus who may not be the brightest bulb on the tree, but who gets the job done.

Anthony Hopkins, however, is one of the world's greatest actors, who in *Titus* is at the height of his powers. And by a sly twist of fate, he is forever associated in the public mind with the cannibalistic Hannibal Lecter in *Silence of the Lambs*. So when he says "I'll play the cook," and, clad in chef's whites, serves the Empress the remains of her sons, the moment is delicious.

## Inside this issue:

*The Ashbourne Portrait -  
Part IV - page 1*

*The Sanders Portrait - page 1*

*Commentary - "Is Oxford buried  
in Poets' Corner?" - page 7*

*Book reviews - pages 1, 30*

*Year in the Life: "Reckonings  
and reconciliation" - page 31*

*Confidential Video Bard: Titus  
Andronicus - page 34*

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