



# Shakespeare Matters

"The Voice of the Shakespeare Fellowship"

Vol.3: no.1

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

Fall 2003

## William Camden

*What did he say, and when did he say it?*

By Paul H. Altrocchi, MD

*Truth hath a quiet breast.* (Richard II)

The prolific William Camden is recognized as England's first influential historian. Born in 1551 and buried in Westminster Abbey in 1623, his 72 years spanned all but the first year of Edward de Vere's life and bridged the entire life of William Shaksper of Stratford-on-Avon.

Camden graduated from Oxford at age 20, then toured Europe before joining the faculty of Westminster School in 1575, becoming headmaster in 1593. One of his pupils was Ben Jonson. As a hobby, Camden traveled throughout the British Isles collecting information on its cities and towns, including their worthy citizens and their contributions to English culture.

Two generations of Oxfordians have known that Camden, in describing noteworthy persons from Stratford-on-Avon in his *Britannia*, failed to mention either William Shaksper or the playwright William Shakespeare.<sup>1,1a</sup> The details of that important omission, not hitherto described, are presented here and the significance for the authorship debate is reassessed.

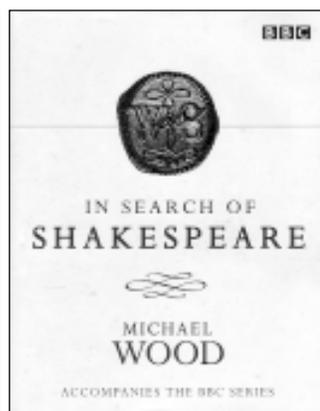
### Camden's books

Camden's major works were:<sup>2,2a</sup>

*(Continued on page 12)*

## Drive, they said

*As the year winds down amid revised Shakespeare bios, authorship novels and anti-Oxfordian tracts, is there any doubt who's driving?*



Two books published this summer have upped the ante on the centuries-old authorship debate. Michael Wood's *In Search of Shakespeare (r)* and Prof. Alan Nelson's biography of Oxford, *Monstrous Adversary (l)* are a one-two punch counter-offensive that belie the notion that there is no authorship debate.

In the 20 years since Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* reignited the authorship debate there has been a steady progression of interest in the issue and a regular appearance of it in both the major media (PBS's *Frontline*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harpers*, *Time*, *US News and World Report*, *The New York Times*, etc.) and on the campuses of some academic institutions. In addition, the emergence of the internet in the 1990s has undoubtedly fostered even more interest  
*(Continued on page 6)*

### Book Review

## Nelson's new Oxford biography

*One man's interpretation of the record*

By Richard Whalen

***Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford.* By Alan H. Nelson. Liverpool University Press, 2003.**

After trolling for primary source documents in the archives for years, Alan Nelson has emerged with a flawed biography of the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford as an Elizabethan curiosity who, by the way, could not have written the works of Shake-

speare because of the scandalous incidents in his life and his allegedly poor spelling.

Nelson admits to a "harsh judgment" of Oxford's character, a judgment that is largely justifiable. Oxford did lead an eccentric, tumultuous, sometimes scandalous life, but that does not preclude him from having written the great plays and poems. To the contrary, it argues that like many other writers of genius who were

*(Continued on page 20)*

## Letters:

To the Editor:

As an attendee of the Smithsonian seminar detailed so ably by Peter Rush in your last issue (Summer 2003), I enjoyed the author's popping of several Stratfordian balloons. And I agree with Rush that future debates should be framed: "Resolved: Shakespeare of Stratford is the author of Shakespeare's poems and plays." Posed this way, Stratfordians are forced to provide positive evidence for a shaky hypothesis and our side has only to knock it down, plus have the last word. This letter is only to add my own two cents worth.

Of all the comments made by panelists on either side, the most bordering on obnoxious were those of Prof. Alan Nelson (U.C. Berkeley). A single smug assertion of his (cited by Rush on page 13) is typical of the tone set by his arguments. In one breath, it contains at least two egregious abuses of legitimate debating tactics: "I've been in this business [for years] [*argumentum ex cathedra*], and I've never heard that suggestion, (see below) and it seems to me absolutely impossible [*hyperbole*]."

Indeed, the professor's overuse of the adverb "absolutely" drew frequent laughter from the audience, especially after Joseph Sobran uttered an exasperated rejoinder to Nelson's constant putdowns of Oxford's verse and prose: "I wish I were as certain of anything as he [Nelson] is of everything."

If Alan Nelson really "never heard" that plays were performed in private homes, this statement in itself raises serious questions about the professor's qualifications to lecture anti-Stratfordians on any aspect of "this business" in which he claims such long experience. The contrary position that Nelson favors—i.e. that Shakespeare only wrote plays for "his company," the Lord Chamberlain's Men—was demolished 95 years ago by Sir George Greenwood in *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (London, 1908).

And speaking of Shakespeare's alleged company, Nelson misstates the facts when he is quoted on page 14 as saying that "there is no connection whatsoever between Oxford and any aspect of the Lord

Chamberlain's Men or the King's Men."

Wrong, Al! In 1947 the renowned Oxfordian scholar A. Bronson Feldman found the connection between Robert Armin (called "Shakespeare's Jester" by T. W. Baldwin) and Oxford, whom Armin describes as his "Maister," and whom he plans to visit in Hackney. The only "Maister" Armin could have served who lived in Hackney at the time he wrote (1599) was the 17th Earl of Oxford (see the *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*, Autumn, 1973, pp. 9-12).

If the quality of the alleged "proofs" that Prof. Nelson promises in his forthcoming book *Monstrous Adversary* are of the quality as his Smithsonian statements, Oxfordians have little to fear.

Gordon C. Cyr  
Baltimore, Maryland  
7 August 2003

(For some initial reaction to Nelson's just published biography of Oxford (*Monstrous Adversary*), see Richard Whalen's review beginning on page 1, and also Roger Stritmatter's commentary on pages 8-9, re: Nelson's anti-Oxfordian agenda in publishing *Monstrous*. — Ed.)

To the Editor:

It occurs to me that your readers may be interested to learn of developments that followed my recent article concerning the lost letter of Wilton, and the Shakespeare House ("We have the man Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Matters*, Spring 2003, pp. 1, 8-13).

In August I was approached by a journalist working for the German TV Company, WDR, who asked me to give an interview at Wilton House. A film crew had been sent over to England to prepare a documentary for their German audience concerning the connection between de Vere and Shakespeare. Filming took place in September at Wilton House in front of the Holbein Porch, referred to in the past as Shakespeare's House.

I therefore had ample opportunity to examine it, take photographs and make further enquiries. In the course of doing so, I was informed that the Porch had recently been surveyed and it was then confirmed that it did indeed date back to the time of Sir Philip Sidney's sister, Lady Mary Herbert. At the top of the porch I observed the feudal coats of arms to which previous reference has been made, although their detail is now

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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).

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largely indistinct from a ground view.

There are also several portrait busts accompanying these emblems, but no attempt has been made by the House to identify who they were intended to represent. Inside the Porch are pedestals standing in each corner. But the busts they once supported have since been removed. At the back of my mind I half remember reading a description in the County Record Office at Trowbridge that the Porch had contained busts of classical figures. The inscription taken from Macbeth, which Edward Rose reported he saw and then quoted, is no longer there.

The House manager confirmed that the Porch is not accessible to the public. However, an accompanied tour can be organized by prior arrangement to include the Porch. I was then taken into the House and shown the courtyard where the Porch had once stood, and for added interest shown a portrait of Edward de Vere's son, Henry, which hangs nearby. There was also talk from the representative of WDR about linking Wilton House with Burghley House and the Globe Theatre, in order to provide plays with an Elizabethan theme for summer audiences. Wilton House expressed interest in this idea since it would bring more visitors to the House. I shall be interested to see if anything further develops.

The German documentary is to be shown at a later date, still to be arranged, and efforts are being made to have it shown at length on British TV. In this respect an excerpt from it will be shown in a 15-minute slot on breakfast TV in England on November 28. I understand Mark Rylance, director of the Globe theatre in London, and, I believe, Charles Beauclerk talking from Castle Hedingham, are also taking part in the documentary. Evidence from Burghley House is also to be included.

I was also informed that video recordings of the documentary, which of course include the Porch, are to be made available, although I assume these will be in the German language.

I will keep *Shakespeare Matters* readers apprised of any further developments as I learn of them.

David Roper  
Elstead, United Kingdom  
17 October 2003

## From the Editor

### Reality check

As we begin our third year of publishing *Shakespeare Matters* there is no shortage of news in the ongoing Shakespeare authorship story. Our lead story, "Drive, they said," plus book reviews and commentaries from our regular contributors, all focus on the significant development that two mainstream books were published over the summer that engage the Oxfordian movement headon—even though one book doesn't mention Oxfordians at all, and the other mentions them only long enough to dismiss them!

But make no mistake, engagement is the real story behind the story. And we might add that our review of Brian Vickers's 2002 book *Counterfeiting Shakespeare* (pages 18-19) should also be considered in evaluating the current state of the debate, circa 2003, for in it Vickers is taking to task his fellow scholars over *The Funeral Elegy* fiasco in yet another authorship story driven by Oxfordians.

The common thread here is reality. For some of us—perhaps even many of us or all of us—the moment when we realized that the Shakespeare authorship debate was for real, and that Oxford was the true Shakespeare, was the realization that the author was of course writing about himself and his world; the universal greatness of Shakespeare is built on the foundation of a life lived, not a life imagined. This is why these recent developments in the authorship debate are so intriguing.

With Prof. Alan Nelson's book the reality of Oxford's life is interpreted to condemn him and declare him (implicitly) *to not be Shakespeare*, while Michael Wood

mines the realities of William of Stratford's family and life—along with the politics of Elizabethan England—to make him more real than any previous biography had ever dared, thus filling—Wood hopes—the mundane void that drove Samuel Schoenbaum to despair, and, of course, confirming that he *is* indeed Shakespeare.

Finally, enter Vickers, who, even as he rakes unscholarly scholars over the coals for letting their desire to prove a thesis "blind them," then goes out of his way to remind his readers that Stratman *was* indeed Shakespeare, and that notions of "concealed autobiography" in the *Sonnets* is just a "silly form of reductivism."

While the phrase "reality check" is somewhat of a cliché, it still seems to us to be an apt description of what is going on here. In the broadest sense it means that Stratfordians are engaging Oxfordians on our turf, i.e. that the reality of an author's life is inexorably embedded in his work.

We are now witnessing Stratfordians going in three directions at once in these most recent exchanges in the authorship debate. Nelson claims the "reality" of Oxford's life means he *can't be Shakespeare* (even as he deceitfully omits all parallels between Oxford's life and Shakespeare from his book), while Wood co-opts the reality/biography argument *to make real* the Stratford man as Shakespeare the author. And Vickers, meanwhile, even as he confronts the mismatch of *Elegy* and Shakespeare, brings us back to the past as he argues the old saw that autobiography in poetry is "silly" and that a Stratford grammar school education can explain all.

## Congratulations, Dr. Stritmatter

Of special interest to all our readers is the news that Fellowship trustee and newsletter editorial Board member Roger Stritmatter has been hired as an Instructor at Coppin State College in Baltimore, Maryland. Dr. Stritmatter moved there at the beginning of September and is now busily engaged in a full schedule of classroom teaching and other special events at the his new home.

His duties are teaching composition, literary theory and literary history, but Shakespeare studies will always be part of his focus. Roger reports to us that he has found much interest and enthusiasm for the Shakespeare question among his new

colleagues and students.

In fact, a special event has already been placed on the campus calendar, and Roger will be speaking on November 20th on "Much Ado about Something: Searching for Shakespeare and the Shape of Intellectual History." As we go to press we already know of a number of Roger's friends and Fellowship members who will be on hand, in addition to some of Roger's new neighbors in Baltimore, among whom are Dr. Gordon C. Cyr (Fellowship member and contributor to the newsletter) and the inestimable Terry Ross, who debated Roger at our first Fellowship Conference in Cambridge (MA) last fall.

## Shakeyland theme park and food court

Once again, Stratford-upon-Avon gets a bad review for its crass commercialism—but with a suggestion of what to do about it.

A dyspeptic essayist pans “Bardtown” in the *Financial Times* of July 19-20 and suggests that if someone else wrote the works of Shakespeare the merchants might do something useful instead of just “separating you from your money.”

In a long article in the UK newspaper, Iain Aitch says the town should be renamed “The Shakeyland Theme Park and Food Court.”

He was surprised at “what a miserable experience Stratford turned out to be.” The Tudor beams were phony. The food was awful. The town is unwelcoming, overpriced, “down market...and downright snooty.”

His solution: “Perhaps if genealogists were to find conclusive proof that the London playwright was not the same man as the grain-dealing Shakespeare of Stratford, then the town would be forced to tear down the fake beams and start to make an effort, rather than snatching your money and slamming the till.”

## Authorship talks in Vermont

For the fifth consecutive year Shakespeare authorship talks were one of the events available to those in Killington, Vermont, for the Renaissance Festival.

This year the talks, organized by Betty Sears, were held Saturday morning at the Sherbourne Public Library, where *Shakespeare Matters* editor Bill Boyle and columnist Hank Whittemore spoke to their audience in a “fireside chat” format that proved quite engaging for all. The topic was Shakespeare and the Politics of Elizabethan Drama, and drew heavily on Whittemore’s recent columns on Oxford’s activities in the 1580s.

## “Roscius” annotation debated

Dr. Paul Altrocchi’s discovery of a genuine new piece of information about Shakespeare—or more, correctly, Shaksper of Stratford—has generated some interesting reaction and commentary in Shakespeare circles since its publication in the Summer 2003 issue of *Shakespeare Matters*.

The “Roscius” annotation has already been seized upon by some Stratfordians as further proof that Shaksper was indeed an actor, and therefore must also have been Shakespeare the writer. But as Altrocchi noted in his conclusions, calling him famous for being an actor seems problematic, in fact raising the question of whether anyone in Stratford actually thought of him as a writer. Dr. Altrocchi has noted since the article’s publication that, at the very least, this annotation may mean that the Stratford man was, indeed, an actor, something that some Oxfordians have never embraced but perhaps now should.

That the annotation does involve the authorship debate was born out when Hardy

Cook, moderator of the mainstream Shakespeare discussion group SHAKSPER, declared the thread discussing the “Roscius” annotation over once discussion came too close to such questions as, “Why not call the Stratford man a writer instead of an actor?” ...What does that mean?”

Meanwhile, Prof. Alan Nelson has personally inspected the Camden volume containing the annotation (it’s owned by the Huntington Library) and found that the owner Richard Hunt, vicar of Itchington in Warwickshire county, had inscribed the title page. This means Hunt probably wrote the annotation, and tends to confirm that it was written in the early 17th century by someone close to Stratford.

Another development in the story has been the doubts raised by some about the authenticity of the annotation, i.e., could it be a Collier forgery? Only careful testing of the ink could put aside such forgery concerns.

We will update the story in more detail in our next issue (Winter 2004).

## Folger displays Ashbourne portrait in exhibition on frauds

The Folger Shakespeare Library opened a new exhibit in August, “Fakes, Forgeries and Facsimiles,” which is slated to run through the end of this year. The exhibit covers all manner of Shakespeareana, ranging from fake documents of the Elizabethan era to fake First Folios and fake paintings.

Most notable among the document forgeries are those of William Henry Ireland and John Payne Collier. Ireland in the late 18th century and Collier in the 19th century either fabricated from scratch documents purportedly from Shakespeare’s hand (Ireland) or doctored documents with spurious annotations and/or additional pages (Collier) that provided new references to Shakespeare. The Collier forgeries still confound scholars today, since no one knows for sure if all of his frauds have been uncovered.

Of most interest to Oxfordians in this exhibition is the presentation of the Ashbourne portrait. The x-ray analysis done last year on it by the Canadian Conservation Institute is displayed next to the painting, and the current story line for the

painting is that it was once thought to be Shakespeare but now been proven to be an overpainting of someone else. The original sitter is still asserted by the Folger to be Sir Hugh Hamersley, a claim that has been disputed—if not disposed of—in Barbara Burris’s series of articles in *Shakespeare Matters* over the past two years. No mention is made of Burris’s work.

They do exhibit the 1940 *Scientific American* article by Charles Wisner Barrell claiming to have proved that the original sitter was the Earl of Oxford. The Folger says this claim has now been “discredited.”

Interestingly, Prof. Alan Nelson remarked to this writer in November 2002 in Toronto at the seminar on the Sanders Portrait (see *Shakespeare Matters*, Winter 2003) that he thought the Folger should drop the Hamersley attribution since the case had not been made. We spoke with him again about this in October 2003, and he reaffirmed that this was his position—although he added that he was not an art expert.

—W. Boyle

## Second Annual Oxfordian Seminar Convenes at Concordia University

From August 17–23, the annual Oxfordian seminar sponsored by Concordia University convened on the university campus for an intense, week-long study of the topics, “Hamlet: Oxford’s Biography?” and “How Does One Recognize Autobiography?” Participants assembled for their deliberations each day around a vast marble seminar table in a sprawling seminar room above the library, surrounded by floor-to-ceiling windows that looked out onto the lush, green campus. There, they examined and discussed readings assigned by Professor Daniel Wright, the seminar director, and pondered insights offered by articles submitted to the seminar for the group’s consideration by such contributors as Christopher Paul, Carl Caruso and Dr. Michael Delahoyde.

The seminar also enjoyed a three-hour, midweek presentation by Marlovian John Baker, who expanded upon remarks that he delivered to the Edward de Vere Studies Conference in April by drawing participants’ attention to features of the Dering Manuscript—a manuscript that many scholars have conjectured may be an au-

thorial copy of Shakespeare’s *Henry the Fourth*. As a concluding exercise, some of the seminar participants—Ian and Jo Haste, John Varady, Patricia Urquhart, Dr. Merilee Karr and University of Oregon doctoral student Dan Mackay—volunteered to take roles and read sections of the play as it is written in the Dering Manuscript. All concluded that it was a more lively and entertaining text than the edited version of the play that appears in the First Folio.

In addition to their week of studies on *Hamlet* and autobiographical writing, participants enjoyed a luncheon cruise on the Willamette River, a trip to Multnomah Falls and the Columbia River Gorge, a shopping day at Powell’s Bookstore and a tour of Portland’s Chinese Gardens. They also enjoyed opening day and midweek dinners that lasted into the late hours of the night at the homes of Professor Wright and Patricia Urquhart.

The seminar was visited during the week by Dr. Charles Kunert, the Dean of Concordia University’s College of Arts and Sciences, who welcomed everyone to the campus and expressed the university’s plea-

sure in providing an academic home for Oxfordian studies programs such as the Oxfordian Studies Institute and the Edward de Vere Studies Conference.

Next year’s seminar topic will focus on “Prince Tudor: Truth or Delusion?” Sections of the week-long seminar will focus, equally, on the cases for and against the controversial thesis. Arguments for the authority of the Prince Tudor thesis will be led by Hank Whittemore, actor and author; a case for the opposition to Prince Tudor will be made by retired statistician John Varady. Registrations for the August (15–20) 2004 seminar are being accepted now. Tuition of \$995 (\$75 extra for single rooms) covers all instructional costs, books, a week’s comfortable lodgings on campus, breakfasts (delivered to your room), lunches and tours. Checks should be made payable to the Edward de Vere Studies Conference and sent to Professor Wright at Concordia University, 2811 NE Holman, Portland, OR 97211-6099. For more information, e-mail Professor Wright at [dwright@cu-portland.edu](mailto:dwright@cu-portland.edu).

## New computer analysis technique for comparing texts and determining authorship unveiled

In *The Boston Globe* for August 5, 2003, an article by staff writer Gareth Cook described a new method of computer textual analysis which has been developed by researchers at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, and is derived from a model of computer analysis of cardiac problems.

The original program was designed to measure patients’ heartbeats and track repeating patterns common to patients with known heart problems. These patterns could then be used to identify patients with similar patterns who might be at risk for heart attacks or other heart problems.

What is different about this new technique as adapted to analyzing literary texts is that it tracks the use of common words,

not rare ones in comparing bodies of text. Cook explains that the [computer program] “constructs a list of all the words two plays have in common, throwing out any word... that appears in only one of the plays. Then the computer ranks how often each word appears in each play.”

“Previous literary scholars have compared texts by picking out the unusual words that one author is more likely to use than another,” Cook continues. “But the Beth Israel team found that they could find the signature of a writer by looking at the most common words, such as ‘and’ or ‘as.’”

Their program will be explained in detail in an upcoming paper in the journal *Physica A*. The researchers believe it will

have many applications beyond just medicine, as already demonstrated in their text analysis.

One outcome of their early tests using the texts of Shakespeare plays, plus Jonson, Marlowe and Fletcher plays, is that *Edward III* comes up as clearly not by Shakespeare (it is grouped with Marlowe), and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* lands closer to Fletcher than Shakespeare.

Cook concludes by noting that this new statistical approach may seem “soulless to some scholars.”

One skeptical scholar quoted is Prof. Alan Nelson, who remarks that “It is like taking all the words and throwing them in a blender.”

*Drive, they said (cont'd from page 1)*  
than could ever have happened otherwise.

And as this interest has grown, so has a concerted effort from the entrenched interests of mainstream Stratfordians to fight back and prop up their story, even as they denigrate Oxfordians and claim there is no debate. Two books have recently been published which underscore this changing landscape, and represent the boldest counterattack yet on the Oxfordian movement. While these books do not at first appear to be connected in any way, they really are—and not just because they were both published in the United Kingdom, backed up by the prestige of universities and such establishment media as the BBC.

Recently, longtime Oxfordian Gordon Cyr, an officer of the Shakespeare Oxford Society in the 1970s and 1980s, recalled a letter that Charlton Ogburn, Jr. had sent him around the time he had decided to embark on writing *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. “All I want,” he recalls Ogburn writing, “is to get these [Stratfordians] to come out and fight.” The Nelson and Wood books, more than anything else published in the last 20 years, represent the fulfillment of Ogburn’s hopes. Since 1984 the more usual pattern has been for surrogate defenders of Stratford to tackle both the authorship debate and Oxfordians, ranging from freelance scholar Irv Matus in his 1994 *Shakespeare, In Fact*, to such non-English Department warriors as David Kathman and Terry Ross on the internet (while the debate is forbidden on the mainstream ListServ discussion group SHAKSPER), and including all the lawyers and other non-establishment types who have participated in various debates and moot courts over the years. One exception to this pattern was the appearance of Harvard’s Marjorie Garber, Yale’s Harold Bloom, and the Folger Shakespeare Library’s Gail Kern Paster in the April 1999 *Harpers* magazine article on the authorship. But generally, major academic institutions in both the US and the UK—and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust—have really responded by trying to stay above it all; “there is no debate” has been the standard party line.

But with Liverpool University now publishing UC-Berkeley English professor Nelson, and the BBC teaming up with the Birthplace Trust to publish Wood, that has changed. In both books the key players—academic English departments and Stratford-on-Avon itself—are coming out

and fighting.

It would be fair to say that neither book would have been created except for the Oxfordian movement. Certainly that is the case of Nelson’s biography of Edward de Vere, *Monstrous Adversary* (see Richard Whalen’s review, beginning on page one). Would Nelson have ever tackled this subject, save for Oxford’s candidacy as Shakespeare? No. And what Nelson does in *Monstrous* is to cite—and often reproduce in full—every known record and document

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***“Indeed, if there is one  
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their interpretation...”***

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relating to Oxford, and then interpret them consistently in pejorative terms. The anti-Oxfordian thesis that underlies his efforts fairly flies off each page.

As Whalen’s review also shows—and as others are quickly learning as they read *Monstrous*—Nelson is prone not to just gross misinterpretations, but also to some incredible errors. At the recently concluded Shakespeare Fellowship Conference in Carmel, California, Christopher Paul presented one such error on page 432, where Nelson describes a letter signed by the young 18th Earl of Oxford as being about “white herrings,” and written by an adult for the boy’s “entertainment.” It turns out, as Paul clearly demonstrated, that the “wytheringes” spelling in the letter was meant to be a proper name: Wytherings (possibly Anthony Wytherings, who held on office related to overseeing forests, which is the subject of the letter). With mistakes like this one must wonder how much there is to fear in Nelson’s book.

Meanwhile, on the other side of town, Michael Wood—in collaboration with the BBC and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

in Stratford—has produced an unabashedly pro-Stratford work, *In Search of Shakespeare*, which is both a four-hour television documentary and an accompanying 352-page book. Wood’s efforts are nothing short of a total reinvention of the Stratfordian biography, and, like Nelson, he makes documents from the era the centerpiece of his presentation. In a regular *leit-motif* of the film we see Wood in an archive, an office or an estate library, wearing protective white gloves, proudly showing us the name “Shaksper” or “Shakespeare” or some variant (e.g. “Shakeshafte”) on a yellowed piece of parchment.

Indeed, if there is one unifying theme that links Nelson and Wood it is their use of—and reverence for—the documentary evidence. But what is not so readily apparent on a first viewing or reading is that what they say about these documents is *their* interpretation of what the documents *may* mean and how they *may* fit into the story *they* are telling.

Of particular interest to Oxfordians in Wood’s efforts is how much he owes his retelling of the Stratford tale to the influence of the authorship movement and its core argument about how real art gets written—how real artists are influenced by the world they live in (including family, politics and religion). They draw upon their lives for both their inspiration and material. The Oxfordian movement has been the strongest in this regard, since its story is of Hamlet himself trapped in a court and a court life he didn’t make, but which he now must set right. All his efforts revolve around “words, words, words,” including, of course, a provocative play meant to catch the conscience of the king. And in the end he dies, asking someone else to tell his story to set right his “wounded name.”

Eighty years ago J. Thomas Looney wrote in *Shakespeare Identified* that the authorship problem was not a literary problem, but an historical and political one. Many Oxfordians today would say how right he was. And what Wood is really doing here is stealing this persuasive argument and making it Stratfordian.

As we noted briefly in our last issue, the single most important element of Wood’s story is the Catholicism of the Stratford man’s father John, along with the involvement of other cousins and possible Warwickshire acquaintances in the recusant Catholic underground. While this

can be seen to give the Stratford story both a reason for secrecy and a reason for some of the religious and moral content of the plays, it actually breaks down pretty quickly under closer examination, and a number of mainstream scholars perceive this and want little or nothing to do with Wood's retelling of the Stratford story (see the article by Prof. Daniel Wright beginning on page ten for some further insights into Catholicism and Shakespeare).

There are other important changes in the traditional biography throughout the film, but the one of most interest, especially to Oxfordians, is Wood's treatment of the 3rd Earl of Southampton—he is more or less deleted from the Shakespeare/Stratford story. Without even acknowledging the significance of what he is doing, Wood simply states that the Sonnets were written to William Herbert in the 1590s. Having done this, when he comes to the 1601 Essex Rebellion and the use of *Richard II* by the conspirators, Southampton is merely one of the others, not even mentioned as Essex's chief partner, let alone also being Shakespeare's Fair Youth. So a key point in the Oxfordian political interpretation of the Sonnets is neutralized, and Sonnet 107, thought by many (Stratfordians and Oxfordians) to refer to Southampton's "confined doom," need not even be mentioned.

Yet the Sonnets are used throughout the film as commentary on the author's life, most notably in using Sonnet 145's "hate away" to mean "Hathaway," and thus a comment on the Stratford man's wife, or having Sonnet 33's "the sun was but one hour mine" refer to the death of Hamnet Shaksper in 1596 (thus taking the sun/son idea cited by some Oxfordians and making it Stratfordian).

In recent discussions about both books during the Fellowship's Carmel Conference it was suggested that they are not really that big a deal, and certainly not designed as a coordinated counter-offensive. Well, true, we have no evidence that Nelson and Wood worked together, or that the publication of these books virtually together was planned in any way.

But come out together they did, giving all the appearances of a coordinated counter-offensive. And if this is the establishment's best shot at defending Stratford, then Stratford may soon be ending—not with bang, but a whimper.

—W. Boyle

# Triumph of (the) Will?

## *New bio, new facts - same old propaganda*

By Joe Eldredge

Last spring the BBC subjected its viewers to four hours of TV financed by the real estate interests of the theme park on the river Avon. The production, ironically titled *In Search of Shakespeare*, and written and presented by Michael Wood in conjunction with the Royal Shakespeare Company, will be shown in the US in January. The film is a towering piece of cynical propaganda. But it is also a generous gift to that growing number of readers who simply do not believe the canon was written by a recusant Catholic from Warwickshire.

No doubt we will be hearing much about this religious swamp-on-Avon. Wood's evidence supporting William of Stratford's recusant background and beliefs is impressive, if not conclusive; but the director is describing someone other than the actual author of the plays. Nevertheless, the alleged Catholicism of the Shaksper family is useful to Wood: it helps to create a pseudo-excuse for the lingering mystery over authorship.

But of course there is nothing mysterious about Wood's author; he is always in full view. Was the film made with literary mirrors? It is glaringly obvious that the team producing this mediocre fiction understands that there is very little in the canon to indicate the alleged Catholic convictions of its author(s). Wood, however, salivates onscreen when he discovers that someone named "William Shakeshaft"—obviously the poet!—has documented connections to Lancashire recusants.

This film is a study in empty propaganda. There are no arguments in it. It is just a form of brainwashing for anyone who might (heaven forbid) have heard that there was some other guy—like what's his name?

Wood's book follows the TV series closely enough to allow us to understand its structure. It is a sparkling collection of every Stratford gambit since the work of John Aubrey: the circular reasoning, the

must-have-beens, the liberties of sequence (time-joints). Although it contains numerous passages which are evidently responding to Oxfordian arguments found in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* and other books, the authorship question as such is never mentioned. My cursory list of such covert "Ox-Blocs" will no doubt be doubled by the real scholars among us; but even the existing items on my initial list on the Shakespeare Fellowship website Discussion Forums are a testament to the compound intellectual dishonesty of the BBC production and the book. (Look for the "Michael Wood still 'Searching for Shakespeare,'" thread in the *State of the Debate* Forum, [www.shakespearefellowship.org](http://www.shakespearefellowship.org))

The concept of circular reasoning probably never came up at BBC editorial/production conferences. But of the book's 344 pages, 111 contain a total of 226 instances of assigning material from the canon to the life of the author of choice. And, of course, an even larger body of "must-have-beens" enriches this fictional triumph of will. There at least 397 of these spread out over 151 pages. For instance: "Shakespeare must have had," "for boys in Stratford were given," etc., etc. So, the underlying argument throughout is that we can just assume this or that—with certainty no less.

An accurate list of Wood's many confirmations that indeed "time is out of joint" must await detailed analysis, if it ever becomes necessary to examine this catafalque further; but chances are, no such critique will be required. Wood's works will collapse under their own weight. With so delinquent a factual basis, can BBC defend these productions as part of a larger commitment to its national and world public? I think not. Is it willing to allow equal time and funds for a rebuttal? Probably not. The BBC has, at least at this point in time, placed its very considerable resources on the line to defend the disintegrating myth of Stratford.

*Commentary***“Monstrous Animosity”***How Nelson’s Oxford bio distorts both Oxford and Oxfordians*

By Roger Stritmatter

It is difficult to know where to begin to place Dr. Alan Nelson’s *Monstrous Adversary* in historical perspective. One recent reviewer describes the book as “a plethora of archival transcriptions” which “misconstrues the personality of a genius” (see page one of this issue). To argue, however, that Professor Nelson merely “misconstrues” the character of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, is a kindness, in my opinion, which reflects more on the noble oblige of the reviewer than on the content of the book being reviewed; the word implies that there is something casual and innocent about Nelson’s methodology, that the book should be criticized for errors of judgment instead of errors of intent. Admittedly, the difference may in practice be difficult to discern. But even the casual reader of *Monstrous Adversary* will be impressed by Professor Nelson’s thorough hostility towards the subject of his own biography and wonder why a man would devote ten years of his life to writing a book about a man whom he so obviously despises.

Ironically, Professor Nelson makes no attempt in his book to actually counter the arguments contained in the numerous works which constitute the desideratum of his project; true, a few names are considered in his introduction and a handful of works advocating the case for Oxford’s authorship are named in his bibliography. Yet, whenever the arguments of those works would have a bearing on the matters in question, Nelson somehow fails to offer any reference to their contents. This is not, it must be emphasized, because Nelson is unaware of the relevance of these arguments; it is clear from the shape of his own “refutation” that he is often formulating his own narrative with these very arguments in mind.

But somehow Nelson cannot trust his readers enough to acknowledge that another point of view exists. They must be protected from what Nelson’s ideological ancestor, Giles Dawson, reviewing *This Star of England* in 1952, referred to as the

“specious plausibility” of the Oxfordian case.

The result is a work of laborious schol-

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***“Ogburn never intended, of course, to present a new body of ‘original documentary research’ .... Instead, his book assembled under one cover an impressive body of circumstantial evidence ....”***

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arship which has about it an air of unreality. It is as if the reader is being let in on the argument of the millennium, but is only being given access to one side in the debate. He is expected to assume that the other side is beneath consideration. To be sure, Nelson does make an effort to justify the book’s one-sidedness. In his introduction, Nelson states that he will “dismiss from serious consideration” two major works which make the case for Oxford’s authorship because “neither...contains anything substantial in the way of original documentary research” (5).

One of them is Charlton Ogburn’s 1984 work, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. Nelson’s condescending phraseology is a clue to the importance of this rhetorical gambit. As anyone who has studied the recent history of the Shakespearean question is aware, Ogburn’s book is the most important work on the authorship question since J. T. Looney first made the

case for Oxford’s authorship in 1920.

Indeed, the alarming circumstance documented on the dust jacket of Nelson’s book (see “Who’s an Amateur?” on page 23 in this issue) is a direct consequence of the publication of Ogburn’s 1984 book. The chief reason that, by the turn of the millennium, the Oxford myth had been “uncritically embraced” by large segments of popular media and was making significant inroads within academia was Ogburn’s book. It was in response to it that *Frontline* prepared a 1989 documentary, on which Ogburn was a featured guest; it was in response to this book that a thousand persons attended the 1987 moot court trial on the authorship question at American University in Washington, D.C.; the moot court in turn led directly to a 1988 Shakespeare authorship story in *The New Yorker* and stimulated Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens to enter the authorship fray with his article, “The Shakespeare Canon of Statutory Construction,” published in the *Pennsylvania Law Review* in 1992; it was in response to Ogburn’s book that *Atlantic* magazine in October 1991 ran an extensive cover story on the authorship question. And yet, Nelson refuses to engage the content of Ogburn’s book on the basis that it fails to contain anything substantial “in the way of original documentary research.”

Ogburn never intended, of course, to present a new body of “original documentary research” based on archival transcription of the kind which Professor Nelson approves. Instead, his book assembled under one cover an impressive body of circumstantial evidence, much of it appearing previously in print only in obscure articles published in journals with tiny circulations during the 64 years intervening between Looney’s book and his own. Ogburn’s purpose was to transmit the research and scholarship contained in these obscure sources to a general readership; by all accounts, he was enormously successful in achieving this purpose. As Pulitzer Prize winning historian David

McCullough wrote in the introduction to the 1984 first edition,

this is a scholarly detective work at its most absorbing. More, it is close analysis by a writer with a rare sense of humanity. The strange, difficult, contradictory man who emerges as the real Shakespeare...is not just plausible but fascinating and wholly believable. It is hard to imagine anyone who reads the book with an open mind ever seeing Shakespeare or his works in the same way again (x).

A second purpose of Ogburn's book, however, was to force a long-delayed confrontation between advocates of the Oxford case and their academic opponents. As long ago as 1950 Hamilton Basso, writing in *The New Yorker*, quoted Columbia University Professor Fredrick Tabor Cooper's opinion of "*Shakespeare*" *Identified*, said:

Here at last is a sane, dignified, arresting contribution to the much abused and sadly discredited Shakespearean controversy. Every right-minded scholar who cares for the welfare of letters in the bigger sense should face the problem that this book presents and argue it to a finish.

Ogburn, born in 1911, had been a keen observer and participant in the authorship debate since the 1940s when both he and his parents were inspired by Looney's book to take up the cause Cooper advocated. Ogburn had watched in dismay as two generations of academic scholars ignored, belittled, and misrepresented the case for Oxford's authorship. He was determined to change this circumstance; accordingly, his book opens with a stunning indictment of the animadversions of the Shakespearean establishment. He wrote in the introduction to *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*:

One of their weapons was to attack the character and motives, even sanity, of dissenters. I meant to try not to reply in kind. One of my points would be that *argumentum ad hominem*, while often effective and difficult to combat, does not do much to advance anyone's understanding of the issues and is the resort, usually, of those unable to defend their case on its merits. What I could do and would do was to put the orthodox academicians on record at every turn and contrast their claims with the facts. I knew the academicians well enough to have little doubt that if their

animadversions were matched against those facts they would never again be cited as authorities by anyone with respect for evidence and reason... (xvii).

Ogburn may have been overly optimistic about the immediate consequences of exposing the fallacies of orthodox reasoning. But it must be acknowledged that one of the primary reasons for the success and popularity of his book was that, in an age when inherited respect for authority had

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***"The market Nelson is now playing to exists only because of Ogburn's charismatic eloquence; unfortunately, Nelson's own work is profoundly deficient in the very qualities .... which made The Mysterious William Shakespeare such an influential work."***

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been undermined by the colossal follies of the U.S. war in Indochina, Watergate, and the Iran-Contra scandal, his argument that the Emperor of Shakespearean orthodoxy had no clothes found a ready audience. One early, sympathetic review of the book is remarkable because of its source and author: in 1985 Richmond Crinkley was the Director of Educational Programs at the Folger Shakespeare Library, an institution which then, as now, was a bastion of orthodox dogma on the questions raised by Ogburn's book. Crinkley, however, achieved the miraculous by publishing a thoughtful review of Ogburn's book in the *Folger's Shakespeare Quarterly*. In a stunning rebuke to the Folger's own traditions, Crinkley commented that "if the intellectual standards of Shakespeare scholarship quoted in such embarrassing abundance by Ogburn are representative, then it is not just authorship about which we need to be

worried .... Ogburn has skillfully directed so much attention on the shabby behavior of his opponents that his argument for Oxford looks all the better because of who is against it."

Ironically, then, Professor Nelson's *Monstrous Adversary* constitutes a delayed response to Ogburn's purpose of engaging the authorship debate. Without Ogburn's book, Nelson would have found no occasion to write his monstrous biography, and without Ogburn's book Nelson's own work would probably not have found a publisher and certainly would never have found a readership. The market Nelson is now playing to exists only because of Ogburn's charismatic eloquence; unfortunately, Nelson's own work is profoundly deficient in the very qualities—balance, tolerance, and critical acumen, to name only a few—which made *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* such an influential work. Nelson has of course read Ogburn's work, but it failed to impress him in the manner it impressed David McCullough. Not only is his view of Shakespeare unchanged by Ogburn's book; he wants to make sure that no one else's view of Shakespeare will be changed by it, either.

To Nelson, this is a professional mandate. What might seem a strange paradox, namely that Nelson has excised Ogburn's book from his bibliography, and for all practical purposes from his book, is in fact the conventional orthodox methodology in dealing with the authorship question. Ogburn's real crime was not that his book lacked "original documentary research," but that it exposed to public awareness a shocking duplicity within the literary establishment and lack of candor in its methods of dealing with public dissent. Therefore, at any cost, the book must be condemned as inadequate in its scholarship and beneath "serious consideration" by "real scholars."

Ogburn's point about the limitations of the *ad hominem* argument, however, applies with special ironic force to Nelson's own book. For all its window-dressing of scholarship, the book is neither plausible nor believable. In place of a judicious scholarly critique of the Oxfordian case it substitutes a sustained *ad hominem* attack on Oxford's character which bends or breaks every canon of fairness which might impede its single-minded pursuit of ideological conformity to orthodox belief.

*Commentary*

# Knocking on Wood

## *Why Michael Wood's recent biography of the Stratford man undermines Shakespearean orthodoxy*

By Prof. Daniel L. Wright

As many Oxfordians are aware, Michael Wood's new book, *In Search of Shakespeare* and the four-hour television series based on it have been getting a lot of attention from scholars and Shakespeare aficionados (to date, the TV series has been broadcast only in the United Kingdom, but is scheduled for release in the US in January 2004). Central to Wood's interpretation of the legend of Stratford Will is his emphasis on Shakspeare's Roman Catholic heritage and ostensible religious convictions. However, it is precisely Wood's underscoring of these features in Shakspeare's biography—in addition to all the other damning evidence against him—that disqualifies Stratford Will from serious consideration as a candidate for the authorship of Shakespeare's works.

Wood establishes Shakspeare's Catholic identity beyond serious question. He points out that the Warwickshire of Shakspeare's youth was a region that for generations had stood firm in its resistance to the Protestant Reformation. He reminds us that Shakspeare's mother was a member of the Arden family—"old-fashioned stalwarts of the shire"—whose *paterfamilias*, Edward Arden, a long-time antagonist of Protestant authority, was executed in 1583 for his role in the Arden-Somerville conspiracy to assassinate the Queen. On Will Shakspeare's father's side, Wood recalls John Shakspeare's notorious recusancy as well as the record of his posthumously-discovered spiritual testament, in which he affirms a passionate attachment to the Roman Catholic Church and instructs his son and others, upon his death, to have masses said for the repose of his soul. Given such evidence of Will Shakspeare's parents' religious practices, and their alliance with Elizabethan England's most notorious Catholic rebels and insurrectionists, one easily can understand Frederick Pohl's conclusion that for their obstinacy, "his parents were lucky . . .

never [to have been] arrested . . ."

In addition to showing that even "before [Shakspeare] was out of his teens . . . the taint of treason had touched his family," Wood reminds us that Will's parents, in conformity with their Catholic convictions, had had their son baptised not by the Anglican vicar at Stratford, but by a Catholic sympathiser. Wood notes that Will himself, a couple of decades later, elected not to be married according to Anglican rites by the local Protestant vicar, but by the aged John Frith, a relic of England's Catholic past who later would be denounced by a government agent as an "old priest . . . [u]nsound in religion." Shakspeare and his wife also would have their twins, Hamnet and Judith, christened in honour of Hamnet and Judith Sadler—neighbors who, like Will and Anne, were devout Catholics. Finally, as if there yet were any doubt about Stratford Will's Catholicism, Wood reminds us of the declaration by Archdeacon Richard Davies who attested that Shakspeare, when he passed from this world in 1616, "dyled a Papyst."

Wood also provides other evidence attesting to Will Shakspeare's probably near-fanatical and quasi-treasonous brand of Catholicism. Most significantly, however, he notes that in 1613 Shakspeare purchased the infamous Blackfriars' Gatehouse, a notorious, labyrinthine-tunneled London refuge for Catholic dissidents and seditious priests located on the north bank of the Thames. Why Shakspeare would have purchased, of all places, such a scandalous property—unless his purposes were intimately linked with those who were suspected of using it as a cover for their proscribed activities—is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine. Additionally, the price he paid for this property—the exorbitant sum of £140 (more than twice what he paid for New Place)—challenges, as Ian Wilson has suggested, the easy assumption by most orthodoxists that Shakspeare, the

miserly businessman, bought it for investment purposes.

Moreover, as Peter Dickson has pointed out in the 2003 issue of *The Oxfordian*, the incredulity of this purchase by the putative writer of the Shakespeare plays is underscored by the fact that, at the very time when Shakspeare was acquiring the Blackfriars' Gatehouse, "five Shakespeare dramas were being featured at festivities celebrating . . . the highly political marriage of King James's daughter Elizabeth to Frederick, Elector of the Palatinate and leader of the German Protestants." Can we believe that the dramatist I would nominate as the archetypal advocate of Reformation sensibilities on the English stage—at the same moment his works were being used to celebrate the alliance of two major European Protestant powers—would be about the business of purchasing one of London's most notorious dens of Catholic sedition? Dickson puts the question well: "Can one," he asks, "imagine a greater incongruity?"

Given that the sum of evidence clearly points in the direction of a Catholic Shakspeare from Stratford-Upon-Avon, how does a reasonable person reconcile these facts with the evidence of plays that conspicuously advance a Reformation agenda, challenge pontifical authority, nurture a skeptical attitude toward Catholic orthodoxy and reveal an authorial disposition that is decidedly Erasmian, humanistic and Protestant? Is such reconciliation possible?

Ten years ago, I published *The Anglican Shakespeare*, a text in which I attempted to demonstrate that Shakespeare, especially in his history plays, wrote as an ardent supporter of the Protestant Reformation and the Anglican Church. Shakespeare, after all, elected not only to view the world from an open-minded, Reformation perspective that enthusiastically embraced the exploration of theretofore for-

bidden questions and long-cherished “truths,” but, in doing so, he utilized sources crafted and shaped by firmly Protestant authorities that no Roman Catholic, in conscience, would have touched: texts like the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer*; the *Elizabethan Homilies*; Richard Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* and the Protestant Geneva Bible. The utilization of such sources for anything but an oppositional purpose would have been anathema to any Catholic writer of the age, and surely it would have been so for one of such decidedly Catholic heritage and apparently radical conviction as Will Shakspeare of Stratford-Upon-Avon.

Shakespeare’s depiction of Catholic authority in his plays is utterly irreconcilable with any argument suggesting he wrote as a Catholic sympathizer, let alone as a propagandist for the Old Faith. His depictions of Roman Catholic prelates are particularly unflattering. His high-ranking ecclesiastics are worse than corrupt—they are the very counterfeits of Christ. These “wol[ves] in sheep’s array” (*1 Henry VI*, I.iii.55) instigate unrest and conspire the overthrow of the State. In *King John*, Shakespeare even has the papal legate call for the assassination of the King—accompanied by the promise of canonization and “worship . . . as a saint” for the man who performs it (III.i.174-79). Also in *King John*, Shakespeare has his thirteenth-century King speak as though he were a son of the sixteenth-century Reformation, boldly declaring the Pope to be a “meddling . . . Italian priest” whose authority is “usurp’d” and his power corruptly sustained by the sale of pardons (III.i.152-60, 162-71). In *1 Henry VI*, the duke of Gloucester denounces the Cardinal Archbishop of Winchester as an “insolen[t]” and “manifest conspirator” who “regards nor God nor king,” and the Mayor of London declares him to be “more haughty than the devil” (I.iii.33-37, 60, 85). Indeed, the only prelate in the entire canon who is treated with uncompromising favor is Thomas Cranmer, Henry VIII’s Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, who baptises the Princess Elizabeth and proclaims, prophetically, that in her reign, “[t]ruth shall nurse her,” and “God shall be truly known” (V.iv.14-55).

One might try to make something of a case for Shakespeare’s sympathetic treat-

ment of the Bishop of Carlisle in *Richard II* as a lonely exception to the portrayal of “scarlet hypocri[sy]” (*1 Henry VI*, I.iii.56) that typifies the bishops and cardinals in the rest of the canon, but such an argument ultimately can go nowhere, for Shakespeare’s depiction of Carlisle is historical fiction. From first to last, Shakespeare’s Carlisle is not depicted as he was, for the playwright’s fawning reverence for Carlisle is nothing but an obsequi-

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ous nod to Elizabeth’s fondness for her *own* bishop of Carlisle, Owen Oglethorpe (he, after all, had agreed to crown her Queen when all the prelates with prior claim to that privilege had refused). Shakespeare’s approbation of the Bishop of Carlisle in *Richard II*, therefore, is *not* for Thomas Merke, England’s late fourteenth-century Bishop of Carlisle but for Oglethorpe, a man who would follow almost 200 years later. Contrary to Shakespeare’s depiction of him, Merke was tried for conspiracy against Henry IV, convicted and sentenced to death. The

only reason he was spared execution was due to intervention by the Pope—not, as Shakespeare would have it, because Henry saw “[h]igh sparks of honour” in the old traitor and wanted him to “joy [his] life” (V.vi.26, 29).

That Shakespeare wrote as a man persuaded of the truth of the Reformation has long been acknowledged by many orthodox critics. In 1993 Maurice Hunt declared as much in a celebrated article on Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, observing that “[a]fter satirizing traits of Puritanism, Brownism, and Catholicism . . . Shakespeare approximates an Anglican perspective on Providence . . .” Similarly, Jeffrey Knapp, in *Shakespeare’s Tribe*, argues that, notably in *1 Henry VI*, “a popish Christendom is united by cupidity, not faith, if it is united by anything at all.” In *King John*, Knapp further observes, “[Shakespeare] endorses the Protestant critique of Rome,” reflecting and reinforcing earlier criticism by S.W. Fullom, who had written that throughout the canon Shakespeare “denies the supremacy of the Pope and contemns his spiritual powers. He ridicules the notion that there is miraculous virtue in the shrines of saints. . . . The old Church sealed up the Bible [but] Shakespeare is for having it open . . .”

One staggers at the odds that the Elizabethan Age’s premier playwright could have been a Catholic during the most anti-Catholic epoch in English history. The extreme unlikelihood that the writer could have been a Catholic is underscored with particular force by the fact that Catholics did not—indeed, *could* not—write as Catholics for the theatre. Given the laws of censorship that applied to the Elizabethan stage, nothing that could be recognized as anti-Protestant and pro-Catholic propaganda had any chance of achieving a public forum by passing the ecclesiastical censors. Catholics, therefore, like Puritans, frowned on most theatrical productions in early modern England, albeit for different reasons.

If Puritans scowled at the theatre because they saw it as a corrupter of morals and a distraction from religious devotion, Catholics glowered on it because the public stage was the Elizabethan State’s principal vehicle—apart from the pulpit—for

*(Continued on page 17)*

*Camden* (continued from page 1)

1. *Britannia, A Chorographical Description of the Most Flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the Islands adjoining, out of the depth of Antiquitie: Beautified With Mappes of the severall Shires of England.* Six richly illustrated editions were published in Latin in 1586, 1587, 1590, 1594, 1600 and 1607. English editions were published by Philemon Holland in 1610 and, after Camden's death, by Holland again in 1637.

"Chorography" combines geographic descriptions of a country's regions with its history, in particular what makes a town or district distinctive or special with regard to its history and notable citizenry.

2. *Reges*, 1600, a book about Westminster Abbey's epitaphs.

3. *Anglica*, 1602, a collection of historical chronicles about England.

4. *Remains Concerning Britain*, 1605, containing diverse tidbits of English history not used by Camden in his *Britannia*.

5. *Annales rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum regnante Elizabetha*. Volume 1, 1615, is a praiseful history of Queen Elizabeth's reign to 1588. Volume 2, completing the history, was finished in 1617 but, at Camden's specific request, was not published until two years after his death. Since this history was commissioned by Baron Burghley and was largely based upon his highly sieved and selected papers, some think Camden delayed the second volume's publication to avoid any personal criticism. Modern historians now recognize this two-volume work as quite "Cecilized" and one-sided.

Camden wrote in Latin. His descriptions of Stratford-on-Avon in the first six editions of *Britannia*<sup>3</sup> are provided below, together with modern translations by the author and his consultant.<sup>4</sup>

#### First Edition (1586)

Plenior hinc Avona defertur per Stratford emporiolu non inelegans quod duobus fuis alumnis omnem dignitatem debet, Ioanni de Stratford Archiepiscopo



Fig. 1

By courtesy of National Portrait Gallery

William Camden, 1551-1623

Cantuariensi qui templum posuit, & Hugoni Clopton Pretori Londinensi, qui Avone pontem faxeum quatuordecem fornibus subnixum non fine maximis inipensis induxit.

Translation: "From here the River Avon flows down more strongly through the not undistinguished 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."

[Second Edition (1587), not available]

#### Third Edition (1590)

Plenior hinc Avona defertur primùm per Charlcott nobilis & equestris familiae Luciorum habitationem. quae à Charlcottis iam olim ad Was haereditariò transmigravit & per Stratford emporiolu non elegans [misprinted; word should have been "inelegans"], quod duobus fuis alumnis omnem dignitatem debet... [The rest is unchanged; the author's underlines mean words added since the first edition.]

Translation: "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..."

#### Fourth Edition (1594)

Plenior hinc Avona defertur primum per Charlcott nobilis & equestris familiae Luciorum habitationem, quae à Charlcottis iam olim ad illos haereditariò quasi transmigravit: & per Stratford emporiolum non inelegans quod duobus fuis alumnis omnem dignitatem debet... [Words changed are the 1590 spelling of "emporiolu" to "emporiolum" and correcting the misprinted word "elegans" back to "inelegans".]

The English translation remains the same as that for the 1590 edition.

#### Fifth Edition (1600)

Same wording as the 1594 edition.

#### Sixth Edition (1607)

Plenior hinc Avona defertur per Charlcott nobilis & equestris familiae Luciorum habitationem, quae à Charlcottis iam olim ad illos haereditariò quasi transmigravit, qui ad pauperes & suscipiendos domum religiosam pio instituto ad Thellisford posuerunt, Thelley enim fluviolus dictus erat, qui per compton Murdac olim Mutdecorum. nunc equestris familie Vernaorum, & hanc Thellisford Avonam petit, qui Stratford mox allabitur emperiolum non inelegans, quod duobus fuis alumnis omnem dignitatem debet ...

Translation: "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, who in order to accept under their protection the poor and the outsiders, established a religious house near Thellesford with a Godfearing

purpose. For the little river had been called Thelley which, flowing through Compton Murdac (formerly of the Murdackes, now of the knightly family of Vernaies) and Thellesford, then heads for this River Avon which next flows to the not undistinguished little market town of Stratford, which owes all of its reputation to its two foster sons..."

The 1607 edition of *Britannia* was the last edition published by Camden and, therefore, no further text revisions were made by Camden himself.

### Holland's 1610 & 1637 Translation of Camden's 6th Edition

The next two editions were translated by Philemon Holland and published for the first time in English in 1610 and 1637, 14 years after Camden died in 1623 (Shaksper died in 1616). These two editions contained identical English wording for the single paragraph describing Stratford.

"Avon now runneth downe from Warwicke with a fuller streame by Charlecot, the habitation of the renowned ancient family of the Lucies Knights, which place long agoe descended hereditarily to them from the Charlcots: who upon a pious and devout minde founded a religious house at Thellisford, for entertainment of poore folke and pilgrims. For, that little river was called Thelley, which by Comton Murdicke, the possession sometime of the Murdackes, and now of the Vernaies, Knights, and by this, Thellisford goeth into Avon, which within a while runneth hard by Stratford, a proper little mercate town, beholden for all the beauty that it hath to two men there bred and brought up, namely, John of Stratford, Archbishop of Canterburie, who built the Church; and Sir Hugh Clopton, Major of London, who over Avon made a stone bridge supported with foureteene arches, not without exceeding great expenses."<sup>5</sup>

### Who was John of Stratford?

John de Stratford was born in Stratford and graduated from Oxford. A Doctor of Civil and Canon Law, he pursued a religious career, becoming Archdeacon of Lincoln, Canon of York and then Bishop of Winchester in 1323.<sup>6</sup> John was the principal

adviser to King William III and several times an emissary to France and the Vatican. He was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1333, a post he held until his death in 1348.

The first Stratford church was of wood, mentioned in 845 by Bertulf, King of Mercia. The word Stratford is derived from "strete ford" a Roman road crossed the River Avon at this fording place, the name being coined when the town was planned

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***"The key point is that William Shakespeare is not mentioned at all, either in the first edition or in subsequent editions of 1627, 1634, and 1661, as a contributor to the Elizabethan Golden Age for literature."***

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in 1196.

The present Trinity Parish Church was built of limestone in the shape of a cross beginning in 1210. Many additions and remodelings have occurred over the centuries, including a chantry founded by John of Stratford in 1331 for the singing of masses in the Thomas Becket Chapel.<sup>7</sup>

John built a College of Priests which had a significant impact on the church over succeeding centuries.<sup>8</sup> John also purchased an advowson from the Royal Crown, giving Trinity Parish Church the right to nominate its own vicar, subject to approval by the Bishop. This gave the church some important control over its own leadership.<sup>9</sup>

For these reasons William Camden praised John as having "built" Trinity Parish Church, which he didn't. But he did make important material and administrative

contributions to its current and future welfare.

### Who was Hugh Clopton?

Hugh Clopton was born in Stratford circa 1440 and became rich as a London textile merchant. He became Mayor of London in 1492 and died in 1496. Although sometimes referred to as "Sir", he was never knighted.<sup>10</sup>

His fondness for his birthplace was financially manifested by:

1. Replacing a dilapidated wooden bridge over the Avon in Stratford with an expensive stone bridge of 14 arches, still in use today.
2. Rebuilding the Guild Chapel of Holy Cross in Trinity Parish Church.
3. Building New Place in Stratford which became the final home of the grain merchant and real estate speculator William Shaksper.<sup>11</sup>

### Was William Camden acquainted with the Vere family?

Camden must have known Edward de Vere personally, doing much of his research at Cecil House where de Vere's three daughters lived with their grandfather, William Cecil, and where de Vere himself often visited. Clearly he knew of the Vere family, in his Elizabethan history referring to the following Veres contemporaneous with himself:<sup>12</sup>

1. "This yeere (1562) John Vere, the sixteenth Earl of Oxford of that noble lineage, rendered his life to Nature, who by ... his second wife Margaret Golding begate Edward Earle of Oxford (who set his Patrimony flying) and Mary married to Peregrine Berty."
2. He lists Edward de Vere as a trial judge of Mary Queen of Scots in 1586.
3. He lists "Edward Earle of Oxford, Lord Great Chamberlaine of England" as a judge in the treason trial of Philip Howard in 1589.
4. He refers to Francis Vere's important victory at Turnholt in 1597.
5. Writing Cecil's obituary in 1598, Camden states, "By his other wife

(Continued on page 14)

*Camden (continued from page 13)*

Mildred Coke hee begat . . . Anne Countess of Oxford (to whom were born three daughters, Elizabeth married to William Earle of Darby, Bridget married to the Lord Norris, and Susan married to Philip Earle of Montgomery) . . .”

6. Camden refers to Francis Vere's war commentaries of 1600.

7. Camden describes the treason trial of the Earls of Essex and Southampton in 1601, listing their judges, including the Earl of Oxford.<sup>13</sup> In his *Britannia*, Camden refers to a number of de Veres, including Aubrey (second son of Alberic, who came over to England with William the Conqueror), who was made Lord Great Chamberlain of England; Aubrey III who was made the first Earl of Oxford; Robert, the Ninth Earl of Oxford who was a close friend of Richard II; John, the great Thirteenth Earl; and others.

### Comments

It is hard to imagine that Camden, a privileged historian with detailed access to the highest circles of government including Queen Elizabeth's Court, was not fully aware of de Vere's writing genius and the open "secret" of his Cecil-coerced pseudonymity as William Shakespeare, but there is no primary proof of this assumption. Although the town of Hedingham's chorography is not mentioned in *Britannia*, de Vere certainly deserved description as bringing glory to Queen Elizabeth's Court. But one senses a Burghley-influenced intentional and complete omission of Edward de Vere despite his being described by others as the preeminent poet and comedy playwright in England. For example, William Webbe in his 1586 critique, "A Discourse of English Poetry" said:

I may not omit the deserved commendation of many honourable and noble Lords and Gentlemen in Her Majesty's Court which, in the rare devices of poetry have been, and yet are, most skillful; among whom the Right Honourable Earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of most excellent among the rest.

Even the less eminent Henry de Vere, Edward's son, is mentioned by Camden as the 18th Earl of Oxford in the 1610 edition of *Britannia*. In 1964, Charlton Ogburn, Jr. had this to say about Camden:<sup>14</sup>

William Camden, while including William Shakespeare among the "most pregnant wits of these our times" in 1605, not only did not record Shaksper's death in 1616 but made no mention of him in his listing of "Worthies" of Stratford when Shaksper was domiciled there. He obviously did not consider the two men the same.

In the 1980s, the Shakespeare Oxford Society pointed out that

William Camden in his book *Remains Concerning Britain...* had praised the author 'Shakespeare,' but in his *Annals* for the year 1616 Camden omits mention of the Stratford man's death. Also, in the list of Stratford Worthies of 1605 Camden omits the Stratford man's name, even though Camden had previously passed on Shaksper's application for a family coat of arms. The inference is that it did not occur to Camden that the author, "Shakespeare," and the Stratford man were the same person.<sup>15</sup>

Thus William Camden was aware of the existence of William Shaksper of Stratford and yet never mentioned him as the great playwright, William Shakespeare, in any of his many editions of *Britannia*, or in his *Remains Concerning Britain*, or in his official history of the Elizabethan era. Diana Price, in her recent book, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*, put it this way:<sup>16</sup>

...in 1603, the antiquarian and historian William Camden, in his *Remains Concerning Britain*, included 'William Shakespeare' as one of the 'most pregnant wits of these our times, whom succeeding ages may justly admire'. Yet Camden omitted Shakespeare when discussing the worthies of Stratford-on-Avon in his later work of 1607, *Britannia*.

### Should Camden have mentioned William Shakespeare?

Stratfordians argue that playwrights as well as actors were denigrated by Elizabethan England and this explains why Camden didn't mention Shaksper of Stratford in his *Britannia*. But where is the

evidence that playwrights were denigrated by Camden or by England? Certainly not in Gloriana's Court, to which the exemplary playwright Edward de Vere and others brought supreme glory, making it the most illustrious Court of the age and for which he was paid £1000 a year for writing plays. Was the Queen paying him for his sonnets and other poetry? Hardly.

Thomas Sackville, cousin of Queen Elizabeth through Anne Boleyn, was co-writer of the highly regarded *The Tragedy of Gorboduc*, performed at Whitehall before the Queen on January 18, 1562, and other works.<sup>17</sup> His "denigration" included being made a Privy Councilor in 1585, Chancellor of Oxford in 1591, Lord High Treasurer in 1599, and Earl of Dorset in 1604. The funeral sermon for Sackville at Westminster Abbey in 1608 described the Queen as "sharing the general high opinion of Sackville's merits as a writer."<sup>18</sup>

The Elizabethans did harbor the strange idea that nobles should not acknowledge any hand work because it was "manual labor" unbecoming the rank of noble. Therefore any literary creativity must remain anonymous until after their death. But this is a far cry from writers and playwrights being denigrated, i.e., blackened and defamed.

Elizabeth herself was highly intellectual, loved literature and encouraged literary pursuits throughout her reign. It was through these writings that her Court achieved the acme of its brilliance, becoming a "golden age," not for painting, sculpture or music but for creative writing. Sonnets were passed around the Court. New plays by the best playwrights, after tryouts at tavern inns, were presented at Court first before London public staging. By the end of Gloriana's reign, plays in London were attended by the staggering number of 15,000 paying customers per week, scarcely possible if plays and playwrights were "denigrated" in the Elizabethan age.

But what were Camden's own guidelines for including writers and poets in his *Britannia*? Literary wisdom, writers, learning, books, poets and poetry are placed on a revered pedestal in *Britannia*, sprinkled with literary quotes, both poetry and prose. For instance, in the 1637 edition:

1. Page 375: "The town itself, having nothing in it at all to shew, glorieth yet in this, that Geoffrey Chaucer our English Homer was there bred and brought up."

2. Page 411: In describing the town of Verulam in Hertfordshire, "Alexander Nicham who 400 yeeres since was there born..." Camden then quotes one of Nicham's poems:

This is the place that knowledge took of my  
Nativity,  
My happy yeeres, my days also of mirth and  
jollity.  
This place, my childhood trained up in all  
Arts liberall,  
And laid the groundworke of my name and  
skill Poeticall.

3. Page 518: "Whereupon Bernard Andreas of Thelous, a Poet living in those days. . ." (wrote an ode dedicated to Henry VII).

4. Page 575: Describing the Saxon times of Old English, Camden mentions "Joseph the Monk of Exeter, a right elegant poet in those days."

5. Page 654: "... that I may use no other words than the verses of Augustus Thuanus Esmerius, that most excellent Poet of our age...."

6. Page 707: "Master John Jonston of Aberden has but a while since written in verse of Yorke..."

7. Page 744: "And our St. Bede, the singular glory and ornament of England, wrote many most learned volumes."

These important precedents in *Britannia* create a powerful argument that the failure to mention England's greatest poet, William Shakespeare, in his chorographical description of Stratford-on-Avon is both intentional and significant. The argument that he could not mention Shakespeare because he was a playwright is not viable.

### The importance of circumstantial evidence to the Oxfordian case

As growing numbers of lid nails inexorably circumnavigate the coffin of the appallingly weak and prognosis-doomed Stratfordian authorship doctrine, the Oxfordian case steadily strengthens. Reviewing the embarrassingly illogical

Stratfordian hypothesis and its many eminent proponents, one is reminded of the words of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe:

The most fruitful lesson is the conquest of one's own error. Whoever refuses to admit error may be a great scholar, but he is not a great learner.

Lisa Fittko's words also come to mind: "Such people known for their eminent intellects are found shambling throughout history with blinders on. Sometimes it seems that the higher the mind, the bigger the blinders."

As Francis Bacon said, circa 1600:

The more intelligent the authorities, the more idiotic will be some of their claims. When such a man sets out in the wrong direction, his superior skill and mental swiftness will lead him proportionally further away from the truth.

Until a smoking gun is found confirming that Edward de Vere is William Shakespeare, Oxfordians must rely upon the increasing cascade of powerful circumstantial evidence, exemplified in the following examples.

In a recent paper entitled "The Queen Elizabeth Pregnancy Portrait: Who Designed It and Who Did the Cover ups?"<sup>19</sup> a compelling circumstantial case is made, despite one-third of the portrait having been painted over by truth destroyers, that:

1. Edward de Vere designed the enigmatic pregnancy portrait which has perplexed English art experts for generations.

2. Through Latin mottoes on the portrait, de Vere strongly implies: (a) that the royal fetus was Henry Wriothesley; (b) that he, de Vere, was the father; (c) that de Vere was William Shakespeare, who devotedly dedicated his first two "signed" published works (*Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*) to his son, the Third Earl of Southampton. Peter Dickson's excellent work on Henry Peacham, now familiar to all Oxfordians, is also a strong case in point.<sup>20</sup> In his 1622 *Compleat Gentleman*, a survey of important English literature, Peacham wrote:

The reign of Elizabeth was a Golden Age, distinguished by poets whose like are hardly to be hoped for in any succeeding age. The first in honor is Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

The key point is that William Shakespeare is not mentioned at all, either in the first edition or in subsequent editions of 1627, 1634, and 1661, as a contributor to the Elizabethan Golden Age for literature. The implication is clear and obvious except to those with eyes wide shut, that to mention Shakespeare would have been redundant since Peacham and the Elizabethan literary world were quite aware that Edward de Vere was Shakespeare. Increasingly confident Oxfordians need no longer tread lightly on the erroneous, often preposterous and sometimes fraudulent Bigfootian toes of Stratfordians, and Peter Dickson pulls no punches:

This glaring omission of Shakespeare's name from Peacham's list was astounding and in all likelihood was not an oversight but, on the contrary, was a deliberate exclusion because Peacham knew that Oxford and Shakespeare were the same person... Peacham's decision in 1622 was clearly testimony that there was no Shakespeare but, instead, only Oxford.<sup>21</sup>

The same logic applies to William Camden and his clearly intentional omission of William Shaksper as a worthy person of Stratford or bringing any fame whatsoever to that "not undistinguished little market town."

The rigid exclusion of important evidence, circumstantial and otherwise, is typical of dominant guild ideation. The process is widespread, not only in the Shakespeare authorship debate but in all other fields of endeavor as a distinguishing characteristic of humans. In the field of medicine, for instance, Skrabanek and McCormick conclude that it is often "experts" themselves who delay important advances. They point out that:

It now sounds incredible that the prestigious scientific journal *Nature* could refuse, on the advice of 'authorities', to publish Hans Krebs' work on the citric acid cycle, H.C. Urey's work on heavy hydrogen, and Enrico Fermi's research on beta-decay.

(Continued on page 16)

Camden (continued from page 15)

Krebs, Urey, and Fermi all subsequently received Nobel Prizes for these discoveries.<sup>22</sup>

### Concluding remarks

1. In the Shakespeare authorship debate, neither side has yet discovered a smoking gun. Until such is found, and there may not be one, Stratfordians and Oxfordians must rely upon circumstantial evidence.

2. Each side is supremely confident of its case. But while Stratfordians rest upon their whimsically constructed laurels, based upon more than 200 years of biased research intermixed with blatant coverups and vitriolic *ad hominem* attacks against their adversaries, Oxfordians quietly do their basic research and march with firm persistence towards the Truth.

3. William Camden, England's first historian, who knew of Shaksper of Stratford through his application for a family crest, never once mentioned him as the playwright William Shakespeare or as a noteworthy citizen of Stratford in any of seven editions of *Britannia* between 1586 and 1610, or in his *Remains Concerning Britain* of 1605, or in his comprehensive two-volume history of the Elizabethan age published in 1615 and 1625.

4. The main conclusion is the same as that of two generations of Oxfordians, that the failure of Camden to link William Shaksper of Stratford-on-Avon to the works of Shakespeare is significant circumstantial testimony that Camden knew they were two very different individuals.

5. The Camden evidence cited in this paper is against the reigning Shaksper of Stratford authorship theory but does not add specific evidence in favor of Edward de Vere's candidacy.

6. It is difficult not to shake one's head in continuing disbelief over the remarkable power of Conventional Wisdom in maintaining the incredibly weak Stratfordian dogma which continues impervious to all evidence and logic. The words of Leo Tolstoy come to mind:

Most men can seldom accept even the simplest and most obvious truth if it would oblige them to admit the falsity of conclusions which they have delighted in explaining to colleagues, have proudly

taught to others, and have woven thread by thread into the fabric of their lives.

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Earwig Arts present

### EDWARD'S PRESENTS

Written by Sally Llewellyn

Directed by Kirrie Wratten

*This exciting new play tells the story behind the writing of Shakespeare's Sonnets and A Midsummer Night's Dream, on the assumption that Shakespeare was the pseudonym of Edward de Vere.*

'An accomplished and entertaining piece with an involved story and rounded characterisation... the language is so fluent and progressive in terms of the narrative' (*Paines Plough*)

Edward's Presents grew from Sally's combined interests in literature and psychology. Sally's first degree was in English, at Sussex University, and she later trained as a psychotherapist at Regent's College, London. She has written several shorter pieces; this is her first full-length play. The production marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Edward de Vere.

**Times:** 6th to 24th January 2004 7:30pm **Tickets:** £10 (£8 concessions)

**Venue:** The Union Theatre, 204 Union Street, London SE1 0LX

**Box-office:** 011-44-20-7261-9876 (or e-mail: [sasha@uniontheatre.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:sasha@uniontheatre.freeserve.co.uk))

**Further information:** [www.edwardsresents.co.uk](http://www.edwardsresents.co.uk) E-mail: [earwigarts@hotmail.com](mailto:earwigarts@hotmail.com)

*Knocking on Wood (cont'd from page 11)*

instructing of the people in the new Protestant religion. John Foxe, for example—a man we know best for his graphic Protestant martyrology—was unapologetic in his defense of the theatre in the cultural war against Catholicism: “[P]layers, printers, [and] preachers,” he declared, were “set up of God, as a triple bulwark against the triple crown of the Pope . . . .” If Shakespeare had been a Catholic of any conviction—let alone the fiery, subversive Catholic that the historical record suggests Stratford Will may have been—it is inconceivable that he would have pursued, as his life’s work, the advancement of the government’s Protestant agenda by skewering Catholic authorities and mastering one of the primary means of propaganda by which the State sought to undermine Catholic faith, convictions and loyalties.

“[M]iracles are ceas’d,” utters Shakespeare’s anachronistically Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury in *Henry V* (I.i.67) in obedience to the Protestant conviction that revelation has been closed. *Henry IV, Part One*, in Falstaff’s comic lament over Poins, trumpets the distinctively Protestant proposition that one’s salvation is not achieved by personal works: “O, if men were to be sav’d by merit, what hole in hell were hot enough for him?” (I.ii.107-08). The play echoes that doctrine in Act IV when Henry laments that “all that I can do is nothing worth, / Since my penitence comes after all, / Imploring pardon” (IV.i.303-05). And when Shakespeare’s Catholics are not about the business of trying to kill someone or plot with a foreign power, they are usually worse than useless, as even the relatively innocuous Friar Laurence is unarguably culpable for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, having encouraged the children to lie to their parents, offered them dangerous counsel, supplied them with drugs and, in the words of the late Roy Battenhouse, proffered “worldly nostrums rather than gospel. . . .”

An independent factor which may be the most revealing about Shakespeare’s incompatibility with any assumption that he was Catholic—quite apart from his pro-Reformation manipulation and distortion of history, his copious appropriation and use of Anglican texts, and his open ad-

vancement of unambiguously Protestant religious doctrine and prejudices—may be his distinctly Reformation and humanistic attitude toward writing itself, a perspective that eschewed any assumptions that a writer was obligated, first and foremost, to write in deference to an ossified tradition, in obedience to codified doctrine, and in submission to hierophants with mitres and red hats.

Particularly in this respect Shake-

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***“Could any Catholic writer***

***so completely abandon***

***his confidence in the***

***authority of divine***

***revelation to contend,***

***as Hamlet does, that***

***‘there is nothing either***

***good or bad, but***

***thinking makes it so?”***

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speare’s work has much in common with that of the members of the School of Night—those poet/philosophers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries such as Raleigh and Marlowe, whose works reflect skeptical attitudes toward conventional truths, as well as a strong measure of unorthodox religiosity. Can one seriously imagine, for example, a Catholic writer advancing, in the person of Prince Hamlet, a hero meditating on the nobility of suicide or suggesting, as Prospero does in *The Tempest*, that faith in the Resurrection is absurd by asserting, instead, that “We are such stuff/As dreams are made on/And our little life/Is rounded with a sleep”? Could any Catholic writer so completely abandon his confidence in the authority of

divine revelation to contend, as Hamlet does, that “there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so” (II.ii.249-50)? Would he give authority to sorceresses and represent them as actually capable of seeing into the future? Would he lionize, in a play like *Henry VIII*, the very Queen who would put the head of the Catholic Queen of Scots on the executioner’s block? Would he show Catholic popes, bishops and cardinals as arrogant, carnal-minded toads worthy of being cudged by plain-spoken, doughty Englishmen? Would he laugh at Catholic piety, merrily indulge an irreverent and bawdy wit, and consistently depict the Catholic Church’s notables as incompetents, dissemblers, subversives and traitors? Would he write with a skeptical muse, explorationally, quizzically and non-dogmatically? How, in God’s name, if he were so dedicated to a fundamentalist, activist Catholicism and the subversion of the Elizabethan State as was the man who bought the Blackfriars’ Gatehouse, could he have written a masterpiece of proto-existentialist sensibility like *King Lear*?

So, more power to Michael Wood and other Stratfordian historians as they unseal the literary tomb that orthodox Stratfordianism has tried to keep closed for generations. What they reveal, in unravelling the Stratford mummy, is that this “corpse”—like its fabled Egyptian counterpart—tells a story and bears a curse, too. What it reveals is that the narrowly Catholic, parochial, bourgeois malcontent from Stratford could not have been the wildly artful, free-thinking humanist with passions for romance, fantasy, high comedy and revisionist history that was Shakespeare—a literary creator whose existence was possible, in large part, because of a cultural revolution that broke old restraints, liberated imaginations and freed artists to create works transcending the simple mechanics and medieval morality of the old mystery and miracle plays. Shakespeare was our first modern writer—indeed, our contemporary—a literary revolutionary who broke ground and planted seeds in soil that, in the hands of his artistic successors, would yield a harvest of unrivalled richness that would ultimately establish little England as the literary jewel in the world’s crown.

# Book Reviews

***Counterfeiting Shakespeare—Evidence, Authorship and John Ford's Funerall Elegye.* By Brian Vickers. Cambridge University Press, 2002. 562 pages. ISBN: 0-521-772435 (hardback, \$75).**

By James Webster Sherwood

**B**rian Vickers, a professional Stratfordian scholar, took his thesis from Richard J. Kennedy, a prize-winning professional writer of children's stories, but a self-professed amateur at Shakespeare studies, and therefore to be forgiven his Oxfordian views.

In a massive work of research, comparative analysis and common sense, Professor Vickers uses statistics to fight statistics. He affirms that if the writing is dull, a dull mind wrote it, thereby denying Shakespeare and awarding John Ford the credit. His efforts end the claim of a little three-page ditty called "Shall I Die" and a fourteen-page dirge, *A Funerall Elegye*, to authorship by Shakespeare.

Along the way he disqualifies two serious Stratfordian scholars: Gary Taylor, an editor of the *Oxford Complete Works of Shakespeare*, and Donald Foster, the celebrated Vassar professor who correctly identified Joe Klein as the Anonymous author of *Primary Colors* and then awarded a forgotten man from Poughkeepsie the authorship of "The Night Before Christmas,"—attributions which have been accepted by experts. Others who had acquiesced to the Taylor and Foster claims for Shakespeare, and are now reduced by Vickers's proofs of poor scholarship, are Professors Stanley Wells, David Bevington, Stephen Greenblatt and Walter Cohen. He then winds up by describing the conduct of the established scholars and suggests a more congenial attitude.

## A simple plan

Vickers follows a simple plan. He shows how Shakespeare *could not*, then proves beyond question how the poet-playwright John Ford (1586-at least 1638) *could and did*, write the tedious "*Elegye*, "a fantasy on one note"—only showing little or no

fantasy." He parses the words down to the incredible "Fordian thumbprint"—"Of as a key fulcrum" of Ford's writing, his "favorite partitive genitive."

Poor Foster "evidently never looked at Ford" although he was the first to drop Ford's name in this famous failed attribution to Shakespeare. The "odds on the *Elegye* having arisen by chance from one corpus or the other were at least 3,000 times better for Ford than they are for Shakespeare," Vickers writes, quoting a satellite study by two of his myriad fellow scholars, Professors Elliott and Valenza.

So much for the fall of a few Stratfordian experts. Vickers's real book is only beginning:

Arguably, the importance of properly identifying authorship is even greater in literature, since our engagement with the detail of language in poetry, drama or fiction is far more intense than that of the philosopher or historian. In literary texts the direct confrontation with language is the primary experience, to which we constantly return. We take it for granted that even the most humble writers deserve to have their work correctly identified, an expectation which becomes more exigent the more eminent the author. . . the inclusion in his canon of work erroneously attributed to him would be deeply depressing, almost tragic.

Just warming up, he continues:

As I point out, authorship studies, almost more than other branches of literary criticism, is prone to. . . the pursuit of scholarly disagreement in a personal manner, as if the goal. . . was not to establish truth, or probability, but to protect scholarly reputation.

The gloves are off. Setting the stage for his real case, against a scholar's ethics, the professor writes that his book will end "with a reminder that authorship studies, like all forms of research, is best performed with an open mind." That is a virtue he denies Mr. Foster, whose aggressive defiance of all his better warnings "involves not just the ethics of controversy but the whole practice of authorship studies." As Vickers notes, "it is a sad fact. . . that when an attribution is wrong, everything about

it is wrong."

Vickers wastes no words on Foster's fall. He congratulates him, "as Richard J. Kennedy put it, on 'having discovered a new poem by John Ford.'"

On to the bigger issue, integrity. "It is noteworthy how Foster's critics continually find their attempts to have a say being blocked." He cites case after case of editors who do not referee this controversy with fairness. Not to forget the other disgraced editor, "I also noted Taylor being 'violent in dismissing other scholars' views.'" Then, "As readers will already have noticed, it is sometimes necessary to read Taylor's arguments rather carefully." And, examining Foster's work, "how easily the unwary reader can be misled by the manipulation of statistics."

So, "Foster is a master of sweeping the crumbs together, hoping to identify the loaf from which they derive."

## The death of scholarship

As Vickers calmly observes in this epic of rational discourse and understatement, "Refusing to address counter arguments brings about the death of scholarship." Where "disputes have proved particularly troublesome," he notes, "an attribution scholar, almost more than anyone else, is duty-bound to take note of contrary interpretations of the evidence. . . ."

Whipping his fellow Stratfordians, Vickers purrs, "To ignore one's critics is to kill off scholarship, denying the whole purpose of intellectual exchange." He buries his foes. They "seem to have forgotten the questionable status of certainty in all forms of research." And, "an issue dismissed as closed remains gaping open." Thus, "To build on such foundations is to rest, not upon sand, but upon air."

Vickers' aim "is to try and remedy the increasing isolation of authorship studies within a specialized enclave."

Now he presents his philosopher heroes: "A person's judgments of the quality of evidence. . . are perspectival, depending on his background beliefs." (Susan Haack, who warns about "the untidy process of groping for truth.") Then, "what passes for truth, known fact, strong evidence and

well-conducted inquiry is sometimes no such thing, but only what the powerful have managed to get accepted as such." (C. S. Peirce, the founder of pragmatism.) So, "Do not believe what you wish to believe until you perceive what you ought to have perceived." (John Crow).

Now comes a curious collision. "No biographical or 'close' reading of the *Sonnets* has ever produced any coherent evidence that the human feelings described and represented in those poems are actual feelings felt by Shakespeare on specific occasions for real people."

Is he suggesting a miracle of writing, an author who knows nothing about his subject? Here is the kicker: "Such a naive approach would turn the whole of lyric poetry from Petrarch to Milton, at least, into concealed autobiography, an unusually silly form of reductivism."

Good grief, the scholar pleads for bloodless bleeding, for soulless soul-searching, for life without living and death without dying!

Yet, studying the text he attributes to Ford, our gentle professor opines, "Here for the first time, [John Ford] seems to compose from a real familiarity with his subject-matter, and with a sense of relief that he has something concrete to write about. . . something that he has lived, is living with."

Does the professor betray a conflict between the real and the imagined? Perhaps he will entertain our query in the spirit of "well-conducted inquiry."

Now our Stratfordian guide says, "Thanks to T. W. Baldwin, we know that Shakespeare had had the standard Elizabethan grammar-school education, with its remarkable intensive analytical approach to Latin style, the best students acquiring a high linguistic consciousness and a range of skills which were then let loose on English."

But of course no one in history has ever offered one document to prove that William of Stratford was that student, or indeed even entered the grammar-school, and our poor Vickers, alas, is forced like all his enclave to wing it, deciding that the noted bard was not made, but born, a sort of whim and afterthought of the gods, master of not just the 25 forms of rhetoric which Professor Vickers measures by, but so versatile in skills, so schooled in styles that his education had to come out of his ears, and pores,

and everywhere, perhaps the way the Earl of Oxford was tutored, according to record.

Yet Brian Vickers does make the Oxfordian argument though he never posits the question. To him, Shakespeare "was often content to explore older resources rather than turn to new ones" almost suggesting an author perhaps older than his author. And, Shakespeare "seems to have been 'the sole serious exponent' of a syntactical usage more common in *The Spanish Tragedy* (1589) than in the Jacobean theater." But perhaps Mr. Vickers is just letting his mind run free, describing a bard of "the old school" of conservative writers, not as daring as the newcomers of William of Stratford's generation.

Maybe Mr. Vickers is a closet Oxfordian, an undiagnosed heretic to the professional scholarly community, allowing only hints that the true author, even as a "newcomer" seemed to be far older than his age.

The professor provides his alibi with, "the desire to prove a thesis can blind one to everything else," he writes. "One of the vices of authorship studies as currently practiced, where electronic databases give instantaneous access to a far wider range of linguistic material than ever before, is that words become treated as neutral units. . . that take no account of their history. . ." And, "it is a general fact in all human experience that any phenomenon may have more than one explanation."

Alas, poor Vickers! We learned from him, friends. As he said of Foster, his "total reversal of position must call in question his methodology."

### Synonymous with anonymous

Mr. Vickers ends on a question he forgets to ask. In denying attribution of *A Funerall Elegye* to William Shakespeare, and assigning it to the clear claimant of its sorrowful achievement, the 27-year-old John Ford, he does not deal with why its publication page, "Imprinted at London by G. Eld. 1612" declared it to be "By W. S." with a dedication further signed by "W.S."

"Despite the initials," he writes, "I see nothing in the work that would suggest Shakespeare." Except, of course, the pseudonymous authorship. So why the initials "W.S."?

It is, in this reviewer's opinion, to suggest that—circa 1612—the name "William Shakespeare" and the initials "W.S."

were synonymous with "anonymous." That was the year when certain Catholic interests were attempting to unmask a Protestant literary conspiracy which had claimed the high ground of religious neutrality behind a pen name and beard for a bard that carried no cultural baggage or literary controversy from the past. They were publishing at London a book revealing a hand disguised behind a curtain and a literary allusion in cipher to the name of Edward de Vere, unmasked in *Minerva Britannia*, evidencing that the common knowledge regarding pen names in the town was obvious. The "W.S." initials—and indeed the whole name William Shakespeare—were accepted as a pen name, a "Mickey Mouse" and therefore free to be used by anybody who wished to remain unknown—as John Ford obviously did—who today might simply be referred to as "Name Withheld" or "according to Reliable Sources," or "Cholly Knickerbocker," "Deep Throat," or some other "Mark Twain" and left unexplained, unstained, unashamed, untamed.

We owe to Mr. Vickers's university in Zurich, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, an expression of sincere appreciation for his saving effort. History still will have, thanks to his great work, no new writing from the author of the Shakespeare Canon which can be conclusively proven to have been written after 1603, the year when the Stratford man left London to return home more or less permanently, and the Earl of Oxford, whatever he wrote, did lay down his pen forever.

Here is a telling statistic with which I end: "'the' is, far and away, the single most common word in Shakespeare," appearing over 29,000 times in his work, "or just about once in every 30 words." Now those are the kind of facts I like—just the facts, only factual. Let's see, how many times did Marlowe use "the" after he was declared dead, and Bacon, in all those essays and legal briefs he wrote, especially when proving himself the Ken Starr of his time? Is it possible to prove who wrote a work based on just such a statistic? [For a possible answer, see page 5—Ed.]

As the gentle and delightful Mr. Vickers wrote charitably, at a particularly painful point in his execution, "but I break off—" and so must I.

*(James Sherwood is author of Shakespeare's Ghost, An Historical Mystery Novel. See ad on page 32)*

*Monstrous Adversary* (cont'd from page 1) guilty of similar erratic behavior he was just the kind of writer who would have produced the works of Shakespeare.

### An object of curiosity

Although his subject is the leading candidate for authorship honors, Nelson says almost nothing about the controversy. Oxfordians eager to see how a Stratfordian English professor addresses the evidence in a biography of Oxford will be disappointed. He never summarizes the arguments and doesn't even mention the parallels between Oxford's life and Shakespeare's works. Nor does he present the case for the Stratford man. His focus is solely on Oxford's life as merely an "object of curiosity" for historians. Almost incidental is his view of what the archival records say about Oxford's qualifications to have written Shakespeare.

The archival records themselves fairly overwhelm the book and may overwhelm the reader. The transcriptions, which appear in smaller type on virtually every one of the 442 pages, retain the spelling and grammar of Elizabethan handwritten records. Some are two and three pages long. A few are in untranslated Latin and Spanish. While Oxfordian scholars will appreciate the extraordinary number of verbatim transcriptions, the book will be hard going, almost impenetrable, for the general reader. It is a book to be used, not to be read.

### Flawed interpretations

Unfortunately, it also suffers from several flawed interpretations, a selective use of evidence and a casual bias against Oxford as Shakespeare from cover to cover. The title, *Monstrous Adversary*, is from a denunciation of Oxford by one of his enemies.

Alan Nelson is a youthful professor emeritus at the University of California at

Berkeley and the author of several books on the early English stage. One of his works in progress is a biography of Shakspeare of Stratford as the author Shakespeare. (Yet another biography!) Although not a career Shakespeare scholar, he has had considerable experience researching archives and deciphering 16<sup>th</sup> century handwriting.

To his credit, he debates with Oxfordians at their conferences, at social occasions and on the Internet. He has been a genial critic and friendly adversary, keep-

## "The rest is silence"

*Although in his book Alan Nelson never mentions the parallels in Shakespeare's works to Oxford's life, he uses a line from Shakespeare to conclude his chapter on Oxford's death.*

*"The rest was silence," he writes, and the words, of course, are a slight variation on the last words of Hamlet before he dies: "The rest is silence."*

*Oxfordians, who see the Earl of Oxford portraying much of himself in Prince Hamlet, have sometimes conjectured that Hamlet's final words expressed the dramatist's despair about the end of his creative but controversial life and about how posterity would judge him and his works. Nelson would not agree—at least not yet.*

ing Oxfordians on their toes with his challenges. His archival research into the documents on Oxford has no equal, and he shares all his findings with Oxfordians. Serious Oxfordian scholars will want his book on their shelf, handy to consult, even though it offers no significant new evidence.

Besides sharing his work-in-progress, Nelson plans to deposit with Oxfordians his original research papers and potentially some of the royalties from his book.

His transcriptions will go to the Edward de Vere Collection at Concordia University, Portland, Oregon, the site of the annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference, directed by Professor Daniel Wright. And he says he will donate the royalties from the sale of the second 1,000-copies of his book to the conference.

A number of contemporary Oxfordian scholars and writers appear in the acknowledgments, foremost among them Nina Green, an independent researcher, who leads a list of eleven Oxfordians. He even gives an example of her help. She is active on the internet but has not published in the Oxfordian newsletters or journals (Green maintains a website at: <http://www3.telus.net/oxford/>).

### No authorship debate

Nelson sketches historical aspects of the authorship controversy in the Introduction but then mentions it briefly in passing only three times in the 85 chapters that follow. In the Introduction, he notes simply that Oxford has been "touted" as the author of Shakespeare's works, that J. Thomas Looney was the originator, that Bernard M. Ward's 1928 biography has several shortcomings, and that partial credit for scholarship is due Charles Wisner Barrell and Gyneth Bowen. He dismisses the Ogburns, parents and son, as "contributing nothing substantial in the way of original documentary research."

In the five-page Introduction, Nelson manages to commit three factual errors. He spells Barrell's name wrong (also in the index but correctly in the bibliography) and gives the wrong publication date for *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* by Charlton Ogburn (1984, not 1975.)

More seriously, he says Ward "confined his overt speculation [that Oxford was Shakespeare] to interstitial chapters which he called interludes." In fact, the interludes are simply digressions. Ward's only men-

tion of Shakespeare is at the end of the fourth and last interlude where he says he refrained from comment on the authorship controversy—just the opposite of “overt speculation.” A bibliographic appendix does include works by seven non-Stratfordians, including J. Thomas Looney and Eva Turner Clark. Nelson does not mention it in his text.

His lapses in the Introduction inevitably raise doubts about his knowledge of Oxfordian works, and unfortunately about the accuracy of the rest of the book. Several Oxfordians offered to review Nelson’s manuscript, but he declined.

He is already hearing about factual errors and serious misrepresentations. For example, he says Oxford was not “a fully competent practitioner of his native English” because he misspelled words, including some that he had apparently “misheard.” (How he knows what Oxford heard is not explained.) He concludes that “clearly Oxford’s language was not the language of Shakespeare.” (The bluster of “clearly” from a scholar usually betrays some hesitancy.) Nina Green, however, had already shown him that many of the words are not misspellings but are readily found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Nelson chose to ignore some of her corrections, probably because they undermined his view of Oxford’s language skills. Oxfordians will cry “foul!”

Nelson also infers from the record that William Cecil, Lord Burghley, was a benevolent, long-suffering guardian and father-in-law, forever rescuing Oxford from his escapades and financial difficulties. Oxfordians do not agree with that interpretation of the record.

### More demonologer than biographer

Nelson’s general view of Ward is that he is a “worthy (if partisan) historian” but “more hagiographer than historian.” He accuses “partisan apologists” for Oxford of seeing him through rose-colored glasses and creating what he calls a myth of an admirable poet and dramatist. He doesn’t cite any examples, but he probably could have. Oxfordians may well consider that Nelson himself is a worthy (if biased) biographer but, in his case, more demonologer than biographer. The truth, as usual, lies

somewhere between the extremes.

Throughout *Monstrous Adversary*, Nelson interprets documents in a way that he considers blots on Oxford’s character, supposedly disqualifying him as Shakespeare. They show that Oxford was a “youthful hot head” and quarrelsome, that his “first aim in life was to serve himself” not others, that he was a spendthrift, that he was superstitious and dealt in necromancy, that he consorted with prostitutes in Venice and caught syphilis, that he was debauched and riotous, that he was bi-sexual and had sexual relations with boys, that his “braggadocio was unmatched by manly deeds,” and that “foppishness was Oxford’s most characteristic trait.”

Oxford’s “most characteristic pose,” he says, was “presiding at a well-furnished table, flanked by male companions, high in his cups, firing satirical salvos and witticisms, enlisting his guests in his conspiratorial fantasies...allowing scandalous talk at his table.”

### Unworthy of Shakespeare

Nelson deems this all unworthy of Shakespeare. But he misunderstands the typical personality of a great genius. The life that he finds “so privately scandalous” (publicly, too) sounds just like the life of most artists and writers of genius. Indeed, it is their complex and sometimes outrageous personalities that are richly reflected in the works of great writers.

As Kay Redfield Jamison of Johns Hopkins University pointed out in *Touched With Fire*, great artists and writers have often been by turns difficult, charming, eccentric, brilliant, egotistical, generous, profligate and sometimes sexually reprehensible. Count Tolstoy was famously eccentric and difficult. And, of course, Lord Byron, at war with the world, led a most scandalous life.

So Nelson is right. Oxford did lead an extravagant and sometimes scandalous life. But he’s wrong to conclude that this disqualifies him from having written the works of Shakespeare. Indeed, it supports the case for him as a literary genius, especially in contrast to the life of Will Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon, a “life of mundane inconsequence,” in the words of the great, orthodox scholar, S. Schoenbaum.

## Who’s an amateur?

The back cover of Alan Nelson’s new biography of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, *Monstrous Adversary* (taken from his Introduction), proclaims his reason for writing the book:

Since 1920 Oxford has been touted by amateur historians and conspiracy theorists as the true author of the poems and plays of William Shakespeare. It has become a matter of urgency to measure the real Oxford against the myth created by his apologists, and uncritically embraced by television documentaries, by playwrights, and by the popular press.

So, before we have even opened the book, examined his work and given an assessment of its perceptions and revelations about its subject, historical accuracy and evidentiary value, Nelson has, in my view, launched his enterprise, or “touted” it, to use his aggressive vocabulary, with an essentially bogus premise delivered in both offensive and misleading language.

Though he himself is not a professional historian, he nonetheless categorizes as “amateurs” the many professionals from other fields who (like himself) have engaged in Oxfordian studies (some of them for many more years than he), and further impugns their credentials by adding to their numbers those he deems to be “conspiracy theorists.” From here it’s a short leap to the melodramatic assertion that (after 80 years of this) there is an urgent need to stop the mythologizing of Oxford created by his “apologists,” a locution designed to suggest that Oxfordian studies “make excuses” for Oxford by those Nelson names “true believers” in his Introduction.

In the very moment, therefore, of declaring the dire necessity for someone to set the record straight about Oxford, Nelson is misrepresenting Oxfordians, not to mention “television documentaries” (wouldn’t that be documentary filmmakers?), playwrights (are there that many?) and the popular press (*The New York Times*?), who are all supposedly “embracing” Oxford as Shakespeare without engaging in a single critical thought.

Well, he had to do something to “tout” his book.

—K.C. Ligon

*A year in the life*

By Hank Whittemore

## 1586: Part II—Preparing for war

In this year of the campaign against Spanish forces in the Netherlands, the Babington Plot, the mortal wounding of Philip Sidney and the treason trial of Mary Queen of Scots, the great Enterprise of King Philip and the Pope looms on the horizon as an inescapable reality: the long-dreaded invasion by armada is at hand. Meanwhile, as Queen Elizabeth desperately scrounges for new cash to prosecute the war abroad while building naval defenses at home, she nonetheless commands the Treasurer of her royal Exchequer to start paying 36-year-old Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, an extraordinarily large annual allowance of 1,000 pounds.

**January:** On New Year's Day in Holland, a deputation calls upon Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, urging him to accept the Supreme Governorship of the United Provinces of the Netherlands. Leicester is well aware that the Queen herself has consistently refused all offers of such sovereignty, but he takes office in a solemn ceremony at the Hague—an act, writes Jenkins, so “lunatic” it could be explained only as “the irrepressible upsurge of instincts which he had been obliged to control for the greater part of his life, and were the stronger for being denied.”<sup>1</sup>

**February:** Elizabeth learns about Leicester's office and explodes with unbridled fury. Camden records the earl had acted “as if he were a perfect King; but the Queen, taking it very ill that the Estates had conferred so large Honour on him, and that he had accepted it, nipped the man at unawares in his swelling Pride.”

How contemptuously you have carried yourself towards us you shall understand by this Messenger,” the Queen wrote her onetime lover. “We little thought that one whom we had raised out of the Dust, and prosecuted with such singular Favour above all others, would with so great Contempt have slighted and broken our Commands in a matter of so great Consequence ... We therefore command you that, all Excuse set apart, you do forthwith, upon your Allegiance which you owe unto us, do whatsoever Heneage, our Vice-chamberlain, shall make known to you in our Name, upon pain of further Peril.”<sup>2</sup>

**March:** Philip of Spain writes to Pope

Sixtus V to confer the Church's blessing upon his forthcoming Enterprise. The Pope readily agrees, promising financial support for this grand holy crusade against the Infidel.<sup>3</sup>

Sir Thomas Heneage informs the Dutch Council that Leicester will have to resign his supreme office. But William Cecil, Lord Treasurer Burghley, while equally outraged over the earl's arrogance, argues that Spain would view his removal as English weakness. Burghley threatens to resign until Elizabeth agrees Leicester can retain his post so long as he makes clear his status as a subordinate.<sup>4</sup>

**April:** Leicester, celebrating St. George's Day in Utrecht with a state banquet, exhibits his loyalty to Elizabeth by installing an empty throne to signify her as holding the place of honor.<sup>5</sup>

**May:** Spanish ambassador Bernardino de Mendoza, in Paris, writes to King Philip and notes the “extreme care” with which Elizabeth “obtains intelligence by every possible means of your Majesty's designs.”<sup>6</sup>

Gathering such information from paid agents at home and abroad is Secretary of State Francis Walsingham, who is now using a young Catholic exile named Gilbert Gifford to entrap Mary Stuart in something to warrant her execution and thereby, once and for all, eliminate the threat she has increasingly posed. While training in France to become a priest, Gifford entered Walsingham's service as a spy; and upon his return to England in December he was “arrested” and taken straight to the Secretary, who directed him to pick up letters for Mary at the French embassy and bring them to her at Chartley Manor. Gifford will return Mary's replies to Walsingham, whose assistant Thomas Phelippes, a master code breaker and forger, will decipher them. Then the letters will be re-sealed and sent on to their intended destinations.

Elizabeth now makes a pointed comment to the French ambassador, suggesting she knows all about these machinations and approves of them: “You have much secret communication with the Queen of Scotland, but believe me, I know all that goes on in my kingdom. I myself was a prisoner in the days of the Queen my sister, and am aware of the artifices that

prisoners use to win over servants and obtain secret intelligence.”<sup>7</sup>

Since the early 1570s, with cash from his own pocket, Walsingham has been building an elaborate system of espionage to support Burghley's policies. The Secretary “must have developed it little by little as he was able to impress upon the Queen the need for it,” writes Conyers Read. “First to last, in this as in all other measures which he devised for the safety of the State, he was severely handicapped by the close-fisted policy of Elizabeth.”

In July 1582 the Queen finally authorized the first annual allowance for Walsingham at 750 pounds. Within a year came the death (possibly from Leicester-inspired poison) of Oxford's friend Thomas Radcliffe, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Sussex, patron of the Lord Chamberlain's Men producing plays at Court; and also in 1583 the spymaster inaugurated the Queen's Men, signaling that royal-sponsored performances played an integral part in operations for his Secret Service. Cecil was himself a proponent of the stage as a vehicle for state propaganda, while young men recruited as writers gained “covers” for activities as agents or informants.

Plays of the Queen's actors in the 1580s include *The Famous Victories of Henry Fifth*, *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, *The True Tragedy of Richard III* and *King Leire*, to name but a few undoubtedly from the pen of Edward de Vere, although scholars in the future will view “Shakespeare” as drawing upon them for his own creations.

Elizabeth and Burghley have steadily increased Secretary Walsingham's allowance, with annual payments to reach a limit of 2,000 pounds in 1588. “Two thousand pounds was a large amount of money in the later sixteenth century,” Read notes, adding, “The fact that Elizabeth, for all her cheese-paring, was willing to invest so much in secret service shows how important she conceived it to be. No doubt it was efficient: Elizabeth was the last person in the world to spend 2,000 pounds unless she could see an adequate return.”<sup>8</sup>

By now, through Gifford, all letters to Mary Stuart and her replies are being craftily intercepted – at their hiding place, in a beer barrel – and deciphered by Phelippes

for Walsingham, who feeds details to Burghley. In one letter they find the Queen of Scots assuring Mendoza of her support for Spain's invasion and promising help from her 20-year-old son, James VI of Scotland. Clearly she welcomes a chance to seize her cousin's throne, but more specific evidence will be needed to incriminate her.

**June 21:** Burghley writes to Walsingham about the Low Countries and, in the midst of this letter, urges him to confront the Queen about financial assistance to Oxford.<sup>9</sup>

**June 23:** A "New Decree of the Star Chamber" authorizes strict government controls over printing, so wartime censorship is now in effect.<sup>10</sup> This is "the most important enactment dealing with the press during the period," writes McKerrow.<sup>11</sup>

**June 25:** Oxford writes to Burghley that both Walsingham and Robert Cecil have been keeping him informed of personal financial help expected from the Queen; meanwhile, he requests a loan of 200 pounds "till her Majesty performeth her promise."<sup>12</sup>

**June 26:** Elizabeth orders an annual allowance of 1,000 pounds to be paid to Oxford in quarterly installments, made retroactive to March, using the formula for Walsingham himself.<sup>13</sup> By now, if Eva Turner Clark is correct, Oxford has written versions of all but three plays (*Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Henry VIII*) to be attributed later to Shakespeare. He employs Burghley protégé John Lyly as his personal secretary while patronizing separate companies of adults, boys and musicians.<sup>14</sup> He maintains Vere House at London Stone and the mansion Fisher's Folly, just outside Bishopsgate, which may have served "as headquarters for the school of poets and dramatists who openly acknowledge his patronage and leadership."<sup>15</sup>

Books dedicated to Oxford thus far have come from the pens of Arthur Golding, Thomas Underdowne, Edmund Elviden, Thomas Bedingfield, Thomas Twyne, George Baker, John Brooke, Anthony Munday, John Lyly, John Hester, Thomas Stocker, Thomas Watson, John Southern and Robert Greene. Now the eighteenth dedication appears in the Oxford-sponsored *English Secretary* (with a new version of the Vere arms, containing a double-crowned eagle crest) attributed to Angel Day, who refers to the earl's "exceeding bounty" as well as to

"the learned view and insight of your Lordship, whose infancy from the beginning was ever sacred to the Muses."<sup>16</sup>

Also, in *A Discourse of English Poetry* this year, William Webbe pays high tribute to Edward de Vere's own verse:

I may not omit the deserved commendations of many honourable and noble Lords and Gentlemen in Her Majesty's Court, which, in the rare devices of poetry, have been and yet are most skilful; among whom the Right Honourable Earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of the most excellent among the rest.<sup>17</sup>

Among literary men in Oxford's circle are Walsingham operatives such as Munday and Watson – suggesting the earl himself has been moving within the same shadows of espionage (albeit at a higher level) where appearance and reality seldom meet. In doing so, he would be uniquely adapting his own life as premier earl to the multi-layered hall of mirrors in which such men exist. In a true sense the entire Elizabethan world is a stage, its actors using various disguises amid an atmosphere of secrecy and paranoia from the top down. As Haigh opens his portrait of the Queen:

The monarchy of Elizabeth I was founded upon illusion. She ruled by propagandist images which captivated her courtiers and seduced her subjects – images which have misled historians for four centuries.<sup>18</sup>

In the labyrinth of spy and counter-spy, double agent and agent provocateur," Plowden writes of 1586, "it is far from clear at this distance in time who was double-crossing who" among agents trying to entrap Mary Stuart and "it is also evident that this was often far from clear at the time."<sup>19</sup>

The same may be said of Edward de Vere's history. Having accurately accused his former Catholic associates of treason and having become the target of monstrous allegations against him, five years later Oxford remains a trusted servant of Elizabeth as she faces her most dangerous hour. If the contemporary public has received negative reports of him, these are contradicted by the help Burghley and Walsingham have displayed in securing his annual allowance, not to mention by the Queen's ordering of it. Could it be that Oxford himself played *agent provocateur* in getting his erstwhile friends to confide their treacherous plans? Had he absorbed their personal attacks on him, with the Queen's knowledge, to avoid revealing the duplicitous extremes he went to betray them?

In history Oxford will be seen as temporarily professing the Roman faith, bragging about his antipathy toward Elizabeth and wasting his earldom with nothing to show for it; but the view here is that this negative reputation may have been a price he paid as the Lord Great Chamberlain who, as part of services he could not acknowledge, was given the freedom to use his resources and talent to foster the English renaissance. In this view, Oxford accepted a government pension in return for having privately financed his work, as Walsingham had done, and then necessarily participated in the obliteration of the truth of what he had actually accomplished:

Alas, 'tis true, I have gone here and there,  
And made myself a motley to the view,  
Gored my own thoughts, sold cheap what  
is most dear,  
Made old offences of affections new.  
Most true it is, that I have looked on truth  
Askance and strangely...

Sonnet 110, lines 1-6

One letter to Mary Stuart (read first by Walsingham) describes how a priest, John Ballard, has arrived from France to organize a rebellion against Elizabeth timed with Philip's armada. The Secretary's spies are watching Ballard, who proposes to a young Catholic supporter, Anthony Babington, that they assemble a team to assassinate Queen Elizabeth. The next step is for Walsingham—through Gifford and other agents, such as Robert Poley—to push the conspirators onward and specifically get Babington to lure Mary to make a move ensuring her own destruction.

Belloc offers this view of the goals and tactics used by Burghley and Walsingham:

What was really important was that Gilbert Gifford was urging the conspirators, with the object of entrapping Mary, to make a definite plan for murdering Elizabeth. He and his master, Walsingham (and behind Walsingham his master, Cecil) were not aiming at the wretched dupes whom they had egged on to attack Elizabeth; they were aiming at catching Mary herself by getting some document from her under color of which she might be put to death without raising rebellion in England and all Europe to fury.<sup>20</sup>

**July 5:** The Queen and James VI of Scotland conclude the Treaty of Berwick, providing for each sovereign to help the other in the event of Philip's invasion.

(Continued on page 24)

*Year in the life (cont'd from page 23)*

Mary receives this news of her son's betrayal with "the greatest anguish, despair and grief" while becoming more ready than ever to endorse a conspiracy against Elizabeth.<sup>21</sup> She, of course, is also navigating through the hall of mirrors.

**July 6:** Babington writes to Mary, in a letter passing through the hands of Walsingham, with a plan to liberate her and kill Elizabeth.<sup>22</sup> Phelippes, the code-breaker, is sent up to Chartley to receive Mary's reply as soon as it can be intercepted.

**July 17:** Mary replies to Babington, appearing to agree with the plan and effectively signing her own death warrant. Phelippes rushes back with the deciphered letter to Walsingham, who either instructs or allows him to forge a postscript in which Mary asks for the names of the conspirators. By the spymaster's later statements, Belloc writes, it is virtually certain his assistant "forged much else in the letter" including interpolations that "could be construed into a vague support for the project of Elizabeth's murder." Such evidence means "Cecil could now kill Mary Stuart by process of law with a plausible excuse."<sup>23</sup>

**July 29:** Francis Drake is returning with Walter Raleigh's colonists from Virginia.

**August:** Ballard is arrested and sent to the Tower; Mary's belongings are searched and forwarded to Walsingham; and finally Babington, who had fled into hiding, is caught and also sent to the Tower. After the duped young man has been examined, Burghley writes to Leicester in Holland that they both were "very great notes in the traitors' eyes" and had been slated to be killed. Unable to resist a malicious glance at reports of the earl as one who poisons his enemies, Burghley adds, "Of your Lordship they thought rather of poisoning than of slaying."<sup>24</sup>

**Sept 20-21:** Fourteen plotters, having been tried and condemned, are executed amid public celebrations. (Agent Poley, arrested with the others, is set free.) "The first seven were hanged, cut down, their Privities cut off, their Bowels taken out before their Faces while they were alive, and their Bodies quartered, not without some note and touch of Cruelty," Camden reports. "The next day the other seven ... suffered the same kind of death; but somewhat more favorably, by the Queen's express Command, who detested the former Cruelty."<sup>25</sup>

On the contrary, however, it was Elizabeth (frightened for her own life) who originally pressed for terrible punishments in public view, prompting Burghley to assure the Queen that her executioners would be "protracting the same both to the extremity of the pains in the action" and that the deaths "would be as terrible as any other new device could be."<sup>26</sup> After the first spectacle evoked such horror, she apparently changed her mind.

**Sept 22:** Philip Sidney is mortally wounded at Zutphen, lingering in agony for twenty-six days before dying at thirty-one, sparking general mourning in England.<sup>27</sup> As a result of the Elizabethan hall of mirrors, he will be viewed in history as having inspired various works of Shakespeare, rather than the more likely scenario that it was Edward de Vere who had inspired him.

**Sept 27:** Commissioners appointed for the trial of Mary Queen of Scots assemble in Star Chamber at Westminster to hear the incriminating evidence. Among them is "our most dear Cousin Edward Earl of Oxford, great Chamberlain of England, another of the Lords of the Parliament."<sup>28</sup> (Leicester is still overseas.) In the Queen's view Burghley will be directing the show; and Read writes that by now "there is no doubt at all" that Cecil's "unwavering purpose" is "to bring Mary to her reckoning."<sup>29</sup>

**Oct 12:** The trial opens at Fortheringhay, but Mary refuses to appear on the ground that she is a sovereign Queen not answerable to any English court.

**Oct 14-16:** Formal proceedings begin with Mary present. She denies having written the infamous letter to Babington, pointing out that Walsingham knew her cipher and easily could have had it forged; and while admitting she supports English Catholics, she also denies ever plotting against Elizabeth's life. The Secretary rises in protest, calling upon God to affirm his own honesty and freedom from malice.

"Mary was probably right in asserting that the commission had already made up its mind about her guilt before the trial began," Read comments. "The trial itself followed the usual pattern of English trials for treason in the sixteenth century. Obviously it does not conform to modern ideas of justice. The object was not to establish Mary's guilt, but to display the evidence upon which the judgment was based."<sup>30</sup>

Despite Mary's eloquent defense, claiming she would "never make shipwreck of my soul by compassing the death of my

dearest sister," the commissioners get set to find her guilty; but a messenger arrives saying Elizabeth has been unable to sleep and the court is now adjourned to London.

**Oct 29:** Parliament assembles, with Oxford in attendance, and focuses on determining Mary's fate.

**Nov. 16:** Elizabeth, torn by having to make the ultimate decision, sends Mary a message warning her that she has been sentenced to death, that Parliament has petitioned to have the sentence carried out and that she should prepare herself for that fate; but the Queen is far from being able to follow through.

**Nov. 23:** Leicester, along with his 20-year-old stepson Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex, returns from the Netherlands; and it may be wondered to what extent he and others might be aware that next year a young man named Arthur Dudley will show up in Madrid claiming to be Leicester's son by Elizabeth and, therefore, of potential use by Philip as a puppet king of England. Nevertheless, amid the never-ending hall of mirrors, Burghley and Walsingham now enlist Leicester's help in persuading the Queen to act decisively in the matter of getting rid of Mary Stuart.

**Dec. 2:** By now the trial commissioners have met again and formally condemned Mary to death; but to give Elizabeth more time to strengthen her resolve, Parliament is prorogued until February of the following year.

**Dec. 4:** When a redrafted proclamation of Mary's sentence is published, the result is a great burst of public rejoicing in London.

**Dec 25:** The Court has moved from Richmond to Greenwich, where Elizabeth agrees that Burghley should prepare a formal warrant for Mary's execution.<sup>31</sup> (The momentous event will take place on Feb. 8, 1587, ensuring Spain's invasion of England.)

Now at Christmas, with this "most grievous and irksome burden" still upon her, Elizabeth cannot forget that she remains the lead actress in a real-life play. "We princes are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world," she has recently reminded her lords, among them Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, who holds a front-row seat for the show and has surely savored this allusion to players and plays from his sovereign Mistress.<sup>32</sup>

**Dec. 26:** The Chamber Accounts indicate that on this day a performance at Court

*(Continued on page 32)*

**Paradigm Shift**

By Mark K. Anderson, with Tekastiaks

**Burghley's Bribe; De Vere's Dower?**

In the life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, few of his 19,798 recorded days on this planet had more far-reaching consequences than December 16, 1571: The day he married Anne Cecil.

Yet the circumstances behind this wedding and the forces motivating the groom, bride and father-of-the-bride still have yet to be fully appreciated. Was de Vere in love with "sweet Anne Page" (as the Fenton subplot in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* would suggest) or was he kicking and screaming all the way to the altar (as his self-characterization as Bertram in *All's Well That Ends Well* would suggest)? Or, perhaps, was he doing both at once and neither very well?

Moreover, was Anne's father Lord Burghley just a passive observer on the sidelines, as Burghley's correspondence from the period would suggest? Or did the Secretary of State (and later Lord Treasurer) play a more active role in this marriage game?

As can be seen in Alan Nelson's new biography "*Monstrous Adversary*," in 1576 when de Vere first officially split with his wife Anne, Burghley wrote out a memo ostensibly detailing the marriage expenses. As translated into modern spelling, it reads:

The Lord Treasurer did first assure to the Earl and his wife and the heirs of their two bodies a manor of £108 per annum, and because the Earl might not sell the same away he was first offended with the Lord Treasurer. And then upon the surrender of that estate, the Lord Treasurer paid £3000 to and for the Earl, for which sum after 3 in the hundred he might have had £360 yearly and his stock returned.

The marriage hath cost the Lord Treasurer from the beginning above 5000 or 6000 pounds.<sup>2</sup>

This would seem to settle the question of the kind and quantity of poker chips brought to the nuptial bargaining table in 1571. Burghley, according to the above document, put up £3000 in dowry plus a family property worth £100 or more annually—probably Combe Neville in Kingston-on-Thames.<sup>3</sup>

However, another document has recently surfaced that alters our understanding of Burghley's above quoted expense account.

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***"Burghley, according to the above document, put up £3000 in dowry plus a family property worth £100 or more annually ... However, another document has recently surfaced that alters our understanding of Burghley's above quoted expense account."***

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The document is a letter written in Spanish from the Spanish agent Antonio de Guaras in London to his superior the Duke of Alva, then serving as governor of the Spanish Lowlands. The letter, dated 1 May 1573 and preserved at the Spanish Archives de Simancas, reports a conversation de Guaras had had with Burghley. It requests that payment be arranged for a bribe the latter had tacitly agreed to. Although the purpose of the "gratuity" goes unspoken, at the time Queen Elizabeth had given Burghley a sensitive task to perform that a Spanish payoff would have adversely affected. Only months before de Guaras's letter, Elizabeth appointed her new Lord Treasurer the task of normalizing trade relations with Spain. Economic ties between the two European powers had been feeble since England suborned Alva's payships in 1569.<sup>4</sup> Catholic Spain still stung from Elizabeth's filching their gold,

but the trade embargo set up in the fiasco's wake was bad for both English and Spanish business. Burghley negotiated a new and friendly agreement with Spain on 15 March 1573.<sup>5</sup> The embargo was lifted. But for the near term it presumably remained in Spain's best interests to ensure that the skids of their English negotiator remained well greased at this sensitive time when so many doubloons remained on the line.

De Guaras notes that the bribe could not come anywhere near Burghley's accounts. This, Burghley reportedly admitted, would be tantamount to political suicide if anyone at court ever found out. Instead, de Guaras tells his superior that the Spanish "gratuity" should come in the form of paying off Burghley's dowry. (This suggests that in the spring of 1573, a year and a half after the wedding, Burghley still hadn't paid the dowry to his son-in-law.)

More curious still is the fact that the dowry de Guaras requests be remitted is five times larger than what Burghley had recorded in his own personal notes. De Guaras arranges for what he euphemistically calls a "stipend" of £15,000 to be delivered to the Flanders town of Dunkirk for its presumptive final journey to England. (The amount is actually quoted in Spanish currency—40,000 escudos—which in round numbers translates to £15,000.<sup>6</sup>)

The letter quoted below introduces the prospect of Spanish money being secretly funneled into the Lord Treasurer's pockets: To complete the story, the check, as it were, should ultimately be traced. We still don't know how or even if the casks of gold were shipped to or picked up in Dunkirk.

However, one anomaly in de Vere's biography might be better explained with this new information. In July 1574, after being rebuked by the queen, de Vere (and Lord Edward Seymour) did flee England for unknown reasons, landing at Calais and passing "by Bruges to Brussels."<sup>7</sup> Dunkirk lies on the road between Calais and Bruges. As can be seen in B.M. Ward's 1928 biography of de Vere, Burghley

*(Continued on page 26)*

*Paradigm Shift (continued from page 25)*  
promptly stood up for this rash behavior: “Howsoever [de Vere] might be, for his own private matters of thrift inconsiderate,” wrote Burghley on 15 July, “I dare avow him to be resolute in dutifulness to the Queen and his country.”<sup>8</sup> Perhaps Burghley was just defending a child he’d become accustomed to apologizing for. But, if the casks of gold had indeed been delivered to Dunkirk and were awaiting a pickup, there may have been more self-interested motives lurking behind Burghley’s avowals.

Below, a modern English translation of de Guaras’s letter is reprinted, followed by the original Spanish. De Guaras’ words, run-on sentences to make Alan Ginsberg howl, have been broken into sentence-length chunks. I have inserted commentary between some of these snippets.

The letter, although not written in any cipher, is nevertheless still cryptic—no doubt for good reason. De Guaras was writing about sensitive matters that required the utmost secrecy. Intentional ambiguity and plausible deniability are part of the lingua franca of this trade. Normal rules of antecedents are out the window. “He” can typically mean one of several people in any given instance; one must rely on context to derive the identities and actions behind de Guaras’ well guarded language.

The letter begins with de Guaras reporting to the Duke of Alva about a conversation the correspondent had had with Lord Burghley concerning various affairs of state. The topic then shifts to the following excerpt. The letter closes with a discussion of the Huguenot Count Montgomery, which like the preamble has also been edited out. Translated text—by Tekastiaks with Mark K. Anderson—is in smaller type, with my comments following each quoted section:<sup>9</sup>

...And these were the words point by point of his [Burghley’s] informal conversation which he carried on with me more than once, and, as I say, [our] being alone;

Note that de Guaras says the following discussions were “carried on... more than once.”

and on the occasion of the aforesaid, I said to him that, concerning what we had talked about in the way of a “gratuity” — that I would not be able to reply to Your

Excellency without him allowing me to accept it [the deal], and that, in consideration of who was ordering it [Burghley], that I hoped that he would not refuse it;

Implicitly, de Guaras appears to be expressing his fears that Burghley may be trying to set up a sting or a trap. Might Burghley be arranging for a bribe to be sent just to publicly refuse it and humiliate Spain? De Guaras doesn’t want to count out

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***“More curious still is the fact that the dowry de Guaras requests be remitted is five times larger than what Burghley had recorded .... [the letter], although not written in any cipher, is nevertheless still cryptic .... [he] was writing about sensitive matters that required the utmost secrecy.”***

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any possibility when dealing with this crafty English diplomat.

and he [Burghley] said to me that if his colleagues knew that he was getting a “stipend” from His Majesty [the King of Spain], it would be his undoing, and that in no way would he accept it;

All parties involved know what kind of dynamite they’re playing with. If Elizabeth ever did find out about these subrosa negotiations—even before it came to cash on the barrelhead—Burghley could have ended up with anything from a public censure to a trip to the scaffold. Scarcely more than a year after the Duke of Norfolk met his maker, the Regnum Cecilianum would have come to an ignominious end.

and saying to him that I thought that,

if there was no “stipend”—that to help with the marriage of madam his daughter, who married the Earl of Oxford, that perhaps milady his wife would not refuse the demonstration of His Majesty’s goodwill;

De Guaras cleverly brings in Lady Burghley as an intermediary to make this bribe palatable to the extremely cautious Lord Treasurer.

and to this he did not reply, but [he was] as if admitting it and laughing to himself;

A good novelist or screenwriter couldn’t have loaded this moment better.

and at that same time madam his wife entered and greeted me, asking me how I was and if there were anything in which she could please me, from which I could consider that she was hoping for this “gift,” because other times she had not granted me such favors;

Ditto for Lady Burghley. One pictures poor Ophelia (and Anne) as a child stuck in a household where both parents loved to hide behind arrases.

and his secretary, who is his cousin and who has done in this matter whatever he could out of good will, and his stewards who have helped me with their master, all hope for something [their own bribe] as if it was an obligation, although this could be fulfilled with little.

But it is natural for them all to appreciate getting a gift; and, as if he were the one who well deserved it, [every] third person expects the “grace” of His Majesty, as I have written;

Everyone who might get wind of this bribe will want a piece of the action; fortunately, they’ll be easily bought off.

as he is like the king of this kingdom, in my humble opinion, at the very least up to 40,000 escudos should be sent to him, which is what he offered to give in dowry to his daughter;

and less would not be appropriate, considering who had it given [Burghley?] and whom it is given to [Oxford?], [one or both?] being worthy of our high suspicions—and with good reason;

We need to make it worth his/their

while; he/they might double-cross us otherwise.

then it is in such a degree that he [Burghley] holds in his hand the will of the queen in everything and the disposal of all the royal rents at her [his?] will, and has gained such confidence of the queen that she has granted release [of the rents?] to him so that neither in life nor in death would they [renters?] be able to seek any other accounting than that which he will want to give;

Burghley doesn't have to answer to renters or to anyone else for that matter. He is a free agent in the queen's fiscal affairs.

we can hope that he is grateful, so that it will be well used on him

Conyers Read was apparently unaware of this letter when he wrote—with unintended irony—“De Guaras was of the opinion that the English were so eager for the re-establishment of trade that they would accept almost any terms. He even thought that the Queen could be induced to return to the obedience of the Pope. *Evidently Burghley buttered him well.*” [My emphasis]<sup>10</sup>

and the sending of it by courier or by exchange would cause too much of a rum-pus.

It seems to me that if it will be a service to His Majesty that it be done, that this “precaution” be sent to Dunkirk in a pair of coffers in order that he [Burghley? Oxford? or one of their agents?] would bring it straight here in a good boat on account of danger of pirates,

Spain, it seems, cannot bring this money into England; taking the casks the last leg of the journey appears to have been Burghley's job. Note Burghley's conundrum here, too: Whom might he have trusted to make the trip? A servant could easily just abscond with the cash and never return to England again; de Vere would seem to be a natural choice of envoy, since it's presumably his money anyway.

and with all silence and secrecy to deliver it to his [Burghley's] wife, discussing it with him first, since with him there can be no negotiating about it, without offering it and delivering it at the same time, and as they say, he who gives soon gives twice.

The don wants to see the gold with his own eyes before any deal is finalized.

I write my humble opinion: Your Excellency will do that which will be in His Majesty's best interests.

Precisely what the Duke of Alva did with this suggestion is a matter that will be interesting to piece together in the coming years.

The original Spanish of de Guaras's letter follows:

[Y] estas fueron las palabras puntalmente de su platica que me dixo por mas de una ora y, como digo, estando a solas; y con la ocasion de lo dicho, le dixi que, sobre lo que le avia hablado de la gratificacion, que yo no podria hazer a Vuestra Ecellencia respuesta sin que el me la diese de aceptarla, y que, en consideracion de quien lo mandava, que esperaba que no la rehusaria; y el me dixo que, si sus compañeros supiesen que tenia pension de Su Magestad que seria su perdicion y que en ninguna manera la aceptaria; y diziendole que estimava que, si no fuese pension, que para ayuda del casamiento de madama su hija, que caso con el Conde de Ocsfort, que Miladi su muger no rehusaria la demonstracion de la buena voluntad de Su Magestad; y a esto no respondio sino como concediendo y reyendose; y en el mismo tiempo entro Madama su muger y me saludo, demandandome como estava y que si avia alguna cosa en que hazerme plazer, por donde podia yo considerar que ella esperaba por este don, porque otras vezes no me hazia tantos favores; y su secretario que es su primo y que ha hecho en este negocio lo que ha podido de buena voluntad, y sus camareros que me an ayudado con su amo, todos esperan por algo, como si fuese deuda, aunque esto con poco se cumplira. Pero es natural dellos todos tener respeto al recevir don; y, como quien lo merece bien, la tercera persona espera merced du Su Magestad, como he escripto; y como es como el Rey de este reyno, a mi simple parecer, por lo menos se le avian de embiar hasta quarenta mill escudos, que es lo que ofrescio de dar en dote a su hija, y menos so convenria en consideracion de quien lo manda dar y a quien se da, siendo de muy altos pensamientos y con razon, pues esta en tal grado que tiene en su mano la voluntad de la Reyna en todo y el disponer de todas las rentas reales a su voluntad, y ha hecho del la Reyna tanta confiança que le ha dado descargo para que en vida, ni en muerte no le puedan pedir otra cuenta sino la que el guerra dar; y se puede esperar que tenia[\*] gratitud para que en el sea bien empleado; y el embiarlo con correos o por cambio seria mucho ruydo. Pareceme que, si sera servicio de Su Magestad hazerse, que se embiase este recaudo a Dunquerque en un par de cofres para que en un buen barco por

el peligro de los piratas lo truxiese derecho aqui, y con todo silencio y secreto entregarselo a su muger, comunicandolo primero con el, pues con el no se puede tratar mas dello, sino ofrenciendolo y entregandolo juntamente, y, como se dize, dos vezes da el que luego da. Yo escrivo mi simple parecer: Vuestra Excellencia hara lo que mas sera servicio de Su Magestad.

[\*] previous editor erroneously read “terna”

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>B.M. Ward, *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, 1550-1604*. John Murray, London (1928) 61-4; Charlton Ogburn, Jr., *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality*. EPM Publications, McLean, Va. (1992; 1984 first ed.) 483-93.

<sup>2</sup>Salisbury MSS 2.144-45 (160/115) reprinted in Alan Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford*. Liverpool Univ. Press, Liverpool, U.K. (2003) 148; Daphne Pearson also discusses these financial arrangements in “Did Lord Edward ‘Send His Patrimony Flying’?” *De Vere Society Newsletter* 3:3 (May 1999) 17, although it seems she misread Burghley's “jC viij” as £800 instead of £108.

<sup>3</sup>Pearson 17-18.

<sup>4</sup>Wallace MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime*. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, N.J. (1968) 280-1; Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth*. Jonathan Cape, London (1965; 1960 first ed.) 100-2, 154-60.

<sup>5</sup>William S. Maltby, *Alba: A Biography of Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, Third Duke of Alba, 507-1582*. Univ. of Calif. Press, Berkeley (1983) 249.

<sup>6</sup>According to Arthur Dimock and Ro. Cecyll (“The Conspiracy of Dr. Lopez” *The English Historical Review* 9:35 [Jul. 1894]) 450-1, fn. 15), in 1593 “50,000 crowns or gold escudos [is] worth £18,800.” This conversion rate yields the relation 40,000 escudos = £15,040.

<sup>7</sup>BL MS Harley 6991[44], ff. 88-9, reprinted in Nelson, op. cit. 110; Cal. S.P. Foreign, reprinted in Ward 93.

<sup>8</sup>Cal. S.P. Foreign, Sir Thomas Smith to Lord Burghley 13 July 1574, reprinted in: William Kittle, *G. Gascoigne. . . or Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*. W.F. Roberts Co., Washington, D.C. (1930) 62.; Cal. S.P. Foreign, Henry Killigrew to Sir Thomas Walsingham 18 July 1574, reprinted in WARD 93; Cotton MSS, Titus B.2.298, Lord Burghley to the Earl of Sussex 15 July 1574, reprinted in WARD 94.

<sup>9</sup>Reprinted in *Relations Politiques des Pays-Bas et de L'Angleterre, Sous le Règne de Philippe II, Le Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove*, ed. Académie Royale des Sciences, etc., Brussels (1888) 6:723, translated from the Spanish by Tekastiaks with Mark K. Anderson. Cited in Kittle, op. cit. 53.

<sup>10</sup>Read 101.

Research Notes

## Illicit reversal

By Michael Brame and Galina Popova

Among Shakespeare's more notable artistic devices is found one we will call *illicit reversal*. As the name suggests, the device relates to the reversing of the action expressed by a verb. In English this process is effectuated by attaching to the verb the familiar prefix *un-*, as witnessed in the change of *zip* to *unzip* or of *dress* to *undress*, and the like. What makes Shakespeare's use of reversal appeal to our artistic sense is the tasteful manner in which he reverses what cannot be reversed in the real world, amounting to a violation of ordinary rules of reversal, hence our added adjective *illicit*. An apt illustration is provided by his illicit reversal of the verb *say*.

Call you me fair? that fair again **unsay**  
*Midsummer Night's Dream* 1.1, 181.

Interestingly, it is through such a violation of rules that Shakespeare succeeds in expressing with almost uncanny accuracy and precision just that meaning he wishes to convey. Elsewhere, in his sonnets and in his narrative verse, we encounter more such examples of the master's genius:

Look in thy glass and tell the face thou  
viewest,  
Now is the time that face should form  
another,  
Whose fresh repair if now thou not  
renewest,  
Thou dost beguile the world, **unbless** some  
mother.  
Sonnet 3, 1-4.

Now she **unweaves** the web that she hath  
wrought:  
Adonis lives and death is not to blame;  
It was not she that called him all to naught;  
Now she adds honors to his hateful name:  
*Venus and Adonis*, 991-4.

Shakespeare's plays are truly riddled with ingenious examples of illicit reversal. One oft-noted instance, though cited by orthodoxy for very different reasons, is the following:

**Untune** that string,  
And, hark, what discord follows!  
*Troilus and Cressida* 5.2, 109.

A striking array of clever examples

can also be found in the historical plays.

There I'll **uncrown** him ere't be long  
*3 Henry VI*, 3.3, 232.

Then crushing penury  
Persuades me I was better when a king;  
Then am I kinged again: and by and by  
Think that I am **unkinged** by Bolinbroke.  
*Richard II*, 5.5, 37.

Alongside the predicate *say*, Shakespeare reverses a range of additional irreversible vocal verbs, including *speaking*, *shouting*, and *swearing*.

Your darling tongue  
Scorns to **unsay** what once it hath delivered  
*Richard II*, 4.1, 9.

Even now I put myself to thy direction, and  
**Unspeaking** mine own detract  
*Macbeth* 4.3, 123.

**Unshout** the noise that banished Marcius,  
Repeal him  
*Coriolanus* 5.5, 4.

Hath he said anything?—he hath, my lord;  
but be you well assured,  
No more than he'll **unswear**  
*Othello* 4.1, 31.

Many more examples could be cited, but the point will be granted: Shakespeare violates ordinary rules of reversal with stellar results. Such illicit reversal can be taken as a subtle indication of his deft hand, a kind of fingerprint indicating that we are indeed dealing with the genius we recognize as Shakespeare.

In light of so many diagnostic examples identifying Shakespeare and his genius, we are inspired to look elsewhere, first turning to Arthur Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet*, the alleged source of *Romeo and Juliet*, taking careful note along the way of two particularly lovely related examples.

SHAKESPEARE:  
Let me **unkiss** the oath 'twixt  
thee and me.  
*Richard II*, 5.1, 74.  
=REV, =LEX

BROOKE:  
A thousand times she kissed, and him  
**unkissed** again  
*Romeus and Juliet*, 821-2.

In this display formal relatedness is indicated by the two intervening relational symbols—one marking relatedness in term of reversal (=REV), another marking lexical relatedness (=LEX). The example suggests one of two conclusions: (1) Shakespeare took his clue for his artistic deployment of reversal from the author Brooke, or (2) the two authors express a similar propensity for artistic reversal precisely because they are one and the same author.

If (2) holds, it follows that the real Shakespeare was not William of Stratford, since Brooke's work appeared in 1562, when William of Stratford was a mere sprite of minus two years of age. Of course, some Oxfordians have suspected "Arthur Brooke" to be another pseudonym for Edward de Vere, following on Looney's empirical demonstration of the pseudonymous status of the name "William Shakespeare." If they are right, we expect to find more impressive Brookean examples of lexical congruence within the context of the reversal relation. A stunning example of such convergence is situated in the following pair.

BROOKE:  
A **thousand** times she **kissed**, and him  
**unkissed** again  
*Romeus and Juliet*, 821-2.  
=REV, =LEX-4, =SYN

SHAKESPEARE:  
A **thousand** spleens bear her a thousand  
ways,  
She **treads** the path that she **untreads**  
**again**;  
*Venus and Adonis*, 907-10.

Apart from the reversed items themselves, these examples also evince an impressive degree of lexical relatedness, including at least four lexical items: *a*, *thousand*, *she*, and *again*. We also encounter upon careful inspection a third salient relation, a syntactic fact, namely the presence of adverbial modification of the reversed predicate in both cases by the frequency adverb *again*. Clearly this convergence of three congruence relations is no accident. Either Shakespeare was an outright plagiarist of Brooke, or else Shakespeare and Brooke were one and the same author.

Needless to say, those who show great store of little wit will be unmoved by our examples, but it is our hope that those who do not will not. In this spirit, to be fully convincing the argument for (2) must be buttressed by another big C, which we choose to call *cumulation*. That is, to the two C's of *congruence* and *convergence* of congruence, one seeks a cumulative effect of converging congruence relations. With such additional evidence, there can remain no doubt that "Arthur Brooke" and "William Shakespeare" were indeed pseudonyms for a unique author. Such a demonstration has been essayed in Chapter 10 of *Shakespeare's Fingerprints*, where a detailed argument relating to plagiarism is also developed.

What animates us here—indeed, the *raison d'être* for this article—is that illicit reversal can be used to give crucial clues to the existence of additional pseudonyms employed by the Earl of Oxford during the course of his long and productive career as poet, playwright, novelist, translator, historian, satirist, and essayist. In what follows, we advance several such candidates, reserving others for a later date. The next pair immediately lets one new cat out of the bag.

## SHAKESPEARE:

A thousand spleens bear her a thousand ways,

She **treads** the path **that** she **untreads** again;

Her more than haste is mated with delays  
Like the proceedings of a drunken brain,  
*Venus and Adonis*, 907-10.  
=LEX-4., =REV, =SYN

## WEEVER:

Then mused awhile; straight, as resolved quite,

I **trod** the steps **that** I **untrod** before,  
Oft starting back at mine own shadow's sight,

And every sinew shivering wondrous sore:  
*Whipping of the Satyre*, 61-4.

Again we find an example of 4-fold lexical congruence exhibiting illicit reversal in which the reversed predicates are themselves lexically related, thus contributing to the total valence of =LEX. Moreover, the two second lines are syntactically equivalent, each consisting of a subject plus verb plus object modified by a relative clause headed by the pronoun *that* and including in both cases within those clauses verbs reversing the matrix predicates. This overlap can be no random occurrence and we thus emerge with a powerful clue that "John Weever" is another pseudonym for

Edward de Vere, a conclusion that can be supported by a wealth of additional evidence, including the following stunning fingerprint playing on the author's real name E. Vere, reminiscent of Shakespeare's line: *That every word doth almost tell my name*.

And by her power divine she so hath framed,  
That by his own name he is **ever named**.  
*Faunus and Melliflora*.

Towards a discovery of additional pseudonyms, we recall that Shakespeare was fond of brows, for he mentions them in numerous contexts. One should not be surprised by a poet's talk of furrows or wrinkles associated with brows, but talk of a bending brow is another matter. Just so, we are struck by Shakespeare's use of this phrasing in several plays, of which two are cited.

See how the ugly witch doth **bend** her **brows!**

*1 Henry IV* 5.3.34.

And who durst smile when Warwick **bent** his **brow?**

*3 Henry VI*, 5.2.22.

We may proceed by recalling what some Oxfordians have long suspected, that the works published under the name "George Gascoigne" were penned by Edward de Vere. The arguments for that conclusion are legion and many new ones are advanced in Chapters 9 and 12 of *Shakespeare's Fingerprints*. It therefore comes as no surprise that the *bending-brow* motif is also found in the luminous work attributed to Gascoigne.

## GASCOIGNE:

These three, not she, their angry **brows do bend**,

*The Grief of Joy*.

We are now in a position to return to illicit reversal and note that John Grange utilized both it and the *bending-brow* motif in his glorious *Golden Aphroditis*.

GRANGE: Whereat N. O., taking a better courage, told forth his will and chief desire in this order: "O muses worthy of musing, by earnest suit I crave of your wonted and accustomed courtesy to **unlace** our liberality, extending your benevolence in filling this goblet of mine with the heavenly and unspeakable dew of your gracious fountain."

GRANGE: A. O., looking frowningly, **bend-**ing her **brows**, and scowling with her

eyelids like unto Pallas, who can no other-wise do, for that she was engendered of the brains of Jupiter, who always are troubled and vexed, answered: "Am I the cat by whom thou meanest?"

The reason for this convergence of two Shakespearean signature devices is that the author "John Grange" and "Shakespeare," i.e., the Earl of Oxford, were again one and the same, as we have shown in the second installment of our fingerprint trilogy, entitled *Never and For Ever*. Still more impressive is the convergence found in a book attributed to Stephan Gosson.

## GOSSON:

Of thousand heels except the Lord **do** lend  
His helping hand and luring **brows unbend**.

*Ephemerides of Phialo*.  
=LEX-3, =SEM

## GASCOIGNE:

Another Oxe, right lean, **God** her amend.  
These three, not she, their angry **brows do bend**,

*Grief of Joy*.

The Gosson example sports a context for a climactic convergence of the *bending-brow* motif with illicit reversal and suggests that "Stephan Gosson" is another pseudonym for Edward de Vere, a proposition whose truth is also empirically verified in *Never and For Ever*. Considering this example in comparison with the Gascoigne lines, one cannot miss the semantic fact of identical agents, the Lord and God, underscored in the display for quick recognition. As for additional comparisons, the following is also noteworthy:

## GOSSON:

His helping hand and luring **brows unbend**.

*Ephemerides of Phialo*.

## SHAKESPEARE:

A **brow unbent** that seemed to welcome woe,

*Lucrece* 1506-9.

Although the example drawn from Shakespeare involves the negative prefix *un-* in contrast to reversible *un-*, the comparison nonetheless provides an added incentive for disbelieving that our views are those of rank bedlamites, as orthodoxy would no doubt have it.

*This material is excerpted from the authors' book Shakespeare's Fingerprints, reviewed in the Spring 2003 issue of Shakespeare Matters.*

# Sir Walter Scott as Paleo-Oxfordian

## Part 2: The Abbot

By Chuck Berney

A few years ago I read *Kenilworth*, Sir Walter Scott's 1821 novel about the Earl of Leicester's attempts to persuade Queen Elizabeth to marry him, and the associated murder of his wife, Amy Robsart. Verbal clues in the novel led me to believe that Scott was aware of Edward de Vere's authorship of the Shakespeare canon a hundred years before the publication of Looney's *Shakespeare Identified*. An article discussing my conclusions was printed in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Fall 2000. Roger Stritmatter and Elliott Stone (in unpublished work) have reached a similar conclusion regarding Herman Melville. Richard Whalen (*Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*, Autumn 1995) has made the case for such knowledge on the part of Charles Dibdin (a composer in David Garrick's circle ca. 1769) and Robert Plumer Ward (like Scott, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century novelist). Thus there appears to have been an ongoing community of literary figures who knew the identity of the Bard and referred to it cryptically in their writings. I term these people paleo-Oxfordians.

Another of Scott's novels, *The Abbot* (1820), offers a fictional treatment of historical events of 1567-68 in Scotland—the imprisonment of Mary, Queen of Scots, in a castle on the island of Lochleven, her forced abdication, and her subsequent escape. In spite of the title, the protagonist of the novel is Roland Græme, an orphan adopted as a page by Lady Avenel. Græme eventually joins the suite of Mary Stuart and aids in her escape. I believe that Scott intended the knowing reader to associate Græme with Edward de Vere, for reasons given below.

(1) High Rank. In spite of his apparently humble origin, perceptive observers detect evidence of nobility. The domestic, Lilius, muses

He must, she thought, be born of gentle blood; it were shame to think otherwise of a form so noble and features so fair; the very wildness in which he occasionally indulged, his contempt of danger and impatience of restraint, had in them

something noble: assuredly, the child was born of high rank. [28]<sup>1</sup>

A few pages later, she exclaims

... he speaks as if he were the son of an earl...! [70]

Of course, at the end of the novel it is revealed that he is in fact the son of a nobleman, the Baron Julian Avenel.

(2) Association with Falconry. Beginning with Chapter 4, much is made of young Roland's friendship with Adam Woodcock, Avenel's falconer. They argue about whether to feed the eyases washed or unwashed meat, and hawking terms and metaphors permeate much of the dialog.

(3) Catholic Leanings. Wingate, the castle steward, notes

I have often noticed that the boy had strange observances which savoured of Popery, and that he was very jealous to conceal them... [78]

In fact, the battle between Catholicism and the Reformed Church for Græme's allegiance is one of the major themes of the book.

The above three traits constitute three of the criteria adduced by Looney (p. 103, Miller edition) in seeking the identity of the Bard: 2. A member of the higher aristocracy; 5. A follower of sport (including falconry); 9. Of probable Catholic leanings, but touched with skepticism.

(4) Word-clues. On page 55, Wingate says of Græme "... but the youth is a fair youth..." It takes but the buzz of a vocal cord to change "fair" to "vair," the contemporary pronunciation of "Vere." On page 271, Adam Woodcock tells him "... thou hadst been the veriest crack-hemp of a page that ever wore feather in thy bonnet," providing two references to the Vere family name. Another word-clue is "madcap," a term characteristically used in the Shakespeare plays (along

with the equivalent, "mad wag") to describe characters such as Prince Hal, Philip the Bastard, and Feste, who are extensions of the author. "Madcap" is applied to Roland Græme at least five times [139, 187, 225, 230, 466]. No other character is referred to in this way.

(5) Græme's Age. In the main part of the novel, Græme's age is given as 18 [231, 398]. Since the events described take place in 1567, he must have been born in 1549. This is within a year of Edward de Vere's birth, even considering the ambiguity of whether he was the son of John de Vere or of Thomas Seymour.

(6) The Ceremony of the Ewer. After Græme has been installed as a page in Mary Stuart's retinue at Lochleven, he serves dinner to her ladies-in-waiting:

When he observed that they had finished eating, he hastened to offer to the elder lady the silver ewer, basin, and napkin, with the ceremony and gravity which he would have used towards Mary herself. [356]

As explained in Vol. II of the Miller edition of Looney (pp. 106-117), the Office of the Ewer was a hereditary function of the Earls of Oxford. The duties consisted of serving a newly-crowned monarch at the banquet following the coronation in exactly the manner described above. Note that Scott is careful to introduce the word "ceremony" into his description of what was ostensibly a rather mundane event, and to indicate that it normally would have involved the Queen.

For the most part, the references associating Græme with Oxford are nonfunctional—icing on the cake, or caviar for the knowing—not affecting the plot or intended to reflect actual events in de Vere's life. There is one possible exception to this view. The climactic set-piece of the novel is the battle between forces loyal to Mary and those supporting the Protestant Lords (historically this took place at Langside on 13 May 1568; Scott places it at Crookstone); Mary's forces were seeking to depose Mo-

ray, the Regent, and return Scotland to the Church of Rome. It is during this battle that Roland (now Avenel) first experiences combat, and is transformed from a page to a knight. A year and a half after the Battle of Langside there was an uprising in England, instigated by the Catholic earls of the North with the object of deposing Elizabeth and replacing her with Mary, thus returning England to the Church of Rome. This rebellion was suppressed by Elizabeth's forces, led by Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex. He was accompanied by his 19-year-old protégé Edward de Vere, who thus gained his first experience of combat.

About two-thirds of the way through the novel, Roland is sent on an errand from Lochleven to a village on the shore. The villagers are celebrating May Day, and the festivities include a performance by a group of traveling players. Scott's account includes the following remarkable sentence:

... Amid all these, and more acceptable than almost the whole put together, was the all-licensed fool, the Gracioso of the Spanish drama, who, with his cap fashioned into the resemblance of a coxcomb, and his bauble, a truncheon terminated by a carved figure, wearing a fool's cap, in his hand, went, came, and returned, mingling in every scene of the piece, and interrupting the business, without having any share himself in the action, and ever and anon transferring his gibes from the actors on the stage to the audience who sat around, prompt to applaud the whole. [415]

This sentence is remarkable for at least two reasons: (a) it contains 17 commas, more than any sentence I can remember encountering before, and (b) almost everything it mentions is inappropriate to the scene it purports to describe. Goneril's phrase, "all-licensed fool," is appropriate for a court, where the reigning authority may give a jester permission to deal with sensitive topics, but it makes no sense applied to traveling players performing on a village green. Who does the licensing? It appears to have been included simply to point us in the direction of the Shakespeare plays. "Truncheon" is an odd word in this context; an archaic meaning is "the shaft of a spear." Webster's dictionary defines "gracioso" as "a sportive and comic character in Spanish comedy," that is, a madcap. Scott apparently uses the Spanish word (capitalized) to remind us that this madcap is a noble, habitually addressed as "your Grace." The Gracioso is described as "mingling in every scene of the piece, and interrupting the business, without having any share himself in the action." This is not what an actor does, it's what a director does during the rehearsal process—and can we doubt that Oxford himself directed the plays he wrote? Then there's "ever and anon transferring his gibes from the actors on the stage to the audience . . ." How do you do that? Does the Fool listen to each actor's lines, then run to the edge of the stage and repeat them to the audience? A play staged that way would be booed rather

than applauded. Scott is describing what the author does, "ever and anon," providing the gibes that the actors then deliver to the audience. Even the word "stage" is inappropriate, as Scott has previously established that the performance takes place on a plot of greensward. I can only conclude that Scott is giving the mature Oxford—actor, director and playwright—a cameo appearance, perhaps to balance the use of the young Oxford as a model for Roland.

Scott was writing almost 200 years after publication of the First Folio, and 50 years after David Garrick's Stratford Jubilee mythologized the Lad from Stratford. How did he learn the truth? One of Scott's biographers writes

Indeed, his literary art was based on memory: he learned about the recent past by listening eagerly to the memories of survivors of distant adventures, and his most fruitful approach to history was through a chain of recollection. [19]<sup>2</sup>

And later,

It was Scott's friend and former schoolfellow Adam Ferguson . . . who first introduced him to the society of those whom Scott later called 'the most distinguished literati of the old time who still remained, with such young persons as were thought worthy to approach their circle and listen to their conversation'. [42]

*(Continued on page 32)*

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*Walter Scott (continued from page 31)*

So evidently there were circles of "distinguished literati" within which the secret of the Bard's identity was passed from generation to generation. These were the people that Scott expected would understand and appreciate his oblique references to Oxford as Shakespeare, the audience for whom he wove these references into the fabric of his story. The significance of Scott's knowledge of Oxford is not so much that Scott knew it, but that a community of literati knew it. As we think about the history of the authorship question, it is important to be aware of these clandestine groups. The study of paleo-Oxfordian communities and populations would seem to be a fruitful field for further investigation.

#### Endnotes

1. Page numbers refer to the Houghton Mifflin edition of 1913.
2. David Daiches, *Sir Walter Scott and His World* (Viking, New York, 1971).

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*Year in the Life (continued from page 24)*

is given "by Her Majesty's players" (the Queen's Men) for the sum of £10.<sup>33</sup> The name of the stage work presented for Elizabeth is unstated; its topic will be unknown in the future; and even now, as the year 1586 comes to a close, the undisclosed dramatist who wrote this play has begun to disappear from view. He is slipping back into the shadows and mirrors of his world, vanishing from its recorded history.

#### Endnotes

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- 26 Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth*, op. cit., 346
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- 30 Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth*, op. cit., 357
- 31 Weir, op. cit., 375
- 32 Weir, op. cit., 372
- 33 Chambers, op. cit., Appendix B

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