



Shakespeare Matters

"The Voice of the Shakespeare Fellowship"

Vol.2:no.4

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments..."

Summer 2003

Shakespeare question debated at Smithsonian

By Peter Rush

On April 19 the Smithsonian Institution sponsored a day-long debate pitting three prominent Stratfordian scholars against three noted Oxfordian experts. It was one of—if not the—best such debate that this reviewer is aware of. The right people were in the room, lots of important issues were raised and responded to by both sides, and each side had the opportunity to “throw its best stuff” at the other’s strongest arguments. I believe that the preponderance of strong, unrefuted arguments was made by the Oxfordians, and that the Stratfordians left many crucial arguments unanswered, while the Stratfordians strongest suit was a number of assertions—drawn largely from Alan Nelson’s forthcoming biography of Oxford—for which “proof” was promised, and should be demanded. The result was that—unlike some other debates—we were not left standing on “square one,” but rather the authorship debate was advanced. Subsequent research and publication by Oxfordians can greatly benefit from exposing the weakness of the best the Stratfordian side could throw at certain issues, and by shoring up several previously unknown or weakly identified soft flanks in the Oxfordian dossier.

William Causey, a Washington, DC attorney who helped organize the January 2002 Smithsonian debate, organized, promoted and moderated the event, and great credit is due him for attracting such a high quality of participants from both sides, for keeping the agenda relevant, lively, and moving along, and for establishing an effective debate format where each issue was aired adequately without the panelists being preoccupied with time constraints.

The Oxfordian side was represented by Ron Hess, author of a trilogy, *The Dark Side of Shakespeare*, the first volume of which is now in print, with the next two due later this year; Joseph Sobran, well-known author of *Alias Shakespeare*; and Katherine Chiljan, editor of *The Letters and Poems of Edward, Earl of Oxford*. The Stratfordian side was presented by Stephen May, Prof. of English at Georgetown University and author of several books and numerous articles on Elizabethan and Renaissance poetry (including Oxford’s); Prof. Alan Nelson of UC-Berkeley, whose biography on the Earl of Oxford, *Monstrous Adversary*, will appear later this year; and Irvin Matus, author of *Shakespeare, In Fact*. Diana Price, author of *Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography*, hailing from neither camp, made opening and closing remarks, presenting the

(Continued on page 12)

7th Annual De Vere Studies Conference

Attendees treated to new insights and breaking news



Prof. William Rubinstein spoke about his experiences in writing a pro-Oxford authorship article for History Today.

The 2003 Edward de Vere Studies Conference in Portland, Oregon proved to be one of the best in its seven-year history. Over the course of three days of papers and panel discussions, some groundbreaking research was presented, and in a few cases, news was made. Several of the most newsworthy stories involved the authorship debate itself and information of interest to all Shakespeareans.

The biggest news of the weekend came from Conference Director Dr. Daniel Wright in his presentation on the Rever-

(Continued on page 8)

Wilmot did not The “first” authorship story called possible Baconian hoax

By Nathan Baca

On Saturday afternoon of the recently-concluded Edward de Vere Studies Conference, Professor Daniel Wright reported on his pursuit of evidence first uncovered by Dr. John Rollett that suggests the so-called “Wilmot legend”—one of the oldest anti-Stratfordian reports of early doubts about the authenticity of William of Stratford as the Shakespeare poet-playwright—is a fraud. Professor Wright reported that his examination of the facts uncovered by Dr. Rollett has led him to conclude that if Rollett’s signal discoveries can be borne out by subsequent tests, readers of anti-Stratfordian investigations into the Shakespeare Authorship Question will have no choice but to form an entirely new—and highly uncomplimentary—“take” on the role that

(Continued on page 7)

Letters:

To the Editor:

I'd like to suggest a different interpretation of "Audrey" from that provided by Alex McNeil in his otherwise excellent article on *As You Like It*. As McNeil notes, "Audrey" sounds too much like the Latin verb *audire* to be accidental, particularly in this play where every name carries at least a second, if not a third, meaning. *Audire*, however, can't possibly refer to the plays, as McNeil (and Boyle) would have it, but to Touchstone/Shakespeare's audience—that is, his *public* audience.

First, *audire* means "to hear"—which is what an audience does. Plays do not hear, they are heard. Second, a favorite word for audience in Shakespeare's time was "auditory" which is darn close to "Audrey." Third, Audrey is portrayed as ignorant of poetry and almost everything else, lacking awareness of the finer things, a slut, hardly the view that the world's greatest playwright, or posterity, could possibly have of these elegant plays. Fourth, that Touchstone/Shakespeare wishes to marry his own plays makes about as much sense as a man wishing to marry his own daughter, which is where you end up if you take the Audrey-as-plays metaphor to its logical conclusion.

There should be no doubt that the Touchstone/Audrey/William scenes were added late in the author's career and that he was using them to express something about his personal relationship to the theater, but what was that something? With Shakespeare, an anomaly among playwrights of any age because he did *not* write for money or fame, we must always ask ourselves, *why* he wrote a particular thing? Everything he wrote was for a purpose. He would not have introduced Touchstone, Audrey and William simply to make it clear to a handful of insiders that he owned the plays, something they already knew.

In my view, he inserted this scene to explain to his true audience, the so-called "gentlemen of the Inns of Court," why plays that he had written especially for them over the years were now being refashioned for the great unwashed at the Globe and other public venues. I think that he actually relished writing for the public. What playwright would not? But he felt he had to make some sort of explanation to this, his first, best and truest audience, the one for whom he pulled out all the stops, used legal metaphors and classical allusions,

argued for Equity Law and against outdated blue laws, the one he invariably turned to when he felt he had to explain himself; and, not least, the one that financed his theater ventures once he'd spent his inheritance and lost his credit.

First, in Act III, scene 3, Touchstone compares himself to Ovid, who was exiled from the Court of Augustus and sent to live among Gothic goatherds, much as Oxford was exiled from Court for writing too openly of Court secrets. Having lost his right to entertain the Court, now he must entertain goatherds, i.e. the public. He asks Audrey (his "auditory") if his features content her? Is he her favorite playwright? He wishes this audience understood poetry. After a few wry comments on honesty he announces that Sir Oliver Mar-text will marry them. McNeil sees this Oliver as a mistake, since the name Oliver has already been used for Orlando's brother, but this may actually be Shakespeare's point, for Mar-text represents the bishops whose authority over plays performed for the public were being reinforced at the time that these scenes were probably inserted, and the source of their authority was surely Robert Cecil, the most likely model for Orlando's stingy brother. Sir Oliver Mar-text is a combination of Cecil and the bishops, authorities who mar the poet's text.

Next Jaques, who has been listening in

and commenting, offers to be the one who gives Audrey away so that the marriage will be official. Although I agree that there is a great deal of Oxford in Jaques, his name suggests that his external model was that ironic commentator of the Court scene, Sir John Harington, author of *The Metamorphosis of Ajax* (a pun for "a jakes," or toilet). I don't know what role Harington played with regard to Oxford's productions, but that there was a community of liberal, educated noblemen who supported Oxford's theater enterprise should be a matter of simple common sense and Harington's biography would certainly make him a candidate. Harington got in trouble for his book, which was thought to satirize Leicester, and was banished from Court, 1596-98, a period that corresponds to other changes in the play. The DNB quotes a letter to Harington written just before he embarked with Essex on the ill-fated Irish expedition, stating "that damnable uncovered honesty of yours will mar your fortunes," and portraying him as one who "considered himself a privileged person who might jest at will," which sounds a lot like Jaques. Touchstone tells Jaques to "be covered," in other words, to keep his efforts on Oxford's behalf private.

Act V, scene 1 is the addition where Touchstone confronts William. Him too he instructs to "be covered," i.e. to keep quiet. I don't agree that William's age,

Shakespeare Matters

Published quarterly by the
The Shakespeare Fellowship

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The Shakespeare Fellowship

Subscriptions to *Shakespeare Matters* are \$40 per year (\$20 for online issues only). Family or institution subscriptions are \$60 per year. Patrons of the Fellowship are \$75 and up. Send subscription requests to:

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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. It is a recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit (Fed ID 04-3578550).

Dues, grants and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Shakespeare Matters welcomes articles, essays, commentary, book reviews, letters and news items. Contributions should be reasonably concise and, when appropriate, validated by peer review. The views expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the Fellowship as a literary and educational organization.

"twenty-five," necessarily refers to the actual age of Shakspeare, although I can't think what else it means; surely it means something. I doubt that Oxford was aware of Shakspeare's age or of anything about him apart from the usefulness of his "fair name" and that he was becoming an annoyance. Like Touchstone, William has some sort of claim on the public audience. Surely it is his surname, which is never mentioned, and just as surely Touchstone's claim is the greater. The plays are his while only the "fair name" belongs to William.

Touchstone's questions define William as an ignorant country fool. He toys with William, threatening him with witty reprisals if he continues to take advantage of his identification with the plays because of his name. Diana Price has suggested that Shakspeare was brokering the plays with Oxford's consent. This scene would seem to argue against Oxford having any connection of this sort with Shakspeare, but someone was profiting by the sale and publication of the bad quartos in the late 90s. It may well have been Shakspeare.

At the end when Touchstone refers to Audrey as "a poor virgin sir, an ill-favored thing, sir, but mine own; a poor humor of mine, sir, to take that that no man else will," he is saying that unlike other Court poets, he is willing to entertain the ignorant masses, virgins to history and the classics, thus excusing himself to his noble and educated backers, who were distressed that the plays were being dumbed down for the public. That this was in fact the case would seem to be evident from those "bad quartos" in which the poetry has been eliminated. We can have no idea of how many plays were actually dumbed down in this manner since it's likely that only a few made it into print. The First Folio, of course, concentrated on providing only Shakespearean caviar for posterity.

One last point: this play has one of those marvelous scenes (Act III, scene 2) where the mature Oxford as Jaques confronts his juvenile self as Orlando. Their mutual disdain is most entertaining. We see something similar with Romeo and Mercutio. Romeo and Orlando were products of Oxford's youth and the early versions of his plays, while Mercutio and Jaques were creations of a matured Oxford.

Stephanie Hughes
Editor, THE OXFORDIAN
Nyack, New York
20 April 2003

Alex McNeil responds:

Stephanie Hughes's thoughtful letter raises many points, to be sure. Her argument that the character of Audrey is intended to represent Shakespeare's "public" audience is certainly plausible, and may even be correct.

I'd like to think, however, that perhaps we're both right, and that Audrey, like many of Shakespeare's characters, may be a composite. To me, there are compelling clues that Audrey does represent the plays themselves (as they existed in manuscript form), and not merely the public audience for them. The use of the word "foul" to describe Audrey, with its special connotation to marked-up written matter, is suggestive, as is her own comment that William has "no interest" in her, with "interest" suggesting a claim of ownership. As one orthodox commentator noted, Audrey is "a thing to be possessed." If so, the author would more likely be seeking "possession" of his works (especially if the author, like Oxford, was not publicly associated with them) than possession of his audience.

Although Ms. Hughes finds it nonsensical—perhaps even incestuous—"that Touchstone/Shakespeare wishes to marry his own plays," I do not. Obviously, I was not suggesting that the author was expressing a desire to be physically intimate with his manuscripts; I was suggesting that among the traditional attributes of marriage, particularly in medieval times, were that the bride (Audrey) would take the groom's name, and would, in the eyes of the world, be considered his. It strikes me as far more logical that, in this sense, Audrey represents the plays rather than the audience. I don't see how Touchstone/Shakespeare would have wanted to "marry" his audience.

As for Oliver Mar-text being "a mistake," yes. My point, however, was that the insertion of a second character named Oliver was clear evidence that As You Like It was revised at some time, a point on which we both agree.

Ms. Hughes expresses "doubt that Oxford was aware of Shakspeare's age or anything about him." Perhaps, sadly, we'll never know. But I prefer to think that Oxford knew Shakspeare well, and that their paths crossed sometime in 1589, when the Stratford man was 25, the same age as William reports in his lone scene. [By the way, we do know that Shakspeare of Stratford did know his own age, as he correctly states he's in his 48th year when he gave his deposition in the Mountjoy-Bellott case.]

From the Editor

Jacobi, York to serve as honorary trustees

It is with great pleasure that we can announce in this space that longtime Oxfordians Michael York and Sir Derek Jacobi, two of the most distinguished British stage and screen actors of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, have agreed to join the Shakespeare Fellowship as Lifetime Honorary Trustees.

"I have long believed that actors, due to their intimate involvement with the language and emotions of Shakespeare's characters, have a privileged insight with regard to the authorship issue," commented Shakespeare Fellowship President Dr. Charles Berney. "Michael York and Sir Derek Jacobi are certainly among the most distinguished Shakespearean actors in the world today; both have played many of the characters, including Hamlet, the most autobiographical of Oxford's creations. Thus it is a special pleasure to welcome Michael and Sir Derek to the Shakespeare Fellowship as Honorary Lifetime Trustees. Their willingness to be so welcomed lends lustre both to the Oxfordian movement and to the Fellowship itself."

In a year that has seen much good news on all fronts in the authorship debate, having Sir Derek and Michael take such a bold public step just heartens us all the more. Public awareness of and interest in the authorship story seems to pop up at every turn, whether it's the cover of the *New Yorker* winking Marlowe (see page 5), Fellowship trustee Sarah Smith's new acclaimed authorship novel *Chasing Shakespeares* promoting Oxford (see page 24), or even such Stratfordian efforts as the BBC documentary trying to make Stratman real (see page 6) and Prof. Alan Nelson's soon-to-be published biography trying to render Oxford dead (we'll report on his efforts in our next issue).

And then of course let us not forget the remarkable all-day authorship seminar at the Smithsonian (see page 1) and the 7th Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference breaking new research ground and making news (see page 1).

In short, these are exciting times to be engaged in this most fascinating issue. We only wish some of the stalwarts of the past could be with us to savor the moment.

16th Annual Oxford Day Banquet at MIT

Boston area Oxfordians gathered for the 16th Annual Oxford Day Banquet on Friday, April 25. The event was held at the MIT Faculty Club in Cambridge, affording a beautiful view of the Charles River and the Boston skyline.

The dinner began with entertainment by professional singers Stuart "Whitey" Rubinow and Dave "The Rifleman" Harrison who wowed the crowd with a version of Cole Porter's "Brush Up Your Shakespeare," featuring additional lyrics composed by Shakespeare Fellowship President—and banquet host—Chuck Berney.

After dinner, Fellowship trustee Sarah Smith, author of the new novel *Chasing Shakespeares* (see review, page 24), spoke on the how "the academy" treats Shakespeare studies, and especially how it treats "Shakespeareans" who are outside the academy. The topic followed naturally from the basic "academics-in-search-of-the-truth" narrative of *Chasing Shakespeares*.



Alex and Jill McNeil presided over Oxfordian "JEOPARDY"

Also speaking briefly were composer Joseph Summer, a Massachusetts Oxfordian who has honored Oxford with his "Oxford Songs," and Sally Mosher, who also gave a harpsichord recital at the First Church in Cambridge the following day (featuring, of course, William Byrd's "Earl of Oxford's March").

Other events on Saturday were held at Lesley College in Cambridge, where *Shakespeare Matters* editor Bill Boyle provided

an update on the Folger Library's Ashbourne Portrait (subject of a continuing series of stories in this newsletter) and Richard Whalen moderated a panel discussion on "the State of the Debate."

After lunch, Alex and Jill McNeil entertained everyone with "Oxfordian Jeopardy," an original version of the game show with all Shakespeare-related and Oxford-related content. Roger Stritmatter, Mark Anderson and Sarah Smith bravely agreed to be the contestants. At the end of the contest, Stritmatter was declared

the winner.

Here's the "Final Jeopardy" answer (which, by the way, none of the contestants got right):

Category: Famous Last Words

Answer: It's the last word uttered by a character in the First Folio (see below for correct response).

Correct Response: "What is 'peace' (from Cymbeline)?"

Shakespeare Authorship Trust Conference in London

A bit of Shakespeare Authorship history was established earlier this summer when the Globe Theatre played host to 70 persons on June 14-15 for the first-ever Globe-centered conference to explore insights into the authorship question. The event was sponsored by the Shakespeare Authorship Trust and was presided over by Mark Rylance, the Globe's Artistic Director.

During the two-day conference, cases for William Shakspeare, Lord Bacon, Lord Oxford and Christopher Marlowe were advanced, respectively, by Prof. William Rubinstein, Peter Dawkins, Nicholas Hagger and Michael Frohnsdorff—although Professor Rubinstein admitted that his presentation in defense of the man from Stratford was an argument to which he, personally, could not subscribe. Still, he declared his determination to strive mightily to make the best case he could while suppressing his own anti-Stratfordian convictions.

Several Americans attended the conference, including Professor Daniel Wright of the Edward de Vere Studies Conference, Gerit Quealy of the Shakespeare Oxford

Society, and Stephen Mooror of the Carmel Shake-Spear Festival (host of the forthcoming Shakespeare Fellowship Conference). Oxfordian turnout, Dr. Wright reported to us, was somewhat disappointing, but he concluded that the conference was still a grand success as it provided a heretofore-unrivalled occasion to meet many British Baconians and Marlovians who were strongly committed, through their own organizations and efforts, to exploring the Shakespeare Authorship Question but who (like many Oxfordians) don't often congregate with anti-Stratfordians apart from their own kind.

According to Professor Wright, Nicholas Hagger gave a creditable overview of the Oxfordian thesis, and he accorded him good marks on his presentation. He also offered high praise to Professor Rubinstein's courageous effort to fairly represent the Stratford man as a candidate for the authorship of Shakespeare's works, and he assessed Michael Frohnsdorff's Marlovian case to be well done as well.

Wright reported, however, that he was particularly impressed with the delivery of the Baconian case by Peter Dawkins.

Dawkins—a widely-published author—was particularly skillful in offering a view of the merit of the Baconian thesis that was largely independent of reliance on the notorious history of "cipher-revelations" in the Shakespeare texts for which Baconians so often have been derided. Mark Rylance, himself a great admirer of Dawkins' work, spoke glowingly of his contributions to the Shakespeare Authorship inquiry and to the formation of his own anti-Stratfordian convictions.

On Saturday night, conference attendees had an option of purchasing a ticket to see Rylance and other actors at the Globe perform an all-male version of *Richard the Second*—a novel interpretation of the play that included some unexpected but highly effective comic moments that have contributed to winning the performance much acclaim among reviewers in the British press. The play concluded with a rousing dance that evoked thunderous applause throughout the house, signifying, perhaps as well, happy days ahead for the inquisition into the mystery of the identity of the man who wrought such works.

“Will Writ Wrong”

New Yorker takes a bite of the authorship apple

In a happy and quite incredible coincidence, the same day the *Boston Globe* published its review praising Sarah Smith's novel, *Chasing Shakespeares* (plural) on the case for Oxford, the *New Yorker* magazine arrived with a cover depicting “Shakespeares [plural] in the Park.”

On the cover is a drawing of Central Park with seven Shakespeares. All have the face of the Stratford man in the monument but are dressed like typical New Yorkers. (The outdoor theater festival, Shakespeare in the Park, has been held in Central Park every summer for years.)

The seven Shakespeares are jogging, bicycling, playing a bongo drum, eating a piece of pizza, rowing a boat, walking a dog and reading the *New York Daily News*.

The headline at the top of the tabloid's front page is “Bloom to Mediate New Tempest, Asks ‘What’s in a Name?’” Yale Professor Harold Bloom has published two popular books on Shakespeare in recent years. Presumably, he’s expected to mediate the debate over the author’s identity, a most unlikely occurrence.

The main headline is “Will Writ Wrong, I Wrote Hamlet!” Under it, unfortunately for Oxfordians but in much smaller type,



are the words “Confesses Marlowe.” The cartoonist, Mark Ulriksen, must have been influenced by the recent PBS TV program claiming evidence for Christopher Marlowe as the real author. —RFW

Katharine Hepburn - a Shakespearean woman

With the death of Katharine Hepburn this past month the film world lost one of its great stars. But our readers may not be aware that Hepburn played many Shakespearean roles in her career—all on the stage, and none ever filmed.

Among Hepburn's stage roles were Cleopatra in *A&C*, Portia in *Merchant*, Beatrice in *Much Ado*, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Rosalind in *AYLI*, Katherine in *Shrew*, and Isabella in *Measure*. It's a pity that none of these performances was ever filmed, since—as we're sure many would agree—she seemed throughout her career to be a “Shakespearean woman.”

An interesting remembrance of her was published in the *Boston Globe* on July 2, in which a former Harvard student, John Spooner, involved with the Hasty Pudding show and the annual “Woman of the Year” award, reminisces about his senior year—the year Hepburn won the award.

Spooner, playing a woman as is the tradition for the male students, recalls Hepburn was the only real woman there—



Barrie Maguire, with permission *Globe Newspaper Co.*

and she was wearing pants.

Spooner quotes her telling him, in answer to his question on how to play female roles, “Read the female roles in Shakespeare. Everything you want to know about character and theatre is in Shakespeare.”

Later that evening, after seeing Spooner in action in a Rockette-style kickline, she counseled the young would-be actor, “I said Shakespeare's *heroines*, not Shakespeare's *fools*.”

Spooner is today a money manager and an author.

Chicago Oxford Society

The Chicago Oxford Society celebrated its third anniversary with a conference at the Adler Planetarium on “Shakespeare and the Stars.” The guest lecturer was Peter Usher, professor emeritus of astronomy and astrophysics at Penn State University, who spoke on “Hamlet: A Cosmic Allegory.”

When the audience arrived, they found 40 quotations on astronomy posted on the walls of the auditorium. Christine Ramos won the challenge to identify those by Shakespeare.

After the lunch break, society director Bill Farina gave a slide presentation entitled “Snippets of Shakespeare: Lear and the Heavens.” And the next day, society members saw a performance of *King Lear* by the Shakespeare Project of Chicago.

Three weeks later, Farina and Marion Buckley, co-founders of the Chicago Oxford Society, traveled to Massachusetts, where Farina gave his Oxfordian slide presentation on *The Tempest* at the Wellfleet Public Library. The event, which drew fifteen people, was sponsored by the Shakespeare Oxford Seminar on Cape Cod, now in its tenth year. Farina, Buckley and Richard Whalen, co-founder of the seminar, led a spirited discussion of the evidence for Oxford as the true author. The seminar gained five new members.

Measure for Measure in real life

The headline in the *Boston Globe* read, “As hearing nears, plot of Shakespeare play comes to mind.” The story was about UMass President William Bulger, who—with a Congressional hearing imminent about his knowledge of the whereabouts of his fugitive brother “Whitey” Bulger—was thinking about *Measure for Measure*, a play, the article said, that he had been thinking about since he participated in a discussion about it last October; the discussion, of course, was the one co-sponsored by the Social Law Library and the Shakespeare Fellowship.

Bulger was seeing himself as Isabella vis-à-vis his brother's plight. Others in Massachusetts might wonder whether he should have been thinking more about Angelo, but in any event it is interesting to see how Shakespeare matters in today's world.

Trustee election news

As reported in our last issue, the Nominating Committee has named a slate of candidates for the October election: Alex McNeil for president, Roger Stritmatter, Steve Aucella and Earl Showerman for trustees.

Candidates can also be nominated by petition up until 45 days before the election. Petition nominations require 10 signatures of current Fellowship members, and should be received by August 25th at: The Shakespeare Fellowship, PO Box 561, Belmont, MA 02478. For further information contact Chuck Berney at the above address or by email: cvberney@rcn.com.

Board nominee Earl Showerman

A native of Detroit, MI, Earl attended Harvard College 1962-66, and the University of Michigan Medical School 1966-70. He moved to the Portland, Oregon area in the 1970s, where he has held a variety of health services positions, including co-founding and developing Epic Software Systems, Inc., a modest enterprise with a computer program designed to print emergency department and urgent care patient discharge instructions and referral information (the system is used today by 300 to 400 hospitals and clinics). He has also served as a volunteer on the board of the local forestry and watershed environmental organization, Headwaters, and served for two years with the Oregon Natural Resources Council.

Earl first became aware of the Shakespeare authorship controversy in 1985 after reading an intriguing review of Charlton Ogburn's book in *Harvard Magazine*.

Having lived in Ashland, Oregon, home of the renowned Oregon Shakespeare Festival, he had already become a theatre devotee, and, after encountering the authorship thesis, he found it was revelatory to recognize the beautiful concurrence between the story of de Vere's life and the themes explored over and over again in the plays—the Italian connection, the comedies of forgiveness and their rejected women of virtue, the problem play *Measure for Measure*, and especially *The Winter's Tale*, all came to new life with the understanding of Oxford's complex and rich life, adding greatly to his appreciation of the plays and their historical and psychological significance.

During a fundraiser for the renovation of the superb outdoor Allen Pavillion theatre, a chair was dedicated to Edward de Vere. Although the Festival takes no official position on the authorship question, it did host a Stratford vs. Oxford debate last summer between two actors in the company. But the Tudor Guild bookstore doesn't carry any Oxfordian titles, so there is still work to do.

Earl has found his involvement in the authorship debate to be a wonderful story to follow, and making informed converts to Oxford's case has been personally extremely satisfying.

Conference Update

The Fellowship's 2nd Annual Conference in Carmel, California continues to attract speakers who Oxfordians will not want to miss.

The latest additions to the scheduled slate of talks are William Causey of Washington, DC, and Christopher Paul of Atlanta, GA.

Causey was the key organizer and moderator of the all-day authorship seminar at the Smithsonian (see story, page 1). He also organized the Whalen-Pasteur debate at the Smithsonian in 2002. He will speak on his experiences as a recent Oxfordian and how he sees the debate developing today.

Paul is an Oxfordian researcher who has published in *The Oxfordian* and *Shakespeare Matters*. He will be presenting findings of his most recent research, which we understand is "remarkable." The early word among those in touch with Paul is that he

will present some provocative material which could shake the debate to its core. Check in with the Fellowship's web site at www.shakespearefellowship.org in the coming weeks for the latest word.

Others among the 20 scheduled speakers include authors Michael Brame and Gina Popova, novelist Sarah Smith, plus Oxfordian academics such as Dr. Roger Stritmatter and Dr. Daniel Wright.

Full registrations are \$195, which includes all papers, three plays, and four meals; \$95 for just papers and plays (no meals); and a papers-only rate of \$15/day or \$50 for all four days. The plays are *Taming of the Shrew* and *Henry VI, Parts I and II*.

Contact Fellowship President Chuck Berney at cvberney@rcn.com or at 617-926-4552 for further information.

Shakespeare documentary goes Catholic

The long-awaited Michael Wood four-part documentary *In Search of Shakespeare* began airing in June on the BBC in England. It will appear on PBS in the US in late 2003 or early 2004.

Oxfordian Peter Dickson (Arlington, VA), who has been tracking this story for years, has been keeping his Oxfordian friends up to date via regular emails on the latest news, press releases, reviews, and of course his own take on what Wood's efforts mean for the authorship debate.

Basically—as Dickson has been saying for years—the Wood documentary brings to a head an internal contradiction within the Stratfordian paradigm that could in the end be its undoing. For, by accurately portraying the Stratford man's true family heritage as recusant Catholics, Wood has thrown down the gauntlet to all those in both England and America who say that the Shakespeare works themselves are *not* the product of a devout Catholic, but rather a progressive, existential thinker—one so progressive, in fact, that he is still considered modern today. Further, the secret Catholic take on the Stratford man raises the serious question of how he could have survived politically in Elizabethan England, given that the traditional story has him publishing *under his own name*.

In one of his emails on this subject Dickson says, "Wood's name will go down in history as the Stratfordian who put the Stratford man's crypto-Catholicism at center stage, pushing other Stratfordians into the orchestra pit ... and then pulled the roof of the theatre down all around."

Wood himself, in an interview with *The Guardian* on June 23, remarked, "There will almost certainly be plenty of people unwilling to incorporate into the national narrative the idea of Shakespeare as a quietly Catholic dissident..." Further, Wood notes, "Shakespeare had good reason to be so guarded and private, in an era where spies were everywhere and any dissent ... was ruthlessly wiped out."

And there's the rub in this conundrum of the Stratford man's Catholic roots: it conflicts with the works, with England today, and with the real politique of Elizabethan England. We'll have more in our next issue.

Wilmot did not (cont'd from page 1)

Baconians played in 20th-century efforts to displace the man from Stratford from his usurped perch as the writer we know as Shakespeare.

The Wilmot legend is recorded in what arguably is the most important work in the library of famed Baconian Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence (1837-1914)—namely, the 1805 report by James Corton Cowell to the Ipswich Philosophic Society. Cowell's report detailed the fruitless 18th-century investigations into the mystery of the Stratford man by the Rev. James Wilmot of the Anglican parish at Barton-on-the-Heath, a parish church near Stratford-Upon-Avon.

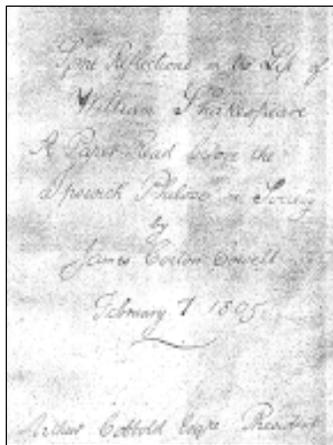
Professor Wright reported that several years ago, Dr. Rollett (an Ipswich resident and noted anti-Stratfordian scholar) discovered, after extensive archival research, that there was no record of a James Corton Cowell in local archives, nor was there any record of an Ipswich Philosophic Society to which Cowell purportedly gave his historic address! Moreover, he discovered that the putative president of that society—Arthur Cobbold, Esq. (whose name is appended to the cover of the Cowell report)—apparently never existed either.

This, Professor Wright reported, led him to the University of London to study and transcribe the manuscript that Cowell supposedly read to the Ipswich Philosophic Society (the full manuscript, which actually consists of two papers, has never been published). He was stunned to find that it was aimed not so much to exposing a lack of evidence for Will Shakspeare of Stratford as a playwright, but rather to advancing the case for Sir Francis Bacon as the author of the works of Shakespeare.

This, Professor Wright reported, seemed to him remarkable. No records indicate that a public case for Bacon as Shakespeare had ever been attempted prior to the mid-19th century (Delia Bacon published her famous Baconian tome, *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded*, in 1857)—and yet, here was a document, purportedly written over half a century earlier, which made precisely that claim for Bacon, and in altogether unexpected detail.

Why, Professor Wright wondered, had Sir Edwin (arguably the world's leading advocate for Bacon as Shakespeare in the late 19th and early 20th centuries) never reported his possession of this historic

document or its contents to anyone? If he had come into possession of the Cowell report prior to authoring his two notable books on the Baconian case (both were published in the last years of his life) why had he made no mention of this landmark Cowell address to the Ipswich society in either of those books? Why did he not declare in any of his books that he possessed this document? Even if he came into possession of this document after he published his books, why would he have made



The handwritten title page to Cowell's 1805 paper.

no mention to anyone that he owned it—a document that, beyond question, was the single most valuable manuscript in his library and unquestionably the greatest acquisition of his life! Why did it take almost 20 years after Sir Edwin's death for Professor Allardyce Nicoll, in a story for the *Times* of London, to break the news of the existence of this manuscript when it was discovered amidst the particulars of Sir Edwin's library that his widow had bequeathed to the University of London in 1929?

These and scores of other questions attend this problem, Professor Wright announced. Apart from the mystery of how Durning-Lawrence came to possess the document and yet never said or wrote anything about it, one has to wonder (if the manuscript were authentic) how many people might have owned the Cowell paper prior to Sir Edwin's receipt of it. After all, as Professor Wright reported, there are no records of its existence until Nicoll's account of its discovery in Sir Edwin's effects in 1932 (a year after all the bequeathed documents in Sir Edwin's li-

brary had been transferred to the University of London), and no one, prior to its discovery among Sir Edwin's collections, had ever claimed to possess or even know of it. How, and through whom, had it therefore come into Sir Edwin's possession? How did he know to whom to go for it? What had he paid for it? From whom, if he did not buy it, did he acquire it, and why had neither he nor anyone else spoken of its contents or even reported its existence after their acquisition of this manuscript—the most ancient and valuable Baconian document in existence?

To answer these questions, Professor Wright suggested we return to questions raised by Dr. Rollett's investigation of the Suffolk archives and other repositories that might (but don't) point us to the individuals with whom the document was first associated. Why, Professor Wright reiterated, do no records of an Ipswich Philosophic Society exist? Why are there no records of Arthur Cobbold, the supposed President of the Ipswich Philosophic Society? Why are there no records to validate the existence of James Corton Cowell—the putative scion of one of the most prominent families in Suffolk? And why is the only record of the existence of Cowell, the first public proponent of the Baconian thesis of Shakespeare authorship, found on a manuscript discovered in the holdings of Britain's leading Baconian over a century later?

Another speaker at the conference, Dr. William Rubinstein of the History Department of the University of Wales-Aberystwyth, who was intrigued by Professor Wright's presentation, also has joined in the search for these elusive men and their alleged society, and he recently reported to Professor Wright that he, like Dr. Rollett, has been unable to discover any records of these men or the Society in the various archives he has consulted since having returned to Britain.

So what best accounts for this document, the oldest known document of a case publicly made for Sir Francis Bacon as the writer we know as Shakespeare?

Forgery, argues Professor Wright.

Professor Wright acknowledges that a definitive case for establishing the Cowell report as a forgery has yet to be made, if it can be made, given that the challenge may require the task of proving several negatives. In his effort to pursue this question

(Continued on page 33)

Conf. (cont'd from page 1)
end John Wilmot (see separate article, "Wilmot did not," page 1). Wright reported on continuing research into a discovery first made by Dr. John Rollett of Ipswich, England, namely that the entire story of Wilmot having searched for years for any news of the Stratford man—and finding nothing—may have been a 20th-century fabrication. In two visits to England, Dr. Wright has conformed Dr. Rollett's breakthrough findings and confirmed by his own investigation of local and regional archives that the Ipswich Philosophic Society—at which a paper first reporting on Wilmot's findings in 1805 was supposed to have been read—apparently never existed, and neither did the President of the supposed society nor the presenter of the Wilmot findings, James Corton Cowell.

Dr. Wright cautioned his audience that further research and undertakings—such



At the Awards Banquet on Saturday evening Concordia University President Dr. Charles Schlimpert (l) welcomed everyone, while Tim Holcomb (r), a Shakespeare Fellowship trustee, was on hand to accept the Achievement in the Arts Award.

as dating the paper and ink of the alleged 1805 report—would be necessary, but he felt that he and Dr. Rollett had made enough progress to date to make the story public. It has wide-reaching implications for all involved in the authorship debate, especially, as Dr. Wright declared that he concludes it was early 20th-century Baconians who probably fabricated the Wilmot story

than writers, such as Oxford.

The Awards Banquet was again celebrated at the Columbia Edgewater Country Club. This year's Scholarship Award was given to Dr. Deborah Bacon, Professor Emerita of English at the University of Michigan, and the Achievement of Arts award went to Tim Holcomb, Director of the Hampshire Shakespeare Company in Amherst, Massachusetts. The President of Concordia University, Dr. Charles Schlimpert, spoke briefly and welcomed everyone back to Portland. Dr. Charles Berney, President of the Shakespeare Fellowship and a great fan of Gilbert and Sullivan, spoke after dinner on "Gilbert and Shakespeare," relating some of William Gilbert's career in the theatre to Shakespeare.

New research and publications

The conference opened on Thursday evening with a presentation by Dr. Michael Brame and Dr. Galina Popova, both professors at the University of Washington, who reported on their linguistic research into the Shakespeare canon and Oxford's known writings. Their talk, entitled "Linguistic Evidence for Authorship Identification: Oxford's Pseudonyms," was, to say the least, provocative. Their book, *Shakespeare's Fingerprints*, was reviewed in the last issue of *Shakespeare Matters* by Dr. Roger Stritmatter, who concluded that the authors and their work must be reckoned with by a mainstream that is used to dismissing all things Oxfordian as "not scholarly." Brame and Popova not only

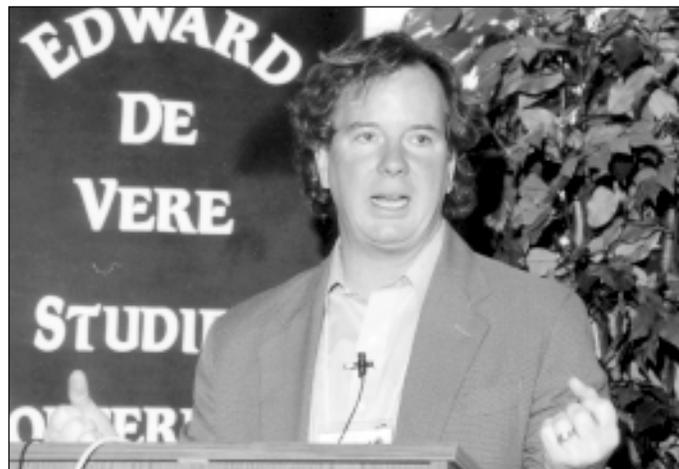
EDVSC raises over \$10,000 during conference for Oxford Memorial

During the latest Edward de Vere Studies Conference at Concordia University, contributors provided over \$10,000 in donations to finance efforts that Professor Daniel Wright has orchestrated and coordinated in order to see a memorial to Edward de Vere established in Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey. While in England for the first-ever Shakespeare Authorship Conference to be held at the Globe Theatre, Professor Wright met with the Very Rev'd Dr. Wesley Carr, the Dean of Westminster Abbey, to present him with news of the many thousands of dollars that he had raised for the memorial and to present the dean with letters of endorsement for a de Vere memorial from such leading scholars as Concordia University President Dr. Charles Schlimpert, Professor Steven May, Dr. Roger Stritmatter, Professor Ren Draya and Professor William Rubinstein. Dr. Wright, in a luncheon

meeting with Sir Derek Jacobi, also gained Sir Derek's pledge to assist in efforts to gain the abbey's official recognition of Edward de Vere's contribution to English letters.

The process of approving the petition for the memorial is one that now is in the hands of abbey authorities, and the success of the initiative is not guaranteed, but Dr. Wright reported that Dr. Carr was most interested in the appeal and very receptive to his fellow clergyman's presentation of the merits of the case for memorializing the heretofore-overlooked-and-neglected earl.

Professor Wright will report later this year—at the Oxfordian Studies seminar at Concordia University this August and at the Shakespeare Fellowship conference in Carmel, California this October—on developments in this effort to achieve lasting recognition for Edward de Vere in England's most sacred precinct commemorating its literary men and women.



Among the presenters this year were Marlovian John Baker (top left, speaking on the Derrington manuscript of Henry IV), Randall Sherman (top right, presenting the research of Robert Detobel on Merchant of Venice), Merilee Karr (bottom left, speaking on the authorship and class politics), and Carole Sue Lipman (bottom right, speaking on a newly edited edition of Delia Bacon's *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspeare Unfolded*).

embrace Oxford as the author of Shakespeare, but they make a strong case for his authorship of other Elizabethan works and generally argue that he was the leading mind behind much of the advancement of culture in Elizabethan England.

Not all in attendance Thursday night agreed, and there were some spirited exchanges with members of the audience about the methodology employed in their research. However, both Brame and Popova commented later how much they enjoyed their first trip to Portland, remarking that it was rewarding in numerous ways. In a statement to *SM* after the conference they said, "We were afforded the opportunity of meeting and interacting with many astute Oxfordians, of airing our own views about Oxford's multiple pseudonymity, of discussing a range of heretical propositions, and most importantly of witnessing the dissemination of fresh ideas and new evidence relating to Oxford's life and works. We left the conference with the fond wish that professors at

our university and others might open their doors and windows to the sweet smell of veritas."

In addition to *Shakespeare's Fingerprints*, Brame and Popova will also be publishing two more books (*The Adventures of Freeman Jones* and *Never and For Ever*) on Oxford as Shakespeare. They will both be presenting at the Shakespeare Fellowship's conference in Carmel, California (October 9th to 12th).

Another EDVSC presenter with a new book out was Shakespeare Fellowship Trustee Sarah Smith of Brookline, Massachusetts. Her novel, *Chasing Shakespeares*, was published by Simon & Shuster in June. Smith announced that her publisher was planning to promote the book heavily, and it should be reviewed in major media in the coming months. *Chasing Shakespeares* is a novel that features an Oxfordian from Boston linked up with a skeptical Stratfordian in a search for the truth about a document that could settle the debate (it is reviewed on page 24).

Smith's presentation, on Angel Day's 1586 *The English Secretarie*, posited that Day's work may be yet another instance where Oxford (to whom the book is dedicated) is the actual force—if not the author—behind the scene.

Early Shakespeare reference found

Still another newsworthy presentation at the conference came from Dr. Paul Altrocchi, also a Trustee of the Shakespeare Fellowship, who, in preparing his paper on historian William Camden's *Britannia*, came across a reference to Shakespeare that apparently no researcher—Stratfordian or anti-Stratfordian—has ever seen before.

Dr. Altrocchi showed slides of his find, a hand-written note in Latin which appears under the entry for the town of Stratford-on-Avon. The slides were made from the UMI (University Microfilms) copy of the 1590 edition of *Britannia*, owned by the
(Continued on page 10)

Confir'nce (cont'd from p. 9)
Henry E. Huntington Library in California.

In his presentation in Portland Dr. Altrocchi had a transcription of the annotation—and a translation based on that transcription—that, it turns out, was not correct, given the blurry quality of the annotation on the microfilm. Since the conference Dr. Altrocchi has obtained a copy made directly from the book owned by the Huntington. He reports his findings in an article beginning on page 16 of this issue.

Oxford's new coat of arms

More significant research was presented by Barbara Burris in her ongoing study of the Ashbourne portrait (Parts I to IV have already appeared in these pages; Part V will appear in our Fall 2003 issue). Burris's presentation this year focused on her theory that the coat of arms now on the painting had been added to the portrait by the Trentham family *in the early 17th century*—perhaps as early as 1612. Further, Burris noted, it would be possible for a unique combination of the Trentham arms and Oxford's arms to have included an eagle and excluded a boar (the Folger Shakespeare Library and experts it consulted had made much of the fact the coat of arms couldn't possibly include Oxford since no boar was present).

But, Burris continued, it is a well-documented—yet little known—fact that Edward de Vere had changed his coat of arms in the 1580s, and replaced the boar crest with an eagle crest. Therefore the absence of a boar on the Ashbourne coat of arms—and the presence of a bird—can be explained.

Burris believes that the Ashbourne painting was tampered with by the Folger Shakespeare Library sometime between the 1940s and 1970s, and the new Oxford eagle that had been there in combination with the Trentham shield was changed into a Hamersley-like griffin.

While this theory is indeed controversial, one part of it is incontrovertible: that Edward de Vere made extensive changes to his heraldry in 1586 and apparently used



The State of the Debate panel was moderated by Bill Farina (c) of the Chicago Oxford Society, with Richard Whalen (l) and Ken Kaplan (r) providing stories and insights ranging from academe to the Internet.

his new coat of arms (which dumped the blue boar and replaced it with an eagle or phoenix arising from a crown) for the rest of his life. It made its first appearance in Angel Day's *The English Secretarie*, and was seen again in 1599 in John Farmer's *Book of Madrigals*. For more about the changes Oxford made to his coat of arms in 1586, see Burris's article beginning on page 20.

Shakespeare and class politics

Another extremely interesting presentation was given by Dr. Merilee Karr, a member of the EDVSC Advisory Board, who spoke on "Shakespeare Authorship and Class Politics." Dr. Karr covered several centuries of Shakespearean criticism with an eye on trying to establish how and why Shakespeare became the cultural icon he is today. As many are aware, the modern era of "Bardolatry" really started in 1769 with the first Shakespeare Jubilee, held in Stratford and organized by David Garrick. What many don't realize about this seminal event, Karr reported, is that during the entire week of the Jubilee not one Shakespeare play was presented. The emphasis was clearly on concretizing the life of the work-a-day actor who Garrick believed wrote them, rather than celebrating the works themselves.

As Karr noted, this circumstance clearly foreshadowed much that has followed by people who have sought to create an image of the Stratford man as a writer when no such writer from Stratford, in any historical documents, exists. It may go a long way, she continued, toward explaining why the topic is still so sensitive with the class pride

issues surrounding the great Stratford commoner as the nation's greatest writer being far more important than any inquiry into making sure who actually wrote the plays.

Carol Sue Lipman, President of the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable, also gave some historical perspective on the debate in her talk, "From Delia Bacon to Elliott Baker." Lipman reported on a new abridged edition of Delia Bacon's *The Philosophy*

of the Plays of Shakspeare Unfolded, prepared by Elliott Baker. Baker, who has researched and written on the authorship for more than 25 years, has produced an edition of Bacon's seminal work that is much more accessible to the average reader. Long-time Oxfordian Warren Hope (author of *The Shakespeare Controversy*) described Baker's edition as "a little miracle of editing." This edited edition can be purchased under the title *Shakespeare's Philosophy Unfolded* from XLIBRIS (888-795-4274 x276) or through Barnes & Noble.

Some other papers also concerned with the authorship debate itself included one by William Niederkorn of *The New York Times*, who reviewed how the *Times* has covered the story for the past 150 years, complete with extensive clippings from past years.

Professor William Rubenstein of the University of Wales, author of a 2001 authorship story in the prestigious British magazine *History Today*, talked of the response to his article and the fact the *History Today* even published it—to record sales for the magazine. Professor Rubenstein has also written on such other unresolved controversies as the JFK assassination and the murders by Jack the Ripper.

Also related to the authorship debate was Concordia faculty member Professor Matthew Becker's talk on "The Not-so-Free Academy: Informal Observations on the Political Realities Surrounding Controversial Issues." Becker's topic focused on how the search for truth can be confounded by doctrinal and dogmatic rigidities, even—and maybe especially—in higher education.

Accordingly, that such heretical notions as Shakespeare authorship have been

allowed to exist—and to thrive—on this campus speaks well for the Concordia system's policy of letting issues be played out in the public arena, even issues that invite contentious disagreement. This year, as in each of the last six, Concordia University's Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Charles Kunert, gave the welcoming address on Friday morning, and, as always, was warm in his praise of Professor Wright and all who traveled to Portland for the conference to pursue questions surrounding the Shakespeare authorship debate.

State of the debate

Finally, the premier conference event in discussing the authorship debate itself was the Friday morning panel discussion. The "State of the Debate" panelists included Richard Whalen, author of *Shakespeare: Who was He?*, William Farina, Founder and President of the Chicago Oxford Society; and Ken Kaplan, an Oxfordian who has debated the issue extensively on the Internet in various forums. Farina served as moderator, asking questions of Whalen and Kaplan, and fielding questions for the panel from the audience of almost 200 participants.

The panel was quite illuminating in addressing issues familiar to all Oxfordians: how to broach the subject with strangers, what to say first, what not to say, and how to answer the questions that come up most often (e.g., that all Oxfordians are snobs, "What about the post-1604 plays?", and, of course, "We have the plays anyway, so who cares?" etc.). Whalen's review of the debate concluded that much progress has been made with so much recent publicity, and he encouraged that we should keep the public attention up, but "keep our cool" in doing so. Whalen himself spoke of how he maintains a list of interested university professors around the country, and how that list has grown over the years (from under 10 in the mid-1990s to nearly 125 today).

Kaplan had several interesting comments on how the debate has gone on the Internet, especially on the Usenet group **humanities.lit.authors.shakespeare** (a group founded by Oxfordians in 1995, but



During a break some attendees and presenters share refreshments and stories. Left to right are Ken Kaplan, Shakespeare Fellowship trustees Ted Story and Sarah Smith, Shakespeare Oxford Society trustee James Sherwood and Richard Whalen.

now dominated by a coordinated pack of Stratfordians who gang-tackle any newbie who shows up and generally deal with all authorship questions using *ad hominem* assaults *ad nauseum*).

Still, Kaplan said, it's useful to keep the dialogue going, conceding points when need requires, but always staying cool and rebutting everything nonsensical or wrong that one can. He mentioned how Diana Price's recent book, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*, has proved to be a great contribution, and he noted in particular how her husband, Pat Dooley—in Ken's estimation—had shown the hollowness of the Stratfordian attacks by patiently

arguing every point thrown up at him. All these exchanges can be found on the Internet by going to the Google archives for newsgroups and searching under: **humanities.lit.authors.shakespeare**.

The works and Oxford

Other talks over the weekend concentrated on some of the Shakespeare works themselves, or events in the life of Oxford.

Appearing Thursday evening were Dr. Eric Altschuler and William Jansen in a joint presentation ("The Unknown Gentleman of Nicholas Yonge: Do We Know Him?"), in which they related how, in 1588, one Nicholas Yonge published *Musica Transalpina*, a collection of translations of 57 madrigal texts—most from Italian but a few from French. Yonge said the madrigals had been translated by some "unknown Gentleman." Altschuler and Jansen suggested that this secretive gentleman was none other than Oxford. The Pacific University Chambers Singers added to the presentation with several illustrative choral selections.

Stephanie Hughes, editor of *The Oxfordian*
(Continued on page 12)

The Institute for Oxfordian Studies at Concordia University

announces

The 2nd Annual Oxfordian Studies Seminar

August 17 – 23, 2003

Tuition is \$995 and includes instructional costs, all books, classroom supplies, a week's lodging on campus, all breakfasts and lunches, a luncheon cruise on the Willamette River aboard the Portland Spirit, guided tours of Portland's world-famous Chinese Gardens, an evening at Powell's City of Books, and other delights.

*For more details and to register,
contact*

*Professor Daniel Wright,
Director of the Institute for Oxfordian Studies*

at dwright@cu-portland.edu

Smithsonian debate (continued from page 1) case developed in her book, that Shakespeare of Stratford was a play buyer, broker, impresario, possibly an actor, but not a playwright, while maintaining that she is inclined away from thinking Oxford the real author.

Rather than attempting a blow-by-blow reconstruction of the debate, I will comment on the issues that I feel were most productively discussed.

First, I should point out that the arguments of the two sides are not symmetrical. The authorship debate is not really about whether Oxford or Shakspeare of Stratford was Shakespeare, but about showing why Shakspeare *couldn't have been* Shakespeare, and then choosing the best candidate from among the known contenders. Misdefined as Oxford v. Shakspeare, arguments against Oxford become arguments for Shakspeare. This is not true. No matter how strong an argument might be against the Earl of Oxford, it in no way strengthens the case for Shakspeare, whose claim Oxfordians obviously believe is indefensible no matter who the real author might turn out to be.

On the other hand, the weaker the case for Shakspeare, the stronger the case for Oxford, simply because no matter what

problems may be raised against Oxford, he remains by far the strongest contender, who would be almost universally acclaimed were the claims for the Stratford man to be generally recognized as invalid. Another time Oxfordians would do well to make this point explicitly.

1. Strongly made Oxfordian points poorly countered by the Stratfordians.

Shakespeare's geographical knowledge.

The weakness and state of denial of the Stratfordians on this issue suggests they unconsciously recognize how fatal this argument is. Sobran referred to a book from the 1930s by Ernest Grillo, an Italian scholar who was not an anti-Stratfordian, but who documented reasons that Shakespeare had to have visited Italy, including his knowledge of Italian idioms and accents, specific physical details, and other items in the plays set in Italy that couldn't have been learned from books or travelers. Hess pointed the audience to his handout (partly based on Lambin) with further citations of geographical references in the plays that could only have come from first-hand knowledge. The Stratfordians neither responded to nor refuted a single example.

Instead, Nelson and Matus ridiculed

the argument by caricaturing it as an assertion that no author could set a play in any venue he hadn't visited, hence, Oxford couldn't have written *Hamlet* or *Julius Caesar* because he never went to Denmark or classical Rome—an obtuse misstatement of the obvious fact that the only plays Oxfordians claim are relevant to this point are those set in Renaissance Italy. May cited several instances in the plays where travelers make sea voyages between non-seaports in Italy as supposed proof that Shakespeare was indifferent to geographical accuracy. And May and Nelson both resorted to simple denial, with Nelson stating, "The significance [of Shakspeare never traveling outside of England] is zero," and May saying, "I disagree that there is any [geographical] detail shown in these plays [in reference to the items of evidence in Hess's handout] . . . There's nothing to them [the instances where Shakespeare included accurate local geographical detail]."

The Polonius as Burghley issue.

Nelson first raised this issue, to preemptively rebut it, saying that if Polonius were really "an obvious putdown of Burghley, the censors would have caught it." This led to two tracks, one a back-and-forth on the issue of censorship, the other

De Vere Conference (continued from p.11) dian, gave an overview of "Oxford's Life Story: What We Know and What We Don't Know." Hughes, who has researched and written on Oxford for a number of years, emphasized that there is still much to be discovered about Oxford and/or figured out from the records that have survived.

Randall Sherman gave an updated presentation on the research of German researcher Robert Detobel into author's rights to their works in Elizabethan England. Detobel had originally presented his research at the conference two years ago, with particular mention of the staying of publication of *The Merchant of Venice* as proof of Oxford's authorship of the play.

Ramon Jimenez, an independent scholar from Berkeley, California and a Board member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, spoke on *Edmund Ironside*, *The English King*, as most likely an early history play by Oxford. Marlovian John Baker of Centralia, Washington focused on the notorious Dering manuscript of *Henry IV* and made an excellent case for its being an original version of the Shakespeare play and not a later copy. Baker also explained how the published Folger edition of this

manuscript had actually ducked the question of its being a *bona fide* early draft or version of the play. His essay on this topic appears on his website: www2.localaccess.com/Marlowe/msh4.htm.

Dr. Ren Draya of Blackburn College and Dr. Michael Delahoyde of Washington State University spoke back-to-back on *The Rape of Lucrece*. Dr. Draya covered the dramatic elements of the poem itself, while Dr. Delahoyde pointed out interesting Italian connections that only someone—i.e. Oxford—who had traveled to Italy could have been aware of.

Roger Stritmatter's workshop, "Shakespeare and the King James Bible," revisited a question first raised by acclaimed Oregon fiction writer Richard Kennedy to the effect that "Shakespeare" may have been associated with the King James Bible translation. Stritmatter is not convinced of this, but notes that de Vere could have been involved in the translation of some parts—most probably the psalms. He invited the audience to examine Psalm 46 and the well-known numerologically embedded "Shake-Speare." If this is a signature to Psalm 45 (first suggested by William Boyle), he asked the audience to consider

how Psalm 45 begins: "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." He noted that the critical phrase "touching the King" (which has distinctive legal connotations) is unique to the King James translation of the psalm. Regarding de Vere and James, he also discussed the William Stirling play, *Darius* (1603)—a known "source" for *The Tempest*. Stritmatter suggested that King James is portrayed in Stirling's play as Alexander the Conquerer, and de Vere, the fallen playwright, as the title character.

Those who couldn't make it to Concordia this April should remember that there is also an Oxfordian Seminar on the Concordia University campus each August, running for a full week under the direction of Dr. Wright (see the box on page 11 for further details about attending this annual summer seminar). The principal topic of this year's seminar is "Hamlet: Oxford's Biography?"

The 8th Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference will be held at CU from April 15th to 18th, 2004. Registrations are being accepted even now, as enrollment is limited to 200 persons. —W. Boyle

the reasons for believing that Polonius was a takeoff on Burghley. Again, the Stratfordian side sensed that to concede this point (despite the fact that many Stratfordians do concede it) was very damaging, as it was far more likely that if Burghley were being satirized, it is much more likely that Oxford could get away with it than the Stratford man.

Hess made the point several times that most Oxfordians believe that many of Oxford's—i.e., Shakespeare's—plays were first performed either in the homes of the nobility, or at the universities or semi-public places such as Blackfriars, none of which would have involved the censors. The first time Hess brought this up, in arguing that *The Winter's Tale*—first licensed in 1610—could have been around for many years before being licensed, Nelson astoundingly retorted that "I've been in this business [for years], and I've never heard that suggestion, and it seems to me absolutely impossible." Later, Hess countered that it was in a book "recommended to me by my very good friend Professor Nelson" by one Andrew Gurr, that detailed the several ways plays could have been written and bypass censorship, including performances in private homes.

But the strongest refutation of Nelson's argument came—unintentionally—from Matus, who, for reasons unclear to this reviewer, cited how the name "Oldcastle" in *Henry IV* was forced by the censors to be changed to "Falstaff" to disguise the real-life person being referenced, and how in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, the name "Brooke" was changed to "Brooms" in the Folio edition for the same reason. "I would believe that if they could censor this man (the real-life Brooke)...they could certainly censor references to the most powerful figure second to Queen Elizabeth," Matus stated. Which is precisely what Oxfordians say was done, when, as Chiljan pointed out, the original name "Corambis," an obvious pun on Burghley's motto "Cor Unam," was changed to Polonius. In all three cases, the censors forced the names to change, while leaving the characterizations intact.

Hess also cited additional likely references to Burghley in *Hamlet*, including references to the "fishmonger business" (pillorying Burghley's attempt to make Wednesday a second fish day), the diet of worms (a pun on the Diet of Worms, which was summoned in the year of Burghley's birth), and the close parallel between Polonius's and Burghley's duties for the sovereign.

The Cessation of New Source Material after 1603, and Other Dating Issues.

Chiljan and Sobran pointed out two types of source material abundant in the plays, all of which date from 1603 or earlier—and none later—strongly suggesting that the author incorporating that material ceased doing so just about the time that Oxford died. Chiljan noted that numerous scientific discoveries and observations made during the latter 1500s appear in the plays, and yet not one discov-

*... the weaker the case
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remains by far the
strongest contender..."*

ery or observation post-1603, even though the telescope and thermometer both appeared between 1604 and 1616, when Shakspeare died.

Sobran had led off the debate by noting that all the "published sources for the plays end in 1603." He also noted that the first allusion to *Hamlet* occurs in 1589, an impossibly early date for the Stratford man to have written the play. He observed that a number of bogus plays initially attributed to Shakespeare only began to appear in 1605, the year after Oxford died when, had he been the true author, he could no longer protest. There is no record that Shakspeare ever protested the misuse of his name on these bogus plays.

None of these points was addressed by the Stratfordian side.

The "Dogs That Didn't Bark."

Hess and Chiljan provided three examples of "dogs that didn't bark," (a reference to a Sherlock Holmes mystery, "Silver Blaze," solved by Holmes when he realizes that a dog that should have barked at the culprit, but didn't, proved that the culprit was known to the dog). Hess referred to five people (William Camden, Michael Drayton, Thomas Greene, Dr. John Hall [Shakspeare's son-in-law] and Dr. James

Cooke), all of whom knew Shakspeare, but not one of whom ever mentioned him as the then well-known playwright William Shakespeare—dogs that "didn't bark." Hess noted the absolute silence that greeted Shakspeare's death, that it was years later that anyone belatedly wrote about the departed playwright's death, in stark contrast to the contemporaneous hubbub that was made just a few weeks prior to Shakspeare's death when the minor poet Beaumont died. "His corpse was paraded throughout the streets of London by tens of thousands and then buried in Westminster whereas Mr. Shaxpere is thrown into a boneyard and forgotten," remarked Hess.

Chiljan detailed the very strong negative evidence provided by William Camden, whom Matus himself cited for having referred to Shakespeare the playwright in a book in 1605. In 1607 Camden published a revised edition of an earlier tome called *Britannia*, which was a county by county travelogue account of England in 1607. In it Camden has an entire chapter on Warwickshire and its principal town, Stratford-upon-Avon. Obviously familiar with the existence of Shakespeare the playwright just two years earlier, Camden makes no mention of Shakespeare in connection with Stratford—an inexplicable omission had Shakespeare the playwright hailed from Stratford.

To none of these points did the Stratfordian side choose to respond. Matus did respond to Sobran's question, "Why does Shakespeare always seem so socially isolated, in a really teeming literary world, like Elizabethan London, it's just odd, isn't it?" Matus replied that, "Few people in London of that period were less socially isolated than members of an acting company," obtusely missing Sobran's point, which wasn't that Shakspeare was a hermit, but rather that no literary or cultural figures ever report a first-hand communication with, or any personal knowledge of, Shakespeare the playwright—despite his presumed presence on the scene in London.

2. The Great Circle: Stratfordian Circular Reasoning on Display.

Early in the debate, May gave the first of many statements of what may be called the Great Circular Argument, one that misses the point of the debate, and assumes its own conclusion. "The basic problem is this," he asserted, "every work attributed to William Shakespeare was attributed to him

(Continued on page 14)

Smithsonian (cont'd from page 13) during his lifetime, or within seven years of his death. Not one of those works is attributed in any way by anyone to the Earl of Oxford." Somehow, the fact escapes them that the Oxfordian case rests on the premise that "William Shakespeare" is a pseudonym. If the name is a pseudonym, then is it any mystery that all works by this author appear under that pseudonym? Did any of Mark Twain's works appear under the name Samuel Clemens? If not, would the existence of someone named Mark Twain prove that *he* was the author? The Stratfordian argument would appear to say so. May assumes that Shakspeare was the playwright, and uses that assumption to prove that, indeed, such was the case.

Nelson subsequently pro-pounded a variant of this argument, discussing the issue of licensing and publication of the plays. Shakespeare "did not write for money.... Shakespeare was a member of the Company, he wrote for his Company, his income, the income of his Company, the entire Company, depended on their plays being performed before the public, so it was really important that once a play was written, it was acted." This was all stated as if it was settled fact. Again, the issue is that the Oxfordian side questions whether Shakspeare of Stratford was, in fact, a playwright. Not one shred of evidence suggests that the man from Stratford wrote for any play company. Evidence needs to be presented to make the case. Nelson asserted it without proof.

Nelson returned to this line of argument later on, asserting that the plays which first appeared in print in the First Folio (i.e., those not previously published) "were owned by the play company, by the King's Men." If Nelson has discovered some previously unknown document establishing that the "new" plays were conclusively in the possession of the King's Men, this is the biggest story in Shakespearean scholarship in two centuries, and would definitely strengthen the case for the Stratford man.

3. Most Preposterous Stratfordian Assertion: Dating *The Tempest*.

Matus's first point in the debate was that the reference in *The Tempest* to the "still-vexed Bermoothes" was based directly on reports of a 1609 shipwreck on



In bottom photo are Joseph Sobran (l) and Prof. Alan Nelson (r) sharing the podium during a 1997 authorship debate in Seattle. Above is Prof. Stephen May speaking at the 2002 Edward de Vere Studies Conference in Portland, Oregon.

Bermuda. Chiljan disputed Matus's citation of a book by a survivor of that shipwreck, William Strachey, pointing out that it wasn't published until 1625. She also noted that there were many shipwrecks in the 1580s and 1590s and that there is no evidence that Shakespeare based *The Tempest* on the 1609 one.

However, no panelists sought to show Matus's argument to be absurd by simply reading the line about the "still-vexed Bermoothes" in context. It occurs in a passage where Ariel is recounting a previous errand he did for Prospero. The reference to "Bermoothes" has no connection to the shipwreck that opens *The Tempest*. That the shipwreck has occurred in the Mediterranean is confirmed when it is announced that the other four ships that had accompanied it turned back to their Mediterranean port of embarkation.

4. Strongest Stratfordian Point: Why Would Oxford Write for Another Company?

Nelson stated that Oxford had his own acting company, Oxford's Men, from 1580 until 1602 or 1603. He asserted that he doesn't find it impossible to believe that Oxford wrote plays, certainly corroborated

by George Putnam's reference that Oxford wrote comedies, but that "if he wrote plays, it would have been for his own company, it would not have been for another company." Returning to this theme a bit later, he added, "There is therefore no reason, since he had his own company, that he should be writing for another company with which he had nothing to do. There is no connection whatsoever between Oxford and any aspect of the Lord Chamberlain's Men or the King's Men," the latter Shakespeare's alleged company.

While no Oxfordian directly responded to this, an answer could be that Oxford wrote mainly for private performances—as Hess indicated—and all companies were then free to perform them.

5. Potentially Damaging Stratfordian Assertions Awaiting Proof.

The Stratfordians argued several points not previously known to this reviewer, for which they claimed proofs not presented during the debate. Nelson asserted, contrary to previous belief on this point, that Oxford did not attend Cambridge for more than one year and never attended Oxford, and that there's no evidence he ever studied at the Inns of Court. Nelson referred to his forthcoming book for "absolute proof" of this.

May repeatedly stressed the point that Oxford's known literary work was so far below Shakespeare's in quality that, "I simply couldn't see any hint of that in anything written by the Earl of Oxford." Later, he went further, stating that "If you read Oxford's poetry, and consider that the light years of development between that and Shakespeare could have taken place in the highly condensed time that the Oxfordians must commit to it, I simply find it incredible, there's just nothing there that even suggests the germ of a Shakespeare."

Chiljan countered May by pointing out that most of Oxford's surviving poems under his own name were written by him as a teenager, since they appeared in a volume published in 1576 (when Oxford was 26) but compiled 10 years earlier. May challenged this by saying that some poems were added after an initial set were compiled, but provided no proof that Oxford's poems were among those added later.

Sobran responded, "These are very personal esthetic judgments of Alan Nelson,

they prove nothing about the quality of Oxford's writings one way or the other." Undercutting his own argument, Nelson conceded, albeit "to my disappointment," that "Oxford is a competent, moderately experimental poet," while May, after his "light years" statement, added "which is not to say that he wasn't a competent mid-century poet, I think he was." Why an admittedly "competent" poet, almost all of whose known literary work dates from his youth, couldn't have morphed into a great artist is a question the Stratfordians failed to address. Some elaborated demonstration by the Stratfordians of the hopeless inferiority of Oxford's literary work would be required to advance this argument beyond the realm of mere opinion.

Debate also occurred over Oxford's surviving letters, almost all written to Lord Burghley, which Nelson characterized as displaying "about the linguistic competence of our president," to which Matus retorted "I think that's too cruel to Bush." Nelson said the letters were so boring he contemplated recommending readers of his book skip the chapters quoting from them, to which Hess rejoined, "I find the writings of Shakespeare to be infinitely more boring than Oxford's." Chiljan said that there are passages in some of the letters that seem to hark back to lines in several plays, citing in particular a passage about making substance out of a shadow, a metaphor which recurs in *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Titus Andronicus* and Sonnet 37.

6. Points Debated and Left Unresolved.

Several points were asserted by one side, contested by the other, and left unresolved, in need of further evidence on both sides. One such example was Hess's claim that Lord Burghley was "one of the greatest kleptocrats of his time" who was "essentially ruling by thievery." He continued that, "tons of evidence sent to me by British scholars ... show that Burghley was not only inept in ruling England's financial matters, but he aided and abetted crime after crime, plus he plundered various wards' estates," including Oxford's.

Matus rejoined, "I don't think there's anything with less foundation." May claimed



Representing the Oxfordian case were Oxfordian researcher Ron Hess, author of *The Dark Side of Shakespeare* (2000 photo), and Katherine Chiljan, editor of *The Letters and Poems of Edward, Earl of Oxford* (1998 photo).

that two books (not further identified) on Oxford's wardship claim that Burghley did not profit personally from his wardships, even though other nobles admittedly did.

7. Parting Shot.

The Stratfordian side inserted a variant of the Great Circular Argument that also involved an implicit statement about the plays that I believe is counter-factual (i.e. a lie), but that went unremarked during the debate. In his first remarks, Nelson said that, since *The Winter's Tale* wasn't licensed until 1610, "to imagine that it was written by Oxford in 1604... and that it was just sitting around unused for 6 or 8 years, is a complete misunderstanding of how plays were written, and what they were written for, they could only be performed once they were licensed, so the time between the completion of the play and the licensing of the play was very short." As Hess replied, licensing was only required for public performances, so Nelson's argument boils down to assuming that Shakespeare was a member of a play company—the point that ought to be the one in need of proof—ruling out the possibility that Oxford was Shakespeare *ex hypothesi*.

Nelson later restated his point, saying that, "The strongest argument in favor of William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon is that he was a man of the theater, the plays, above all are the product of a man in the theater." On what basis does he rest this assertion?

But there is another hidden implication in Nelson's argument. Since not all of the plays in the Folio were known to have been

performed prior to 1623, how can he explain the appearance of even one single "new" play in the Folio, much less the 16 previously unpublished plays appearing in 1623? By his reasoning, all of Shakespeare's plays were *ex hypothesi* licensed, then promptly performed, since all the money was in performance, not printed publication, as he claimed.

Returning to this theme, Nelson stated that the plays not known to have been printed in quarto before 1623 "were owned by the... King's Men," and that the entire explanation of the Folio's appearance was the desire of Shakespeare's fellow actors Heminges and

Condell "to bring out the plays of their fellow" in print. The only self-consistent position Nelson can take is to assert that, despite the absence of documentary evidence, *all* of the 36 plays of the First Folio were, in fact, performed by the King's Men during Shakespeare's lifetime. It would be important for Nelson to be asked this question. If he says yes, then it's time for him to produce evidence for it. If he says no, then he has undercut—or even entirely destroyed—one of the strongest arguments from the Stratfordian camp, since the failure to license and perform plays supposedly written by Shakespeare for "his" company would demonstrate that Shakespeare wrote at least some plays neither for performance nor publication—a total contradiction for the Stratford argument.

Conclusion

In sum, this all-day event was a landmark in the authorship debate. There was a thorough airing of many issues and many of each side's best arguments were presented. In this observer's estimation, a lot of Oxfordian points went unanswered from the Stratfordian side and a number of Stratfordian positions were shown to be self-contradictory or absurd.

However, Oxfordians have some work to do on a number of assertions made, largely ones that are about to make their first appearance in Nelson's book, but they also now have, with the experience of this debate, the raw material to craft even more pointed and specific challenges to the Stratfordian camp in future debates and publications.

Sleuthing an enigmatic Latin annotation

By Paul H. Altrocchi, M.D.

*What is the end of study, let me know?
Why, that to know which else we should
not know.
Things hid and barred, you mean, from
common sense?
Ay, that is study's godlike recompense.
(Love's Labour's Lost, I.i.55)*

Unsolved enigmas stimulate the human mind; unraveling them accepts the de Verean challenge seeking “to know which else we should not know.”

The enigma in this case is a six-word handwritten Latin annotation stumbled across in the University of Hawaii's micro-filmed copy of the 1590 edition of William Camden's *Britannia*. A photocopy of the difficult-to-read penned comment was read by a consulting Professor of Latin as “Is Gulielmo Shakespear Rescio plani nostro” and translated as “Thus I find out that William Shakespeare is an impostor.”¹

Could the annotator be the first anti-Stratfordian, even an Oxfordian, possibly as early as the 17th Century? When was the mysterious comment written and who was the writer? The hunt was on. As Professor Rudolph Altrocchi has written:

How mistaken those people are who think the scholar's life is nothing more than a monotonous grind! There are adventures for the literary sleuth as for the much more frequently exalted private detective, adventures in books as thrilling as adventures in life. Indeed, what are books if not records of adventures in life? And some old volumes have stories, quite apart from those told in the printed page, stories full of mystery, romance, even crime. These adventures reveal themselves only to the booky explorer, the research scholar.²

The facts

The University of Michigan micro-filmed the six Latin editions (1586, 1587, 1590, 1594, 1600, and 1607) and two English editions (1610 and 1637) of William Camden's *Britannia*, using books of its

own as well as ones borrowed from other libraries, making copies available to all libraries in the world. For microfilming the 1590 Third Latin Edition it used a copy owned by The Huntington Library in San

*“The enigma is a
six word handwritten
Latin annotation
stumbled across ... [in a]
1590 edition of William
Camden's Britannia.”*

Marino, California.³ The Huntington had purchased the volume from Clarence Saunders Brigham in January, 1922.⁴ Brigham was President of the American Antiquarian Society and often volunteered to fill gaps in the Huntington's book collections on overseas buying trips, a story detailed in Don Dickinson's *Henry E. Huntington's Library of Libraries*.

Thus Brigham merely acted as a purchasing intermediary for the copy now at the Huntington. The bookseller was never revealed and the provenance of the book between 1590 and 1922 is impossible to trace.⁵ Camden's brief description of Stratford-on-Avon appears on pages 452 and 453 of the 1590 edition and reads as follows:⁶

Plenior hinc Avona defertur primùm per Charlcott nobilis & equestris familiae Luciorum habitationem, quae à Charlcottis iam olim ad illos haereditario quasi transmigravit: & per Stratford emporiolù non elegans [sic. This word was misprinted; it should have been “inelegans”]. quod duobus fuis alumnis omnem dignitatem debet loanni de Stratford Archiepiscopo

Cantuariensi qui templu posuit, & Hugoni Clopton Pretori Londinési, qui A vonae pontem faxeum quatuordecem fornicibus subnixum non fine maximis impensis induxit.

The key lines with relevance to this paper are underlined. The English translation of the paragraph (with the same key lines underlined) is:

From here the River Avon flows down more strongly first through famous Charlcott and the house of the knightly family of Lucies which long ago passed to them from the Charlcotts as it were by heredity, and through the not (un)distinguished little market town of Stratford, which owes all of its reputation to its two foster sons, John of Stratford, the Archbishop of Canterbury who built the church, and Hugh Clopton, the magistrate of London who began the stone bridge over the Avon supported by fourteen arches, not without very great expense.

The last printed line on page 452 reads:

quod duobus fuis alumnis omnem dignitatem debet loanni
(trans. = ...which owes all of its reputation to its two foster sons...)

There is a penned underline (see figure 1) beneath the word “alumnis” which means “alumni” or “foster sons” or, as Philemon Holland translated it in the English editions of 1610 and 1637, “there bred and brought up.”

At the bottom of page 452, below that underline, is the intriguing handwritten comment in ink which, when photographed directly from the book, is seen to state in Latin: “et Gulielmo Shakefpear Rofcio planè nostro.”

Three key words—*et, Roscio, and planè*—are now seen differently from the original imperfect photocopy of the microfilm and yield an entirely different meaning.

Translation of the annotation's first Word: "Et"

The first "word" of the annotation is a Tirolian note for "et", the Latin word for "and." It is fancily penned but its main and darkest component is similar to the number "7" and means the same as our modern printed symbol "&."⁷ The handwritten shape of such symbols changed over time until printing presses tended to standardize their design.

Various abbreviations and symbols like the asterisk (*), which connoted poetic verses regarded as authentic, can be traced as far back as Alexandrian Greece in the fourth century B.C.⁸ Most of us do not know shorthand but we all use such shortcut abbreviations and symbols as "part of English," e.g.:

1. Abbreviations: "i.e." = "that is", derived from the Latin *id est*; "e.g." = "for example", derived from the Latin *exempli gratia*.

2. Symbols: # % & @

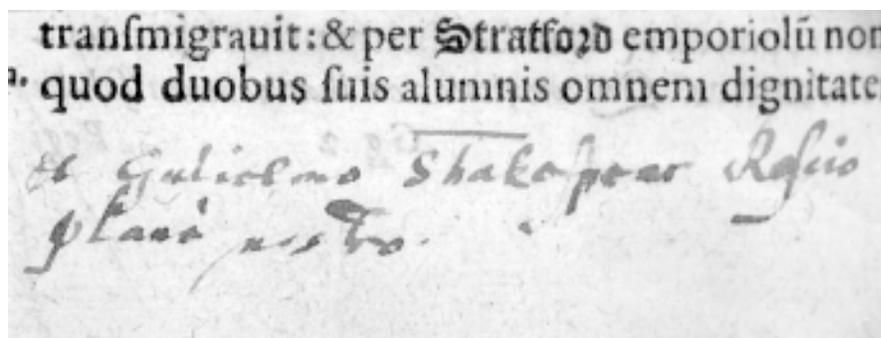
The invention of a comprehensive system of shorthand is credited to Marcus Tullius Tiro, a former Roman slave who became a freedman and the secretary of Cicero (106-43 B.C.). Recognizing Tiro's high intellect, Cicero encouraged him to develop a standard tachygraphic (speed writing) system which could be used to record Cicero's dictation and speeches and also be taught to professional scribes.⁹

The system rapidly spread. Many Romans trained special slaves as shorthand writers. Students learned shorthand to take down lectures. Even prominent Romans learned the system, e.g., Cicero himself and Seneca (4 B.C.- 65 A.D.) the philosopher, statesman and writer of nine tragedies who amplified and codified the system further.¹⁰

So successful was Tiro's concept and system that for centuries shorthand was known as "notae Tironianae" or "Tironian notes." Tiro retired to a farm and, before dying at the age of 100, played an important role in preserving the literary works and extensive personal correspondence of his close friend Marcus Tullius Cicero.¹¹

Translation of the second and third words: Gulielmo Shakefpear

Gulielmo = William. Shakefpear (= Shakespeare) has a second "s" in the "secretary" style of writing (*vide infra*) and lacks a final "e".



Courtesy of the Henry E. Huntington Library

Figure 1. The intriguing handwritten annotation—apparently never before noted by any Shakespeare researcher—that the author found in the UMI microfilm copy of Camden's *Britannia* (1590 edition) while researching entries under "Stratford" in all the available editions of *Britannia* (ranging from 1586 to 1637).

Translation of the annotation's fourth word: Roscio

The second letter is definitely different from every "e" in the annotation and, despite its solid black ink center, is an "o", not an "e". The "f" is an "s" in the secretary hand. The word, therefore, is not Rescio but Roscio. What is the meaning of Roscio, a word not in any Latin dictionary?

"Roscio" is rarely encountered nowadays, and the author is indebted to an insightful comment by Roger Stritmatter from the audience when this material was first presented at the Seventh Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference in Portland, Oregon, this past April¹² (see article on page 1).

Quintus Roscius Gallus (c. 126 - 62 B.C.) was born a slave at Solonium, south of Rome. Handsome with an elegant carriage, he moved to Rome to study acting, frequenting the Roman forum to study the eloquence and delivery of famous orators including Quintus Hortensius and Cicero. He became a master of the acting art, the finest comic actor of his time, so remarkably outstanding that Cicero took lessons from him and the Emperor Sulla presented him with a gold ring, symbol of equestrian rank, a unique distinction for an actor. He even wrote a treatise comparing acting and oratory. He amassed a fortune from his acting.¹³

In a time of grandeur for Rome and some of its famous leaders, Roscius was deemed so supremely peerless that his name came to symbolize greatness in theatrical artistry and, in later centuries, supremacy in any field of artistic endeavor, i.e., a consummate artist.¹⁴

In 18th century England the term Roscius or Roscian was still applied to

uniquely great actors, e.g.:

1. James Boswell (1740 - 1795), noted biographer of Samuel Johnson, wrote, "I was sitting with the great Roscius of the age, David Garrick."

2. In *Theatre in the Age of Garrick*, C. Price said: "To the eighteenth century, Garrick was the outstanding actor of modern times, and to call him 'Roscius' as was so often done was merely to indicate that in one respect at least, England could rival ancient Rome."¹⁵

In his later years, Garrick had the dubious distinctions of financing the fabrication of a new statue of "Shakespeare" in 1768 for the north side niche in Stratford's Trinity Parish Church (now claimed as "the original" by Stratfordians), and in 1769 initiating the Shakespearean Festival in Stratford-on-Avon which continues to the present day.

Now back to our Latin annotation. The annotator uses the dative case of "Roscius," i.e., "Roscio," in accord with Camden's use of the dative case: "... Stratford, which owes all of its reputation to its two foster sons—John of Stratford, the Archbishop of Canterbury who built the church, and Hugh Clopton . . ."

The unknown annotator is adding "and to our Roscius . . ." which, in Latin, requires the dative case.

Was Edward de Vere aware of the quintessential actor, Roscius? Yes, indeed! Our new friend Roscius is encountered twice in de Vere's plays:

(1) *3 Henry VI* (V.vi.10). Henry VI is about to be murdered by Gloucester and asks him:

(Continued on page 18)

Latin annotation (cont'd from page 17)

So flies the reckless shepherd from the
wolf;
So first the harmless sheep doth yield
his fleece,
And next his throat unto the butcher's
knife.
What scene of death hath Roscius now
to act?

(2) *Hamlet* (II.ii.392). As a group of theatrical players arrives at Elinsore Castle, Hamlet, feigning madness, mocks Polonius:

Hamlet (aside): I will prophesy he comes
to tell me of the players. Mark it. You
say right, sir, for o' Monday morn
ing, 'twas so indeed.
Polonius: My lord, I have news to tell
you.
Hamlet: My lord, I have news to tell you.
When Roscius was an actor in Rome
Polonius: The actors are come hither,
my lord.
Hamlet: Buzz, buzz.

Translation of the annotation's fifth word: *planè*

Planè is an adverb meaning "certainly," as used by the great Roman writer of comedies, Plautus, who died in 184 B.C. and was paid homage to by Edward de Vere, who used plots from *Amphitrua*, *Aulularia*, and *Manacchi* in his own plays. *Planè* was used by Cicero to mean "distinctly," "clearly" or "intelligibly"—as in "planissime explicare," to explain distinctly or clearly.¹⁶

The fifth letter in "*planè*" is a secretarial "e" (*vide infra*), not an "i." The word is *not* "*plani*," the Latin subjective genitive case of "*planus*" describing the source of an activity, "Shakespeare's impostoring" as it was first translated erroneously.¹⁷

The Latin language used a line over a vowel such as "i" or "e" to express longness in pronunciation. By the middle ages it had disappeared, being replaced by accent marks to indicate either long vowels or stressed syllables,¹⁸ as used by our unknown annotator.

Translation of the sixth word: *nostro*

Nostro means "our" in Latin.

We can now see that the complete, correct translation of the annotation is:

And certainly to our Roscius, William Shakespeare.

So what Camden is saying in the 1590 entry under the town of Stratford-on-Avon is that the otherwise rather undistinguished market town owes its reputation to two eminent local sons, John, who became Archbishop of Canterbury, and Hugh Clopton, who built Stratford's lovely bridge. The annotator is adding his opinion that Stratford also certainly owes its reputation to "our" Roscius, William Shakespeare.

Relevant history of English handwriting

The secretarial hand was an indigenous English creation—developing from the small handwriting characteristic of the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509). Fancy and difficult to write but popular because of its graceful appearance, the secretarial hand was well established in England by 1525 and became the working hand both of scribes and businessmen in the 1500s, lingering into the first half of the 1600s.¹⁹ As Martin Billingsley said in his 1618 analysis of handwriting, *The Pens Excellence*:²⁰

The secretary . . . is so termed (as I conceive) because it is the Secretaries common hand; and partly because it is the only usual hand of England, for dispatching of all manner of businesses.

The italic hand appeared in Italy in 1423 and was officially adopted by the Vatican's papal chancery in 1431. It appeared in England in the early 1500s and rapidly spread. Why? Because of its greater ease and clarity and because emigrating Italian writing teachers dominated European and English handwriting and printing styles in the 16th century.²¹

The italic hand soon became favored by scholars at Cambridge, including Roger Ascham, who tutored the future Queen Elizabeth I in calligraphy as well as Greek and Latin from 1548 to 1550, when Elizabeth was 15 to 17 years old. Having learned the secretarial hand first, she was adept at both scripts, as were Francis Bacon and a number of Elizabethan nobles.²² Edward de Vere and his nemesis, William Cecil, used the italic hand.

There was a continuing battle between the two hands in England in the late 1500s and 1600s, written documents and letters often showing an intermixture but with the italic hand increasingly predominating.²³

Ardent Stratfordian Giles Dawson of the Folger Shakespeare Library summarized the demise of the secretarial hand: "By 1650 it was well on its way towards extinction, and by 1700 it had vanished not without a trace, but vanished as a distinct hand."²⁴

Analysis of the annotation's handwriting: can it be dated?

Our annotation is a mixture of secretarial and italic hands. The two secretarial letters are the "e" and the "f = s".

The clearly secretarial "e" appears four times in *Gulielmo*, *Shakespear* (twice), and *planè*. Each of these "e's" has a horizontal slash near the top which is formed by a broad separate stroke of the pen, quite distinctive from an italic "e," which is the same as our printed "e" today. The italic "e" is well exemplified in personal letters written by Edward de Vere.²⁵ The secretarial "e" persisted longer than all other secretarial letters as the italic script took over.²⁶

The "f" (see figure 1) as the sixth letter in "Shakespear" and the third letter in "Roscio" is a definite secretarial "s" in form, quite different from the italic "s," which looks exactly like our modern printed "s." The "f" persisted so long in mixed scripts that it is given less diagnostic value in dating than the secretarial "e."²⁷

The "t" in *nostro* is flourished but not clearly secretarial.²⁸

In the 1500s the "i" is usually accented rather than dotted, so the dotted "i" in *Gulielmo* and in *Roscio* favors a date in the 1600s or later.

Handwriting analysts try to decide the earliest and latest dates for a piece of writing. Given the important caveats that handwriting analysis is an inexact science and that a sample of six words is extremely small, the author's experts state that the overall predominance of the italic hand (30 out of 35 letters = 86%), mixed with secretarial "e's" and "f's," suggest that our annotation was most likely written between 1620 and 1650.²⁹

Summary and Conclusions

1. The ink annotation found on page 452 of the Huntington Library's copy of William Camden's 1590 Third Edition of *Britannia* correctly reads: "et Gulielmo

Shakespear Roscio planè nostro.”

2. In English this reads: “and certainly to our Roscius, William Shakespeare.”

3. Handwriting analysis suggests the annotation was written between 1620 and 1650.

4. By his annotation, the book’s owner is declaring himself a Stratfordian since he is attributing Stratford-on-Avon’s reputation to Shakespeare as well as to its two foster sons, John, Archbishop of Canterbury and Hugh Clopton, the only two Stratford “alumni” thought worthy of note by Camden.

5. Owners of any book except the Bible in those days were certainly members of the educated class, especially the owner of a book in Latin who wrote a Latin annotation. This does not mean he was a member of the nobility, since most members of Edward de Vere’s University Wits were fluent in Latin and none were nobles, and since other bright commoners like Ben Jonson knew Latin. The identity of the annotator will never be known.

6. Since there is no evidence that Shaksper of Stratford was a famous actor and little or no valid evidence that he was an actor at all, this reference to “Roscius” raises an interesting question. Just what did the annotator know about Shaksper of Stratford? He believes Shaksper is famous enough to be mentioned as an important foster son of Stratford, but in what capacity?

If the annotator knew the works of Shakespeare, why not call him “Our honey-tongued Ovid” or “Our mellifluous Virgilian wordsmith?” In the vast majority of cases, “Roscius” has been used to refer to great actors, including Shakespeare’s two usages in *3 Henry VI* and *Hamlet*. Calling Shaksper “Roscius” would seem to indicate that, despite the lack of evidence, there were some who thought he was an actor and that acting was how he “made it” in London.

7. The annotation, likely written so soon after Shaksper of Stratford’s death in 1616, does confirm the remarkable early success of what Oxfordians view as William Cecil’s clever but monstrous connivance: forcing the genius Edward de Vere into pseudonymity and promoting the illiterate grain merchant and real estate speculator, William Shaksper of Stratford, into hoaxian prominence as the great poet and playwright, William Shakespeare.

Final comments

In addition to the obvious reminder that one must always make certain that research material is copied with uncompromised technical accuracy, sleuthing a cryptic six-word Latin annotation in a 1590 book led to edification in the following scholarly arenas:

1. Paleography, the study of ancient writing.
2. The wonderful intricacies of Lingua Latina, the Latin language.
3. The historical origins and development of shorthand.
4. The life of Tiro and his historically important association with Cicero.
5. The life of Quintus Roscius and use of the terms “Roscius” or “Roscian” for supremely gifted artists in any field, especially actors.
6. Study of Elizabethan handwriting, the evolution of the secretary hand and its demise, and the supremacy of the italic hand up to the present.
7. The techniques of handwriting analysis in chronological dating.

All of these derivatives represent a rather bountiful harvest from six words hastily scribbled more than 300 years ago. Edward de Vere’s viewpoint on literary study and research is once again confirmed:

*Study is like the heaven’s glorious sun.
Love’s Labour’s Lost (I.i.84)*

The author is indebted to Stephen Tabor, Curator of Early Printed Books, Huntington Library, for sage and helpful advice.

References

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2. Rudolph Altrocchi. *Sleuthing in the Stacks*. Harvard Univ. Press, page 3, Cambridge, Mass., 1944.
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11. Thompson, op. cit.
12. Comment made by Roger Stritmatter after presentation of “What Did William Camden Say? Why and When Did He Say It?”, 7th Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference, Portland, Oregon, April 13, 2003.
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21. Young, op. cit.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Dawson and Skipton, op. cit.
25. William Plumer Fowler. *Shakespeare Revealed in Oxford’s Letters*, preface, Peter E. Randall, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1986.
26. Tabor, op. cit.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Mary Robertson, handwriting expert and Chief Curator of Manuscripts, The Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif., 2003, communicated to the author via Stephen Tabor (Tabor, op. cit.).

Oxford's new coat of arms in 1586

If heraldry is a statement about ancestry, what was de Vere saying?

By Barbara Burris

In 1950 Giles Dawson of the Folger Shakespeare Library saw his chance to undermine Charles Wisner Barrell's otherwise solid case for Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, as the Ashbourne portrait sitter. Dawson doubted Barrell's contentions that the entire coat of arms on the painting was the Trentham arms—the family arms of de Vere's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham. Dawson showed the Folger x-rays to a Herald of Arms in the College of Arms in London. The Herald wrote to Dawson that a woman would not have a crest, though the crest could possibly be that of Elizabeth Trentham's father. The Herald found the figures on the x-ray of the shield too indistinct to identify as any particular coat of arms.

But he stated that the arms could not be those of Trentham's husband, the Earl of Oxford, because, "the Arms of de Vere are of a very distinct type quite different from this Coat."¹ The coat of arms (or more precisely the achievement) of the ancient Oxford line consists of a blue boar in the crest and a silver mullet (star) in the first of four quarters of the shield. The crest in the uncovered arms on the painting is of a bird facing left and the shield is of three birds heads with ears (griffins). Barrell had identified the crest as the Trentham griffin and lion crest and the shield as the three griffin heads armed and erased of the Trenthams.

Although the Herald did not provide Dawson any clear evidence against Barrell's claims, the issue of the coat of arms on the painting nevertheless presented a problem for Barrell's case. Curiously, given all the evidence that the painting was one of Oxford, there seemed to be no evidence of the de Vere boar crest in the coat of arms. One would expect the husband's crest to be displayed above the wife's family shield,² especially since the evidence of the uncovered arms, despite alterations, shows Barrell was correct about the Trentham griffins in the shield.³

Apparently, neither Barrell, Dawson, nor the Herald at Arms was aware that Edward de Vere had changed the Oxford heraldry sometime between 1574 and 1586. Although de Vere printed these changes, it is unlikely he registered them with the heraldry authority of the time.

The startling fact is that de Vere eliminated the ancient Oxford boar crest and replaced it with an eagle crest.⁴ It is the latter crest that we will fit into the coat of arms on the Ashbourne painting, showing that the combined crest and shield on the painting is Edward de Vere's new eagle crest above the Trentham family shield.

Book depictions of the de Vere eagle crest

The fact that Edward de Vere replaced the Oxford boar with an eagle is beyond dispute. While still in his youth in 1574, de Vere published *The Composition or making of the most precious Oil called Oleum Magistrate* by Dr. George Baker. On the page opposite Baker's dedication to de Vere appears the Oxford achievement of arms complete with the Oxford shield, earl's coronet, helmet and blue boar atop the cap of maintenance (figure 1). These were the ancient Oxford family arms that had remained unchanged for 16 generations.

But 12 years later, in 1586, when *The English Secretary* (attributed to Angel Day, but possibly by de Vere) was published the Oxford arms opposite the dedication to de Vere appear drastically changed (figure 2). The ancient and venerable blue boar of the Oxford family crest has been removed entirely and in its place is a double crowned eagle crest. The shield supporters have been redrawn and reversed and 13 quarterings added to the shield. These changes are not an anomaly, or a mistake in printing. They are repeated in the 1592 and 1595 re-printings of *Secretary*.⁵ The arms opposite John Farmer's dedication to de Vere in the *The First Set of English Madrigals*, published in

1599, also show the same eagle crest.

The altered Oxford arms are proof that from 1586 (the year he began receiving his £1,000 pension from the Queen) through 1599 de Vere publicly proclaimed he was using a different heraldry from the ancient Oxford clan. Why? Heraldic symbolism represented one's ancestry, and, as one Herald of Arms put it, "the glory of descent from a long line of armigerous ancestors, the glory and the pride of race inseparably interwoven with the inheritance of a name which has been famous in history. The display of a particular coat of arms has been the method, which society has countenanced, of advertising to the world that one is a descendant of some ancestor who performed some glorious deed," and is "the very sign of a particular descent or of a particular rank. By the use of a certain coat of arms, you assert your descent from the person to whom those arms were granted."⁶ As the Herald stated, one of the two essential qualities of armory was that it was a definite sign of hereditary nobility and rank. One of its main purposes was to demonstrate pedigree and connection to a family line.

Coats of arms were still extremely important in the 1500s for these purposes, especially in such a notable aristocratic family as the Earls of Oxford. Why then would Edward de Vere distance himself from the ancient Oxford heraldic arms and, by implication, from the Oxford family line? He did not tinker with the arms for aesthetic purposes but boldly replaced a major component of the Oxford achievement—the entire heraldic crest of the famous blue boar. (Although he maintained the Oxford mullet arms on the shield he added 13 more arms, some of which apparently do not relate to the Oxford line.)

These changes were not done secretly. Thus it appears they were done to make a statement. What was Edward de Vere saying with this heraldry change? The answer appears to go far beyond the Ashbourne

painting issues and may lead to part of the explanation of the great “Shakespeare” mystery.

Thomas Chaucer’s Change in Heraldry

At this point it would be helpful to look at another example of a change in heraldry—one involving Thomas Chaucer, purported son of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer.

In *The Life and Times of Chaucer*, John Gardner discusses the issue of Thomas Chaucer’s legitimacy. The story goes that Thomas was actually the son of John of Gaunt, Chaucer’s patron, and Gaunt’s mistress, Philipa. Gaunt and Chaucer arranged that Chaucer would marry the pregnant Philipa, who was of a higher class than Chaucer. Elizabeth was the first child born to Philipa and Thomas the second child, rumored also to be by Gaunt, not Chaucer. “The tradition begins with Speght who reluctantly reports, damaging his own case, ‘yet some hold opinion (but I know not upon what grounds) that Thomas Chaucer was not the sonne of Geoffrey Chaucer, but rather some kinsman of his whome hee brought up.’”⁷⁷

Gardner relates much of the evidence of special treatment of Philipa and Thomas by Gaunt, including a pension for Thomas that was far larger than Geoffrey’s, later doubled, other large monetary grants to Thomas from Gaunt and Gaunt’s family after his death, and Thomas’s special relations with the Gaunt family. Also, Thomas’s failure to claim Hainault property in his mother’s line (she was a Roet heiress) is an indication of his illegitimacy. Philipa’s sister Katherine’s son by Gaunt (Katherine was also a mistress of Gaunt who eventually married him) was barred from the Hainault property on claims of illegitimacy until Henry IV issued a special writ declaring his legitimacy (one of the legitimized offspring of Gaunt from which derived future lines of kings). Gardner notes that “according to Prof. Williams the likelihood, or anyway suspicion, is that not only Chaucer’s daughter Elizabeth but his son Thomas was biologically a child of Gaunt.”⁷⁸ Russell Kraus wrote a serious



Fig. 1

In figure 1 is the traditional Oxford coat of arms, as published in 1574 in Dr. Baker’s *The Composition or making [etc.]*. Figure 2 shows the new coat of arms that first appeared in 1586 as part of the dedication to Oxford in Angel Day’s *The English Secretary*.



Fig. 2

study of the claim in *The Paternity of Thomas Chaucer* in hopes of disproving it “but ended up convinced that there was no other way of accounting for the facts.”⁷⁹

But what concerns us here is the evidence of changes to Thomas Chaucer’s coat of arms. Gardner states that on his tomb Thomas took his mother’s Roet arms, but not Geoffrey Chaucer’s, and though she was of higher degree, Chaucer’s fame as a poet “makes this omission curious.”⁸⁰ But “Thomas’s apparent alteration of his father’s arms is even stranger. A seal used by Thomas Chaucer in 1409 is marked S (G)HOFRAICHAUCER”—it is not Thomas’s seal but Geoffrey’s—“and on this seal we find a bend entire. All other surviving coats of Thomas Chaucer exhibit a bend countercolored.” The explanation this was a personal whim is unconvincing “since the alteration could be construed as a sign of bastardy.”⁸¹

The double crown

What statement was Edward de Vere making with these changes to the Oxford arms? To answer that question we must examine the changes that he made, again

focusing on the changes to the crest.

We notice that the new eagle crest is atop a double crown. The earl’s coronet (a type of crown or coronet of rank) still sits above the shield beneath the helmet. But instead of the chapeau or cap of maintenance upon which the old Oxford boar stood there is another crown from which the eagle emerges. This is an uncommon double crown crest.

The second crown in the new crest is not another earl’s crown or coronet—each rank in the peerage has a distinctive coronet or crown structure. This crown is unlike any of the peerage coronets or crowns. It is a unique ornamental crown. The design resembles Fleurs-de-lis with the two “side petals” turned up rather than down. The configuration of de Vere’s unique abstracted ornamental crown resembles the flames of a fire (see figures 3 and 4, next page). It is a crown of stylized “flames” beneath the eagle with upraised wings about to fly away (in heraldry an eagle rising wings displayed and inverted). This combination strongly suggests a phoenix. In heraldry a phoenix is portrayed as an eagle issuing from flames. Thus the pecu-

(Continued on page 22)

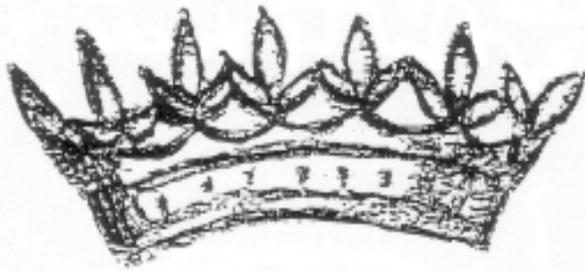


Fig. 3

Figure 3 is an enlargement that shows more clearly the unique, atypical design of the “crown” in the 1586 crest. The design appears to be an attempt to represent “stylized licks of flame” beneath the crest’s eagle (similar to the flames depicted in Elizabeth’s “Phoenix Jewel,” figure 4), thus inviting close observers to see the eagle as a phoenix.

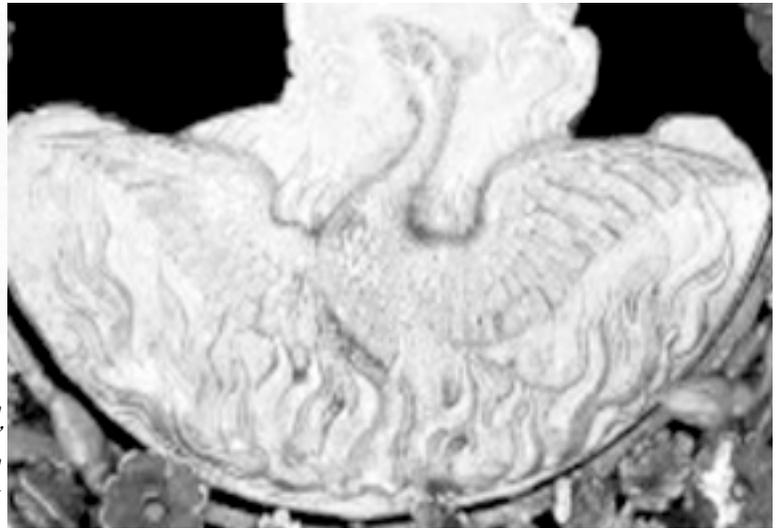


Fig. 4

By permission, British Museum

Coat of arms (cont’d from p. 21)

liar configuration of this second crown and a major part of its function is explained.¹²

The Phoenix Connection

But what does the phoenix have to do with Edward de Vere? We know that one of the appellations of the Queen was “the Phoenix.” Shakespeare’s last poem was called *The Phoenix and the Turtle* (dove) symbolizing (to many Oxfordians) the Queen as the Phoenix and the author as the Turtle (dove). A portrait of the Queen (c. 1575-76) is called the Phoenix portrait because she is wearing a large jeweled phoenix pin. The Phoenix “was one of her favorite emblems and appears in different forms on her portraits.”¹³ We know that Edward de Vere gave the Queen elaborate jeweled pins as New Year’s gifts, and one is noted from him in 1575 (new calendar) of a ship studded with diamonds.¹⁴

Karen Hearn, in her book on paintings of the era, notes, “The phoenix did not come into use as a symbol of Elizabeth until the 1570s. A surviving ‘Phoenix Jewel’ . . . dates from c. 1570-80. Within an enamelled wreath of flowers is set a gold profile bust of Elizabeth I, attired similarly to the present portrait, with a phoenix in flames on the reverse.”¹⁵ This phoenix jewel is dated c. 1574 by Roy Strong¹⁶ (see figure 4).

Hearn also notes that in 1586 (new calendar) a phoenix jewel was recorded

as a New Year’s gift to the Queen.¹⁷ This is, of course, the same year that Oxford’s new coat of arms with its eagle/phoenix crest makes its first appearance in *The English Secretary*.

It is easy to see the Queen making use of Diana, Artemis, the moon, etc., as part of her persona—virgin goddesses promoted as her public image. But why is she associated with the phoenix? And where did this association come from in the mid-1570s? Mainstream texts attempt to explain it as relating to her personal history of having risen from the ashes of her 1550s imprisonment and near extinction under the bloody reign of her Catholic sister Mary. But perhaps part of the answer also lies in the Seymour arms, the crest of which is a phoenix.

The Seymour crest is described in the General Armory as, “Out of a ducal coronet or (gold), a phoenix-gold issuing from flames.” This would appear to be the primary connection to the de Vere eagle/phoenix crest. The eagle/phoenix in Edward de Vere’s crest is also gold as we know from other representations.

Is the Seymour phoenix crest merely a strange coincidence? Or is it the connection to the stylized crown of flames with the rising eagle alluding to the phoenix on the altered crest of Edward de Vere? Is this Seymour phoenix also the connection to the Queen as the Phoenix that began in the 1570s?

We know there was a connection between Thomas Seymour and Princess Elizabeth. Much has been written about Seymour’s advances toward the young

Elizabeth in the late 1540s, and about rumors of Elizabeth’s pregnancy by him and the “...lurid rumours of her having given birth to Seymour’s bastard.”¹⁸

Enough credence was given to these rumors that her servants were arrested and interrogated and she herself was interrogated. Further evidence was Elizabeth’s obvious love for Seymour who had been making plans to marry her—plans that leaked to the public not long before he was arrested for treason. Shortly after she became Queen, Seymour’s friends presented her with a portrait of Thomas Seymour with a poem on it.

De Vere’s heraldic statement

Could Edward de Vere have been making a heraldic statement about his connection to Thomas Seymour and the Phoenix Queen—as the illegitimate offspring of that relationship? Everything in the changed heraldry seems to indicate that.¹⁹ Edward de Vere replaced the Oxford boar crest with a stylized eagle/phoenix crest that appears to be a dual reference to Seymour’s phoenix crest and Elizabeth as the phoenix. That these changes are not coincidental is confirmed by changes Edward de Vere made to the Oxford supporters in other depictions of his changed arms that connect to the Seymour’s unicorn supporter.^{20, 21}

In his chapter entitled “Marks of Bastardy” from *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* Fox-Davies states that despite later times when arms were improperly assumed, in

the past “The use of arms was formerly evidence of pedigree.”²² It was evidence that could be taken to court as late as the early 1800s. That de Vere was making a statement about his own pedigree with his major changes to the Oxford family heraldry is hardly questionable. These changes were a proclamation. Fox-Davies notes that most changes to heraldry are known from changes made by royal bastards. And he states that “one of the most curious bastardized coats is that of Henry Fitz-Roy, Duke of Richmond and Somerset, illegitimate son of Henry VIII.”²³

One might contend that even if de Vere’s new crest is that of a phoenix, it cannot be conclusively linked to the Seymour phoenix crest because the phoenix is not an uncommon crest in heraldry.

But there is corroboration of the Seymour connection in both the 13 added arms and in other later representations of the new Oxford arms where even more extensive changes have been made. It cannot again be coincidence that one of the Seymour supporters is a unicorn and in two other later representations of de Vere’s changed arms the Oxford boar supporter has been replaced by one with a unicorn body with added unique allusive features relating to Oxford and to Shake-speare’s works. These peculiar features are not found in any other heraldic representation of a unicorn. In one of the renditions no boar remains from the original Oxford coat of arms in either crest or supporters. This change to a unicorn supporter bolsters the interpretation of the phoenix crest. How likely is it that Edward de Vere’s changed heraldry would incorporate both a very direct allusion to the Seymour phoenix crest *and* the Seymour unicorn supporter?

Furthermore the Oxford shield depicted in the 1574 Dr. Baker book shows eight quarterings of the Oxford arms. But *none* of the 13 additional quarterings that de Vere added to these eight in the changed coat of arms—as depicted in *The English Secretary*—appear in a previous major version, the 13th Earl of Oxford’s great shield of the Oxford line.

Yet, investigation of some of these added arms again shows connections to the Seymour arms and to royal arms. In some of

these added arms there is punning, allusion and changes that cannot be connected to recognized arms.²⁴ These changes will be explored in future articles. They are extremely important to the Shake-speare mystery.

In a future article we will also return to the Ashbourne painting, where we will link this changed de Vere eagle/phoenix crest to the crest on the Shake-speare portrait.

References

1. Letter to Giles E. Dawson from Anthony R. Wagner, Richmond Herald, 18th April 1950, Coat of Arms Identification File, The Ashbourne Portrait File. Folger Shakespeare Library. Washington, DC
2. One would expect the husband’s crest to be used even if these arms were portrayed incorrectly, as is not uncommon in paintings. The shield in a combined or marshaled arms would have been impaled with the husband’s or baron’s arms on the dexter and the wife’s father’s arms on the sinister side. In this combination on the painting the Trentham family shield is surmounted by Edward de Vere’s eagle crest. It is the author’s contention that the arms were added to the painting after Edward de Vere’s death by his widow. Inaccuracies in heraldry on paintings is a common occurrence due to patron or artist ignorance.
3. In previous articles we have provided evidence of alterations to the coat of arms while in the Folger’s possession, both before and after their X-rays were made in 1948.
4. Ruth Loyd Miller, *Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*, Vol. II. (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 51. Note: Miller displays the eagle crest achievement from the 1599 Farmer book, but there is an earlier use of this changed achievement in *The English Secretary* in 1586. She mis-identified the eagle as a falcon in the crest.
5. Presumably these changes are on the 1599 reprint also, but the copy on microfilm at the University of Michigan library did not show this page.
6. A.C. Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry*, revised and annotated by J.P. Brooke-Little, Richmond Herald of Arms, (Melbourne, Australia: Thomas Nelson Ltd., 1969), pp. 17-18.
7. John Gardner, *The Life and Times of Chaucer* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1977), 158.
8. Ibid, 158.
9. Ibid, 158.

10. Ibid, 159.
11. Ibid, 159.
12. Fox-Davies, op. cit., 180. Phoenix are usually depicted as demi-eagles but there are full eagles with legs used in phoenix crests.
13. Jane Ashelford, *A Visual History of the Costume of the Sixteenth Century* (N.Y. Drama Book Pub., 1983), #85, p. 87.
14. Miller, op. cit., Vol II, 525.
15. Karen Hearn, editor, *Dynasties, Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530 to 1630* (London: Tate Gallery, 1995), # 34 Elizabeth I, the Phoenix portrait.
16. Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, (London: Random House Pimlico edition, 1999), 73.
17. Hearn, op. cit. .
18. David Starkey, *Elizabeth* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 77. Starkey, like many biographers and historians, still clings to and promotes the myth of the virgin Queen—a double standard that would be laughable if applied to a man.
19. There is other independent corroboration of Edward de Vere’s links to Elizabeth and the Tudors aside from the heraldry. Two examples are the “crown signature” and the personal name Edward. Oxford signed his name with the “crown signature” - a “crown” above and a line below with 7 slashes (denoting Edward VII)—from November 1569 until the Queen’s burial and the end of the Tudor line on the throne. Afterward he abruptly stopped using this form of signature though he remained 17th Earl of Oxford until his death. Another curious fact is that before Edward, 17th Earl of Oxford, there were no Edwards (the name of Elizabeth’s beloved half brother, Edward VI) in the Oxford line and no Henry’s (both Tudor names), only Roberts, Johns and Aubreys. Also, when the 16th Earl died, his daughter contested Edward de Vere’s legitimacy and right to inherit. The Queen quashed the Court proceedings.
20. There is not space here to explore other heraldry changes to the shield and supporters in other sources that confirm the Seymour and Queen connections to de Vere’s changed coat, as well as links in these changes to Shake-speare through Ovid and the Actaeon myth.
21. It appears that at least one of the thirteen added arms relates to the royal arms and is not connected to the Oxford line.
22. Fox-Davies, op. cit., 390.
23. Ibid., 401.
24. Punning on names and corresponding arms was common in ancient heraldry. Allusion was also made in arms. The Duke of Richmond, bastard son of Henry VIII, made allusion to his mother’s arms in his Coat.

Book Reviews

Chasing Shakespeares. By Sarah Smith. New York: Simon & Schuster (Atria imprint), 2003.

By Richard F. Whalen

Take heart, Oxfordians. This may be the novel on the Shakespeare authorship question that captures the imagination of the general reading public and wins a place on the best-seller lists.

Sarah Smith is the author of three highly acclaimed historical novels that reached bestseller status. Two of them were named "Notable Books of the Year" by *The New York Times*. They have also been published in England and in 12 languages. Her publisher calls her a "literary star on the rise" and compares *Chasing Shakespeares* to a best-selling novel by A.S. Byatt.

So did the *Boston Globe* in its lengthy review on June 9, which called it "a smart, sexy, modern-day mystery reminiscent of A.S. Byatt's *Possession*." Opening with the question: "Who really wrote Shakespeare's plays?", the reviewer says the "debate has raged (albeit quietly) in the halls of academia for decades. Now, it comes to life in the able hands of Brookline-based Sarah Smith."

More recently, *The New York Times Book Review* gave Smith's book major play, but its reviewer, Jeff Turrentine, "a writer living in Los Angeles," was looking for a different book. Instead of reviewing Smith's, he wishes she had written "a nimble satire" or a non-fiction book "framing the debate for lay readers" or a memoir on her conversion or a novel set in the Elizabethan era. Not very helpful for the reader of the review. At least, the reviewer did not reject the Oxfordian proposition, nor did he even scorn it.

Sarah Smith is not only an accomplished novelist, she is also an archival researcher with outstanding academic credentials. She is a graduate of Harvard College, where she studied Shakespeare with the poet Robert Lowell and Marjorie Garber, a leading Shakespeare professor. Harvard University awarded her a Ph.D. in English literature. She has taught at sev-

eral colleges. She is the webmaster of the Mystery Writers of America, and a member of the board of the Shakespeare Fellowship, publisher of this newsletter.

Adept at scholarly research papers as well as historical mystery novels, she published a paper in last year's *Oxfordian*

"I Don't Believe in Oxford"

Joe Roper, the grad student and narrator of Sarah Smith's Chasing Shakespeares, and Posy Gould, a glamorous new friend, are looking at a letter signed by William of Stratford that seems to say he was not the dramatist. Joe thinks it must be a forgery although it looks authentic. He says, "I don't believe in Oxford." Posy replies:

"You are such a —" She looked up at me, long, appraisingly, but almost vulnerably, too. "Are you just trying to lose this letter? You're supposed to be smart, I can't believe you're being this stupid. We just found Shakespeare. I knew Shakespeare knew Cecil, knew Shakespeare went to Italy, a lot of people think Shakespeare didn't write the plays, and now we have proof, and I want to know all about this letter. Why did Shakespeare write it to Fulke Greville, and did Greville know Elizabeth Vere, and—I can't believe you don't want to know about this."

"Read the anti-Oxford site and just calm down. Oxford can't be Shakespeare."

"Why not?"

"Oxford died in 1604." I was paging down the anti-Oxford site. "Shakespeare kept writing plays until 1613."

"You'd have to redate the plays," Posy mused.

journal on "The Paine of Pleasure," a long, anonymous poem ascribed to Anthony Munday, which she came across while researching her novel. She demonstrates that it is impossible that Munday wrote it and that the likely author was Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford. In April, she delivered a paper on Angel Day's *The English Secretarie* at the seventh annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon.

Chasing Shakespeares is a literary detective story set in Boston, London, Stratford and Hedingham. It's driven by strongly motivated characters and should appeal to a wide range of readers but especially those in academia. It has the PR powerhouse of Simon & Schuster behind it. (As it

happens, co-founder Lincoln Schuster was an Oxfordian.) Bookstores across the nation are sponsoring book signings for her.

In her novel, the detective chasing the Shakespeares is a graduate student at Northeastern University who hopes to write a biography of the dramatist. Cataloguing a collection of old documents, including many obvious forgeries, he comes across a letter from Will Shakspeare of Stratford that seems to be authentic. But, to his dismay, it indicates that he was not the author of the plays and poems. Complications arrive in the person of a rich, California "valley girl" who is researching William Cecil, Lord Burghley, at Harvard. She takes him to London first class to have a manuscript expert verify the letter's authenticity and appraise its value. Torn by the possible loss of his beloved Stratford man, running into Oxford at every turn, he suffers an agonizing reappraisal of what he believes, who he is and what it all means for his career and his image of the man who wrote Shakespeare's works.

It's a first-rate literary detective story with a struggling graduate student, a glamorous seductress, a beautiful would-be nun, deceptive villains and a suspenseful plot line with all the requisite twists and turns. Professors Marjorie Garber and Helen Vendler of Harvard make cameo appearances, as do brothers Charles and William Boyle of the Shakespeare Fellowship. One scene takes place at an Oxfordian

conference, and a few prominent Oxfordians are pseudonymously limned among the supporting cast.

Sarah Smith was a devoted Stratfordian until she met Joanna Wexler, also of Brookline, a Boston suburb. Wexler loaned her books and urged her to write about Oxford. (Wexler, a woman of infectious enthusiasm, also introduced Derek Jacobi to the case for Oxford, and Jacobi is now a confirmed Oxfordian.)

Smith's three historical mysteries are *The Vanished Child* (1992), *The Knowledge of Water* (1996)—both *New York Times* notable books—and *A Citizen of the Country* (2000). She is currently working on a novel about the survivors of the Titanic sinking in 1912.

The Dark Side of Shakespeare: An Iron-fisted Romantic in England's Most Perilous Times. Vol. 1 of III. By W. Ron Hess (iUniverse, 2002)

By Richard Desper

When delving into the life of the putative poet and playwright "William Shakespeare," it may well be said (irony intended) that there is less to the man than meets the eye. Neither the background, qualifications, nor the historical record, seem to support the historical William Shakspeare as the Bard. Ron Hess, in the first book of his planned trilogy¹ has undertaken an analogous if somewhat opposite task—he has examined the facts about the 17th Earl of Oxford, most likely the actual identity of the author "William Shakespeare," and shows that there is much more to the man than meets the eye. Indeed, it would seem, if we are to believe Mr. Hess, that there is much more to the "Shakespeare enterprise" than we had ever imagined.

The "Shakespeare enterprise" is a key concept in Hess's book. In his own words, "... The real question of importance should first be, 'WHAT was Shake-spear?'" In the First Folio, Ben Jonson calls Shakespeare "Soule of the Age! ... Thou art a monument [sic] without a tomb!" suggesting Shakespeare's purpose, that of defining the character and tone of an age. Hess sees the written works as only part of a larger undertaking, with Oxford playing an international role embodying a mythical hero, the "Paladin of England," identified (through Greek etymology) with Pallas Athena as the "Spear-Shaker." Whatever other role he may have had beyond that of a writer, he was prominent, as a writer, in molding opinion first at Court, then in the world at large. That in itself is no small matter, for perception, image, whatever one might call it, counted a great deal in those days, even as it does today.

According to Hess, the enterprise involved a long-term alliance among a core group composed of Earls of Sussex, Oxford, and Pembroke, along with Lords Hunsdon and Effingham, all with key roles at Court and in the London stage. Beginning in the 1570s,² "the alliance controlled the public and semi-public stages, but I argue

that the private homes³ of those in the alliance were where the 'Shakespeare' plays each were 'originated.'"

The alliance used stage plays as a public relations part of its efforts for promoting its desired goals, both in the earlier period when the author was anonymous and later on when the pseudonym "Shakespeare" was introduced. The core of this alliance was formed, according to Hess, as early as

"The 'Shakespeare enterprise' is a key concept in Hess's book... [he] sees the written works as only part of a larger undertaking, with Oxford playing an international role embodying a mythical hero, the 'Paladin of England...'"

1569-70: "Effingham and Hunsdon, along with Oxford, had served under Sussex in the military campaigns of 1569-70 to put down the Northern Rebellion... Sussex's core team were brothers in combat, and they watched an ungrateful government almost destroy Sussex in the midst of his command. . . . Sussex literally lived on a knife-edge, and more important than Oxford's honor and safety was the welfare of his allies." This "band of brothers," men who had shared the rigors and perils of both battle and court intrigue, were bonded together as only companions-at-arms may bond among men, pursuing a common agenda for themselves and for their nation, of which the "Shakespeare Enterprise" was a part. The members of the alliance held key roles in shaping the cultural destiny of England. Sussex and Hunsdon, as successive Lord Chamberlains of the Household, along with Effingham as

Sussex's assistant, had authority for decades over the censorship of plays, along with control of the stage companies through their underling, the Master of the Revels. These three, along with their ally, the Earl of Oxford (a.k.a. the "Lord Great Chamberlain"), held sway over the stage in its Elizabethan heyday through their sponsorship and control of various acting companies: the Chamberlain's Men (in various incarnations), the Admiral's Men (Effingham became Lord Admiral and, incidentally, commanded the fleet which turned back the Spanish Armada in 1588), the combined Oxford's/Worcester's Men, and St. Paul's Boys, under the tutelage of Oxford's secretary, John Lyly. According to Hess, the alliance later enlisted the 6th Earl of Derby, Oxford's son-in-law, who was sponsor of "Derby's Men," then continued even beyond the death of Oxford with the Herbert brothers, the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, the latter another Oxford son-in-law. The Herberts eventually became the "incomparable paire" who published the First Folio in 1623.

What of Oxford's role in history? It has been said on the subject "People want clear-cut answers, but history's really messy"⁴: to a great extent though which we view the past "through a glass darkly," with less evidence than one would like. However, history affords us some level of contemporary documentation of Oxford in a role of the gathering of intelligence, a concept pursued (if not originated) by Hess. In his landmark book, for instance, Charlton Ogburn Jr. tells us: "We have a strong indication from Gabriel Harvey... that Oxford served as the eyes of the crown on his travels when he [Harvey] wrote in *Speculum Tuscanismi* 'not like the lynx to spy out secrets and privities of state.'"⁵ Hess further notes the testimony in Thomas Churchyard's book *Discourse* of a voyage by Oxford and Churchyard in 1567 bearing messages to the Prince of Orange in the Netherlands.

Hess remarks extensively on Oxford's possible role in international intrigue, juxtaposed in the 1570s against Don Juan of Austria, natural half-brother to the King of Spain and the great military leader of the day, a role perhaps not as far-fetched as it

(Continued on page 26)

Book reviews (continued from page 26) might seem at first glance. Oxfordians such as Holland⁶ and Clark⁷ have long noted that the “Shakespeare” plays abound with topical references dated to that decade, including allusions to this Don Juan. Indeed, much of Volume I is devoted to Hess’s identification of historical personages with characters in the “Shakespeare” plays, identifying the playwright as an intimate observer on the stage of international realpolitique, if not an active participant.

As Enoch Powell puts it, the Shakespeare plays “were the works of someone who had been ‘in the kitchen’ . . . it comes straight from experience.”⁸ And while some may take issue with Hess’s proposal that Oxford made a voyage from Venice to Turkey in 1575, there is some evidence supporting this. Oxford’s whereabouts are unaccounted for during several months of the summer of 1575, and he had earlier indicated in a letter: “the king [of France] has given me letters of recommendation to his ambassador in the Turk’s Court . . . perhaps I shall bestow two or three months to see Constantinople, and some part of Greece.”⁹ While Hess’s proposal is somewhat speculative, it is clearly labeled as such, has foundation in fact, and is worth bringing forth.

Hess’s book abounds with notes, appendices, references, an index, and a bibliography which attest to the extensive research involved in its preparation, a level of research unmatched by orthodox Shakespeare scholars. He speaks with logic and clarity, as when he debunks the orthodox “voice of authority”¹⁰ in such matters as the dating of the plays.¹¹ He deftly skewers their inconsistent logic, for instance, as to what standards are to be accepted or disdained as it suits their purposes in one instance vs. another. His writing style exudes candor, freshness, and openness—presenting the evidence, offering alternate interpretations (including his own, of course), and inviting readers to draw their own conclusions.

For those who have found his speaking style entertaining, it has translated into his written work as well, resulting in a colorful presentation, which abounds in Hess’s rich personal literary images.

References:

1. Volume I of the trilogy was printed in softcover in 2002, 620 pgs. \$34.95, ISBN 0-595-24777-6 (www.iUniverse.com). Volumes II and III, coming out in softcover later in 2003, were reviewed from preprints.
2. Hess, Vol. II, preprint p. 12.5. Chapter 12 in this volume delineates Hess’s proposals about the nature, composition, and extent of what he calls “the Shakespeare Enterprise.”

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3. Many Elizabethan gentlemen and nobles had private stages for plays in their homes; one survives today at Otley Hall in Suffolk, the ancestral home of the Gosnold family.
4. Don Carleton, University of Texas, Austin, in *U.S. News & World Report*, 07/24/2000, pg. 331, quote by Hess at the beginning of Volume I.
5. Charlton Ogburn Jr., *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: the Myth and the Reality*, EPM Publications, McLean, VA, 1984, p. 530.
6. Adm. H. H. Holland, *Shakespeare, Oxford, and Elizabethan Times*, Archer, London, 1933.
7. Eva Turner Clark, *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare’s Plays*, 3rd Ed., Kennikat Press, New York, 1974.
8. Enoch Powell, former British cabinet member, in the *Frontline* television program tape, “The Shakespeare Mystery,” WGBH, Boston, 1991.
9. Katherine Chiljan, *Letters and Poems of Edward, Earl of Oxford*, 1998, p. 17; Ogburn Jr., p. 542; B.M. Ward, *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, John Murray,

London, 1928, p. 102.

10. Hess poses questions and offers his opinions, an essential difference from many orthodox scholars who often offer their opinions as though they were facts. In Aristotelian logic, this is known as a fallacious argument from authority”. In a court of law, a qualified expert in his field—e.g. a forensic scientist or a physician—is allowed to offer his opinions in his field of expertise as though they were fact. This is the only carefully limited situation in which testimony of opinion, rather than witnessing to fact, is allowed in Anglo-American jurisprudence. The “fallacy” occurs when one misuses such a claim for authority, arguing solely from authority without facts to support one’s position. Oxfordians are well acquainted with such abuses among orthodox scholars.
11. See Hess’ Appendix B in Volume II regarding the controversy over dating of plays.

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A year in the life

By Hank Whittemore

1586: "Buy a thousand pound, buy a rope"

As the year 1586 dawned upon England, government leaders increasingly feared attempts on Queen Elizabeth's life while preparing for potential civil war. The best they could do to protect her from assassination was to maintain "a powerful household guard," Joel Hurstfield writes, and "an elaborate counter-espionage system to root out the plotters before their plans were ripe." The Queen's ministers had already made clear that any such plot would result in the execution of still-captive Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, and the exclusion of her son, James of Scotland, from ever wearing the English crown.

"It is a chilling thought," Hurstfield adds, "to call to mind that these eminent statesmen would prefer to plunge England into a period of bloody warfare rather than see a second Catholic Mary sit on the throne of England."

Meanwhile a reluctant Elizabeth had also accepted that she must now strike against Spain in the Netherlands before King Philip's buildup for an invasion was complete. Spanish forces under Alexander of Parma were pushing the Dutch from one line of defense to another, while the Catholic League in France had become openly allied with Spain, creating the propitious moment for an all-out attack on England. Having slowly and unwillingly accepted war as inevitable, Elizabeth in 1585 had concluded a treaty with the Netherlands and promised an expensive army of assistance. Hurstfield notes:

"If we are looking for a turning point in Elizabeth's reign, this is surely it. She was now fifty-two years of age, and, although she had 18 years left to live and reign, she would never know peace again. Her hopes of maintaining stability and security by diplomatic means had turned to ashes." Now the Queen must "stretch and strain her resources almost to the breaking-point, live on her capital" and "scrape around for all manner of revenue" to save her life while preventing her country's destruction.¹

Five days after Antwerp had fallen to Parma on August 19, 1585, Colonel John Norris left for Holland in charge of 4,000 soldiers; and following along with 2,000 additional men had been 35-year-old Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, who arrived at

Flanders a month later. William Cecil, Lord Burghley wrote to inform the earl he had been appointed Master of the Horse, but by mid-October he was returning home while his adversary Robert Dudley, Earl of

But that the tennis-court keeper knows better than I, for it is a low ebb of linen with thee when thou keepest not racket there; as thou hast not done a great while, because the rest of thy low countries have made a shift to eat up thy holland. *2 Henry IV*, 2.2.18-22

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If we are looking for
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Leicester was set to take full command of the English presence in Holland. Whether it was the Queen or Oxford himself who cut short his mission is unknown, but getting set to replace him in charge of the Horse was Leicester's nephew Philip Sidney, whom Elizabeth also made Governor of Flushing.²

With these events in mind we may notice a humorous portrait of Sidney in *2 Henry IV* as the comic character Poins.³ Prince Hal pokes fun at the "many pair of silk stockings" owned by Poins-as-Sidney, including "thy peach-colored ones" along with "the inventory of thy shirts, as one for superfluity, and another for use!" Then the future King Henry V makes obvious reference to the 1579 Oxford-Sidney tennis court quarrel (after which Elizabeth had supported Oxford by citing the lower rank of Sidney, who thereupon sulked off in a huff), and to Sir Philip's later commission to the Low Countries:

"Poins has not played tennis recently because he has no spare shirt to change after exercising," explains the Riverside Shakespeare, adding that the "low countries" or brothels had contrived to strip him naked of his "holland" or fine linen.⁴ Traditional editors also duly observe the pun on Holland suggested by low countries, but they necessarily miss the great fun Oxford was having with Sidney's "low ebb" or lower rank and self-imposed exile from the royal tennis court, not to mention his more recent government commission.

While de Vere might have written the scene with Poins before Sidney's departure in November 1585, he would not have penned it later than September 1586, when Sir Philip was mortally wounded at Zutphen and became, in death, a national hero. These few lines help uncover the dating of *2 Henry IV* and reinforce Eva Turner Clark's observation that this play, ostensibly recreating England's past, also reflects the treasonable actions of the Babington plotters, who aimed to murder Elizabeth and replace her with Mary Stuart on behalf of Spain and the Pope—a scheme brought to the brink of fruition during 1586 by the crafty manipulations of Francis Walsingham, Secretary of State, with the help of his state-sponsored espionage network, and fully exposed that August.

"The year 1586 was an important one in the life of the Earl of Oxford," Ms. Clark writes. "He had been disappointed in his hope for a military career when he was recalled a few months earlier from his post in the Low Countries. What filled his time during the first half of 1586 is not clear, although it is a reasonable conjecture that he was busy arranging plays for the stage, even if not writing them himself, plays which would have a definite influence on the mind of the public and prepare it for the coming

(Continued on page 28)

Year in the Life (Continued from p. 27)
of the Spanish Armada, which in 1586 was so obviously imminent.”⁵

June 21: Lord Burghley, writing to Secretary Walsingham about money matters concerning the war against Spain in the Netherlands, pauses to urge him to confront the Queen about impending financial relief for his son-in-law, requesting the busy spymaster to convey any news to his son Robert Cecil on behalf of Anne Cecil: “I pray you send me word if you had any commodity to speak with Her Majesty to speak for my Lord of Oxford and what hope there is, and if you have any, to let Robert Cecil understand it to relieve his sister, who is more troubled for her husband’s lack than he himself.”⁶

Oxford’s financial position had been steadily declining. Of the 56 separate sales of land during his lifetime, B. M. Ward reports, no fewer than 32 had been made between 1580 and 1585, a crucial time in the rise of dramatic entertainment at the private Blackfriars playhouse, at Court and in public theaters. “On the face of it there is little to show for such a high expenditure,” Ward notes, adding that de Vere’s life in this period had been “remarkable for its lack of ostentation” while he had never been called upon, at least not officially, “to undertake any of those duties that so often impoverished Elizabethan courtiers.”⁷

Yet just when events at home and abroad were intensifying, the Lord Treasurer was pointedly reminding the Secretary of State of his role as go-between for news from Elizabeth in regard to Oxford’s purse strings. According to Burghley’s letter, however, the earl himself was far less concerned about his dire financial straits than anyone else, including his wife.

June 23: The Government makes its most sweeping attempt of the reign to exercise severe control over publications. A Decree of the Star Chamber orders all books henceforth to be printed only in London, Oxford or Cambridge; Archbishop John Whitgift of Canterbury and the Bishop of London must see and approve all written material beforehand; and any literature that contradicts “the form and meaning of any Restraint or Ordinance” issued by the Queen or her Privy Council will result “upon pain to have all such presses, letters, and instruments” taken away “to be defaced and made unserviceable for imprinting forever.” From now on England’s writers will live under the strictest censorship.⁸

June 25: Oxford, writing to Burghley for a temporary loan of £200, provides more evidence that Robert Cecil, 23, is rising within the Government; and he confirms that Secretary Walsingham has been paying close attention to his needs by interceding with the Queen at Court on his behalf.

“My very good Lord,” the earl writes, “as I have been beholding unto you divers times & of late by my brother R. Cecil, whereby I have been the better able to

*“In what relation to
the Elizabethan
government—if any—
did Oxford help
generate and galva-
nize the renaissance
of literature and
drama from the
1560s through
the 1580s...”*

follow my suit, wherein I have some comfort at this time from Master Secretary Walsingham, so am I now bold to crave your Lordship’s help at this present. For, being now almost at a point to taste that good which Her Majesty shall determine, yet am I one that hath long besieged a fort and not able to compass the end or reap the fruit of his travail, being forced to levy his siege for want of munition.”

Until recently Oxfordians have erroneously assumed this letter was written on June 25, 1585; but within the context of 1586 it falls one day before the Queen will sign the order for a Privy Seal Warrant, granting Oxford a £1,000 annual allowance from the Exchequer of the Treasury to be paid regularly in quarterly installments.⁹ His use of military language reflects the current war-time atmosphere, while his self-portrait as one unable to “reap the fruit of his travail” suggests he has been rendering services to the Queen, and paying expenses himself, for a long time without compensation. He goes on to ask Burghley for the loan “till Her

Majesty performeth her promise”—a previous pledge, it would seem, that Elizabeth had been extremely slow in fulfilling.¹⁰

The only discernible services Oxford had rendered, Clark notes, involved literature, writing for the stage and maintaining his acting companies. In the decade since Oxford had returned from his Continental tour in 1576, she contends, he had been churning out the first versions of nearly all the immortal comedies, tragedies and chronicle histories which he would revise and publish later: “The 10-year delay in the coming of the Spanish soldier and sailor made possible to England and to the world the production of the world’s greatest dramas,” writes Clark, adding that by the end of 1586 the earl “had almost completed the series of plays known since 1598 under the name of William Shakespeare.”¹¹

By this reckoning de Vere had already created the foundational texts that he could revise at will, deleting or adding allusions as contemporary situations warranted. Now he was also free to accept new challenges, just when Her Majesty along with Cecil and Walsingham needed his services most—to help rouse national unity amid potential struggles around the throne and promote patriotic fervor against Spain.

June 26: Queen Elizabeth signs the Warrant commanding the Treasurer of the Exchequer to pay Oxford an annual allowance of £1,000 with no accounting required. His grant comes via the same channels, by the same formula, as the one first issued to Walsingham in July 1582 for activities of his Secret Service, when her spymaster was authorized to receive £750 per year from the Exchequer in quarterly installments. By now the Secretary’s annual grant has risen to £2,000, but that is as far as Elizabeth will go, even for her spymaster during the Armada year of 1588. At this juncture, desperately needing all available cash to secure her own safety and the survival of her realm, while funding an entire network of espionage requiring continual payments to foreign and domestic spies, the Queen also decides to support Edward de Vere in the same manner.¹²

The singular grant raises a major question: In what relation to the Elizabethan government—if any—did Oxford help generate and galvanize the renaissance of literature and drama from the 1560s through the 1580s, culminating in the works of the 1590s and beyond that were attributed to

Shakespeare? Was he working primarily by himself, for private ends? Or was he playing an invisible role within the government's structure, in service to the Queen and Burghley? Was Oxford a lone wolf or a team player?

This column argues that all evidence points to a blend of extremes, revealing the Lord Great Chamberlain as both "insider" and "outsider" – responding directly to the challenges faced by his country, in accord with the policies of its leaders, while following the dictates of his individual talent and conscience. Seen through this lens, a singular genius was prompted to fulfill his greatness by extraordinary pressures, namely the twin threats of civil war and outright war itself, during a unique time in his nation's history. In this view the "personal" and "political" motives of Oxford joined to produce a result far greater than the sum of their parts.

In practical terms the argument is that he aligned himself with Elizabeth and Burghley, along with Walsingham, to help defend the Queen against assassination, secure political-religious unity and survive the attempt by Spain, sanctioned by the Pope, to conquer England. Oxford is envisioned playing a multi-faceted role behind the scenes that included, but was not limited to, the issuance of his own works for the stage, as he gathered about him and patronized a number of literary men whom he provided with working space, inspiration, guidance and freedom from the wartime suppression of written words and speech.

Some of the writers—e.g., Anthony Munday, Thomas Watson and Christopher Marlowe—operated as Secret Service agents while using their artistic activities as public cover.¹³ Oxford would later extend his veiled efforts for the Government to arenas such as the "Marprelate" pamphlet wars on behalf of Archbishop Whitgift, with help from his private secretary John Lyly along with Robert Greene and Thomas Nashe, who each expressed Oxford's own ideas and even had his own words published under their names.¹⁴

Nashe would inform readers in *Pierce Pennilesse* (1592) that "the policy of Plays is very necessary, howsoever some shallow-brained censurers (not the deepest searchers into the secrets of government) mightily oppugne them," referring to the Crown's deliberate "policy" that the censorious, zealous Puritans refused to appreci-

ate. Plays constituted a "rare exercise of virtue" because "the subject of them (for the most part) is borrowed out of our English Chronicles, wherein our forefathers' valiant acts are revived."¹⁵

Nashe referred specifically to "brave Talbot" in *I Henry VI* by way of pointing to stage works recreating the nation's royal history; but these would also have included *The Famous Victories of Henry Fifth*, *2 Henry VI*, *3 Henry VI*, *Richard III*, *The*

**"...in 1594 [Oxford]
would write to Cecil
to complain about
'sundry abuses,
whereby both Her
Majesty and myself,
were in mine office
greatly hindered.'"**

Troublesome Reign of King John, *King John*, *Richard II*, *I Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*, *Harry of Cornwall*, *Henry V*, *Edward I*, *Edward II* and *Edward III*—plays that in large and small ways evoked the invincibility of English arms, encouraged patriotism, depicted the fate of disloyalty, promoted unity, advocated support for the reigning house, showed the consequences of rebellion and held up the Pope and Spain to mockery and contempt. Additional works with political agendas were *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Othello* and *Troilus and Cressida*, not to mention *Tamburlane* by Marlowe as well as others, many no longer extant.

Back in 1583 the Queen's Men had been formed at the suggestion of Walsingham himself. The Secretary had just received his first regular allowance for espionage, following years of having to finance it from his own pocket; and now at his request, the 12 best actors from existing companies were "sworn the Queen's servants and allowed wages and liveries as Grooms of the Cham-

ber."¹⁶ Performing at Court on Jan. 1, 1584, were Oxford's Men, with Lyly as payee, but both Oxford's and the Queen's companies performed at Court on March 3, 1584, with Lyly again handling business—strong evidence that the two acting companies had been amalgamated, with Oxford's secretary serving as manager and even as rehearsal coach. In other words, soon after the head of the Secret Service had spawned Her Majesty's own acting company, Edward de Vere had rushed to contribute to its success.¹⁷

"I serve Her Majesty," Oxford wrote to Burghley several months later, in October 1584, "and I am that I am"—a thundering protest in God's own words, reminding the most powerful man in England that he was no mere spectator at Court, much as his autobiographical Prince would leap from self-imposed anonymity in the graveyard to declare, "This is I, Hamlet the Dane!" And an equally accurate version of Edward de Vere's life, which he kept from public perception, would come from Iago: "I am not that I am."¹⁸

Oxford held no known office beyond his hereditary title, so most contemporaries may have lacked any knowledge of his service; yet a decade later, in 1594, he would write to Cecil to complain about "sundry abuses, whereby both Her Majesty and myself, were in mine office greatly hindered"—a word deliberately chosen by the man who would have Hamlet include the insolence of "office" among the pitfalls of a "weary life," as Oxford himself told Burghley in 1591 that he was "weary of an unsettled life."¹⁹

In that letter of May 18, 1591, he wondered if the Queen might commute his entire annual pension of £1,000 in return for a single payment of £5,000, to purchase "something that were mine own and that I might possess" so "my children be provided for" as well as "myself at length settled in quiet." Oxford was looking ahead to remarriage and withdrawing further from Court; and though he became a virtual recluse, the Queen continued his payments and King James renewed them until the earl's death in 1604, adding up to £18,000 in 18 years.

Six decades later the Rev. John Ward, vicar of Stratford Parish in Warwickshire, recorded local rumors in his diary of 1661-1663 that "Shakespeare" had "supplied the stage with two plays every year and for that

(Continued on page 30)

Year in the Life (Continued from p. 29)
had an allowance so large that he spent at the rate of £1,000 a year, as I have heard."²⁰ Even if the vicar failed to wonder how a dramatist had received an "allowance" rather than an income, surely he marveled at its amount, especially since William Shaksper's entire cash estate had not exceeded £350.

Ward's diary remained unpublished until 1839 and J. T. Looney pulled Edward de Vere from the shadows in 1920; but only when B. M. Ward delved further into the record did he and other Oxfordians realize the earl himself had received "an allowance" of "£1,000 a year," as the vicar had heard. Clearly the legend drifting into Stratford retained, as legends often do, some essential elements of long-buried reality; and in this instance such kernels of gossip about "Shakespeare" conflated with the life of Shaksper were finally discovered, within the personal history of Oxford, to have been precisely the case. While Rev. Ward of Stratford was hardly an authority on the Elizabethan stage, oral tradition itself has a way of intertwining fact with fiction until, after some filtering process, a few polished diamonds of truth remain.

A crucial turning point

When B. M. Ward reported the annual grant in his 1928 biography of Oxford, he and others of the Oxfordian movement stood at a crucial turning point in deciding how to present their conclusions. The man whom Looney had found to fulfill the qualifications of Shakespeare was no ordinary writer but the highest-ranking earl of Elizabeth's reign; he had been Her Majesty's first royal ward and had enjoyed her favor through the 1570s, regardless of her disregard for his military ambitions and personal finances. Now, on June 26, 1586, just as Elizabeth's purse strings were being stretched by the needs of national survival, this otherwise parsimonious monarch granted him a large annual pension from the same source as the funds used by Walsingham for his unofficial Secret Service:

And so to be continued unto him during Our pleasure, or until such time as he shall be by Us otherwise provided for to be in some manner relieved . . . and for the same or any part thereof . . . neither the said Earl nor his assigns . . . shall by way of account, imprest, or any other way whatsoever be charged towards Us.²¹

The reality of "Shakespeare" turned out to be even more significant than the truth retained by the legend. Not only had Edward de Vere received an "allowance" of Treasury money while England was at war with Spain from 1586 to 1604, he had served England through an unnamed "office"—a term he repeated in his letter of 1594, admonishing Burghley "not to neglect, as heretofore, such occasions as to amend the same may arise from mine office." Far from the writer having

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very center of policy..."***

been a commoner earning his way at the box office, he had been a highborn earl engaged in work so valuable to the state he knew Cecil, the master architect of the reign, would recognize the most casual passing reference to it.

July 10: Just a few weeks after Elizabeth signs the Warrant for Oxford's grant, the Venetian ambassador in Spain writes back to his Senate and Doge that King Philip is furious over reports he has been ridiculed in England by theatrical entertainments; and, he makes clear, Her Majesty and her Government are sanctioning these stage works: "What has enraged him more than all else, and has caused him to show a resentment such as he has never before displayed in all his life, is the account of the masquerades and comedies which the Queen of England orders to be acted as his expense. His Majesty has received a summary of one of these which was recently represented, in which all sorts of evil is spoken of the Pope, the Catholic religion, and the King."^{20A} Obviously, Elizabeth is using the stage for political propaganda.

Oxfordians assimilating this informa-

tion from 1928 onward faced some daunting perceptual challenges: "Shakespeare" had been operating not on the sidelines of political history but from the very center of policy; Oxford was no mere substitute for the great dramatist but, rather, the diametrical opposite of the grain dealer, money-lender and property owner from Warwickshire.

Pioneers building evidence for Edward de Vere might have announced:

"We have found that the phenomenon of Shakespeare was produced not only by an individual genius as everyone has supposed, but simultaneously by an earl whose efforts were authorized by the Cecilian government of Elizabeth the First, which secretly helped to finance his literary and theatrical activities. We have discovered that Shakespeare was a creature of 'policy' working within an unacknowledged 'office' of varied functions. He wrote independently as an artist who chose his own subjects and themes, which coincided generally with the aims of the Tudor dynasty and the Protestant Reformation led by William and Robert Cecil. The Queen tolerated his often stinging wit and merciless humor and compulsion to hold the mirror up to members of her Court, including herself; but because this Hamlet-like earl told more truth than could be tolerated by the Cecils, whose tenure survived beyond Elizabeth's life, this true 'Shakespeare' was almost totally obliterated from history by the same English government he had expended his monumental talent, wisdom and energy to serve."

In addition to the preserved record, in which Oxford had emerged only as a spendthrift lord who wasted his patrimony and required a welfare pension to maintain the dignity of his earldom, promoters of his authorship confronted obstacles such as:

- Usual charges of snobbery against those advocating an earl as Shakespeare.
- Popular notions of "propaganda" as antithetical to the creation of great art.
- Inescapable revisions of England's half-century history of Cecilian power.
- Inevitable skepticism about matters of "conspiracy" and "secret" service.
- Orthodox teachings of Shakespeare as having been uninterested in politics.

Given these existing attitudes, Oxfordians therefore presented their case—in part

unconsciously—within a framework that was less radical and therefore significantly weaker than what the evidence showed. While Edward de Vere's lifelong connection to the Queen and the Cecils was reported as *factually important*, it was not seen as *intrinsic* to the works he produced, and so he was seen as less of an insider or team player and more of an outsider or lone wolf—just as William Shakspeare had always been. The distinction between this retailed image of de Vere and the reality of his life may have appeared innocuous, but it produced a cumulative effect enabling orthodox opponents to argue that Oxfordians were merely replacing the name of a commoner with that of an eccentric aristocrat.

In a letter dated February 2, 1601, however, Oxford testified in his own behalf by reminding Robert Cecil of his past services to the Queen, who had encouraged him to finance activities for which (she led him to believe) he would be compensated. "But if it shall please Her Majesty in regard of my youth, time and fortune spent in her Court, adding thereto Her Majesty's favors and promises, which drew me on without any mistrust the more to presume in mine own expenses"—a recollection showing he had been willing to give up his inherited riches to pursue a higher calling whose values were not only artistic and spiritual, but, inextricably, political.²²

"IT'S THE POLITICS, ...!" Oxfordians might have announced with all the boldness of a tabloid headline, but instead they downplayed this central dynamic or relegated it to the less prominent pages of their works.

The history plays and propaganda

Ward argued in an obscure publication of 1929 that "war-propaganda dramas" by Oxford and others had been "initiated by Queen Elizabeth as a deliberate piece of policy." The last of the Tudor monarchs had "created a secret service Department of State to carry this policy into effect" and had "placed the Earl of Oxford at the head of this Department."²³

Clark in 1930 concluded the earl had received his grant for work already accomplished as well as for continuing services that "we would today call 'political propaganda,' the medium then being the stage," resulting in "the group of dramatic writers

usually spoken of collectively as the 'University wits' ... Play after play flowed from their pens ... mostly calculated to keep people at a high pitch of excitement during wartime."²⁴

When Ruth Loyd Miller reprinted the Ward article in 1975, she included a stunning footnote running below the main text of a dozen pages in barely readable typeface:

Cecil's role in establishing the office of

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obscure publication of
1929 that 'war-propa-
ganda dramas' by
Oxford and others had
been 'initiated by Queen
Elizabeth as a deliberate
piece of policy.'"***

propaganda, and placing his son-in-law over it, has been sadly neglected by historians. Yet it would be entirely out of character for Cecil, whose "hand is seen" in everything, everywhere, during Elizabeth's reign, not to have had his hands on the reins of public opinion. It would be entirely in accord with what is known of Cecilian ratiocination for Cecil to feign disapproval of stage plays, "lewd" actors, and dramatists while, behind the scenes, manipulating them for political purposes.

The vitae of virtually every Elizabethan writer in *DNB* shows Cecil lurking in their shadows. Lyly and Munday, the mainstays of Oxford's dramatic staff, were both placed on that staff by Cecil. Lyly acknowledges Cecil "as a father." Munday was rendering service to the Cecil-Walsingham camp as a spy, infiltrating the Roman school, before he entered Oxford's service.²⁵

Miller notes that in 1559, the first year of the Queen's reign, Spanish ambassador Count de Feria had protested against "comedies in London" deriding his King and claimed Cecil "had supplied the authors of them with their themes and that Elizabeth

had practically admitted Cecil was the guilty man."²⁶ This complaint, remarkably similar to the report of the Venetian ambassador nearly three decades later (July 10, 1586), provides solid evidence that both the Queen and her chief minister were deliberating using the stage for political purposes from the very outset and continually thereafter.

Historian Kevin Sharpe recounted the earlier incident in 1999:

Patronized by courtiers and under the control of city magistrates, the theatre was from its inception closely connected with the government ... Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell saw the potential value of theatre as a forum of propaganda and recruited John Bale and Richard Moryson to write antipapal, and later Protestant, plays. Though after Cromwell's death Henry showed little interest in the stage, other government ministers continued to use theatre for direct political ends: in 1559 the Spanish ambassador even accused William Cecil of providing playwrights with material to mock Phillip II of Spain ... The Privy Council clearly recognized the importance of plays in shaping public opinion.²⁷

"Bale's plays were performed almost exclusively in promotion of the 'New Learning' by the companies of John de Vere and Thomas Cromwell," Miller continues, noting that commentators on *King John* have decided that Shakespeare could not have seen the unpublished manuscript of Bale's play *Kynge John*, written and revised during Henry VIII's reign. "It is no mystery at all, however, when Cecil, Oxford and 'Shakespeare' are brought together," writes Miller, noting with Edmund Malone that upon Elizabeth's accession Bale again rewrote the play (which may well have been the work angering de Feria in 1559) and that in August 1561 the players of John de Vere, 16th Earl of Oxford, performed it for the Queen at Ipswich.

"Elizabeth spent a week that same August at Castle Hedingham, where she was again entertained by Earl John's players, performing the plays of Bale ... A year later ... when Cecil gathered twelve-year-old Earl Edward into the fold of wardship, he took possession of all the young noble's assets. Cecil, who had standing orders for his agents on the continent to supply him with copies of books and publications of interest, would

(Continued on page 32)

Year in the Life (Continued from p. 31) not have failed to appreciate the Earl of Oxford's collection of Bale's dramatic works and move them to safekeeping . . . Undoubtedly 'Shakespeare' saw Bale's manuscript plays, and undoubtedly he saw them through the eyes of Edward de Vere, who owned many of them, in the Library at Cecil House."

We might add that the later-written anonymous play *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, undoubtedly the immediate forerunner of *King John* by Shakespeare (despite silly arguing by Stratfordians over which text came first), was presented initially by none other than the Queen's Men, the company established for Her Majesty in 1583 by Walsingham with Oxford's assistance. We might also add that Edward de Vere must have been inspired as a youngster by Bale's *Kynge John* and gone on to write *Troublesome Reign* followed by *King John*, as a way of using distant English history to mirror Elizabeth's current crises related to bastardry, the Pope and Mary Queen of Scots.²⁸

The grant's significance

The conclusions made by Ward, Clark and Miller about Oxford's grant from the Government failed to capture wide public attention. When Charlton Ogburn Jr. published *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* in 1984, making the authorship case for de Vere far more accessible than before, he waited for 688 pages before probing implications of the £1,000 annuity. Even then Ogburn was reluctant to expound in any detail, much less to shout POLITICS: "It seems to me reasonable," he summed up, "to believe that Oxford received the grant as Shakespeare, to finance his activities in the theatre."²⁹

Given this ethereal treatment of the grant, it is perhaps no wonder that Oxfordians today still appear tentative in coming to grips with its full significance. At one extreme is the view expressed on the website of Nina Green, moderator of the private Phaeton discussion group on the Internet, that it is a "myth"—or "Oxmyth" as a list on the site puts it—that the pension was given to Edward de Vere for any reason beyond the need to refurbish his pocket-book:

"The wording of the grant states that it is to continue during the Queen's pleasure

or until Oxford can be otherwise provided for to be in some manner relieved," Green emphasizes, adding this indicates "it is for Oxford's financial relief, not for secret service work."³⁰

The argument of this column, however, is precisely that a major reason Oxford had fallen into financial ruin was that he (as in the case of Secretary Walsingham himself) had financed his work on behalf of the Crown for at least a decade before the Queen, needing his services more than ever, finally came to the rescue. In that respect the wording of the grant was true, but what else lay behind it? If indeed Elizabeth gave Oxford his annuity to compensate him for past and future services not to be publicly acknowledged, then neither she nor Burghley would have enumerated them in writing.

Although most orthodox scholars of the twentieth century have been unable to view "Shakespeare" as an author with partisan political motives, much less as one with an official mission to perform, a few have stared at the evidence without blinking:

Lily B. Campbell, 1947: "Each of the Shakespeare histories serves a special purpose in elucidating a political problem of Elizabeth's day and in bringing to bear upon this problem the accepted political philosophy of the Tudors . . . Shakespeare, like all other writers who used history to teach politics to the present, cut his cloth to fit the pattern, and the approach to the study of his purposes in choosing subjects and incidents from history as well as in his altering the historical fact is best made with current (Elizabethan) political situations in mind."³¹

Alvin B. Kernan, 1981: "Of all the major writers in the Western literary tradition, there is none who deals so consistently and so profoundly with political matters as Shakespeare. He wrote almost exclusively of courts and aristocratic life; and matters of state, of law, of kingship and of dynastic succession are always prominent parts of his dramatic matter. This is true even in comedies . . . but it is even more obviously true in Shakespeare's history plays and in his tragedies, where the political issues are the very substance of the plays and where crucial matters of state are explored with remarkable precision and in great depth."³²

When such observations are coupled with a view of Oxford writing the Shake-

speare works in relation to the pressing political issues of his time, we are necessarily transported to the personal and particular world of a great man responding to great events (from the vantage point of his role within the Government itself) and penetrating through their intertwining layers to the essential meaning of his experience. Along the way, the irrepressible Edward de Vere may have inserted some pertinent comments to help us comprehend him:

Allowance (*Twelfth Night*): "There is no slander in an allowed fool."

Protection (*Hamlet*): "Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with and that your Grace hath screen'd and stood between much heat and him."

Control (*Comedy of Errors*): "I buy a thousand pound a year, I buy a rope!"³³

Note: Because of the importance of 1586 in the life of Edward de Vere and England, this column will explore the year further in the next issue of Shakespeare Matters.

Endnotes:

¹ Hurstfield, Joel, *Elizabeth I and the Unity of England* (London: English Universities Press Ltd., 1960), 123-132

² Ward, B. M., *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* (London: John Murray, 1928), 252; reprint by Ruth Loyd Miller, Jennings, LA.

³ "Poins" happens to begin and end with "P.S.", the initials of Philip Sidney.

⁴ *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 938.

⁵ Clark, Eva Turner, *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays* (Jennings, LA: Minos Publishing, 1974; first published in England in 1930), 796.

⁶ Transcript of the June 21, 1586 letter sent to the columnist courtesy of Robert Detobel.

⁷ Ward, op. cit., 256.

⁸ Chambers, E. K., *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), "Documents of Control," 303.

⁹ Alan Nelson's Home Page, <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~ahnelson/PERSONAL/86025.html>; heretofore the letter appeared to make perfect sense as dated June 25, 1585, in the context that Oxford was awaiting military appointment to the Netherlands; but Nelson corrects it to 1586, explaining that the top half of the "6" had been cut off. This letter of 1586 stands alone between those of Oct. 30, 1584, and Aug. 5, 1590, among the surviving correspondence of Oxford, but surely he had written many more letters.

¹⁰ Fowler, William Plumer, *Shakespeare Revealed in Oxford's Letters* (Portsmouth, NH: Peter E. Randall, 1986), text of the letter, 342.

¹¹ Clark, op. cit., 799.

¹² Read, Conyers, *Mr. Secretary*

Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth (New York: AMS Press, 1978), vol. 2, 370-371, citing Warrants of Issue under the Privy Seal, Elizabeth, Bundle 124.

¹³ Among the accounts of writer-agents is *The Reckoning* by Charles Nicholl about Marlowe; (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995 edition); on Munday, 173-176; on Watson, 177-184.

¹⁴ Campbell, O. J., *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* (New York: MJF Books, 1966): "In desperation the bishops turned to professional writers, including Thomas Nashe, John Lyly, and Robert Greene ... Archbishop Whitgift employed Nashe and John Lyly to answer the attacks" – 502, 580, demonstrating that orthodox scholars have no trouble envisioning collaboration by the Government and writers, not to mention "employment" of writers by the Archbishop who serves the Queen, Burghley and Privy Council; but once Oxford is inserted into the puzzle, we may conclude he was the chief writer and liaison as well as the paymaster.

¹⁵ McKerrow, Ronald B., *The Works of Thomas Nashe* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, from the first edition of 1904), vol. III, 211-12.

¹⁶ Chambers, op. cit., "The Adult Companies," 104.

¹⁷ The play performed on the night of Jan. 1, 1584, at Court was *Campaspe*, attributed to Lyly; it was rehearsed at Blackfriars (Oxford had given him the lease of the hall in summer 1583) and performed for the Queen by Her Majesty's Children and the Children of Paul's: Adams, J. Q., *Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1924), 609-610; the play at Court on March 3, 1584, was probably *Sapho and Phao*: Ward, op. cit., 271, citing Chambers, op. cit., vol. 3, 414-15.

¹⁸ Oxford to Burghley: "I am that I am" –

postscript in his hand, Oct. 30, 1584 (Fowler, op. cit., 321); "This is I" – the Prince in *Hamlet*, 5.1.217; "I am not that I am" – Iago in *Othello*, 1.1.65.

¹⁹ Oxford to Burghley, May 18, 1591 and July 7, 1594 in Fowler, op. cit., 393, 484.

²⁰ Campbell, op. cit., 936.

^{20A} Clark, op. cit., 796, citing *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, VIII, 182.

²¹ Text of the grant in Ward, op. cit., 257.

²² The letter of Feb 2, 1601, in Fowler, op. cit., 558.

²³ Miller, Ruth Loyd, "Oxfordian Vistas" in *Shakespeare Identified* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 454-482; reprints of articles by Ward, Capt. B. M., "Shakespeare and the Anglo-Spanish War 1585-1604" in *Revue Anglo-American*, Dec. 1929; and Ward, Col. Bernard R., "Shakespeare and Elizabethan War Propaganda" in *The Royal Engineers Journal*, Dec. 1928.

²⁴ Clark, op. cit., 803.

²⁵ Miller, op. cit., extended footnote 469-481.

²⁶ Miller, op. cit., 472-73, citing Cal. S. P. Spanish, 1558-67.62.

²⁷ Sharpe, Kevin, "Representations and Negotiations, etc.," *The Historical Journal* (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1999), 42.3.858-59.

²⁸ Bale first wrote his two-part play *Kynge John* in 1536; under Cromwell's patronage for Henry VIII he formed an acting company to perform plays in favor of the Reformation; he revised *Kynge John* in 1538 and later under Edward VI; then upon Elizabeth's accession of 1558 he made more revisions; the two-part *Troublesome Reign of King John* was performed by the Queen's Men in the 1580s and published with no author cited in 1591; and *King John* by Shakespeare, introducing the fictitious hero the

Bastard, was cited by Meres in 1598 but printed first only in the Folio of 1623. I would argue that Oxford had developed *Troublesome Reign* in the 1560s or 1570s and that he first set forth *King John* by 1582. A traditional dating marker has been Holinshed's *Chronicles* of 1587 as a source of *King John*, but I argue in this case that, to the contrary, it was Oxford who influenced Holinshed.

²⁹ Ogburn Jr., Charlton, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (McLean, VA: EPM Publications, 1984, 1992 revised edition), 688.

³⁰ The Oxford Authorship Site, by Nina Green, <http://www3.telus.net/oxford/>

³¹ Campbell, Lily B., *Shakespeare's 'Histories': Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1965, copyright 1947), 125; Riverside, op. cit., 805, agrees that *King John*, "suggests the tangled relationships between Elizabeth, her cousin Mary Stuart, and the King of Spain."

³² Kernan, Alvin B., "Shakespeare and the Rhetoric of Politics" in *Politics, Power, and Shakespeare* (Arlington: University of Texas at Arlington, 1981), 47.

³³ *Twelfth Night*, 1.5.90-91; *Hamlet*, 3.5.2-4; *Comedy of Errors*, 4.1.21. It appears that Dr. Roger Stritmatter first noted the significance of "I buy a thousand pound a year, I buy a rope"; *The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible* (Northampton, MA: Oxenford Press, February 2001), 39. He points out that Dromio of Syracuse in *Errors* also refers to "both mine office and my name" (3.1.44) leading to his comment about "a rope" or leash. Editor Bill Boyle independently cited the "rope" comment when suggesting in a Phaeton group discussion that the "Shakespeare" plays could provide appropriate commentary on Oxford's complicated role as a playwright—Allowance, Protection, Control—in Elizabeth's England.

Wilmot did not (cont'd from page 7)

to a more conclusive end, Professor Wright will be conducting more research at the British Society of Genealogists in London later this summer to ascertain if there are any records yet unexamined that might establish the existence of James Corton Cowell and Arthur Cobbold as late-18th/early 19th-century men in East Anglia.

Professor Wright is also hopeful that the University of London will allow him to engage experts to test the age of the paper on which the manuscript was written (the University of London has yet to confer permission for such a test). He reported that such a test is vital, for if the paper can be established to be of later manufacture than the late 18th/early 19th century, the assumption of fraud in its composition will be proven correct, and the need to contend for a forgery on the basis of absent principals will be obviated. Other tests that

he wishes to conduct include examinations by expert paleographers of the hand in which the Cowell address was written in order to compare it to handwriting of the age and the handwriting of candidates who might be considered leading suspects in advancing this likely forgery.

When asked why this probably-forged document might have been created—and under such peculiar circumstances—Professor Wright answered that, in his appraisal, the document probably was intended to steal the thunder of the Oxfordian juggernaut that had been launched by John Thomas Looney's 1920 publication of *"Shakespeare" Identified in Edward de Vere the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*. If, Professor Wright declared, Bacon could be shown to have had thoughtful, educated supporters as early as 150 years after the death of the Stratford man, new attention and the conventional British respect ac-

corded antiquity might "jump start" Bacon's fading candidacy. Attention, the forger may have reasoned, might be deflected from the rising anti-Stratfordian star, Edward de Vere, and Bacon might thereby regain the foothold among anti-Stratfordians that, in 1932, he was rapidly losing as a candidate for the authorship of Shakespeare's works.

We await with excitement the work, insights and discoveries of Drs. Wright, Rollett and Rubinstein in their continuing inquiries into this likely Baconian fraud, and we look forward to Professor Wright's planned transcription and publication of this document with a revelation—if a revelation is possible—of who may have written the mysterious manuscript that fantastically appeared without any provenance in the Edwin Durning-Lawrence library at the University of London in 1932.

*Confidential Video Bard**Taming of the Shrew: Zeffirelli and Miller*

By Chuck Berney

The *Taming of the Shrew* (1967) was stage director Franco Zeffirelli's first film. Starring what was then the world's most famous couple, Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, it came on the heels of their disastrous (but well-publicized) version of *Cleopatra*.

The first 10 minutes of the film are a delight. We follow Lucentio (Michael York, in his film debut) and Tranio (Alfred Lynch) through the hills of Lombardy into Padua, which is bursting with medieval life. Zeffirelli displays the talent for suffusing the film with the look and feel of the Italian setting that he used to such good effect in his version of *Romeo and Juliet*, released the following year. But after the first 10 minutes, the overacting begins. Michael Hordern, as Baptista, bumbles and stumbles, rolls his eyes and purses his lips (attentive readers will recall that Hordern was not my favorite Lear). Victor Spinetti, who was droll as the neurotic technician in the Beatles movies *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help*, plays Hortensio with a mincing manner and a Doris Day wig, calling so much attention to his efforts to be funny that he isn't. I have the feeling that Zeffirelli, drawing on his stage experience, encouraged everyone to play broadly, with the result that Hordern and Spinetti gave stage performances, while York and Lynch miraculously escaped. As did Cyril Cusack, whose sly Grumio is always amusing.

Richard Burton's characterization of Petruchio is opaque to me. In half the scenes he is a brawling, drunken lout, while in the other half he seems to be a reasonable man using rational methods to pursue achievable goals. I can't connect the dots, so ultimately I don't find the performance satisfying. As Kate, Elizabeth Taylor just exists—she's an icon rather than an actress.

The film is always marvelous to look at—Zeffirelli has a fine eye for integrating architecture, fabrics, costumes and lighting so that every frame is visually satisfying. The screenwriters have trimmed about half the dialog, sometimes replacing it with interpolated scenes not in the original text, such as Kate's tumble into the river on

the way to Verona, or the wedding itself, which occurs offstage in the original. And I have come to appreciate the final 20 minutes of the film, which documents the last stage of Kate's conversion. As Kate and

"The film is always marvelous to look at—Zeffirelli has a fine eye for integrating architecture, fabrics, costumes and lighting..."

I believe that [Miller's] treatment of the final third of Shrew was inspired by Vincentio's reference to Kate as 'my merry mistress.'"

Petruchio are about to enter Lucentio's house for the wedding feast, he stops her and says "Kiss me, Kate." She says "What, here in the street?" He asks if she is ashamed of him; she replies, "No, God forbid, but ashamed to kiss." Finally, she relents and gives him a platonic peck on the nose. Petruchio looks disgruntled, but they proceed to the banquet. The turning point comes when Kate, watching children roughhousing between the tables, melts perceptibly (maybe Taylor is an actress after all). Apparently she at last sees herself in a domestic union ruled by cooperation rather than confrontation, and so is able to rise to the challenge of the obedience wager, and during her speech to the froward wives she discovers the pleasure of using

socially accepted means to continue to beat up on Bianca. Petruchio again says "Kiss me, Kate," and she responds with genuine intensity.

In my last column I castigated BBC director Jonathan Miller for giving Michael Hordern the title role in his production of *Lear*. In this column I offer enthusiastic praise for his decision to cast Monty Python alumnus John Cleese as Petruchio in his production of *Shrew* (1980). Cleese has mastered the art of making the dialog sound like he just thought of it, so his Petruchio is natural, immediate, and convincing—as intelligent as Cleese himself, and surprisingly gentle. Sarah Badel's Kate is a worthy opponent; their wooing scene (2.1.182) is hilarious. In this exchange, the playwright achieves a bawd rate approaching unity—that is, almost every line contains a salacious double entendre (the corresponding scene in the Zeffirelli production falls flat because most of the lines have been cut, and what remains is overwhelmed by slapstick struggles).

Miller has written that his approach to a production is sometimes determined by a single line of text, in the same way that a paleontologist reconstructs the entire body of an extinct animal from an isolated fragment. I believe that his treatment of the final third of *Shrew* was inspired by Vincentio's reference to Kate as "my merry mistress" (4.5.53). Petruchio and Kate are traveling back to Padua, and he has got her reluctantly to agree that the object shining in the sky is the "moon, or sun, or what you please." An old man (Vincentio) approaches them on the road; Petruchio addresses him as "fair lovely maid" and bids Kate "embrace her for her beauty's sake." By now Kate has gotten into to spirit of the thing and goes over the top: "Young budding virgin, fair, fresh, and sweet . . . Happy the parents of so fair a child! Happier the man whom favorable stars allot thee for his lovely bedfellow!" Then when Petruchio, deadpan, corrects her—"Why, how now, Kate, I hope thou art not mad. This is a man, old, wrinkled, faded, withered"—the absurdity of the scene overwhelms her, and she collapses, shrieking with laughter. It's

a wonderful moment, and it's the turning point for this Kate—hanging out with Petruchio is a lot more fun than throwing stools at Bianca. So when he asks for a kiss before they enter the banquet, she responds passionately, and he murmurs "Is this not well?"

Stephen Moorer's Pacific Repertory Theatre will be performing its version of *Shrew* during the Shakespeare Fellowship's fall conference in Carmel, 9-12 October 2003. We have seen that the arc of Kate's metamorphosis varies from production to production; it will be interesting to see how Moorer stages it.

Several years ago I was in a production of *Kiss Me, Kate*, the great Cole Porter musical which opened on Broadway in 1948. The most effective scenes in the show were the ones lifted directly from *Shrew*—they had a zest and sparkle that far outshone the by-the-numbers foolery of the scenes forming the contemporary plot. But now when I watch *Shrew* as a straight play, certain lines ("I've come to wive it wealthily in Padua," "Where is the life that late I led?") seem flat and empty when spoken, as if crying out to be sung. Why not do a show that combines the best of both worlds: a stripped-down version of *Shrew* that incorporates Porter's wonderful songs?

If there's anybody out there with a lot of money, please contact me, and I'll start work on the script right away. The working title is *Kiss Me, Shrew*.

Michael York on *Shrew*

Fellowship member Michael York has graciously given Shakespeare Matters permission to reprint material from his autobiography Accidentally on Purpose (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1991). Chapter 10 describes preparations for his film debut in Franco Zeffirelli's Taming of the Shrew (1967).



Michael York in *Taming of the Shrew*.

In Rome I was plunged into a plethora of preparations. There were wardrobe fittings and makeup tests. At a ladies' hair salon, alongside some amused matrons, my hair was bleached and permed,

and at a stable, alongside some indifferent horses, I was taught the rudiments of riding. I waited anxiously for Zeffirelli's call, expecting that he would want to rehearse. Finally, on the Sunday before the first day of shooting, I was invited to lunch at his comfy, old-fashioned apartment in the via Due Macelli.

Ever convivial, Franco presided over a large round table of family and friends that included Edward Albee as well as that pole star of the ballet world, Eric Bruhn, and its

sensational new comet Rudolf Nureyev. Our host could have been relaxing on holiday rather than about to embark on his first multimillion-dollar film. I continued to wait with mounting anxiety. Then, as daylight faded, he took me aside and briefly outlined his intentions for the role. His approach was essentially pragmatic yet obviously grounded on thorough preparation—one that I share and try to emulate. Above all I valued his implicit trust.

After a fitful sleep, I was driven out to the de Laurentiis Studios in the predawn quiet. To see the great cities of the world before they have come fully awake is one of the unexpected treats that cinema affords. The view of the Colosseum rising dreamlike against a purple pink sky was no exception.

The brightness of the busy makeup room came as a shock. I was sat down in a chair and with a Borgia malevolence my sleepy face was shocked awake with a coating of strong-smelling spirit gum. To this, a beard was laboriously fixed, glued on hair by hair, protracting the torment. Hot, smoking tongs then curled the appended fuzz as well as my unnaturally blonded head. To this day the merest whiff of spirit gum awakens memories of those hours spent squirming and gagging in that torturer's chair, and the revulsion revives.

On that first morning I was in the very
(Continued on page 36)

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Video Bard/York (cont'd from page 35) first shot of the film. There was an electric air of expectancy. Time was now a measure not of minutes but of dollars. Bundled into doublet and tights, the last of my innumerable bows and laces were being tied as I was escorted to a set that swarmed with activity. Speedily hatted and cloaked, I was thrust onto my horse. "Silenzio!" The hubbub abated. "Motore!" The camera started to whirl and my horse quivered with a contained excitement. Conspicuously more experienced than I was, at "Azzione!" it moved off and, utterly contemptuous of all my energetic spurring, went at its own pace precisely to its marks.

I was grateful for such assured professionalism for the shot required me to ride down a steeply raked street into Padua while quoting a sizable passage of Shakespearean verse. Fortunately, reality assisted illusion. I was meant to be overwhelmed with excitement and anticipation and that is exactly how I felt. So much so, in fact, that Zeffirelli had to keep directing me to look less pop-eyed! By nine o'clock he had ordered "Print" and my screen baptism was over. There had simply been no time to be nervous.

That whole day I felt supremely alive. My love at first sight for Bianca was matched by my own for this new medium. I knew instinctively that I belonged to its world of lenses and lights just as surely as my name belonged on the canvas chair to which it was now proudly affixed. Everything delighted and the work flowed with an intuitive ease. Dining that evening with Alfred Lynch, who played my servant Tranio, I

poured out my enthusiasm with the celebratory Chianti, totally intoxicated by the day's adventures.

I seemed to adjust quickly to the demands of the camera, never finding its presence intrusive or disturbing. I didn't mind the frequent repetition, although it surprised me at first to see how much coverage was required for even a relatively simple sequence. Franco was constantly inventive, cleverly suiting the action to the actor's intrinsic nature so that his direction seemed unforced. For fun he would ask for one take to be filmed in a restrained "English" style, and the next in a flamboyant "Italian" manner with gestured, extrovert behavior. His best effects were achieved through a synthesis of the two. I could understand why he liked working with English actors; their cool sang-froid neutralized his slightly operatic excesses.

He was a visual perfectionist. Renzo Mongiardino had re-created medieval Padua within the giant enclosed space. Its patinaed walls, courtyards and cobbled streets were lit day-bright by batteries of overhead lights, creating an out-of-season summer and much thirsting and fanning. Extras were handpicked, Franco even using some light-skinned blond people from a nearby village, formerly imported by Mussolini from the north to work in the rice fields, for his Lombards. The youthful hordes of long-haired "Capelloni" haunting the Spanish Steps were also rounded up and, along with others, including his own dear aunt and the young Burton children, were costumed and co-opted to his lively creation.

A few weeks later the Burtons started work and I was moved to learn that some of their initial footage was later reshot. Realizing that even these consummately experienced actors could experience unease, I felt pangs of nerves. For our stars, the fantasies and pageantry of the set were matched by their life off it. Chauffeured to work by Rolls Royce, they were there ministered to by maids, secretaries and butlers as well as hairdressers and makeup artists. Their suite of dressing rooms was palatial, replete with kitchen and office and carpeted throughout with virgin whiteness. I was happy to have my own modest dressing room where, between takes, I taught myself to speak Italian, learning as with all languages the rude words first.

The Burtons also held court to legions of visitors and journalists including the legendary Sheila Graham who, flatteringly, found time to chat to me too. They gave a lavish party at their rented villa on the Appia Antica and it was good to experience at firsthand the exotic dolce vita hitherto but glimpsed at in the films of Fellini and Antonioni. Both Elizabeth and Richard were enormously kind and I am forever indebted to them for agreeing, as producers, to have me in their film.

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Inside this issue:

Edward de Vere Studies Conference - page 1

Authorship debate at Smithsonian - page 1

A new Shakespeare reference found - page 16

Oxford's 1586 changes to his heraldry - page 20

Book reviews - page 24

Year in the Life: 1586 - page 27

Video Bard: Taming of the Shrew - page 34

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Address correction requested