



## A critique of the "Monument theory"

By Lynne Kositsky and Roger Stritmatter, PhD.

**H**ank Whittemore's summer 2004 *Shakespeare Matters* article, "Authorize Thy Trespass With Compare," promises to supply a simple, comprehensive solution to the enigma of the sonnets: "Reading the sonnets becomes as clear and uncomplicated as reading a signed, dated letter to a known addressee about the events of the day,"<sup>1</sup> writes editor Bill Boyle in his accompanying essay. Whittemore's solution, believes Boyle, "is absolutely correct"<sup>2</sup> and makes "crystal clear what was once mysterious and opaque."<sup>3</sup> Like many Shakespearean students, we would love to receive the definitive enlightenment promised by these bold words. Regrettably, however, the Whittemore solution to the sonnets fails to live up to Boyle's advance publicity.

No critique of Whittemore's "solution" to the sonnets would be complete without some reference to the highly selective use of reference materials used to construct the theory. Although many relevant influences are noted regarding subjects such as the date of Sonnet 107, neither Whittemore nor Boyle acknowledges the debt that both writers owe to previous scholars who have analyzed the structure of the sonnets. Traditionally, scholars identify four significant parts: 1-17 (fair youth/marriage sonnets), 18-126 (fair youth sonnets), 127-152 (dark lady sonnets), 153-154 (mythological coda). From this it can be seen that two of the four segments which serve to define Whittemore's monument are traditional (127-152 and 153-154) in the sense of being acknowledged by many Sonnet scholars. Contrary to Boyle's claim that "all commentators have struggled with" but "none have solved" the question of whether the 1609 Q is in authorial order, many commentators, including Stephen Booth,<sup>4</sup> have argued that until a better order can be discovered, the best premise is that the order is in fact authorial. We see nothing in Whittemore's analysis which materially contributes to this question. Asserting a chronological order for the Sonnets does not constitute evidence to resolve this question.

The Whittemore "monument" depends on the one structural innovation of moving the first break from sonnet 17 to sonnet 26. By making this change, Whittemore produces the 100 sonnet sequence (27-126) which forms the "center and centerpiece"<sup>5</sup> of  
*(Continued on page 10)*

## Back to the Ashbourne

*More layers of deception in the 2002 examination of the portrait*

By Barbara Burris



*The Ashbourne Portrait*

**I**n the fall of 2002, the Folger Shakespeare Library sent the Ashbourne portrait hundreds of miles away from Washington, DC, for examination by the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI). Why they went so far afield strongly appears to connect to the recent controversy surrounding the Sanders portrait, a claimed Shakespeare portrait that was examined by the same company.

Dated 1603, the Sanders portrait depicts the head and  
*(Continued on page 15)*

## Engaging Prince Tudor

*Concordia seminar touches the third rail of Oxfordianism*



*Hank Whittemore gave a presentation on his new theory on the Sonnets.*

**W**hen Prof. Daniel Wright first announced last year that the topic for the Summer 2004 Shakespeare Authorship Studies Seminar would be the dreaded "Prince Tudor" theory the slings and arrows of outrage started flying almost immediately, and they still haven't stopped. As most Oxfordians are well aware, this particular issue has stirred passions from the earliest years of the Oxfordian movement in the 1920s and has more than once proved to be a schism that has  
*(Continued on page 8)*

## Letters:

To the Editor:

The Summer 2004 issue of *Shakespeare Matters* is superb! Clearly, William Boyle is proving his mettle as editor.

His tandem piece with Hank Whittemore's provides one of the best expositions of WHY Oxford could not write poetry or plays under his own name and why Henry Wriothesley's sentence was commuted from execution to imprisonment.

Albert Burgstahler  
Lawrence, Kansas  
12 August 2004

To the Editor:

Much valuable stuff in the Summer 2004 issue; here is my grab bag of responses. I am very anxious to read Hank Whittemore's new book on the sonnets. I think, based on what he and Bill Boyle wrote, that he may well have proved his case—as far as the “central” 100 sonnets are concerned. I am not as convinced, however, of his interpretation of the so-called “Dark Lady” poems, although Queen Elizabeth may well have been the subject of some of them. Absent some more esoteric reading, Sonnet 138 (for example) would seem to be addressed to a younger woman, and Sonnet 130 to a woman with black hair. If the Sonnets 128-154 were written earlier than (or concurrently with) the first 127, this circumstance would disturb Hank's thesis that all of the sonnets are in “authorial order”—a contention he successfully maintains (in my opinion) for the central 100.

President Alex McNeil omits from his catalog of “noteworthy publications” for 1608-1609 the first quarto of “M. William Shak-speare—His True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear and his three Daughters...” in 1608. This quarto is singular in being the first publication of a Shakespeare play in which the author's name (along with the 1609 Sonnets quarto) precedes the title. As Oxfordian Gwynneth Bowen (citing Stratfordian Sir Sidney Lee) pointed out, this was a practice mostly

used for dead authors. (Additionally, the spelling “Shak-speare” was never used by the Stratford man.)

Finally, what is one to say about Thomas Pendleton's and John Mahon's upside-down responses to Dick Whalen? Are we seriously being asked to believe that because Stratford Will is shown by Mahon to be “difficult,” he could have written the works, but Oxford's being more “awful” proves that Oxford could not?

It is high time that Oxfordians repudiate the calumnious assertions of Nelson, Giroux, Mahon and their ilk: that Edward de Vere was a monster. The truth is, as Sir George Greenwood wrote in 1908, “not a single creditable act” can be attributed to the Stratford man. On the other hand, the tributes to the 17<sup>th</sup> earl's character, intelligence, generosity, and religiosity are quite numerous—from Gabriel Harvey, Robert Greene, Spenser, Percival Golding, to Sir George Buc—and this is only a partial list! To Stratfordians, apparently, where absolutely nothing is known, anything can be imagined (such as Pendleton's nonsense about Shakspeare “quite likely” being better educated than de Vere)!

Gordon C. Cyr  
Baltimore, Maryland  
8 September 2004

To the Editor:

Lynne Kositsky and Roger Stritmatter in their report on the recent University of Tennessee Law School symposium note that Steven May's talk dealt with stylistic features and imagery advanced as arguments for the Oxfordian thesis by Looney in his classic of 1920. They report May's observation that some of Looney's examples “are in fact widely found in Elizabethan literature and hence are not fingerprints...” They characterize May's presentation as “an exceptionally forceful and credible critique of the Oxfordian case,” informing us that “Professor May gave examples from Turberville, Grange, Gascoigne, Whetstone, and others to reinforce his argument.”

Although we were not present to hear May's talk, on the basis of the report and our own research we remain skeptical of the forcefulness and credibility of May's data. Our skepticism relates to the fact that we have shown in *Shakespeare's Fingerprints* that the names ‘Turberville’, ‘Gascoigne’, and ‘Whetstone’ were Oxfordian pseudonyms. In our soon-to-appear *Never and for Ever*, we go on to show that the name ‘Grange’ was another such. Haggard hawks aside (many examples

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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) nonprofit (Fed ID 04-3578550).

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of which May may have saved himself time by culling from our book), lovers of truth in packaging are encouraged to consider the following three couplets:

TURBERVILLE (*Tragical Tales* 408-9):  
To quite all which good parts, this vow I  
make to thee:  
I will be thine as long as I have power mine  
own to be.

SHAKESPEARE (Sonnet 123, 13-4):  
This I do vow and this shall ever be,  
I will be true despite thy scythe and thee.

GASCOIGNE (*Hundreth Sundrie  
Flowres*):  
Such one I was and such always will be,  
For worthy dames, but then I mean not  
thee.

Restricting to the Shakespeare-Gascoigne comparison, we witness a 7-fold lexical overlap, a stunning syntactic overlap, identical rhyme, and equivalent coreference relations (this: this:: such one: such). Is this example of converging congruence relations a random coincidence? That such is hardly likely is shown by the fact that analogous examples accumulate and cascade throughout the relevant works in ways that cannot be explained by anything other than unique authorship. Examples are provided in Chapters 9, 12, 13, and 14 of our book.

Inasmuch as May delivered his paper to a roomful of lawyers and mentioned Whetstone, we cannot resist bringing one last comparison to the attention of Oxfordian readers.

Shakespeare (*2 Henry VI*, 4.2.36)  
The first thing we do, let's kill all the  
lawyers

Whetstone (*Heptameron*)  
If chief magistrates should set their hands  
to this justice, there would be more lawyers  
hanged for stealing of houses than rogues  
for robbing of hedges.

Michael Brame & Galina Popova  
University of Washington  
Seattle, Washington  
5 August 2004

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## From the Editor

### Where do we go from here?

With the publication of the long-awaited Stephen Greenblatt biography on Shakespeare (the Stratford man, that is—see our comments below), and continuing developments within our own Oxfordian movement, we have arrived at a crossroads.

In our last issue we announced what some of us considered to be a major breakthrough in the study of the Sonnets, and along with it perhaps a major new development in the authorship debate. With the publication of a “Critique of the Monument Theory” in this issue, our readers can see that first we must decide among ourselves just what the Sonnets are really about and how important they are (or are not?) to prevailing in the overall debate. We will have more on this evolving debate on the Sonnets and Whittemore’s “Monument” theory in coming issues of *SM* in 2005.

And we should add that just as impor-

tant to the Sonnet issue and the “Monument” theory is the so-called “Prince Tudor” theory and all that implies for the debate and our search for the truth. Beginning on page one in this issue we have a report about the Shakespeare Authorship Studies Seminar held in August at Concordia University (at which the topic was “Prince Tudor; Truth or Delusion?”), which includes an assessment from Seminar Director Prof. Daniel Wright.

The reason we ask “Where do we go from here?” is that the Sonnets and the “Prince Tudor” theory are inexorably intertwined and vexing. And, as we all know, contentious. But *if* the ultimate truth to the whole authorship mystery *is* contained in the Sonnets, and *does* involve the truth of the relationship between Shakespeare/Oxford and the Earl of Southampton, well, then, where else is there to go?

## *Will in the World*

Some of our friends over the past year didn’t think Harvard professor Stephen Greenblatt’s new Shakespeare biography, *Will in the World*, would be any big deal—just another in a long line of attempts to fill the void of the Stratford man’s life and somehow make it fit the works.

But now that it’s here, and we have seen the “big wet kiss” coverage it is getting in major media and cultural publications across the board, we think it’s clear that it is a big deal, part of an “authorship war” that we know all about, but which doesn’t even get acknowledged by Greenblatt himself or most of his reviewers. At least last year, with the Wood and Nelson books, authorship was more part of the story.

While we won’t be reviewing the book until our Winter issue, we do have in this issue a review of *The New Yorker* review,

and that is in itself somewhat revealing about both the book and its reception.

What’s most stunning is how both Greenblatt and his reviewers openly acknowledge that his biography is pretty much “made up.” But no one seems to be bothered by that, since what he’s made up is such a wonderful story, and it “could have been that way. And this comes, let us remind you, from a well-known, well-respected Harvard professor—a “new historicist” whose expertise is setting literature in its proper historic context to better understand it.

The strongest part of the Oxfordian argument has always been historic context and the fit between the author and the work. So now we have Stratfordian context; the works are made real because they are now connected to a life made up. Whatever.

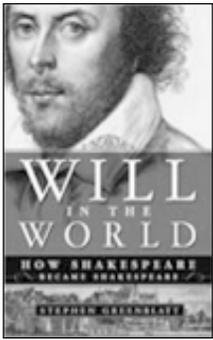
## The Ashbourne Portrait

Meanwhile, down in Washington, the Ashbourne portrait still hangs in the Folger Shakespeare Library, waiting for justice. In this issue we return to the Ashbourne story with an article by Barbara Burris that examines the technical testing done on the portrait in 2002.

We have already published in these pages four articles on Burris’s research into the portrait and whether or not it is

in fact the Earl of Oxford. We think our readers should take a close look at this current contribution, because the story line is pretty straightforward and clear, and backed up by the Folger Shakespeare Library’s own files. In brief, the story of the 2002 examination provides us with a portrait of what Oxfordians are up against in trying to prevail in this centuries-long authorship battle. Check it out.

## Book Notes

*Will in the World* - more Stratfordian gossamer

If the general news of the world isn't discouraging enough, and in case you don't subscribe to *The New Yorker*, you yet will want to obtain a copy of the September 13th issue in order to read and suffer through Adam Gopnik's interminably long, drooling-with-praise review of Stephen Greenblatt's biography of Will Shaksper, *Will in the World*, the latest Stratfordian biography that the Establishment is promoting with feverish vigor—this review article being but one of the more recent inducements in the major media to rally public support for a collapsing orthodoxy (*SM* will be reviewing the book in our next issue—Ed.).

Gopnik's fawning paean of Greenblatt's book—the work as a whole, he encapsulates, is “startlingly good,” and he acclaims it nothing less than “the most complexly intelligent and sophisticated . . . study of the life and work [of Shakespeare] that [he] ha[s] ever read”—is much in the spirit of John Leonard's review of Greenblatt's book that appears in the September issue of *Harper's*. Gopnik's review is a gushing six-page advertisement, awash in sugary rapture for this latest in a line of what we have come to expect from the Shakespeare industry: ever-new biographies, published with predictable regularity, that presume to advance a definitive version of the Stratford man's life or improve the “spin” on an old one—while sometimes paradoxically suggesting that the provision of a “life” for Stratford Will finally isn't really necessary. (When was the last time, however, that you ever heard one of these writers or reviewers say that we should forgo probing the lives of the writers of *Paradise Lost*, *Crime and Punishment* or *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*—such works being better studied without the irritating annoyance of having to consider who wrote them and why?)

**Familiar clichés**

Full of praise for the author's new revelations (Gopnik, for example, calls Greenblatt's declaration that Shakespeare

based Falstaff on Robert Greene “a triumph of biographical criticism”), Gopnik also doesn't fail to rhapsodize about Greenblatt's repetition of the most tiresome Stratfordian commonplaces. He trots out Greenblatt's familiar clichés about Stratford Will with the zeal of the propagandist who tries to convince others of a spurious claim by repeating it, as though something could become true by merely stating it again and again. Shakespeare, Gopnik recounts, wrote “two plays a year for almost twenty years”; he probably became a tutor in Lancashire during the so-called “lost years”; he “would do anything for a joke or a pun”; and he was an artist driven by commercial instincts—an avaricious man who, nonetheless, was willfully ordinary, “self-mockingly modest” and “unprepossessing,” given to small bourgeois ambitions.

Shakespeare, we are to believe, indifferently—almost with casual insouciance—gave birth to the Renaissance in England by revolutionizing the language and the world of literary art, all in the effort, first and foremost, to make a few pennies off the masses' desire for an afternoon's diversion or to satisfy a wealthy aristocrat's vanity. His successes quickly yielded him the ability to pursue his primary goal in life by walking away from London with enough money in his pockets to indulge, at a young age, “the romance of retirement” and thereby fulfill his dream of becoming the “benevolent paterfamilias in a small suburban town”—for above all, Gopnik reminds us, Shakespeare was “a social climber” who “seems to have sworn to do anything in life that he could to get himself and his family . . . in a big bourgeois house.”

Gopnik reports that Greenblatt's book draws on “fertile decades of biographical scholarship” into the life of Shakespeare to tell us that Stratford Will was “something close to an overnight sensation” and that by the early 1590s he was “among the most famous writers in the country.” He broke into poetry with *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* (good first efforts, eh?—or at least considerable improvements on “Lousy Lucy”!). We are informed that he attained “extraordinary social position,” for he was “a pet of the aristocrats” who, like a sixteenth-century Truman Capote, “moved in very fancy circles,” and we are

told that he also messed it up in the artistic world of London by making enemies of the University Wits—a life (whew!) certainly crowded with excitement and incident! (Would—we can continue to wish—that anyone had ever recorded a single minute of this amazing life. . . .)

Shakespeare, however, wasn't just a coarse proto-capitalist with a passion for the demos, a flair for popular drama (“Shakespeare shows us that you don't have to look from on high in order to see it all”) and a habit of engaging in *contretemps* with inferior if learned rivals; he wrote plays, Gopnik reports, because, as a Catholic frustrated by the State's suppression of Catholic worship, he needed to find an outlet for his love of ceremony and ritual: not a Christian of serious conviction, “[i]t was the pagan part of Catholicism that he loved. . . .” Indeed, cold and distant from the spiritual faith of his ancestors, Greenblatt suggests that Shakespeare probably attended the execution of Ruy Lopez where, as Gopnik reports, watching him hanged, drawn and quartered, Shakespeare may even have “shared a mordant snicker with the crowd.” (One entire chapter in Greenblatt's massive biography of Shakespeare is devoted to the execution of Ruy Lopez.)

**Leading a double life**

Greenblatt, as Gopnik recounts, proposes that Shakespeare's injunction against disturbing his body (the curse carved on his tomb in the Stratford church) was intended to keep others from burying his wife next to him. Gopnik points out that Greenblatt thinks Will didn't spend much time with his family after his flight from Stratford in the late 1580s, but yet they remained “the obsessive focus of his financial advancement for the rest of his life.” The death of his son, Hamnet, inspired a “revenge play bearing a variant of his son's name,” although the play, the exposition of “a complete inner life,” probably was written, we are told, not in a reflex of grief over the death of his son but out of Shakespeare's imaginative anticipation of what he thought he would feel when his *father* would die, as *Hamlet*, for Greenblatt, Gopnik reports, is not just about the death of Hamnet but a play about Will and a yet-

(Continued on page 32)

# The Utrecht Conference

The first Dutch conference on the Shakespeare authorship question took place 8–10 July 2004 in the pleasant Dutch city of Utrecht. It was organized by Jan Scheffer, a psychiatrist at the Pieter Baan Center in Utrecht, and Sandra Schruijer, a professor of psychology at Tilburg University.

The opening session took place Thursday afternoon and was followed by a welcoming reception at the *Museum van Speelklok tot Pierement* (Musical Clock and Barrel Organ Museum). Conferees were treated to a demonstration by the museum director of some incredibly elaborate mechanized orchestras from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Presentation of papers began Friday morning. Dan Wright led off with “The Undoing of Shakespearean Orthodoxy: Edward de Vere and the Catholic Stratford ‘Shakespeare’.” He was followed by Odin Dekkers’s report on John Mackinnon Robertson, an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher who advocated a composite-authorship theory of the Shakespearean works. Dekkers is the chair of the English Literature department at the University of Nijmegen and editor of the journal *English Studies*. He is a newcomer to the Oxfordian theory, and during the course of the conference offered (informally) to host another authorship conference next year in Nijmegen. The morning session was concluded with Charles Berney’s paper, “The Earl of Leicester in the Plays of Shakespeare.” Berney was the Shakespeare Fellowship’s official representative to the conference.

In the afternoon, noted researcher Robert Detobel recounted Oxford’s legal actions before his death, and concluded that he may have committed suicide. This talk was followed by one of the highlights of the conference, a report by several high school students from St. Odolphus in Tilburg on their Shakespeare authorship competition. The students who participated in this project were divided into four groups, and each group researched the case for one of the authorial candidates (Oxford, Marlowe, Bacon, and Stratford Will). The groups were allotted one day for internet research, and presentations took place the following afternoon. A prize was awarded to the Marlowe team for the best presentation (this decision was not meant to imply that the judges were convinced

that Marlowe was the author). The students at the conference were enthusiastic about the competition, and it might be something that could be tried in the U.S.

Following the student competition report, DeVere Society member Elizabeth Imlay described progress in the Society’s dating project. This in turn was followed by Michael Dunn’s impressive performance as Conan Doyle’s supersleuth in “Sherlock Holmes and the Shakespeare Mystery,” a performance Fellowship members may remember from the 2002 conference in Boston.

Saturday’s session featured papers by the conference organizers. Jan Scheffer spoke on “Psychodynamic Aspects of the Author as Appearing in *Hamlet*,” suggesting that Oxford’s playwriting activities were a form of compensation for having his childhood cut short by the death of his father and his subsequent wardship in the Cecil household. Sandra Schruijer’s contribution was entitled “Constructing Identities in the Shakespeare Authorship Debate: A Social Psychological Analysis.” She gave an overview of intergroup conflicts and suggested ways in which the debate could be framed so as to reduce partisan emotion. She also reported on her monitoring of the internet exchanges between Alan Nelson and Diana Price, expressing dismay at the way the former treated the latter.

Another feature of the morning program was a presentation by Pieter Helsloot on his new book, *Edward de Vere, onvermijdelik Shakespeare* (“... inevitably Shakespeare”). It’s a slim volume, handsomely printed, with some previously unpublished portraits, and accounts of the Vere family members who died fighting the Spanish in Holland.

Participants agreed that it was a very successful conference, and there was informal talk of another authorship conference in the Netherlands, perhaps as early as next year. Scheffer and Schruijer plan to edit a volume of conference proceedings. American participants were surprised and impressed by the amount of Oxfordian activity in the Netherlands. Perhaps the barrier to consideration of the Oxfordian hypothesis will prove to be lower in European universities than in English-speaking countries.

—CVBerney

## A psychologist on authorship

One of the more intriguing presentations at the Utrecht Conference was by Sandra Schruijer on “Constructing Identities in the Shakespeare Authorship Debate.” This was a talk about the actual ongoing political battle between today’s Stratfordians and anti-Stratfordians.

A summary of her talk was posted on the Authorship Debate Forum on the Fellowship’s website (the summary obtained and posted courtesy of Michael Dunn, who was in Utrecht to present his one-man authorship show as Sherlock Holmes taking on the debate).

Schruijer’s key points in this talk involved the difference between “relational conflict” (in which two groups try to win over each other, and often belittle their opponents) vs. “task conflict” (in which two groups try to find ways to work together towards a common goal). She felt that the authorship debate needed to move on to the “task” model for any progress to be made.

What then followed on the discussion forum was a typical authorship exchange, with the “relational conflict” taking precedence over any “task” exchanges (though Fellowship trustee Lynne Kositsky weighed in on her efforts to engage Stratfordians in “task” oriented debates and noted how her own thinking was evolving as she pursued “task” oriented exchanges).

Meanwhile Stratfordian debater Terry Ross joined in—in true “relational conflict” style—to explain to everyone that Oxfordians are incapable of being “task” oriented, and there’s your problem. The debate then moved on into the “same old, same old” mode for a month, and—surprise! surprise!—no minds were changed.

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# Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Aesopian Method

By Peter Rush

The announcement in the last issue (*SM*, Summer 2004) of the imminent availability of a pre-publication edition of Hank Whittemore's long-awaited book on the sonnets, *The Monument*, and two previews in the same issue, by Editor Bill Boyle and Whittemore, have at last joined the debate that has been in the offing for the past five years, since Whittemore first announced an early version of his novel thesis. Emails pro and con have already started flying back and forth on at least one Oxfordian internet discussion group debating Whittemore's approach to understanding the sonnets, and I am sure that Oxfordians everywhere are preparing to enter the lists—some based on only the published previews, others who intend to hold their fire until they can study the entire work.

To assist the latter, this article will briefly develop a core insight *without* which the debate will be rather sterile, *with* which a whole new world of possibilities will open up.

*Shakespeare's Sonnets* is truly a singular work. Most readers, and even most authors on the subject, make no pretense of fully understanding the entire corpus of 154 sonnets. A brave handful of scholars have attempted to gloss all 154, but none save one, A. L. Rowse, makes the claim that he has fully solved the enigma of the sonnets. All, including Rowse, resort to a sonnet-by-sonnet *ad hoc* attempted *explication du texte*, taking each sonnet and trying to intuit a story behind that sonnet, most of which posit the poet, his beloved "fair youth," and a woman who seems to be playing with both of them.

Even a casual perusal of selected sonnets from such books as Katherine Duncan-Jones's *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, one of the best and most extensive recent attempts to explicate every sonnet (and one which doesn't posit a homosexual relationship to the youth), reveals the inability to intuit a meaning for large numbers of singular words, phrases and lines. Just to pick an

example, she simply has nothing to say about line 9 of sonnet 33, "Even so my sun one morn did shine," nor about the rest of that singular quatrain. The entire quatrain cries out that there is something strange being imparted here; why "my" sun, why "the region cloud," not just "clouds", but one specific cloud, "the" region cloud (whatever "region" might mean), etc.? Rowse, who also glosses every sonnet, is likewise silent on this quatrain.

To my knowledge, there are no Oxfordian attempts to do for the entire sonnet sequence what a few Stratfordians have done. Obviously, knowing that the author is Oxford and not Shaxpere of Stratford, is absolutely essential—no Stratfordian efforts, no matter how well intentioned, can possibly get anything right if they have the wrong author. But that substitution made, I submit that most Oxfordian analyses founder on the same shoals that have doomed all Stratfordian efforts.

It is the belief that "what you see is what there is."

The prevailing approach is to assume that the poems are about the poet, whether Oxford or Shaxpere, and his relationship to a young man (some Stratfordians, and many Oxfordians, actually agree that he is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton), and a woman, who completes a love triangle. The sonnets are thought to be mainly about the trials and tribulations of these three persons.

The devil is in the details, as usual. Such readings compel the creation of an elaborate scaffolding of imagined events among these three: the youth betraying the poet, stealing the woman, and being fickle, the poet going through a gamut of emotions as all this is happening, traveling here and there, and so on. A great deal of "plot" has to be invented to support each such reading of each sonnet, and taken as a whole, this approach becomes an incredibly convoluted speculation on what "might" be going on, dependent on "reading into" the sonnets most of the supposed meaning.

This very chaos suggests that something else must be involved, a possibility buttressed by the number of lines that almost all glosses gloss over, or ignore altogether, because they evidently cannot make sense out of them. "Fair, kind and true is all my argument," "you and love are all my argument," "Fair, kind and true have often lived alone," "jewel hung in ghastly night," "tongue-tied by authority," "why is my verse so barren of new pride?," "when in the chronicle of wasted time," etc. Space limitations forbid further discussion of these, and several dozen more lines, that simply don't make sense in the context of the imputed love triangle that is the stuff of so many scholarly works, but which stand as challenges, the failure to meet which indicts all previous efforts to explicate the sonnets. The reader will have to wait to read *The Monument* to find out what they really mean.

There is a better way, and Whittemore is the only author I know of to have discovered it. Starting with Oxford as the poet, and early on realizing that the youth had to be Southampton, and that Sonnet 107 celebrated the forthcoming peaceful accession of James days after Elizabeth died, and also James's order to release Southampton from the Tower, dating it to April of 1603, Whittemore suddenly saw that the key to Sonnet 27's sudden black tone had to be that it referred to Southampton's arrest and incarceration in the Tower in February 1601. This, in turn, suggested that Sonnets 28-106 were bracketed by those two fixed dates, and were all written in reference to the period of confinement of Southampton.

Pursuing that hunch, Whittemore found other lines referring to historical events during the period in question. More importantly, he began to see that the sonnets were written in a sort of code, where commonplace words, like "love," "age," "fair," "true," "beauty," "one," "time," "moon," "sun" and many others, if

understood as metaphors each with a consistent meaning, yielded a story, a chronicle, of Southampton's tenure in the Tower and of Oxford's efforts to spare his life, and get him released.

Discovering for the first time in four centuries that the sonnets are written in a code is the signal breakthrough that permitted Whittemore to solve this 400-year-old mystery. As he progressively decoded more and more words, more and more sonnets yielded a clear, unambiguous meaning, to the point today where every sonnet has yielded to his method, and tells a consistent, coherent story, about Southampton, Oxford, and Elizabeth.

There is a name for Oxford's method. It is called "Aesopian." An excellent dictionary definition is "communications that convey an innocent meaning to outsiders but hold a concealed meaning to informed members of a conspiracy or underground movement." It is typically used when the author seeks to communicate important political

ideas and information that cannot be safely said in public, where censorship forces political statements underground. "Tongued by authority" is almost certainly Oxford's statement of the conditions he faced while writing the sonnets.

Oxford all but gave away the game when he stated in sonnet 76 that he had to "keep invention in a noted weed." "Weed" is best translated as "disguise," and Whittemore's discovery is that the entirety of the sonnets as conventionally interpreted is nothing but the disguise for the real, underlying, political meaning, largely the chronicle of Oxford's efforts on behalf of a condemned traitor (sonnets 27-126).

If Whittemore is correct, then the conventional avenue of criticism that has been leveled against his thesis misses the point. If there is an Aesopian layer of meaning beneath the surface, apparent meaning that scholars have never yet penetrated, then no reading of any individual line, no standard interpretation

of any sonnet, can be used to refute Whittemore's decoded Aesopian meaning. The two operate on parallel tracks, and do not intersect. *Both* are, in effect, "correct," neither can falsify the other.

However, the surface meaning is just that, the disguise, the mask, the ephemera, of no lasting consequence. The "real" meaning is, obviously, the underlying message being communicated.

Hence, the only relevant way to critique Whittemore's thesis is to show that either there is no underlying Aesopian message, or that there is one, but Whittemore hasn't found it. Both approaches require delving into the details of Whittemore's exposition of each and every sonnet, examining how consistently he applies his code, and trying to show that it doesn't explain what he thinks it does. Just citing lines from various sonnets, and giving surface meanings as a supposed "proof" that Whittemore's Aesopian meaning is wrong, is not a viable line of argument.

## Shakespeare Authorship Trust in London

The Second Annual Shakespearean Authorship Trust Conference was held on July 3-4, 2004 in London. American Oxfordians in attendance included Prof. Daniel Wright (Portland, OR), Gerit Quealy (NYC) and Pidge Sexton (St. Louis, MO). Quealy, a former SOS trustee, is an active member of the De Vere Society in England. Dr. Wright was appointed an Associate Trustee of the Authorship Trust following this meeting.

The meeting was opened by Mark Rylance, Artistic Director of The Globe Theater, London. Rylance welcomed all and set the ground rules for the conference. This was not to be a debate; the four speakers were merely going to present their candidates for the authorship of the Shakespeare canon and make an effort to connect that candidate to the play of the evening, *Measure for Measure*. In his opening remarks, Mr. Rylance requested that questions from the audience be inquiries for information and that any remarks be also of an informative nature. This was not to be a forum for attacks upon the speaker, his message or his candidate.

First to speak was Michael Wood, for the Stratford man. He presented the usual

"facts," none of which connected his candidate to the writing of the plays and poetry. He contended that his candidate wrote *Measure for Measure* in 1604 for King James but otherwise had nothing to offer to tie his man to the writing of the play.

Michael Frohnsdorff presented for Christopher Marlowe contending, as many Marlovians do, that his death was a ploy to cover up his espionage activities after which he went to Italy and wrote the works of Shakespeare. Frohnsdorff contended that Marlowe wrote *Measure for Measure* in 1604 after he supposedly returned to England in disguise.

Robin Williams presented an interesting biography of Mary Sidney, attempting to tie her to the writing of the *Sonnets* because she had a much younger lover. Miss Williams emphasized Mary's great learning and that her home, Wilton, was where she developed a great literary circle. Here again there was no connection of the candidate to the writing of *Measure for Measure*.

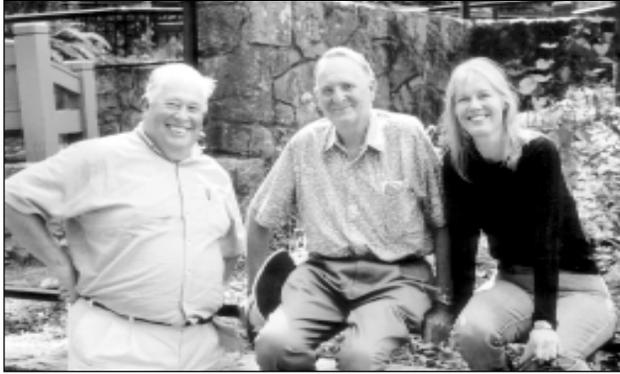
Peter Dawkins presented for Francis and Anthony Bacon believing the plays to be their collaboration. Dawkins also

believes that the play was written in 1604 for King James to instruct him about mercy and authority.

Charles Beauclerk presented a splendid paper outlining the authorship of the earl of Oxford through his biography and his close relationship with Queen Elizabeth. The character of the duke in *Measure for Measure*, Beauclerk maintains, is the author pulling his dramatic strings to force Queen Elizabeth to recognize her shortcomings, especially in chastising him for follies that were similar to her own.

There was some significant media coverage of the conference, with Robin Williams's talk on Lady Pembroke being publicized in advance and *The New York Times* covering it in August (William Niederkorn article, August 21, 2004).

While having such a prominent authorship venue clearly results from the efforts of Globe artistic director and outspoken anti-Stratfordian Rylance, it was announced at the end of summer that Mr. Rylance would be leaving the Globe after the 2004-2005 season, a development which could call into question any future authorship events being held under the Globe's auspices. —Pidge Sexton



Bill Boyle (3)

Marguerite Gyatt

Enjoying an excursion to the Cascade Mountains southeast of Portland are: (top left) Mark Jackson, Paul Altrocchi and Marguerite Gyatt; (top right) Dan Wright, Earl Showerman and Helen Gordon; (bottom left) Wenonah Sharpe and John Varady; (bottom right, left to right) John Varady, Bill Boyle, Paul Altrocchi, Earl Showerman, Pat Urquhart, Dan Wright, Hank Whittemore, Mark Jackson.

#### Engaging Tudor (cont'd from page 1)

kept all Oxfordians from working together over the years. Wright thought that something so longstanding, with so many deeply committed adherents, merited serious consideration in the search for the truth about the authorship mysteries.

The theory, in its basic form, is that the relationship between Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton, as expressed in the Sonnets and the dedications to the two narrative poems, *must be* parental—not that of lovers, not that of friends, and certainly (for Oxfordians) not that of patron and poet. It is in fact the Sonnets which have been—right from the beginning—the primary source of theories about Southampton as a prospective Tudor heir. Without them there could well be no such theory.

In considering having this theory as the topic for the 2004 seminar, Wright knew that the person he needed to have on hand was Hank Whittemore, a leading proponent of the theory and someone who has been working for years on a book about the Sonnets (*The Monument*, now published) that would attempt to explain the Sonnets fully, and in so doing, demonstrate how

they support the royal heir theory. Once Whittemore committed to participate in the seminar, John Varady (Los Altos, CA) agreed to represent the alternative point of view. Wright himself always has been an outspoken critic of the theory, but also always has supported the ideal of open discourse on all matters related to the authorship debate.

While Wright has written up his own assessment of the seminar (opposite page), we can say that it was definitely an interesting week, and while no minds were changed, some progress was made in understanding how the issue fits into the larger picture of the authorship debate itself. In fact, by the end of the week when it was suggested at the concluding roundtable discussion that, "Discussing the PT theory is reasonable, and dismissing it out of hand is unreasonable," there was unanimous agreement with the statement.

A good part of the week was taken up with a presentation by Whittemore of his "Monument" theory, including detailed line by line, sonnet by sonnet readings of Sonnets 27 to 126. All participants agreed that this was an exceptional experience, and one

skeptic remarked that whereas the sonnets had always seemed hard to read, they were all remarkably clear when glossed from the "Monument" point of view.

Also of interest was the unanimous agreement that it was virtually impossible for the imprisoned 2nd Earl of Southampton to have been the actual father of the 3rd Earl, his Oct. 6th, 1573, letter reporting the birth notwithstanding. Seminar participants agreed that the birth announcement could have been: "It's a bastard!"

A rarely seen painting of the 2nd Earl's wife, Mary Browne, was shown at one session, and seminar participants debated whether the 3rd Earl did or didn't resemble her (it was 50-50 whether he did or not). Still, considering that participants agreed that the 2nd Earl most likely was *not* the father, that leaves wide open the question of just what the relationship between Oxford/Shakespeare and the 3rd Earl 20 years later was—for if he wasn't the 2nd Earl's son, then whose son was he? And who knew?

There is much more to consider on all these matters, which we will in upcoming issues of *SM*, and which will also take place at next summer's seminar. —WBoyle

# Prince Tudor Seminar: An Assessment

By Dr. Daniel L. Wright

This year's Shakespeare Authorship Studies Seminar at Concordia University may not have achieved consensus with respect to the authority or definitive character of the Tudor Heir thesis (after a week's intense scrutiny of the issue, the seminar remained about as it began—half supportive of the Tudor Heir thesis, half opposed or skeptical)—but all of the participants were able, at the seminar's conclusion, to recognize that in the task of interpreting the Elizabethan past, the historical record must be expanded to include the witness of its poets and playwrights—most notably Shakespeare—and that historical record includes the Sonnets.

The achievement was not insignificant. In a world which sometimes naively supposes that the history of a nation is recorded most authoritatively (or only) in its official documents and records—inaccurate testaments though we often know those official records to be—Shakespeare challenges us to look at his work with an eye to his engagement of persons and issues of his age. That is a task too few modern readers of his work are willing to embrace because we all grew up with the fiction that literature, as opposed to “history,” is “art” or “pretty poetry”—rarely serious in the sense that we ought sometimes to hear in literature the voice that often speaks as it does because truth cannot otherwise be spoken.

However, when we reflect on the task of many of literature's great writers, we have to affirm that, despite our often easy assumption that writers usually write for superficial or narrowly personal reasons, many of the world's greatest writers have written not for entertainment or commercial reward (or even to celebrate their art) but because of their passion—their need—to tell the truth about an event, an age, or a person to which posterity might, but for the writer's contribution to history, be blind and deaf. Where would we be in our appraisal of the significance of the man, Jesus, if the record of his life had been left solely to the account of Flavius Josephus? How would we assess the reign of Richard III if *he* had defeated Henry Tudor at

Bosworth Field and his legacy not been left to the savage imaginings of Tudor-financed pens? Would we know anything—anything!—of the causes and conduct of the great Peloponnesian War if it were not for the literature of the Athenian aristocrat Thucydides?

We cannot forget, too, that many of the



*The seminar concluded with a Friday morning roundtable discussion on the week's events and talks.*

Western world's greatest writers lived not just in tumultuous times but under the personal shadow of the axe, and they wrote urgently in response to that intimate terror: Dante was condemned to be burned at the stake for opposing the foreign policy of Pope Boniface VIII; Fyodor Dostoyevsky was sentenced to death for opposing the tyrannical Czarist government of Nicholas I; Voltaire was cast into exile for outraging the aristocracy—and after his death, his body was desecrated and thrown into a garbage pit. In our own day, we are familiar with writers such as Wole Soyinka, the heroic Nigerian dramatist and political satirist who was sentenced to death on trumped-up charges during the brutal military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha.

If Oxford was Shakespeare, and if his son was Henry Wriothesley, he had to anticipate (and even participate in!) his son's delivery to the headsman's block—and perhaps face (and flee?) his own arrest on what he may have feared was a forthcoming charge of treason in 1604 when Wriothesley and others were re-arrested on 24 June of that year. The Sonnets, moreover, may not be the only literary testaments of Oxford that speak to the possibility of these events and suggest the means by which he would have us understand them: changeling children, royal bastards and aristocrats driven

into exile are not exactly uncommon figures in Shakespearean drama.

So: do the Sonnets record the history of a passionate same-sex romance that could not, because of the capital nature of its offense, speak its name? Possibly. Do they record the history of a love affair with a prominent woman at Court whose identity, for her own special safety, needed to remain concealed? Possibly. Do they record the history of a son, born to royal promise but denied the fulfillment of that promise? Possibly. The sonnets will bear these and other interpretations. Such, therefore, is the conundrum. The Sonnets surely tell a story, but what story is it that they tell? What is the truth behind the shadows of Shakespeare's art? If it is discernible—and we have to think it is if Shakespeare is honest in declaring

to his primary recipient that his “monument shall be my gentle verse”—then there is a meaning to the Sonnets that ought to be fathomable. But to whom is Oxford speaking, and how are we to know?

To this end, perhaps the most hopeful offering on the horizon for fresh consideration is Oxfordian actor and author Hank Whittemore's forthcoming study of the sonnets: *The Monument*. We've enjoyed, at our CU seminar this summer, a bit of what may be “a foretaste of the feast to come” in an all-too-laconic survey of some of Hank's insights during a lazy August week punctuated by picnics, day trips into the Cascade Mountains, and late-night dinners on the river.

Whether Hank's provocative analysis and conclusions will prove right, wrong or merely another interesting contribution to an already crowded history of analysis, we await publication and study to discover. One thing is certain: with Hank's forthcoming book, a new hope that we may be able to unlock those poems that the great poet, William Wordsworth, identified as “the key to Shakespeare's heart” is soon to offer itself for our consideration. My hope—and the hope of all the seminar participants—is that Oxfordians will give it the careful attention all signs suggest it deserves.

*Monument critique (cont'd from page 1)*

the monument. When introducing an innovation into scholarly discourse it is customary to provide a thorough justification for the change in emphasis as well as to explain what elements of the case are based on the authority of other scholars. Whittemore's justification for the innovation is that the sonnets can be mapped onto a chronological framework which accords with the events of the Essex Rebellion and the imprisonment and liberation of the Earl of Southampton. Within this schema, Sonnet 27 represents the February 8, 1601, imprisonment of Southampton. Unfortunately, this superficially attractive schema suffers from a number of obvious defects. First, Whittemore is forced to entirely disregard the discrete nature of the marriage sonnets (1-17) as a group. Second and more importantly, although Whittemore's prose is engaging and the story dramatic, the evidence in 27 allegedly connecting to Whittemore's historical narrative simply evaporates on close inspection. This is in no discernible way a sonnet about an arrest or imprisonment, but a lyrical meditation by the poet, who has been travelling and in his evening rest imagines the continuation of his physical journey to the addressee. The significant point here is that *the poet* is or has been away. The addressee has neither been removed nor arrested. And although it may be true that the image of the jewel "hung in ghastly night" (27.11) is, in the most general sense, *consistent with* the charged emotional atmosphere of the events Whittemore describes, mere consistency is hardly enough to confirm his interpretation, unless other, more compelling, corroborative evidence can be cited.

### Reviewing the Evidence: Sonnets 27-126

Establishing a break at Sonnet 27 produces the illusion of structural coherence, but the division, alas, is arbitrary. Sonnet 26 begins to develop the theme of the poet's absence, referring to the "written ambassage" the poet has sent to the fair youth. In fact, Vendler calls 26 "the first epistolary sonnet"<sup>6</sup> (148), suggesting that the poet may already be travelling. In Sonnet 27, it is the poet's thoughts that "intend a zealous

pilgrimage" to the addressee. The thematic continuity is obvious, calling into question the basis for identifying Sonnet 27 as a break of any kind, let alone one marking an event as dramatic as the imprisonment of the Earl of Southampton.

Using Sonnet 107 as the marker, Whittemore divides the 100-sonnet sequence (27-126) into two segments: The first segment of 80 sonnets (27-107) is said to correspond to the 26 months spanning Southampton's February 8, 1601, arrest to

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his April 10, 1603, release; the second segment (107-125) covers the period from Southampton's release to Elizabeth's April 28 funeral, with Sonnet 126 added on as an "Envoy" to Southampton. But this division conceals, and partly competes with, Whittemore's further qualification about the Sonnet structure: Sonnets 27-86 (60 sonnets), according to Whittemore, are written at the rate of one per day and are said to cover the period beginning with Southampton's imprisonment. Sonnets 87-106 (20 sonnets) apparently cover the next two years of confinement; while 107-126 (the final 20 sonnets) match the 20 days between Southampton's release and the Queen's funeral if one includes the "Envoy."

It is unfortunate that the rules governing the sequence change. Why, for instance, may one poem in the second segment cover many days or even months, while each poem in the first and third segments

describes only one day? The inconsistency is troubling and Whittemore provides no coherent justification for it. He even seems unaware that a justification is required. If Shakespeare set out to write a 100-sonnet "center" to his "monument," surely the rules would remain the same throughout? Anything else appears arbitrary. And if each poem in the final segment describes one day, how would the poet know in advance that these daily poems would number 20, thus bringing him to the convenient 100 he needs to construct the monument? These "sub-groupings" also disturb the symmetry of the 100-sonnet center, which we might expect to consist of 50 and 50 sonnets rather than 60, 20, and 20.

Nevertheless, at least at the beginning of the final segment, Whittemore is fortunate enough to enjoy the authority of the many other scholars who date Sonnet 107 to spring 1603 and regard the phrase "the mortal moon hath her eclipse endured" as an indication of Elizabeth's death on March 24. It is entirely plausible, therefore, that the line "Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom" refers to Southampton's imprisonment. But one sonnet does not a monument make, and the possible context of 107 presents another problem. If, as Whittemore contends, it is written to celebrate Southampton's release, it *precedes* a sonnet that seems likely to refer to his imprisonment or execution. In Sonnet 112 the poet speaks of the youth as one who is

...so strongly in my purpose bred  
That all the world besides me thinks y'are  
dead. (112.13-14)

To us, the "Essex rebellion" reading of this couplet is plausible—although other interpretations are also plausible. However, identifying the line as being about Southampton's imprisonment under sentence of death has an unfortunate consequence for Whittemore's "monument" thesis. If both 107 and 112 *are* about the Essex Rebellion, and if 107 truly marks Southampton's release from the tower, then it follows that the sonnets are not arranged in chronological order, a finding which undermines, if it does not destroy, Whittemore's "monument."

In fact, with the possible exception of 107, 112, and 124, a close reading of

Sonnets 27-126 reveals no evident connection to the events of the rebellion and Southampton's imprisonment, and some of the sonnets manifestly *cannot* be about either. For example, Sonnets 71-74 are all meditations on the *poet's* imminent death. In these and other sonnets, the poet repeatedly emphasizes the fair youth's surviving him, a curious emphasis indeed if the youth is living in the Tower under a death sentence. Furthermore, many sonnets in the 100-sonnet sequence (27-126) address the youth as an object of consolation to whom the poet turns when distressed by other circumstances:

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,  
All losses are restored and sorrows end.  
(30. 13-14).

Why would the poet be consoled by, or find joy in, the idea of his beloved if that beloved is incarcerated? This couplet and many others make no sense of the context as defined by Whittemore, who creates the illusion of such a connection only through the adroit selection of certain words and phrases with no regard for their immediate or larger context as parts of sonnets or sonnet sequences.

We have already considered Sonnet 27. Let us now examine the evidence Whittemore presents for linking subsequent sonnets to Southampton's imprisonment. He states:

Identifying with the younger earl's plight, [the poet] records in 29 that he himself is "in disgrace with fortune (the Queen) and men's eyes" in the same way Southampton is suffering in the Tower.<sup>7</sup>

However, a close reading of the sonnet shows that the poet is not in any way identifying with "the plight" of the addressee, but talking of his own disgrace, which is again compensated for by *his pleasant thoughts* of the youth:

Yet in these thoughts myself almost  
despising,  
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,  
(Like to the lark at break of day arising)  
From sullen earth sings hymns at heaven's  
gate,  
For thy sweet love remembered such  
wealth brings,  
That then I scorn to change my state with  
kings.

Whittemore's evidence connecting Sonnet 30 to the Privy Council trial of Essex and Southampton is even less credible:

Oxford records in 30 that the Privy Council will summon him to the Sessions or Treason Trial of Essex and Southampton to sit as the highest ranking earl on the tribunal of peers who will judge them.<sup>8</sup>

Here Whittemore mistakes a meta-

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phorical use of the words sessions and summon for a literal one. The "sessions" to which the poem refers are the poet's own *imaginative* sessions of "sweet silent thought" and the "summoning" is not of the session, but of a "remembrance of things past." Although legal metaphors do permeate this sonnet (and many others), there is no mention here of a trial, except perhaps in the most oblique Proustian sense (i.e., a *psychological* "trial" at which the writer is defendant, advocate, and judge). Moreover, even if one understood "sessions" and "summon" to be literal rather than metaphorical, the direct link to the Southampton trial would still be unestablished. Although Whittemore does not acknowledge the fact, these terms apply to many different kinds of trials, not just capital crimes such as treason.

Compounding these implausibilities, Whittemore attempts to identify

Southampton as one of the "precious friends hid in death's dateless night." (30.6) As the "friends" are described in the third person and the youth in the second person, this is clearly not a viable reading. Additionally, the youth cannot be one of the "precious friends," as they are already dead. He is, instead, exactly as in Sonnet 29, providing solace for the poet's "losses...and sorrows" — acting, in other words, as a replacement for those already gone. When the poet calls the addressee "the grave where buried love doth live" in Sonnet 31, his meaning is transparent and has nothing to do with the imprisonment or imminent execution of the addressee; rather, the youth has become the repository for the poet's lost loves. This reading is without ambiguity, for the poet continues:

*Their* images I loved I view *in thee*,  
And thou, all they, hast all the all of me.  
(italics added)

### Treasons Compared

Also critical to Whittemore's thesis is his analysis of Sonnet 35, in which "Oxford accuses himself...of 'authorizing' Southampton's 'trespass' or treason by 'compare.'" The word "treason" does not appear in this sonnet; interestingly, it appears only in 151, outside the 100 "Essex Rebellion" sonnets. There it refers metaphorically to the body's rebellion against the will, and is in fact a bawdy description of male erection. Attempting to skate over the critical problem of his own interpretation of 35 by placing an unwarranted interpretation on the word *sensual*, Whittemore defines "sensual fault" as "willful, riotous crime."

In other words, "sensual" means willful and/or riotous. This definition is contrary to the word's uses in Shakespeare (See *Measure for Measure* 2.4.160, *As You Like It*, 2.7.66, and Sonnet 141.8) and contravenes usage as specified by various authorities we consulted.<sup>9</sup> By no stretch of the imagination can "sensual" here be construed to mean what Whittemore appears to think it does. A "sensual fault" is a sin of the flesh. The word "trespass," used in the sonnet as a synonym for the "sensual fault," appears to have a similar meaning in *Romeo and Juliet*:

(Continued on page 12)

*Monument critique (cont'd from page 11)*

Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urged.  
Give me my sin again. (1.5.111)

Of sonnet 42, Whittemore states:

Oxford reminds [Southampton]...that for now he is stuck with Elizabeth as his sovereign and that he himself had "loved her dearly" or served her with devotion, but now his "chief wailing" or sorrow is that she has Southampton in her prison fortress.<sup>10</sup>

A less plausible exegesis of what is apparently a poem about a lovers' triangle is difficult to imagine. None of the following words are mentioned in the sonnet: "Elizabeth," "Southampton," "prison," or "fortress." Instead, the poem describes the familiar circumstance of two men, the poet and presumably the addressee, fighting over a woman. The poet rationalizes his position by suggesting that as his friend and he "are one," the poet's mistress loves only the poet himself. He describes his own conceit as a "sweet flattery" ("flattery" here meaning delusion)—a very strange phrase to employ with regard to "Southampton in [the Queen's] prison fortress."

### Misprision of Definition

In many ways, the crux of Whittemore's argument can be found in a single word in Sonnet 87. Boyle declares that

Equally important [to the theory] is how the meaning of other words in other sonnets suddenly becomes clearer. Foremost among such other words is "misprision" in Sonnet 87, glossed by all commentators for two centuries as a "misunderstanding" of some sort...the entire meaning of sonnet 87 really hinges on this one word—misprision.<sup>11</sup>

As Boyle observes, an interesting technical alternative was available to the poet. In Tudor law, "misprision of treason" could refer to a crime which fell just short of treason. Given the extended imprisonment of Southampton and his eventual release, it is certainly legitimate to suppose, although concrete evidence is apparently lacking, that at some point the verdict was changed to misprision and his

sentence was commuted from death to a lesser punishment. Unfortunately, simple awareness of this circumstance falls far short of a demonstration that Sonnet 87 has anything to do with the Essex Rebellion or Southampton's imprisonment. To start with, "of treason" is missing, even by implication. More important, this is a sonnet about emotional leave-taking. It appears at first as if the poet is abandoning his relationship with the addressee, but it soon becomes clear that *the addressee is*

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*actually relinquishing the poet*, as clarified in Sonnet 89, which begins, "Say that *thou didst forsake me* for some fault..." (89.1: emphasis added). When the poet states in 87 that the addressee is "too dear" (too beloved or costly) "for [his] possessing..." (87.1), the line anticipates the abandonment which becomes clear in 89.

Boyle does not acknowledge the implications of the Sonnet's surrounding context. Like sonnets 4 and 134, 87 is saturated with financial metaphor (dear, possessing, estimate, charter, bonds, granting, worth, riches, gift, patent). If we want to understand "misprision" in its actual, as opposed to hypothetical, context, we should read the word in relation to this financial schema. Stephen Booth notes that one definition of misprision is "undervaluation,"<sup>12</sup> which accords perfectly with the language of the sonnet without recourse to the meaning that Boyle

and Whittemore depend on to make their thesis. Boyle's caption for the sonnet declares that "The word 'misprision' in Sonnet 87 has never been glossed as 'misprision of treason' since no one ever had the correct context." We suggest an alternative reason for the word never having been glossed in this way: The context of the sonnet does not support it. Instead, the preferred meaning is clearly "undervaluation." To accept the meaning supplied by Boyle and Whittemore requires us to ignore the obvious context (with its extensive monetary metaphors) of the sonnet itself in favor of a hypothetical context, which the sonnet, without the misconstruction of the word "misprision," entirely fails to support.

### Context: Peeling the Literary Onion

The foregoing analysis identifies areas of interpretation which are so basic that we are forced to reflect on the nature of a methodology that could produce such demonstrably erroneous results. We have already seen Bill Boyle declare the "entire meaning" of Sonnet 87 hinges on one word. This kind of focusing on individual words or phrases, separated from the larger "story" of the sonnet, is characteristic of the methodology employed by both Boyle and Whittemore. Boyle describes the discovery of the monument solution as "an intriguing process of *focusing on keywords* and phrases and mulling on *possibilities*."<sup>13</sup> Unhappily, these "possibilities" are then revealed to the world as certainties. A startling example of this is Sonnet 63. After quoting the sonnet's concluding sestet, Boyle writes:

Just as suddenly I got it. I saw in my mind a picture of Southampton being led to the block, about to have the "confounding [Elizabethan] Age's cruel knife [the headman's ax]" cut his "life" [head] off, even as the poet, picturing the same thing and "fortifying" himself through his writing, swears he shall never be cut from memory because "he...still green" [he shall live forever] in "these black lines" [my verse].<sup>14</sup>

The extensive interpolation of interpretative glosses is a clue to the problems inherent in this line of reasoning. One need not read beyond the first two

lines to understand that the poet does not anticipate the addressee's death; on the contrary, he expects him to live *until he's at least the poet's present age*:

Against my love shall be as I am now  
With Time's injurious hand crushed and  
o'erworn... (63:1-2)

The sonnet tells us the poet wishes to commit the addressee's youthful beauty to memory through poetry—not, as Boyle infers, because he expects him to be executed, but rather because he expects him to live until “all those beauties whereof now he's King/Are vanishing or vanished out of sight.” (63.6-7) Boyle's interpretation depends on ignoring this level of *poetic context* (that is, reading the sonnet as an entire coherent statement), and places a wholly unjustified misconstruction on the word “Age's,” so that it will conform to the meaning required by his theory about a *hypothetical historical context*. “Age” does *not* refer to the “Elizabethan Age” but is a personification of the aging process. The phrase “Age's cruel knife” alludes to the Renaissance commonplace of Death, who arrives with a reaper's scythe. A similar image occurs in Sonnet 12: “And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence.” (12.13) If we accept that Sonnet 63 is talking about execution, surely we must accept that 12 is communicating the same idea? Yet Sonnet 12 lies far outside Whittemore's 100-sonnet center and is a part of a sequence urging the addressee to marriage. On the contrary, both instances of the image are a personification of *time*.<sup>15</sup>

### “Sometime I'd divide, and burn in many places”—Ariel

Another example of this kind of misperception of individual words, on which detailed interpretations are then developed, is “place,” which Whittemore in Sonnet 44 interprets as a deliberately obscure reference to the Tower of London (a proposition he bolsters with select citations from historical sources); however, what Whittemore doesn't say, and apparently hasn't considered, is that “place” occurs over 450 times in Shakespeare's plays and 10 times in the sonnets, and very rarely in Shakespeare can it possibly have the specific meaning to which he attributes it here. Most damaging of all, the “he” in the

line cited by Whittemore

As soon as think the place where *he* would  
be. (44.8: italics added)

does not refer to Southampton, to the Earl of Essex, or a “fair youth” of any kind, as the addressee in the sonnet is “thou.” The antecedent is readily apparent in the preceding line:

---

### “Our English teachers

*always taught us to*

*beware the bold*

*generalization and*

*shun the unverified*

*proclamation.”*

---

For *nimble thought* can jump both sea and  
land,

As soon as think the place where *he* would  
be. (44.7-8)

The lines are about the ability of thought, Ariel-like, to traverse physical space and experience a desired location which is not physically present. Whatever “place” Shakespeare may have intended by the word—and there is nothing in the sonnet which supports Whittemore's reading—it is definitely *not* the Tower of London.

Undaunted by such empirical problems, and having, he presumes, securely identified the locale in 44 by the fiat of defining a mind to be a prison palace, Whittemore then states of Sonnet 45: “Messengers are riding back and forth between the Tower and [the poet's] home [in Hackney] to bring news of Southampton's health battles.” Not only does the

word “Tower” not occur in this sonnet, “place” does not either! It has been lifted from 44. Moreover, the sonnet's messengers, whom Whittemore represents as horsemen, are explicitly identified in the sonnet as the metaphysical abstractions, “slight air and purging fire” (45.1), symbolizing thought and desire. And, although Whittemore writes of “[the poet's] home [in Hackney],” the poet himself does not, but instead suggests again that he is travelling by use of the phrase “wherever I abide” (45.2). In short, there is no hint in either 44 or 45 of the historical events that Whittemore assures us are the secret key to the Sonnets.

### Missed Opportunities

Our English teachers always taught us to beware the bold generalization and shun the unverified proclamation. So far in this article we have raised objections to the positive interpretations on which Whittemore and Boyle have rested their case. Doubtless reply will be made that we have not waited to evaluate the entirety of the evidence contained in Mr. Whittemore's book. This is true but also irrelevant. No larger case which depends on the kind of examples cited in these two articles can be regarded as a sound one. Moreover, we wonder how a theory that fares so poorly with respect to the sonnets chosen for analysis can possibly accommodate the content of sonnets that are not mentioned. Boyle and Whittemore are not shy about claiming a global explanatory power for their theory. Boyle states: “*Everything* in the middle sequence of one hundred sonnets is real and related to the Essex Rebellion and its aftermath.”<sup>16</sup> If this is so, how do we account for Sonnet 57?

Being your slave, what should I do but  
tend,  
Upon the hours, and times of your desire?  
I have no precious time at all to spend;  
Nor services to do till you require.  
Nor dare I chide the world without end  
hour,  
Whilst I (my sovereign) watch the clock for  
you,  
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour  
When you have bid your servant once  
adieu.  
Nor dare I question with my jealous  
thought,  
Where you may be or your affairs suppose,

(Continued on page 14)

*Monument critique (cont'd from page 13)*

But like a sad slave stay and think of nought  
Save where you are, how happy you make  
those.

So true a fool is love, that in your will,  
(Though you do anything) he thinks no ill.

The addressee in this sonnet is manifestly not in prison but is free to come and go as he pleases. Indeed the poet declares himself unable to question

with my jealous thought  
*Where you may be* or your affairs suppose.  
(Emphasis added)

In fact, the poet is in a sense *imprisoned* by the addressee, as he waits on his “desire,” while the addressee makes others elsewhere happy with his presence. Sonnet 58, thematically similar to its predecessor, confirms this reading:

That god forbid, that made me first your  
slave  
I should in thought control your times of  
pleasure,  
Or at your hand th'account of hours to  
crave,  
Being your vassal bound to stay your  
leisure...  
Be *where you list*, your charter is so strong,  
That you yourself may privilege your time  
To what you will... (Emphasis added).

In the art of literary interpretation no concept is more evasive and difficult than that of context. Boyle and Whittemore propose a radical new “context” for evaluating the sonnets. What they have failed to acknowledge and grapple with is the multi-layered nature of “context.” Their method short-circuits close reading of sonnets and their sequences, affecting to discover a “solution” in a hypothetical external context which is very weakly, if at all, reflected in the contents of the poems it is supposed to elucidate. An acceptable reading should encompass, at the very least, an entire sonnet, but instead they seize on a word or a phrase, deduce a connection to the dramatic events of the Essex Rebellion, while never returning to the sonnet itself to see if their interpretation can be substantiated by a reading of the entire sonnet in its published sequence. In almost every case, it cannot. The method achieves the illusion of significance only by ignoring the immediate, *actual* context of the Sonnet while discovering an alleged

connection between a single word a *hypothetical* historical context.

Finally, it is important to notice that the legal terminology Whittemore identifies as key to this 100-sonnet sequence<sup>17</sup> is in fact not confined to these sonnets. We have shown above that “treason” occurs only in sonnet 151. “Prisoner” and “pent” occur in 5. “Conspire” occurs in 10. “Doom and date” occurs in 14. “Heinous crime” occurs in 19. “Do witness bear” occurs in 131. “Prison,” “jail,” “ward” and “pent” occur in 133. “A several plot” occurs in 137. These examples, few of many, illustrate that the alleged “context” of the Essex Rebellion and Southampton’s imprisonment is more a statement of the poet’s legal interests or education and entirely superfluous to the interpretation of most, if not all, of the sonnets in the 100-sonnet sequence.

### L’envoy

It is both impossible and unnecessary in a short paper to comment in detail on all of the misapprehensions found in Whittemore’s and Boyle’s articles,<sup>18</sup> and our critique has by design been abbreviated to reflect only a few of the most egregious problems; however, we believe the Whittemore-Boyle “monument” theory is flawed both in its method and its conclusions. The alleged monument fails to manifest the numerical structure attributed to it, and the only point of chronological plausibility in the entire schema is Sonnet 107 (spring 1603). Contrary to the theory’s claim, it is impossible to reconcile the entire sequence of Sonnets 27-126 with the alleged chronological and historical context.

As we have shown, even those sonnets which Whittemore and Boyle single out as exemplars of the theory’s persuasive force fail to substantiate their claims. We urge all readers to study carefully the sonnets themselves and to formulate their own conclusions regarding the utility of the “monument” theory. Testing the text against the theory will always yield an advancement of knowledge.

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Boyle, William. *Shakespeare Matters* (Summer 2004), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Boyle, *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Boyle, *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Booth, Stephen. *An Essay on Shakespeare’s Sonnets*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969.

<sup>5</sup> Boyle, *op. cit.*, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Helen Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard, 1997, 148.

<sup>7</sup> Whittemore, Hank. *Shakespeare Matters* (Summer 2004), 18.

<sup>8</sup> Whittemore, *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the definition at [www.cogsci.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/webwn](http://www.cogsci.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/webwn).

<sup>10</sup> Whittemore, *op. cit.*, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Boyle, *op. cit.*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Shake-Speare’s Sonnets: Edited With an Analytic Commentary by Stephen Booth*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977, 291.

<sup>13</sup> Boyle, *op. cit.*, 15; our emphasis.

<sup>14</sup> Boyle, *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Here, of course, Whittemore may well reply that “Time” is a figure “representing Elizabeth Tudor, Queen Elizabeth I of England” (16)—if this proposition is true, then it would seem to nullify our criticism, since the “knife” could be both the knife of time and the executioner’s axe. Unfortunately this generalization regarding the meaning of “time” cannot be defended by any convincing evidence. It is awkward, to say the least, to equate the power of time to a monarch who is herself subject to the mortal aging process. To do so would be to commit an idolatrous flattery of which we believe the author wholly innocent. Other euphemisms, such as “Beauty,” or “Rose,” seem far more appropriate as symbolic references to Elizabeth.

<sup>16</sup> Boyle, *op. cit.*, 14. Our emphasis.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>18</sup> For example, Boyle states that the publication of Q “was undoubtedly suppressed,” but the bibliographical evidence does not support this interpretation and neither does any other concrete evidence of which I am aware. Rollins’s 1944 census in *The New Variorum Edition* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1944) identified 13 surviving copies, a large number for a publication as perishable as Q. By contrast, only two copies exist of *Hamlet* Q1, and seven of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarto. These numbers are typical and are not evidence for suppression.

*Ashbourne (cont'd from page 1)*

shoulders of a young man painted on a wood panel with a fabric label on the back identifying it as Shakespeare. The Sanders claims, which have surfaced a number of times during the last century and have been rejected each time, resurfaced in 2001 as the result of an enterprising reporter's search for a story in a Toronto newspaper circulation war. The hype surrounding the painting, now owned by a Canadian, encouraged much wishful thinking among Stratfordians seeking a more appealing physiognomy for their man than the Droeshout and the Stratford monument. As a result of this publicity a conference was held in Toronto in November 2002, featuring the experts who had examined the Sanders. Also on the panels were Folger Shakespeare Library personnel. Partisans of the Sanders painting were hopeful that the conference would proclaim the painting to be a portrait of Shakespeare.

But things soon went awry as the experts began to point out major problems with the Shakespeare attribution. Much to the chagrin of the Toronto reporter, the panelists who dealt directly with the evidence displayed polite reservation or outright skepticism about the Shakespeare attribution. There was one curious exception, the Canadian Conservation Institute panelist, who spoke on the most technically restricted look at the painting.

After the 2001 Toronto newspaper articles CCI had been hired by the owner of the portrait to try to date it. At that time CCI, which had previously worked mainly for museums, had experienced financial problems and had lowered its prices to enter the market for individual private clients.

When CCI chemist Marie Claude Corbeil was introduced, the large screen behind the introducer in the darkened auditorium blazoned "The Scientific Examination of the Sanders Portrait of Shakespeare." There arose a murmur from even the partisan Stratfordian audience. When Corbeil took the podium she stated that she was responsible for the wording of that title, and that she would discuss the radiography, the testing of the dating of the wood panel and the "identification" tag of the painting.

CCI had done no comparative analysis connecting its very limited technical ma-

terials testing with the question of whether the Sanders is a portrait of Shakespeare. Perhaps the conclusion proclaimed by the title of Corbeil's talk could be attributed to overzealous Stratfordian partisanship. The far more likely explanation is that Corbeil was simply representing the interests of her CCI client, the owner of the portrait, who had a huge financial stake in the portrait being that of Shakespeare.

### **The Folger hires CCI to examine the Ashbourne**

It is then not surprising that the Folger Shakespeare Library turned so far afield in September 2002 for a technical, but extremely limited, materials examination of the Ashbourne portrait to shore up their claims that Sir Hugh Hamersley is the sitter. In this testing they attempted to refute Charles Wisner Barrell's experts' X-ray and infrared testing of the painting. Art experts had long urged the Folger to send the painting out for thorough testing, one recommending the Amherst College facilities nearby (Amherst trustees oversee the Folger), but this advice was ignored. Possibly the Folger's sudden interest in testing was in response to my series of articles in *Shakespeare Matters* beginning in the fall of 2001. Those articles, especially articles 3 and 4 in the Spring and Fall of 2002, exposed alterations made to the Ashbourne while in the Folger's possession and provided evidence against the Folger claims that Hamersley is the sitter. Interestingly, they did not attempt to address or rebut directly any of the evidence of alterations presented in my articles.

Marie Claude Corbeil was again the chemist and lead scientist (along with Jeremy Powell) who examined the Ashbourne. Like her Sanders portrait talk, the title of the CCI report to the Folger, "Scientific Examination of the Ashbourne Portrait of Shakespeare/Sir Hugh Hamersley," makes a claim for Hamersley that cannot be justified from the examination that was made. CCI's limited technical examination provided no proof that the sitter was Hamersley. CCI never examined the coat of arms on the painting, the Folger's supposed evidence for Hamersley, nor did it undertake any comparative studies linking the painting to Hamersley. CCI was specifically re-

stricted by the Folger to analysis of *only* the gold paint in certain parts of the painting and *only* the top level of that paint. CCI was directed to do radiographic examination and to look for "any changes" in the painting, but was not provided with crucial background information to perform this task.

Not surprisingly, the CCI report supports the Folger's claims about the Ashbourne in every area, including their claim that the inscription is original to the painting—a critical part of their Hamersley claims. Sweeping generalizations are made from inadequate technical materials analysis.

In this article we will analyze the report showing how the limitations placed on this "examination" invalidate the very conclusions that were drawn. We will concentrate on the main issues involving the condition of the canvas and the related issue of the authenticity of the inscription. CCI's 10-page report, containing less than four pages of text, provides the primary basis for this analysis.

Additional information was provided from the author's extensive phone interview of Marie Claude Corbeil on November 8, 2002, after she had completed her report and sent it to the Folger. The information from the interview with Ms. Corbeil provides some important background information not included in the report.

### **The Folger's instructions to CCI**

#### **The mandate**

Corbeil, who very graciously and extensively answered my questions about the examination, stated frankly that CCI examines only what the client requests be examined. She said the Folger had "mandated" it to "authenticate the inscription" to determine if it was contemporaneous or was added later as Barrell suggested, and to report "any changes" compositionally over the painting—specifically in relation to Barrell's findings. In other words, CCI was aware that the Folger wanted to refute the Barrell examination and conclusions. These areas involved the hair, neck ruff, "CK" initials, the rubbing out of the original inscription, and Barrell's (and Spielmann's) observations that the same

*(Continued on page 16)*

*Ashbourne* (continued from page 15)

paint in the later added inscription had been used to paint over the book and thumb ring.

### Information not given to CCI

The Folger provided CCI with only two pieces of information to inform and guide them in “authenticating the inscription” and in looking for “any changes compositionally over the painting” in order to respond to Barrell’s findings. These were a copy of the 1940 *Scientific American* article by Barrell, and William Pressly’s article from his 1993 book (*A Catalog of Paintings in the Folger Shakespeare Library*) stating that Hamersley was the sitter.

What the Folger did *not* provide is most significant. They did not provide their own 1948 X-rays, which confirm Barrell in all key points—despite changes made that show up in these X-rays, such as the attempt to remove the “CK” monogram of the artist, Cornelis Ketel. They did not provide their files on the portrait, which includes important restoration information and photos and much that refutes its position. Nor did they provide Pressly’s more extensive *Shakespeare Quarterly* article. Corbeil received no pictures of different states of the portrait other than the post-1932 black and white reproduction in the 1940 *Scientific American* article, and the color photo from the article in Pressly’s book showing the current state of the painting. She was not given any of the recent articles in *Shakespeare Matters* relating to costume dating, coat of arms and Hamersley claims, “CK” monogram issues and evidence of alterations to the portrait after Barrell, all of which would indicate areas to be scrutinized. The implication of what was provided is that no changes were made to the portrait after its change into “Shakespeare” and that, after Barrell’s examination, the portrait had been found to be Hugh Hamersley without dispute.

Corbeil was unaware of all this information. For example, when I told her about the Folger’s 1948 X-rays she replied that having those would have helped her. Her conclusions against Barrell in various areas exhibit the importance of this lack of information. In addition, CCI did no comparative or intellectual analysis of the paint-

ing involving matters such as iconography, costume, provenance, school of painting, etc. Barrell, on the other hand, did do comparative analysis to supplement his experts’ technical examination of the painting.

The Folger also limited the examination in the crucial area of the inscription, which was really the main issue. There were two things the Folger needed to “confirm” here: (1) That Barrell was wrong in

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***“The Folger provided CCI  
with only two pieces  
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---

concluding that the original inscription was removed and replaced with a new one with the dates “1611 age 47,” which fit the Stratford man. That is crucial to the Folger’s claim that the present inscription is the original inscription, but changed from “1612” to “1611.” (2) That the “1” painted over a possible scraped out “2” was done to change the 1612 date of Hamersley to fit the 1611 date of the Stratford man in the change into Shake-speare. They note that 1612 fits Hamersley’s age of 47 in 1612 (though it also fits numerous other men in England). They claim that a rubbing out of a possible “2” in the date was overpainted with a “1” to fit the Stratford man. This claim is added to the claim that the coat of arms is Hamersley’s, and thus they conclude this proves the sitter is Hamersley changed into Shake-speare. On the surface

it sounds plausible, if Hamersley were the sitter—which all the evidence negates.

### Inadequate data for conclusions

I described these restrictions on testing and the withheld information to a research scientist for a major art museum whose job involves testing for authenticity paintings offered to the museum. He responded that he would be very suspicious of a client who would restrict him to testing the top layer of paint only. Nor would he want to be restricted to certain areas to test. He opined that the client had an answer it already knew and wanted to receive. As to the withheld information he said he would want all information about the painting and unequivocal cooperation from the client. When paintings are tested at his museum they are provided with all the intellectual comparative analysis data including iconography, provenance, history of the painting, school of painting, etc., before any testing begins. He said they can often preclude a period for a painting, but there are very few absolute dating systems and in most cases they do not make determinations based on very narrow materials testing, or based on a tiny piece of material without all the background information. From the information I told him he concluded that there were not enough data to draw conclusions.

### Bias of report

Barrell’s major claim was that the Ashbourne painting was an overpainted portrait of the Earl of Oxford. The original inscription had been removed and a new inscription painted to fit the Stratford man’s age (47) in 1611. A full head of hair had been painted over, the arms of Oxford’s second wife painted over and other personal iconography of the painting (book, thumb ring) covered and hidden with the same gold (or orange yellow, as he called it) paint used in the 1611 inscription. (Spielmann in 1910 had also noted the latter alterations). The Folger denied that Oxford was the sitter and later claimed from dubious information (as we exposed in previous articles) that Sir Hugh Hamersley was the sitter.

This was the issue at the heart of the 2002 examination. In her limited materials testing, and without doing any com-

parative analysis, Corbeil had no basis to make a decision in favor of Hamersley over Oxford. Yet the report shows acceptance without question of the Folger claim's for Hamersley. Like the Sanders portrait title report, the Ashbourne title is conclusive without basis. "Scientific Examination of the Ashbourne Portrait of Shakespeare/Sir Hugh Hamersley" states baldly the acceptance of the Folger claims. And doesn't it sound impressive and intimidating, "The Scientific Examination"? We will see how "scientific" it is as we look at it more closely.

### Introduction to the report

First, we must comment on the sleight of hand in the introduction. The report begins by saying the portrait was believed to be Shakespeare until the late 1930s when Barrell's X-ray and infrared examination "showed that the portrait was of *another sitter*" (emphasis added). Even though Barrell publicly identified the sitter as Oxford, the CCI report doesn't even mention his name. The next sentence continues as if it were summarizing Barrell's findings: "The three most notable changes were that a coat of arms belonging to the first sitter was completely painted over, *the date, "1612" was changed to "1611" so that the age "47" in the inscription on the painting could correspond to Shakespeare's age*, and the hairline of the sitter was raised to imitate Shakespeare's baldness" (p. 3, emphasis added). The first and third statements reflect Barrell's conclusions; the second, however, does not.

She has mixed up the Folger's conclusions with Barrell's findings. As we have noted, Barrell's X-rays showed that the *entire original inscription was removed* and that the *inscription now on the painting was added later in the change to Shakespeare!* Corbeil has combined the Folger's claim of the "1612" date change and their claim that it is the original inscription to make it seem like one of "three" major findings of the original X-ray examination of the painting! She has also made a conclusive statement about an issue (the "1612" date change) that is in contention.



Fig. 1 By permission, Folger Shakespeare Library  
*The Ashbourne portrait as it now appears following restoration. Recent technical tests conducted by the Canadian Conservation Institute have been cited as evidence backing up the Folger Shakespeare Library's claim that the original sitter was Sir Hugh Hamersley, not Edward de Vere as claimed by Charles Wisner Barrell in his 1940 Scientific American articles.*

She then continues: "In 1979, a conservators treatment was undertaken at the Folger Shakespeare Library and the coat of arms was uncovered and found to correspond to that of Sir Hugh Hamersley" (p. 3). This she accepts without question, against Barrell's finding (which she does not mention) that the coat of arms belonged to Oxford's second wife. I asked her if she had examined the coat of arms. She responded that she hadn't looked at it. Nor did she have the Folger files, their 1948 X-rays or the *Shakespeare Matters* articles howing alterations to the coat of arms.

### The inscription

Barrell, himself a photographic expert, hired the top radiography scientists of the time to examine the Ashbourne. In 1940 Barrell reported the results of this examination in *Scientific American*, including the fact that the original inscription had been scraped out so "vigorously that perforations were made in the canvas." He

noted, "...it is still possible to distinguish the ghostly remnants of both alphabetical characters and numerals" (p. 44). From this evidence Barrell concluded that the inscription now on the painting was not the original inscription and that the original had been removed and replaced with the "1611" date and the Stratford man's age of "47" in that year.

The authenticity of the 1611 inscription became a crucial issue for the Folger, which later claimed the portrait was of Hugh Hamersley. That identification was based on incorrect and altered evidence in the coat of arms that we have exposed in previous articles in *Shakespeare Matters*. To bolster its claim the Folger maintained, as we noted, that the date was original to the painting, and had been changed from 1612 (the year in which Hamersley's age was 47) to 1611 to fit the Stratford man. The Folger's claim that Barrell was wrong about the removal of the original inscription and the substitution of the 1611 inscription is crucial to the Folger's claim that the inscription now on the portrait is original to the painting. This explains the emphasis on "authenticating" the inscription in the Folger's instructions to CCI.

### The condition of the canvas

In order to "verify" that the inscription now on the painting is the original, the Folger had to first prove that Barrell was wrong about his X-rays showing that the original inscription had been erased so vigorously that it left perforations in the canvas. The condition of the canvas thus becomes a crucial starting point. How did CCI examine the canvas? They didn't!

Corbeil told me, as appears in the report, that she could not see the canvas in the X-rays, but that the canvas was smooth in the area of the inscription and there was no evidence of scraping. As Barrell's X-rays showed evidence of severe scraping that left perforations in the canvas, to fully resolve these contrary reports Corbeil should have examined the painting for the possibility of resurfacing. But she chose to accept what she could see with no further  
*(Continued on page 18)*

*Ashbourne* (continued from page 17)  
testing.

Instead of investigating further, she assumed that Barrell and his experts had to have been wrong. This is one of a number of instances where the withholding of information by the Folger affected the conclusion of the report. A truly independent investigation, aware of the conservator's reports and alerted by other alterations to the portrait, would have included a further investigation behind the inscription to see if the damaged perforated canvas reported by Barrell's experts had been smoothed and covered over so as to be now invisible in X-rays.

A major metropolitan museum conservator explained to me how a painting could be resurfaced so that prior scraping was no longer visible. He said that some conservationists are experts in replicating surfaces. After making the repair the restorer would only need to lay down a white lead oil-based medium that absorbs X-rays and then, knowing the composition of the nearby paint, incorporate the area into the surrounding paint. A skillful restorer could cover scraping and the surface would thus appear smooth on an X-ray. The canvas would not be visible in the X-ray due to the white lead medium. Skilled observers might detect a disturbance in the area in an X-ray if they are looking for it, which would then require further analysis of the paint layers. Because evidence of a prior inscription is so critical a point of dispute in the *Ashbourne* painting, this area of the inscription should have been examined and tested for the possibility of resurfacing.

I asked Corbeil if she had looked at the back of the canvas for evidence of perforations or filling of holes and she said no, the painting was re-lined, *she couldn't see the canvas at all*.

**"Furthermore the canvas is in perfect condition."**

A month later I was astonished to read in the report, after a referral to Barrell's comments on the rubbing out of a previous inscription, the statement: "Furthermore, the canvas is in perfect condition and does not show any perforations" (p. 4). I looked for a reference in the report to any examination of the canvas to back up this state-

ment. There was none. Corbeil had told me that she had not seen the canvas. How could *any* statement be made about the condition of the canvas without ever having examined it? Much less that it "is in perfect condition"?

Here is what the Folger's own files (which were not provided to Corbeil) say about the condition of the canvas. In July 1979 conservator Peter Michaels worked on patching the back of the canvas before

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***"Because evidence of a  
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relining. He notes in his report, "remove old lining, begin scraping glue, remove wax from back fill holes and thin spots with ettl mache—apply patches." Later he notes, "apply more fillings to weak areas in reverse—apply patches—apply patches [again]...line on heavy canvas with wax resin."

In July 1988 conservator Arthur Page noted in his recommended treatment, "Remove and/or level any excessive fills with a scalpel" and "Remove wax-resin lining and any patch/fill materials which contribute exaggerated thickness to the original canvas."

Michaels verifies the existence of holes in the canvas and Page in turn verifies Michaels's patches of areas in the canvas. These appear to be extensive. Michaels also notes thin spots that have been patched

previously and weak areas, hardly a description of a canvas "in perfect condition," but a clear confirmation of Barrell's report that the original inscription had been scraped so vigorously that it left perforations in the canvas. Early canvases were thinner than later ones (we dated the painting by costume and the "CK" initials and other information to c.1579 in a previous article). Scraping and rubbing to erase something is precisely the kind of action that would have created holes and thin spots.

Failure to disprove the existence of a prior scraped out inscription therefore invalidates any CCI testing of the present inscription. Nevertheless the CCI "tested" the 1611 inscription following the Folger's restrictive directions and concluded, as might be expected, that it was the original inscription.

**Varnish testing claims**

The varnish test involved determining whether the inscription sat above or below the varnish, in order to establish whether the inscription had been painted at the same time as the painting or later. Generally, if the inscription paint is above the varnish, it was painted after the painting was completed. If no varnish is found below the inscription, it was likely painted at the time the portrait was made, after which a coat of finishing varnish would have been applied to the entire painting, inscription and all. However, as an inscription can be added any time later, this is a highly speculative assumption. But the major assumption underlying the varnish test by CCI involved a prior conclusion, based on insufficient examination and testing, that Barrell had been wrong about the existence of a previous inscription that had been scraped, and which also left ghostly remnants of letters, a few of which can be seen in the *Scientific American* photo and in the 1948 X-rays (especially directly above the "S" of SVAE). Interestingly it was only this "S" that was used to test for varnish by going down under layers of pigment with a sample cross-section of this letter.

Corbeil concluded from this small varnish test that the inscription was original because there was no varnish under the "S." But that conclusion assumed that Barrell was wrong about a previous inscription, a

conclusion we have already shown to be invalid. Her conclusion was also based on an assumption that Barrell was talking about an inscription simply put on top of an already varnished painting. But that is not what Barrell stated. He stated that the original inscription was vigorously removed. If paint in the inscription area was largely removed, then the varnish on top of that paint would also have been removed at the same time. The entire area would have to be repainted before the new inscription was added and then varnish added on top of the new inscription. So there would be no varnish under at least part (if not all) of a new inscription (because we don't know exactly how much of the old inscription area is covered with the new inscription). Thus Corbeil's test that found no varnish under the "S" also directly supports Barrell's conclusion that the original inscription was removed. And if varnish were to be found under some, but not all of the inscription, that would be further proof of Barrell's findings. Perhaps that is why only one letter was chosen for testing.

Thus the conservator's evidence supporting Barrell on the scraped and perforated canvas, showing a prior inscription, and the suspicious inability of X-rays to penetrate the inscription area all the way to the canvas, comes back to haunt this examination. CCI's conclusion from the varnish testing that the present inscription is the original is invalid, and can just as reasonably be used to support Barrell's findings.

### CCI claims from paint testing that the inscription is original

As noted, the Folger placed rigid restrictions on paint analysis. They restricted chemical testing of the paint only to the gold paint in certain areas. Two places were tested, the last "1" in "1611" and the same paint that appears on an area of the book. Only the top layer of paint was tested on both. Also, the top layer of the gold or orange yellow "old" paint from the letter "S" was tested.

As I noted in a previous article, art historian Spielmann, who first observed the painting in 1910, and Barrell in 1937, noted that the *entire inscription* was painted with the same gold paint as in the



Fig. 2

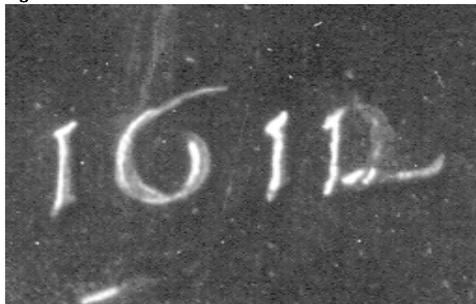


Fig. 3

By permission, Folger Shakespeare Library

*The key issue about the tests done by the Canadian Conservation Institute involve the Folger's instructions to test only the top layer of paint in the final "1" of the "1611" date. As can be seen in the enlargements of the dates above, an original date of "1612" had apparently been changed to "1611." But when? And why? A comparison of the dates of the paint in the inscription would be crucial, but were the tests conducted by CCI a fair comparison? (Fig. 2 is taken from a 1961 B&W Folger image of the portrait; Fig. 3 is how the inscription now appears, with the "1" remaining but a scraped out "2" also showing.)*

overpainting of the book and the signet thumb ring. Spielmann noted that all of those additions were of an ancient application. Michaels (in his 1979 restoration work) noted that the inscription paint was very old and hard. None of them remarks on any numeral that stands out with a different paint, or that such different paint is also used to overpaint the book or ring—which is what the Folger will claim after their 1988-89 restoration. Barrell noted that the paint on the book and ring covered over personal identifications of the sitter. A rubbing taken by Barrell of the thick paint over the signet ring revealed a boar's head.

These statements from Spielmann, Barrell and Michaels about the paint present problems for the Folger, especially in their later claims that the sitter is Sir Hugh Hamersley. For them the whole inscription cannot be all the same paint. If it were, that would negate their claim that the

original inscription for Hamersley was changed long after the portrait was painted, with the original "1612" being changed by rubbing out a "2" and replacing it with a "1" in order to have a 1611 date that would match Shakespeare's age (47) in 1611. In addition, the other changes involving the painting over the book, etc., at the same time have to fit this changed "1" paint and not the paint of the whole inscription as described by Spielmann and Barrell.

When numerous old color photos (Spielmann's, Ruth Loyd Miller's, and conservator Michael's pre-restoration color photo) of the painting are compared, the lettering and numbering all looks like the same old gold paint, corroborating Spielmann's and Barrell's observations. There is no difference in paint color in the final "1" of "1611." The first difference in the paint color of the "1" shows up in a color photo from the slide of the painting as it appears now, after the 1988-89 Folger restoration directed by William Pressly. The "1" in the painting now looks like a different paint, a paler lemony yellow rather than the gold in the rest of the inscription. And it looks newer. The new paint also appears on parts of the book but it is most visible in the "1" in the inscription.

Corbeil also noticed that this paint of the "1" is different. She notes that the "yellow-painted areas" which she examined but did not chemically test (except for the top layer in the "S") were painted using "a golden yellow paint. However, the number '1' painted over the scraped off number '2' of the date and the mask on the book cover were painted using a different pale yellow paint. While the golden yellow paint shows numerous signs of age... the pale yellow paint looks newer in comparison" (pp. 4-5).

She notes that the golden yellow paint of the inscription (from the "S") was made of lead tin yellow type I, a paint "most frequently used in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, and has never been found in a painting done after 1750" (p.5). This will be a significant date.

The pale yellow "newer" paint of the "1" and over the mask on the book was found to be "cerussite, probably massicot." Corbeil told me that such paint has long

*(Continued on page 20)*

*Ashbourne (continued from page 19)*

been in use and that she couldn't date it. I asked her if that paint could be 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century paint. She admitted that it could be. But in her report she does not mention that possibility and obscures the issue so that the general reader would not understand its significance. She says, "Massicot is a traditional pigment, the presence of which does not help in determining when the pale yellow paint was applied" (p. 5).

### **Pressly's directions concerning the inscription**

In William Pressly's June 28, 1988, Memorandum to Folger Director Werner Gundersheimer about how to incorporate elements of Hamersley into the Ashbourne portrait and what directions to give to the conservator Page, he addresses the issue of the "1" in the inscription:

As for the inscription, enough of the "2" survives from the original date of 1612 that it would be easy to reconstruct. The "1" at the end of 1611 would not be permanently removed: it would only be *overpainted* (emphasis added).

Here in Pressly's own words is the explanation for the sudden appearance of the pale lemon yellow "1" in the painting. It confirms that the "1" the Folger painted over—and that Pressly even contemplated removing!—was originally of the same old paint as the rest of the inscription. It appears that paint which cannot be dated was specifically chosen to paint over this old "1." The same pale lemon yellow paint was also used on the "mask" on the book cover to make it appear that this change was done at the same time as the "1" in this concocted change into Shake-speare from Hamersley. Here was another "proof" for Hamersley added by the Folger to the painting.

What about the shadowy scraped off figure behind the "1" that could be construed as a "2" and shows up in Barrell's X-rays? Is there an explanation? Yes, and it has nothing to do with Hamersley. The simplest explanation that fits all the known facts is that it was a mistake made at the time the entire inscription was added and was corrected immediately. Someone got the year wrong or age wrong for the Strat-

ford man and it was easier to correct the "1" than to change the age. This explanation comports with the fact that the "1" on the painting was originally of the same paint as the other numerals, as noted by observers and documented in color photos. As for the Folger's claims, it is mere coincidence that Hamersley was age 47 in 1612. The evidence confirms Barrell's conclusion that the entire original inscription was removed and replaced with the entire

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---

inscription now on the painting.

One further conclusion can be drawn from CCI's testing of the paint in the "S" of the inscription. According to CCI this paint has never been found past 1750. Therefore the inscription and other changes to the portrait into Shake-speare had to have been done prior to 1750. This eliminates Kingston as the person who altered this portrait into Shake-speare, as he was first connected with the Ashbourne portrait in 1847. Other evidence about Kingston corroborates that view. It came to him or to the Ashbourne School as a portrait of Shake-speare. Future articles in *Shakespeare Matters* will discuss the portrait's provenance and dates of change.

Perhaps if CCI had the Folger files they would not have concluded so readily from

the paint of the "1" that the Folger was correct and Barrell wrong. To quote Corbeil, "However, the number '1' painted over the partially scraped off '2' in the date and the mask on the book cover were painted using the same pale yellow paint, different in composition from the golden yellow paint used in the rest of the painting. It is likely that these elements were added when the portrait of the original sitter was transformed into Shakespeare" (p.7). We agree that those elements were added, but we know now *they were added in 1988-89*.

### **Did Corbeil pick up some of the original gold paint with her sample?**

I will speculate about something that puzzled Corbeil and seems also to confirm this overpainting of the "1" from a technical perspective. She was to take off only the top layer of paint. Because she did not know that the "1" had been overpainted only very recently, she probably picked up by accident stray pigment from the original "1" underneath of the same gold color as the rest of the inscription.

She notes that the old gold yellow paint (lead tin yellow) has what appear to be "lead soap inclusions which are frequently observed in paint films pigmented with lead based pigments such as lead white and lead tin yellow. This phenomenon is not observed in the pale yellow paint" (p. 5). The pale yellow paint she identified as massicot. She was puzzled at the presence of cerussite in the massicot paint that was applied to the top layer by the Folger: "However the presence of cerussite is unusual: while cerussite (lead carbonate) is often found associated with lead white (lead carbonate hydroxide, a traditional white pigment) as an impurity, it has rarely been observed by itself" (p. 5).

Now put the two together with the knowledge of the Folger's overpainting with the pale yellow paint. The gold yellow paint of the original inscription (lead tin yellow) contained lead soap inclusions. Cerussite is often found associated with lead white. Could it be that, in picking up the top layer sample of the pale yellow paint used to paint over the old "1," Corbeil just happened to also pick up stray bits of cerussite from the gold paint below? Or, perhaps, was lead white used on top of the

old gold pigment of the "I" before painting it over with the pale yellow to shield it from being seen by X-ray or from having the gold paint beneath picked up in a top sample? Regardless, Corbeil picked up something below this top layer sample that didn't fit the paint in the sample.

### **The "CK" monogram, neck ruff and coat of arms**

We will briefly discuss other issues where Corbeil concluded that Barrell was wrong and the Folger was right. She didn't see the "CK" initials. As noted in a previous article, attempts were made to remove the "CK" initials after Barrell's 1940 *Scientific American* article and before the 1948 X-rays. The very visible and identifiable remnants of the "CK" initials are still in the spot in the coat of arms where Barrell's X-rays show them and where the Folger's own 1948 X-rays show them. Even Pressly admitted the remnants were there in the article Corbeil had. Maybe she didn't look hard enough for them. Regarding the neck ruff, Corbeil says Barrell maintained it was double the size of the visible ruff but she did not observe this on the CCI infrared or X-ray. I am almost afraid to venture a guess as to what might have been done to what was visible of the old ruff in Barrell's X-ray picture in the *Scientific American*—given all the alterations we have uncovered thus far. As we noted, Corbeil never even considered the coat of arms worth looking at and took the Folger's word that it was Hamersley.

### **Conclusion**

It is significant that the CCI conclusions support the Folger's long-held positions, in opposition to Barrell's findings, and often in opposition to the information in the Folger's own files. We have shown that these conclusions lack credibility and validity, beginning with the condition of the canvas and following through the inscription changes to the "CK" initials and the lack of any examination of the coat of arms. We have noted the limitations imposed by the Folger regarding paint analysis and the withholding of important background information necessary for an understanding of where to look for

changes. This limited technical examination is nothing more than a cherry-picking exercise to verify the Folger's foregone conclusions.

This examination of the report has adduced evidence of further alterations to the painting in the inscription area—namely the overpainting of the "I" that CCI was to test in only the top layer. It has also provided technical evidence that supplements other evidence against Kingston's

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***"What is badly needed  
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having altered the painting into Shakespeare. Ironically, our examination of this report has brought out more evidence against Hamersley.

What is badly needed is a full technical examination overseen by independent experts and by both sides of the dispute who have full documentation of all the history of alterations to the portrait. Such an analysis must be augmented with equally important comparative analysis of other aspects of the painting such as costume, provenance, artist, etc. The excuse cannot be made that further microscopic paint analysis would damage the painting—considering all the abuse it has undergone. Analysis of all layers of paint—and in some cases the underlayerment—is needed in a number of areas of the coat of arms, the

"CK" area, the ruff area, the inscription, the wrist ruffs, the book, ring, gauntlet, head area, nose, etc. Examination for resurfacing is needed in the inscription area as well as examination of the back of the canvas in this and the ruff area, etc. But this is a highly unlikely prospect at this time. Hopefully, a regard for the integrity of this extremely important painting would now prevail at the Folger, to prevent any further alterations and destruction. The Folger has a responsibility to preserve this invaluable portrait for future generations.

In the meantime the truth about the painting does not have to wait for further technical analysis. Were it not for the Oxford Shakespeare issue involved, there would have been little or no dispute over it in the first place. Barrell's discoveries about the overpainting of this portrait of a nobleman, along with later research concerning the costume, provenance, iconography, etc., is enough now to convince any fair-minded art expert of the identity and dating of this portrait without any further technical investigation.

The evidence is there, were it not for the threat of Oxford as the real Shakespeare to the Stratfordian establishment. That is the crux of this battle over the Ashbourne that the Folger purchased in 1931 as a genuine portrait of Shakespeare—the largest and finest portrait of the true Bard.

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*Column**A year in the life*

By Hank Whittemore

## 1601 (II): “I ... watch the clock for you”

On the evening of February 19, 1601, as the day-long treason trial drew to its close amid the lofty gloom of Westminster Hall, the twenty-five peers on the tribunal delivered their unanimous verdict one by one in order of rank, from lowest to highest, ending with Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, who now uttered the single public word from his lips all day: “Guilty.”

Robert Devereux and Henry Wriothesley, the Earls of Essex and Southampton, were brought again to the bar. “The peers here, who have heard the evidence and your answer in defense, have found you guilty,” said the Clerk of the Crown, who glared at Essex: “Now what can you say for yourself why you should not have judgment of death?”

The tall, proud Lord Essex replied by paraphrasing a well-known line of Shakespeare (from *Henry IV, Part 1* when Prince Hall tells Sir John Falstaff: “Why, thou owest a death!”) as he addressed the judges: “I do not speak to save my life, for I see that were in vain. *I owe God a death*, which shall be welcome how soon ever it pleaseth her Majesty!”

Given that Shakespeare himself was hearing his own written words within this real-life context, it would be difficult to find a more extraordinary historical moment – except for when Southampton, his beloved Fair Youth of the private sonnets, turned to the noble audience and pleaded for help:

“I pray you truly to inform the Queen of my penitence,<sup>1</sup> and be a means for me to Her Majesty to grant me her gracious pardon.<sup>2</sup> I know I have offended<sup>3</sup> her, yet if it please her to be merciful unto me, I may, by my future service, deserve my life<sup>4</sup> ... I have spent the best part of my patrimony in Her Majesty’s service, with frequent danger of my life, as your Lordships well know ... But since I am found guilty by the law, I do submit myself to death, yet not despairing of Her Majesty’s mercy to me.”

For Oxford, in that dank Westminster courtroom, this may have been the most

painful of all the sorrows he had endured in his half-century of life to now. Seven years earlier he had publicly committed himself to Henry Wriothesley by pledging

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*“...Oxford reacted to*

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in print: “The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end ... What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours, being part in all I have devoted yours.”<sup>5</sup> Privately he had celebrated his personal bond with Southampton by telling him how “happy I that love and am beloved” while calling him “Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage thy merit hath my duty strongly knit.”<sup>6</sup> Yet just now, having no choice in the matter, he had voted to send the 27-year-old earl to death – for a crime against the state that he himself may have helped to trigger through writings such as *Richard II*, which had been revived for political propaganda on the eve of the failed attempt to remove Secretary Robert Cecil from his power behind the throne.<sup>7</sup>

Given that he had made such declarations to Southampton, it becomes virtually impossible to think that Oxford, who so desperately clung to the truth as the last defense against the erosion of his soul, would fail now to do what he could to help him. Also, given his compulsion to express

the truth in words, and having already done so in private sonnets to Henry Wriothesley, it is just as unthinkable that he would fail amid the current crisis to take up his “tables” or writing tablets with a vengeance, motivated with a greater than ever sense of mission to set the record straight.<sup>8</sup>

Such is the perspective of *The Monument*, my forthcoming edition of *Shake-Speares Sonnets*, presented to set forth and demonstrate a coherent explanation of both the form and the content of the 154 consecutively numbered verses. In my view Oxford reacted to Southampton’s tragedy by launching into what would become the most intensely sustained poetical sequence the world has known. The scenario envisions him writing two or three sonnets at a single sitting or even up to a dozen at a time, before revising and carefully arranging the initial outpouring with 60 sonnets in precise correlation with 60 days—from Sonnet 27, upon the imprisonment of Southampton on the night of February 8, 1601, for playing a lead role in the Essex Rebellion, until Sonnet 86 in alignment with the calendar on April 8, 1601, two months later.<sup>9</sup>

These 60 daily sonnets, ultimately comprising the first segment of a 100-sonnet center within Oxford’s “monument” of verse for posterity, coincide with events that came one upon another as the Cecil-run government rushed to ensure its own safety, exaggerate the rebels’ crimes and prosecute them with all the power and authority of the Crown to carry out its justice of choice. Unfolding pell-mell were the public proclamations of treason, the summoning of the peers, the Essex-Southampton trial on February 19, the beheading of Essex six days later at the Tower of London; the trial and condemnation of five others at Westminster Hall on March 5; the public mutilation of two of them on March 13 at Tyburn and the beheading of two more on March 18 at Tower Hill, where Londoners continued to gather each morning in expectation of Southampton’s death, until it dawned on

them that he had been spared.

Within this chronological framework Oxford is viewed as continuing apace by recording his agreement with Cecil to further conceal his relationship with Southampton from the world and bury his name beneath that of "Shakespeare," culminating with Sonnets 78-86 of the so-called Rival Poet series. He would begin the next 20 verses with Sonnet 87 (revealing the new, lesser judgment against Southampton of "misprision" of treason) and cover the remaining two years of his imprisonment until Sonnet 106, thereby completing this extraordinary "Chronicle of wasted time" in correspondence with the younger earl's final night in the Tower on April 9, 1603.<sup>10</sup>

By this reckoning Oxford includes 80 sonnets to record the full two years and two months during which Southampton was reduced to the commoner "Mr. Wriothesley, Henry" (legally "the late earl") while remaining "supposed as forfeit to a confined doom" in Her Majesty's fortress.<sup>11</sup> He followed with a series of 20 sonnets (107-126), matching each of the 19 days between April 10 (when Southampton was actually liberated from imprisonment) and April 28, 1603 (the date of Elizabeth's funeral, the official end of the Tudor dynasty), capped by the concluding envoy (126), addressed to "my lovely Boy."

So ends the 100-sonnet center (see *Figure 1 for highlights*) of the "monument" that Oxford would build for Southampton.

Within this sequence he would promise him in Sonnet 55 to preserve the "living record of your memory" and reinforce that pledge in Sonnet 81 with concise testimony that he had agreed to "die" or allow his own identity as "Shakespeare" to stay hidden from contemporary view and disappear completely for at least some generations to come:

From hence your memory death cannot  
take,  
Although in me each part will be forgotten.  
Your name from hence immortal life shall  
have,  
Though I (once gone) to all the world must  
die...  
Your monument shall be my gentle verse,  
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read...

Shortly after the trial, waiting in the Tower to learn his fate, Essex also began to set down his thoughts and feelings in

### THE 100-SONNET CENTER

#### Sonnets 27 - 126

#### THE PRISON YEARS

Sonnet 27	Feb 8, 1601
Sonnet 30	Feb 11, 1601
Sonnet 38	Feb 19, 1601
Sonnet 44	Feb 25, 1601
Sonnet 52	March 5, 1601
Sonnet 60	March 13, 1601
Sonnet 65	March 18, 1601
Sonnet 66	March 19, 1601
Sonnet 87	April 9, 1601
Sonnet 97	Feb 8, 1602
Sonnet 104	Feb 8, 1603
Sonnet 105	March 24, 1603
Sonnet 106	April 9, 1603

#### THE FINAL DAYS

Sonnet 107	April 10, 1603
Sonnet 125	April 28, 1603
Sonnet 126	April 29, 1603

#### SONNETS 27 – 106 (80)

Rebellion and Imprisonment  
Peers Summoned to Trial  
Trial of Essex-Southampton  
Execution of Essex  
Trial of other Conspirators  
Merrick & Cuffe Executed  
Danvers & Blount Executed  
Southampton's Life Spared  
"Misprision" of Treason  
1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of Rebellion  
2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Rebellion  
Death of Queen Elizabeth I  
Final Night in the Tower

#### SONNETS 107 – 126 (20)

Liberation by King James  
Funeral of Queen Elizabeth  
Farewell to Southampton

*Figure 1*

poetical form. During the four days leading to his execution, he completed 384 lines to the Queen:

I see that my continuance in this *place*  
Cannot be long...  
To gain thy favor whil'st my life dost last...  
Ev'n in the meanest *place* to wait on thee<sup>12</sup>

Essex's use of "place" for the Tower recalled the trial, when the Lord High Steward told the two condemned lords: "You both shall be led from hence to the *place* from whence you came, and there to remain during her Majesty's pleasure—from thence to be drawn upon a hurdle through the midst of the City, and so to the *place* of execution..."<sup>13</sup>

The unmistakable reference to the royal prison-fortress as the "place" appears in Sonnet 44 on February 25, 1601, when Essex lost his head to the executioner's axe. Oxford, using the "noted weed" or familiar costume of poetry,<sup>14</sup> vows that the "thought" in his mind can nimbly leap to the "place" where "he" (the thought) would prefer to be:

No matter then although my foot did stand  
Upon the farthest earth removed from  
thee,  
For nimble thought can jump both sea and  
land  
As soon as think *the place* where he would  
be.

In the very next line, alluding to the expectation that Southampton will follow Essex on the scaffold, Oxford feels the blade on his own neck as well:

But ah, thought *kills* me...

In Sonnet 45 he continues to merge his life with that of the younger earl:

My *life* being made of four, with two alone  
Sinks down to *death*...

And in the ensuing days he will confront death by referring both to Southampton's mortality and to his own obliteration:

"*Die* to themselves ... Sweet *deaths*" (54); "Gainst *death* and all oblivious enmity" (55); "This thought is as a *death*" (64); "For restful *death* I cry ... Save that to *die*" (66); "After my *death* ... *deceased* I" (72); "*Death's* second self ... As the *death* bed" (73)...

Within the 80 prison verses this thread will reach a crescendo in the powerful lines of Sonnet 81, when their twin fates come together in a single great reckoning with fate:

Or shall I live your Epitaph to make,  
Or you survive when I in earth am rotten,  
From hence your memory *death* cannot  
take,  
Although in me each part will be forgotten.

(Continued on page 24)

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

"The death of Essex left Sir Robert Cecil without a rival in the Court or cabinet," Strickland writes, "and he soon established himself as the all-powerful ruler of the realm."<sup>15</sup>

"The fall of Essex may be said to date the end of the reign of Elizabeth in regard to her activities and glories," Stopes adds. "After that she was Queen only in name. She listened to her councilors, signed her papers, and tried to retrench in expenditure; but her policy was dependent on the decisions of Sir Robert Cecil."<sup>16</sup>

The Secretary had envisioned even swifter revenge. "By the time my letters shall come unto you," he had written to Sir George Carew two days after the failed Rebellion, "both he [Essex] and the Earl of Southampton, with some of the other principals, shall have lost their heads."<sup>17</sup>

Edward de Vere would have to deal with Cecil, his brother-in-law, to secure a stay of the younger earl's execution. To further gain the promise of Southampton's eventual release with a royal pardon, he would be forced to continue at the Secretary's mercy. In the near future Cecil would enter a secret correspondence with James VI of Scotland, preparing for the King's succession while retaining his own power behind the throne; and it may well be that Oxford himself would become the unidentified "40" in the correspondence.<sup>18</sup>

"I must plainly confess that both ye and your faithful colleague 40 have by your vigilant and judicious care so easily settled me in the only right course for my good," James would write to Cecil on June 3, 1602, adding, "I always and ever shall account [you and 40] as one." The King would also write to the hunchbacked Secretary "assuring 40 that with God's grace he shall never be disappointed of his confidence in my honesty upon your relation ... and thus, praying 40 to be assured that *by your means only* he shall hear from me." (On July 29, 1602, however, the King would write directly to "40," promising "that all my dealings with you shall ever be accompanied with these three qualities: honesty, secrecy, and constancy," reiterating that "I will deal with you by no other way but by the means of 10 [Cecil]."<sup>19</sup>

Our previous column concluded 20 days (and 20 sonnets) after the failed Rebellion and only two days after the beheading of Essex. In Sonnet 46 on

February 27, 1601, Oxford echoes the trial and how Southampton, upon the verdict, delivered a plea for the Queen's mercy. Key words are woven within his poetical fabric:

My heart doth *plead* that thou in him dost lie...  
But the *defendant* doth that *plea* deny...  
To *'cide* this title is *impaneled*  
A *quest* of thoughts, all tenants to the heart,  
And by their *verdict* is *determined*...

Such words are found in a similar context in the plays of English royal history:

"What *lawful quest* [jury] hath have given their *verdict* up unto the frowning judge?" – Richard III, 1.4.180; "Thy son is banished upon good advice, whereto thy tongue a party-*verdict* gave" – Richard II, 1.3.233; "Forthwith that Edward should be pronounced a traitor and all his lands and goods be *confiscate* [Southampton's current fate]. *What else? And that succession be determined* [Cecil's current goal]" – 3 Henry VI, 4.6.54

### February 28: "A League"

Oxford in Sonnet 47 alludes to the "league" or alliance that Secretary Cecil has forced him to enter on Southampton's behalf:

Betwixt my eye and heart a *league* is took...  
"You peers, continue this united *league*"  
– Richard III, 2.1.2

### March 1: "Locked Up"

Continuing this historical record in Sonnet 48, he refers to the "wards" or guards at the Tower:

How careful was I, when I took my way,  
Each trifle under *truest bars* to thrust,  
That to my use it might unused stay,  
From hands of *falsehood*, in sure *wards* of trust!

"*Truest Bars* = "most reliable locks or barricades" – Duncan-Jones; *Falsehood* = "The usual adverbs in legal records alongside the descriptions of particular treasons are 'falsely' and 'traitorously'" – Bellamy; *Wards* = "Meaning 'guards' ... the range of its applications include chests and prison cells" – Booth<sup>20</sup>

Then he directly addresses Southampton, who is literally "locked up"

in the Tower, where the Crown has dispatched "thirty extraordinary guards to help with the additional duties" occasioned by the Rebellion:<sup>21</sup>

Thee have I not *locked up* in any chest,  
Save where thou art not, though I feel thou art  
Within the gentle *closure* of my breast,  
From whence at pleasure thou mayst come and part.

"O thou bloody prison, fatal and ominous to noble peers! Within the guilty *closure* of thy walls Richard the Second here was *hack'd to death!*" – Richard III, 3.3.9

### March 2: "Lawful Reasons"

He fears in Sonnet 49 that Southampton will "frown" upon him and regard him "strangely" for having cut a deal with Cecil; but he also emphasizes that he is acting "against myself" while arguing for the "lawful reasons" by which the younger earl can be saved:

And this my hand *against myself* uprear,  
To *guard the lawful reasons* on thy part...

The crux of the legal agreement behind the scenes is that he and Southampton will "leave" each other by being able to "allege no cause" of any relationship:

To *leave* poor me, thou hast the strength of laws,  
Since why to love, I can *allege no cause*.

### March 3: "My Grief"

He testifies in Sonnet 50 that, riding on horseback from the Tower back to his Hackney home, he has just visited with Southampton to explain the details of the bargain face to face. The journey is only a few miles, but he suffers from the "weight" and "woe" of their meeting:

The beast that bears me, tired with my *woe*,  
Plods duly on to bear that *weight* in me...

The cutting of all ties with Southampton from this point on produces the "grief" that lies ahead of him in life; behind, in the Tower, is the Fair Youth himself:

My grief lies onward and my joy behind.

### March 4: "Where Thou Art"

Sonnet 51 is a companion piece in which Oxford uses his ride from "where

thou art" to weave in allusions to Southampton's "offence" and his own efforts to legally "excuse" his crime by lessening the judgment against him:

Thus can my love *excuse* the slow *offence*  
Of my dull bearer, when from thee I speed  
From *where thou art*...

"My nephew's *trespass* may be well forgot;  
it hath the *excuse* of youth and heat of  
blood, an adopted name of privilege, a  
hair-brained Hotspur, govern'd by a  
spleen; all his *offences* live upon my head  
and on his father's" – 1 Henry IV, 5.2.16;  
"My soul is heavy and troubled for my  
*offences*" – Southampton, writing from  
the Tower to the Privy Council after the  
trial<sup>22</sup>

### March 5: "Up-Locked"

Standing trial for high treason are Sir Christopher Blount, Sir Gelly Merrick, Henry Cuffe, Sir John Davis (not Davies) and Sir Charles Danvers. All are found guilty and sentenced to death (Davis, who may have been a Cecil agent in their midst, will be spared), as Oxford expands upon the two previous verses by referring again, in Sonnet 52, to his prison visit:

So am I as the rich, whose blessed *key*  
Can bring him to his sweet *up-locked*  
treasure...

By the terms of the bargain made with Cecil to save his life, the "solemn" and "rare" sight of Southampton was among such "feasts" that, from now on, will occur only "seldom" (if at all) in the "long year" that appears to lie ahead,

Therefore are *feasts* so *solemn* and so *rare*,  
Since *seldom* coming in the long year  
set...

"Thus did I keep my person fresh and new;  
my presence ... *seldom*, but *sumptuous*,  
showed like a *feast*, and wan by *rareness*  
and *solemnity*" – the King in 1 Henry IV,  
3.2.53

### March 6: "Strange Shadows"

Edward de Vere ("every" = *E. Ver*) and Henry Wriothesley ("one" = his motto *One for All, All for One*) both suffer in Sonnet 53 under the "strange shadows" of Elizabeth's imperial frown:

What is your substance, whereof are you  
made,

That millions of strange shadows on you  
tend?

Since *every one* hath, *every one*, *one* shade,  
And you, but *one*, can *every* shadow lend.

Having introduced "Shakespeare" with *Venus and Adonis* dedicated to Southampton in 1593, he now reinforces the identification of him as the Fair Youth of the Sonnets:

Describe *Adonis* and the counterfeit

### "Here Oxford/Shakespeare

*now makes his first*

*specific pledge to build*

*a 'monument' for the*

*Fair Youth to preserve*

*'the living record*

*of your memory...'"*

Is poorly imitated after you...

### March 7: "Sweet Deaths"

Robert Cecil writes to George Carew "to let you know what is like to become of the poor young Earl of Southampton, who, merely for the love of the Earl [of Essex], hath been drawn into this action." Because "most of the conspiracies were at Drury House, where he [Southampton] was always chief," he continues, "those that would deal [plead] for him (of which number I protest to God I am one, as far as I dare) are much disadvantaged of arguments to save him."<sup>23</sup>

The Secretary hereby puts himself on record as a Southampton supporter, while prolonging the agony by claiming to be "disadvantaged of arguments to save him." Cecil may be building up the difficulty, in anticipation of taking credit for any reprieve, but at the same time he may genuinely doubt that the Queen can be dissuaded from going forward with the execution.<sup>24</sup>

Oxford writes of Southampton in

Sonnet 54 as "Sweet Roses" whose inner substance cannot be killed even if he is executed:

Of their *sweet deaths* are sweetest odors  
made.

And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,  
When that shall vade, by verse distills your  
truth.

Duncan-Jones understands the final line as "by means of verse [in general], your truth is preserved and transmitted to future generations."<sup>25</sup> But Oxford is also referring to "my" verse of these specific sonnets and paving the way for the great lines that immediately follow.

### March 8: "The Living Record"

With Oxford still uncertain about Southampton's fate, his towering verse in Sonnet 55 is motivated directly by these grim circumstances. Here Oxford/Shakespeare now makes his first specific pledge to build a "monument" for the Fair Youth to preserve "the living record of your memory" for posterity. And we cannot avoid including the entire sonnet, which emphasizes the fundamental struggle that Edward de Vere is waging for Henry Wriothesley against the forces represented by Time:<sup>26</sup>

Not marble nor the gilded monument<sup>27</sup>  
Of Princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,  
But you shall shine more bright in these  
contents

Than unswept stone, besmeared with  
sluttish time.

When wasteful war shall *Statues* overturn,  
And broils root out the work of masonry,  
Nor *Mars* his sword nor war's quick fire  
shall burn

The living record of your memory.<sup>28</sup>  
'Gainst death and all oblivious enmity  
Shall you pace forth! Your praise shall still  
find room

Even in the eyes of all posterity  
That wear this world out to the ending  
doom.<sup>29</sup>

So till the judgment<sup>30</sup> that yourself arise,  
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.<sup>31</sup>

### March 9: "This Sad Interim"

In Sonnet 56 he likens this sorrowful, nerve-racking time of Southampton's imminent execution to a force as powerful as the royal sea:

Let this sad *Int'rim* like the Ocean be  
Which parts the shore, where two  
contracted new

(Continued on page 26)

*Year in Life (cont'd from page 25)*

Come daily to the banks...

"Here, then, we have Shakespeare typifying his Friend variously as a **sun**, a **god**, an **ocean** or a sea: three familiar metaphors which he and his contemporaries use to represent a sovereign prince or king." – Leslie Hotson<sup>32</sup>

### March 10: "Watch the Clock for You"

Oxford in Sonnet 57 embarks on a series of 10 verses for 10 days that build in desperation (and literary power) as they lead to the moment of truth for Southampton. They are akin to the sequential chapters of a dramatic narrative, recounting the history of what took place behind the scenes as Edward de Vere waged war with Time on behalf of the younger earl whom he now, directly and specifically, calls his sovereign:

Nor dare I chide the world without end  
hour  
Whilst I (my sovereign) watch the clock for  
you.

### March 11: "Imprisoned Absence"

He writes to the imprisoned earl in Sonnet 58 as a "vassal" or subject addressing his king:

Being your *vassal* bound to stay your  
leisure.  
O let me suffer (being at your beck)  
*Th' imprisoned absence* of your *liberty*,

The last line above suggests "lack of the liberty of you," Booth writes, expanding this to "lack of the privilege of unrestricted access to you" – that is, an accurate report by Oxford that he can no longer visit Southampton in the Tower.

"His *liberty* is full of threats to us all" – Hamlet, 4.1.14; "I am sorry to see you ta'an from *liberty*, to look on the business present. 'Tis His Highness' pleasure you shall to **the Tower**." – Henry VIII, 1.2.204

Even if Elizabeth spares him and King James releases him, Southampton will need a royal "pardon" from the new monarch to avoid being re-accused of the same crime; and now he has it in his own power to accept the bargain with Cecil and gain the promise of one:

Be where you list, your *charter*

### The "Invention" at the Center

153-154

(2)

1—26/27—76/77—126/127—152  
(26) (50) (50) (26)

Sonnet 76: "My Verse"

Sonnet 77: "Thy Book"

Figure 2

is so strong  
That you your self may *privilege* your time  
To what you will. To you it doth belong  
Your self to *pardon* of self-doing *crime*.  
I am to wait, though waiting so be *hell*...

"**Charter**: a written document delivered by the sovereign ... granting **privileges** ... granting **pardon** ... to receive a **pardon**" – O. E. D.; "Then I crave **pardon** of Your Majesty" – 3 Henry VI, 4.6.8; "Thus in haste I crave Your Majesty's **pardon**" – Oxford to the Queen, June 1599<sup>33</sup>; "y'have passed a **hell** of Time, / And I, a tyrant, have no leisure taken / To weigh how once I suffered in your **crime**" – Sonnet 120

### March 12: "A Former Child"

Oxford, having offered *Venus and Adonis* as "the first heir of my invention" for Southampton, is now "laboring" by the same "invention" (method of concealing yet revealing) to give him rebirth and growth in these private sonnets. Under the dire circumstances as time keeps running out, he opens Sonnet 59 by describing this supreme effort in a four-line howl:

If there be nothing new, but that which is  
Hath been before, how are our brains  
beguiled,  
Which, *laboring* for *invention*, bear *amiss*  
The second *burthen* of a former child!

"**Bear Amiss**" suggests "miscarry" – Booth; "**Burthen**" = burden; "My first **burthen**, coming before his time" – John Lyly, 1580, dedicating *Euphues his England* to Oxford

### March 13: "Crooked Eclipses"

Merrick and Cuffe are hanged, drawn and quartered as Oxford braces for Southampton's own reckoning in Sonnet 60:

So do our minutes hasten to their end...

Alluding to Cecil's "crooked" figure and to his malignant or devious character, he blames both him and Time (Elizabeth) for the destruction of Southampton's "gift" of life and blood:

*Crooked* eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,  
And *time* that gave doth now *his gift*  
*confound*.

### March 14: "The Watchman"

Edward de Vere glances at himself as "ever" in Sonnet 61, vowing to Southampton:

To play the watchman *ever* for thy sake.  
For thee watch I, whilst thou dost wake  
elsewhere,  
From me far off, with others *all too near*.

"As we be knit **near** in our alliance" – Oxford to Cecil, February 2, 1601

### March 15: "Thee, My Self"

As the hour draws even closer for Southampton to lose his head, Oxford records that his own self-love is but a reflection of his love for him. He merges their two selves in Sonnet 62 to indicate that, by "painting" or writing these verses for posterity, he shares in his fate:

'Tis *thee* (*my self*) that for my self I praise,  
Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

### March 16: "I Now Fortify"

His intensity grows in Sonnet 63 as Southampton faces death at any moment:

Against my love shall be as I am now,  
With time's injurious *hand*  
crushed and o'er-worn,  
When hours have *drained*  
*his blood*...

"O let her [Elizabeth] never suffer to be **spilled the blood** of him that desires to live

but to do her service ... *The shedding of my blood can no way avail her* – Southampton from the Tower, to the Privy Council after the trial<sup>34</sup>

Bringing it all back to “now” in the diary, Oxford incorporates the real situation with “knife” for the executioner’s axe, “cut” for the expected beheading and “life” for the flesh-and-blood life of Southampton that is about to be lost:

For such a time do *I now fortify*  
Against confounding Age’s cruel *knife*,  
That he shall never *cut* from memory  
My sweet love’s beauty, though *my lover’s*  
*life*.

*“In fine, she hath the hand and knife,/  
That may both save and end my life”* – Oxford poem (“The trickling tears”), The Paradise of Dainty Devices, 1576; *“And there cut off thy most gracious head”* – 2 Henry VI, 4.10.81

### March 17: “As a Death”

For the bargain with Cecil to save Southampton and gain his release with a pardon, the royal “ocean” of King James must “gain advantage” on the “shore” of England by an “interchange of state” through his succession, as Oxford envisions in Sonnet 64:

When I have seen *the hungry Ocean* gain  
Advantage on *the Kingdom of the shore...*  
When I have seen such *interchange of*  
*state...*

*“Even to our Ocean, to our great King John”* – King John, 5.4.57; *“And says that once more I shall interchange my wane state for Henry’s regal crown”* – 3 Henry VI, 4.7.3

Because this will also mean the obliteration of Elizabeth’s own “state” and dynasty, Oxford will continue to “weep” even if that which he “fears to lose” (Southampton) is spared:

Or *state* itself confounded to decay,  
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate  
That Time will come and take my love away.  
This thought is *as a death*, which cannot  
choose  
But weep to have that which it fears to  
*lose*.

*“But you must know that your father lost a father, that father lost, lost his”* – Hamlet, 1.2.89

### March 18: “Hold a Plea”

Danvers and Blount are beheaded on Tower Hill, leaving no more excuse for the Crown to delay Southampton’s execution. Writing in Sonnet 65 of the younger earl’s “sad mortality” and “beauty” while referring to him as a “flower” about to be crushed, Oxford echoes the legal “plea” and “action” to save his life:

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor  
boundless sea,

---

*“...the London public will*

*begin to assume that her*

*Majesty must have*

*commuted Southampton’s*

*sentence to perpetual*

*imprisonment.”*

---

But *sad mortality* o’er-sways their power,  
How with this rage shall beauty a *plea*,  
Whose *action* is no stronger than a flower?

*“But if I shall defer anything in this action, I will leave the whole consideration thereof to Her Majesty”* – Oxford to Burghley, June 7, 1595<sup>35</sup>

He refers to the “gates of steel” within the Tower fortress:

Nor *gates of steel* so strong but time  
decays...

O fearful *meditation!* Where, alack,  
Shall time’s best jewel from time’s chest lie  
hid?

Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot  
back?

*“I am come to survey the Tower this day  
... Open the gates!”* – 1 Henry VI, 1.3.1  
*“With meditating that she must die at once”* – Julius Caesar, 4.3.190

**March 19: Southampton Is Spared**  
Sonnet 66, a virtual suicide note unlike

all the other verses (and echoing Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” soliloquy), falls within this chronology as the 40<sup>th</sup> sonnet on the 40<sup>th</sup> day proceeding from Southampton’s imprisonment on February 8, 1601; viewed from this perspective it becomes Shakespeare’s exhausted emotional response to Queen Elizabeth’s private decision on March 19 to spare the Fair Youth from execution:

Tir’d with all these, for restful death I cry...

Among his listed complaints appears the limping, swaying figure of Robert Cecil, who in fact holds sway over Oxford, Southampton and Elizabeth as well as over England’s destiny:

And strength *by limping sway disabled...*

*“It is tempting to suspect a glance at the control of the State, including vigorous military men like Raleigh and Essex, by the limping Robert Cecil”* – Dover Wilson<sup>36</sup>

After a week or so the London public will begin to assume that Her Majesty must have commuted Southampton’s sentence to perpetual imprisonment. No legal explanation for the reprieve will be announced or recorded by the government (although Cecil will get credit in history for having obtained the royal mercy), but Oxford supplies the answer in Sonnet 87 for “eyes not yet created” (see endnote 30).

This column will continue the “living record” in the next issue, when Oxford reaches the exact midpoint of the 100-sonnet center of his “monument” for posterity (see Figure 2) and explains his “invention” for writing “my verse” of the Sonnets.

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> “Penitence” is echoed in Sonnet 34: “Though thou *repent*, yet I have still the loss.”

<sup>2</sup> “Pardon” is echoed in Sonnet 58: “Yourself to *pardon* of self-doing crime.”

<sup>3</sup> “Offended” is echoed in Sonnets 34, 42, 51, 89 and 110 of the Fair Youth series (and nowhere else).

<sup>4</sup> Both “mercy” and “my life” will be repeated in Sonnet 145 of the Dark Lady series, when, according to this view of the chronology of the poems, Oxford will react to the Queen’s reprieve of Southampton’s execution by writing: “Straight in her heart

(Continued on page 31)

# Sir Walter Scott as Paleo-Oxfordian

## Part 3: *The Monastery*

by Chuck Berney

I have argued on two previous occasions that a close reading of novels by Sir Walter Scott (*Kenilworth*, *The Abbot*) suggests that Scott was aware that the works of Shakespeare were actually written by Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, and moreover that Scott was familiar with many of the details of de Vere's life. Since Scott was writing 100 years before the publication of Looney's book, *Shakespeare Identified*, I have dubbed Scott a "paleo-Oxfordian." Response to these essays from the community of Oxfordians interested in Scott's works has been so enthusiastic that I have been encouraged to delve into yet another of the Waverley novels.

*The Monastery* (1820) is the prequel to *The Abbot*, which was discussed in *Shakespeare Matters* (Fall 2003). It follows the fortunes of two brothers, Halbert and Edward Glendinning. Halbert's interests are chiefly hunting and the use of arms; Edward's nature is contemplative and spiritual—indeed, he becomes the eponymous cleric of the sequel. The plot is moved along from time to time by a ghost called "the White Lady," a contrivance to which many of Scott's readers objected (*The Monastery* was not one of his more successful novels).

One of my motives in undertaking another Scott novel was to see if I could find one which did *not* contain a character resembling Edward de Vere—a control, so to speak, to make sure I was not reading things into the novels that weren't there. For the first week or so I thought *The Monastery* was it. Then on page 171 Sir Piercie Shafton, the Euphuist, is introduced. Mysie, the miller's daughter, describes him thus:

"I think this rider be not of our country. He has a crimson velvet bonnet, and long brown hair falling down under it, and a beard on his upper lip, and his chin clean and close shaved, save a small patch on the point of it . . ."

I don't know about you, but the image I get

on reading this description bears a strong resemblance to the Welbeck portrait of Oxford in a foppish mode. More clues follow:

. . . the etiquette of the times did not permit Sir Piercie Shafton to pick his teeth, or to yawn, or to gabble like the beggar whose tongue (as he says) was cut out by the Turks . . . [p. 174]<sup>1</sup>

The reference to tooth-picking reminds us of the Bastard's speech in *King John* (1.1.190) in which he pictures himself as a courtier: "Now your traveler,/He and his toothpick at my worship's mess,/And when my knightly stomach is suffic'd,/Why then I suck my teeth and catechize . . ." And "Turk" was Elizabeth's nickname for Oxford.<sup>2</sup>

When Sir Piercie Shafton first makes his appearance in the novel he is accompanied by Christie of the Clinthill, a thuggish henchman of the lawless Baron Julian Avenel. On approaching the Glendinning dwelling, Christie calls out to a servant

"Ha! Art thou there old Truepenny?" [171]

This is virtually identical to Hamlet's line as he addresses his father's ghost (1.5.150). It has been pointed out<sup>3</sup> that "Truepenny" is a direct reference to Oxford's father, who was the son of a Vere (True) and a Trussel (part of the mechanism used in stamping pennies). At the end of the chapter, Christie is regaling the servants with tales of his wild exploits

. . . and Tibb Tacket, rejoiced to find herself once more in the company of a jack-man, listened to his tales, like Desdemona to Othello's, with undisguised delight. [185]

So the section of the narrative introducing Sir Piercie Shafton begins and ends with a specific allusion to one of the Shakespeare plays.

Sir Piercie is an enthusiastic follower of the school of Euphuism:

"Ah, that I had with me my Anatomy of Wit—that all-to-be unparalleled volume—that quintessence of human wit—that treasury of quaint invention—that exquisitely-pleasant-to-read, and inevitably-necessary-to-be-remembered manual of all that is worthy to be known—which indoctrines the rude in civility, the dull in intellectuality, the heavy in jocosity, the blunt in gentility, the vulgar in nobility, and all of them in that unutterable perfection of human utterance, that eloquence which no other eloquence is sufficient to praise, that art which, when we call it by its own name of Euphuism, we bestow on it its richest panegyric."<sup>4</sup> [179]

He is referred to many times in the text as "the Euphuist." The ostensible implication of the definite article is that, of the characters being discussed, he is the only one devoted to the practice of Euphuism. It can also be taken to mean that Sir Piercie is intended to be identified with the central figure of Euphuism (in the same way that "the Christ" is the central figure of Christianity, or that "the Dane" is the ruler of Denmark). Who is the central figure of Euphuism? The orthodox answer is that it's John Lyly, secretary to the Earl of Oxford, who is taken to be the author of *Euphues: His England* and *The Anatomy of Wit*. However, Brame and Popova, using linguistic techniques, have concluded that "The fingerprint evidence shows that de Vere did write the plays ascribed to his former secretary Lyly . . ."<sup>5</sup> Warren Dickinson, an independent scholar, concurs: "This nobleman who nursed *The Anatomy of Wit* with great love must certainly have been Lord Oxford."<sup>6</sup> However, Sir Piercie, like Oxford, is not restricted to the Euphuistic style.

. . . Sir Piercie . . . replying without trope or figure, in that plain English which nobody could speak better when he had a mind. [186]

Slighter clues abound almost without limit.

[Sir Piercie] broke forth into a soliloquy. "What foul fiend sent this wench hither? . . . But patienza, Piercie Shafton . . ." [197]

The word "soliloquy" inevitably reminds us of Hamlet. The phrase 'foul fiend' recalls Edgar's speeches in *Lear* (3.4.61 *et seq.*). And why use the Italian word for "patience" if not to remind us of Oxford, "the Italianate Englishman"? Later, Sir Piercie reminisces:

"...—quitting the tiltyard, where I was ever ready among my compeers to splinter a lance . . . —exchanging the lighted halls, wherein I used nimble to pace the swift coranto, or to move with a loftier grace in the stately galliard . . ." [208]

Ogburn quotes an account of Oxford's triumphant jousting in the court tournament of May 1571: "The challengers . . . all did very valiantly, but the chief honour was given to the Earl of Oxford."<sup>7</sup> Mention of "the stately galliard" echoes Sir Toby Belch's line in *Twelfth Night* (1.3.120), "What is thy excellence in a galliard, knight?" More directly, we are reminded that Oxford himself was one of the best dancers in the Elizabethan court.<sup>8</sup> Later, in the second volume, there is further mention of Sir Piercie's excellence in a galliard (and other forms of music), together with his predilection for sonnets.

Then she could hear him resume his walk through the room, and, as if his spirits had been somewhat relieved and elevated by the survey of his wardrobe, she could distinguish that at one turn he half recited a sonnet, at another half whistled a galliard, and at the third hummed a saraband. [2:150]

Again like Oxford,<sup>9</sup> Sir Piercie has been having financial troubles.

"... my estate, I wot not how, hath of late been somewhat insufficient to maintain the expense of those braveries wherewith it is incumbent on us, who are chosen and selected spirits . . . to distinguish ourselves from the vulgar." [212-3]

Oxford himself makes a cameo appearance in one of Sir Piercie's nostalgic reminiscences about the idyllic life he led in Elizabeth's court.

"... it was my envied lot to lead the winning party at that wondrous match at

ballon, made betwixt the divine Astrophel (our matchless Sidney), and the right honourable my very good lord of Oxford."<sup>10</sup> [2:52]

Presumably Scott intends to remind the reader of the tennis-court quarrel involving Oxford and Sir Philip Sidney, though of course Oxford and Sidney did not play each other, but argued about the use of the court. Perhaps the incident is an invention of Sir Piercie's, since at the end

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***"And why use the  
Italian word for  
'patience' if not  
to remind us  
of Oxford,  
'the Italianate  
Englishman'?"***

---

of the novel it is revealed that he is not everything he claims to be. But *ballon* is not the only exercise at which Sir Piercie is adept; Scott himself testifies that

The English knight was master of all the mystery of the *stoccata*, *imbrocata*, *punto-reverso*, *incartata*, and so forth, which the Italian masters of defence had lately introduced into general practice.<sup>11</sup> [2:54]

And Sir Piercie, like Oxford, is eager to put his skills to the test in actual combat.

"In a word, I am willing to head all who will follow me, and offer such opposition as manhood and mortality may permit . . . and be assured, Piercie Shafton will measure his length, being five feet ten inches, on the ground as he stands, rather than give two yards in retreat, according to the usual motion in which we retrograde." [2:286]

It is unusual to see the word "retrograde" in a nonastronomical context. The only other example I can think of is Claudius's speech to Hamlet (1.2.112):

"For your intent in going back to school in Wittenberg, it is most retrograde to our desire . . ."

At one point Sir Piercie lists some of the "braveries" by which he distinguishes himself from the vulgar.

"... my rich crimson silk doublet, slashed out and lined with cloth of gold, which I wore at the last revels, with baldric and trimmings to correspond—also two pair black silk slops, with hanging garters of carnation silk—also the flesh-coloured silken doublet, with the trimmings of fur, in which I danced the salvage man at the Gray's-Inn mummary . . ." [215]

Ogburn<sup>12</sup> lists some of Oxford's youthful expenditures for clothing: "... one doublet of cambric, one of fine canvas, and one of black satin. . . four yards of velvet and four others of satin, for to guard and border a Spanish cape . . . one velvet hat and one taffeta hat: two velvet caps, a scarf, two pairs of garters with silver at the ends, a plume of feathers for a hat, and another hat band." Ogburn also has something to say about Edward de Vere and Gray's Inn: "At seventeen, in 1567, Edward was admitted to Gray's Inn, there to acquire the legal knowledge that would impress so many in the plays." Ogburn describes "masques" and "revels" performed by the students at Gray's Inn, and adds "If we know our man, he lent a hand in the writing and production of those masques and acted in them, taking the first steps to making himself 'a motley to the view'."

**Question 1.** *Did Scott knowingly use historical figures as prototypes for his fictional characters?* The answer is *yes*. In his notes at the end of the second volume, Scott writes

JULIAN AVENEL. If it were necessary to name a prototype for this brutal, licentious, and cruel Border chief, in an age which showed but too many such, the Laird of Black Ormiston might be selected for that purpose. He was a friend and confidant of Bothwell, and an agent in Henry Darnley's murder. At his last stage he was, like other great offenders, a seeming penitent . . . [2:315]

**Question 2.** *Can the parallelisms between Sir Piercie and Oxford described above be attributed to chance, or do they*

*(Continued on page 30)*

Scott (continued from page 29) require that Scott have had Oxford specifically in mind? We summarize the similarities and clues (in the order listed above) as follows: *appearance/toothpick, Turk/ "Truepenny" quote/ Desdemona-Othello/Euphuism/skill in plain English/ speaks Italian/good joustier/good dancer/ knows sonnets/good musician/ financial troubles/ plays ball with Oxford and Sidney/good fencer/ aspires to military leadership/ fancy dresser/performer at Gray's Inn*. Let us assume the null hypothesis—that is, that Scott was interested only in creating a generic foppish courtier and did not have Oxford specifically in mind. Then he might well have chosen *appearance, Euphuism, good dancer, knows sonnets, good musician, financial troubles*, and *fancy dresser* to characterize his creation. This accounts for seven of the 17 attributes and clues we listed. It seems clear that Scott intended Sir Piercie to be a comic character, but some of the remaining attributes are at odds with such an intent—for example, a comic character is not usually one who is a *good joustier, a good fencer*, or one who *aspires to military leadership* (these are, however known attributes of Edward de Vere). The jousting is particularly difficult to reconcile with the null hypothesis—it required enormous amounts of money to acquire the armor, the war horse and other accoutrements. At the end of the novel, it is revealed that Sir Piercie is the grandson of a tailor, and would have no estates to draw on for an expensive pastime like jousting. It plays no part in the plot. Apparently Scott has given his courtier an attribute that undermines the character's believability for no good reason, except (possibly) to enhance his resemblance to Edward de Vere.

So far we have examined 10 of the 17 attributes and clues, and have found that seven are consistent with the null hypothesis while three mitigate against it. Let us admit that the toothpick-Turk quote, the Desdemona-Othello reference, and the game of *ballon* with Oxford and Sidney, while suggestive, do not rise to the level of evidence. We have four items left to examine. (1) *Skill in plain English*. Who other than Oxford/Shakespeare could be described as speaking English better than any other? (2) *Speaks Italian*. This attribute is revealed by one word, "*patienza*," spoken

by Sir Piercie to himself. No doubt there were a number of Elizabethan courtiers who could read Italian, or speak it occasionally, but how many habitually *thought* in Italian? To me, this is a clear reference to de Vere, the "Italianate Englishman." (3) Christie of the Clinthill's quote of the "Truepenny" line from *Hamlet*. What function does this serve? Christie cannot be knowingly quoting from *Hamlet* (a) because the character is illiterate, and

---

***"This casually-  
mentioned detail  
is one of astonishing  
specificity, and  
it comes  
like a bolt  
from the blue."***

---

(b) the setting of the novel is the early 1560s, and 1583 is the earliest date anyone has suggested for the writing of *Hamlet* (though it must be admitted that Scott the writer gives avoidance of anachronism a remarkably low priority). And remember that "Truepenny" is not just a line from *Hamlet*, but a codeword incorporating two Vere family names. The only explanation I can think of is that Scott is blowing a fanfare for the *cognoscenti*, signaling that after 171 pages he is ready to introduce his Oxford character. (4) *The Gray's Inn performance*. This casually-mentioned detail is one of astonishing specificity, and it comes like a bolt from the blue. How many foppish courtiers went to law school? (Well, Oxford did, and he went to Gray's Inn.) Nowhere in the novel is Sir Piercie's legal training required, mentioned, or even hinted at. And he performed in a dramatic production! Surely the probability of a novelist imbuing a courtier from central casting with these specific attributes is vanishingly small. As far as I'm concerned, the null hypothesis is dead as a doornail.<sup>13, 14</sup>

**NOTE ADDED IN PROOF:** I have found my control sample. Scott's novel *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822), though it has a sprinkling of Shakespeare quotes, is (as far as I can determine) completely free of Oxford-identified characters.

#### Notes:

1. Pagination follows the 1893 edition of Dana Estes & Co., Boston. This edition consists of two volumes bound as one; page 123 in Volume 2 will be written as 2:123.
2. Paul Altrocchi, " 'My Turk': Why the Nickname?" *Shakespeare Matters* 3.3 (Spring 2004) 22-24. See also *SM* 3.4, p. 2.
3. Stephanie Caruana, *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter* 29.3A, Summer 1993.
4. You will be astonished to learn that the critics found Sir Piercie to be as objectionable as the spectral White Lady.
5. Michael Brame and Galina Popova, *Shakespeare's Fingerprints* (Adonis, 2002), p. 405.
6. Warren Dickinson, *The Wonderful Shakespeare Mystery* (Omni, 2001), 231.
7. Charlton Ogburn, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (EPM Publications, 1984), 479.
8. Ogburn, 473, 598. *The Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 1921) in its entry for *Edward de Vere* (Vol. XX, pp. 225-9) quotes a letter from Gilbert Talbot to his father (11 May 1573): "My Lord of Oxford is lately grown into great credit, for the queen's Majesty delighteth more in his personage, and his dancing and valiantness, than any other."
9. *DNB*, *loc. cit.* : "... Oxford's continued extravagance involved him in pecuniary difficulties."
10. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines *ballon* (obs., rare) as "a little ball or packe." It defines *balloon* (alt. spelling *ballon*) as "the game played with this ball." The citation for *balloon* is "The winning party at that wondrous match at *ballon*."
11. Compare Mercutio's line in *Romeo and Juliet* (2.4.25): "Ah, the immortal *passado*, the *punto reverso*, the *hay!*"
12. Ogburn, 453-4.
13. 2 *Henry VI*, 4.10.40.
14. Those who attended the 2003 Shakespeare Fellowship Conference in Carmel will recall that one can prove anything using anagrams. However I cannot resist pointing out that a perfect anagram for SIR PIERCIE SHAFTON is IRONIC SHAFTSPIERE. 'Shaftspiere' is at least as close to 'Shakespeare' as 'Shake-scene,' which our orthodox brethren without exception construe as a reference to the Bard.

*Year in the Life (continued from page 27)*

did mercy come ... And saved my life, saying, 'Not you.'"<sup>5</sup>  
 From the dedication of *Lucrece* in 1594.  
<sup>6</sup> Sonnets 25 and 26.  
<sup>7</sup> It would seem entirely possible that Cecil threatened to charge Oxford himself with treason for writing the deposition scene in *Richard II* and/or for allowing the Lord Chamberlain's Men to perform it at the request of the conspirators – although it's difficult to see how he could have avoided revealing Oxford as the author of the Shakespeare works. There is no direct evidence that Southampton personally gained the playwright's authority to use the play for propaganda, but many historians have assumed it (possibly correctly); for example: "It was he [Southampton] who had arranged the performance of *Richard II* before the rebellion," Catherine Drinker Bowen writes without qualification in *The Lion and the Throne* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1956, p. 154). And Oxford appears to suggest in Sonnet 35 that he had authorized Southampton to use the play: "All men make faults, and even I in this./ Authorizing thy trespass with compare..." Also in that verse he pledges to help the younger earl by making some legal agreement that would harm himself: "Thy adverse party is thy Advocate./ And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence."<sup>8</sup>  
 Hamlet interrupts his own tirade against King Claudius to write down his thoughts and feelings. "O villain, villain, smiling damned villain!" he cries, only to stop cold and mutter, "My tables. Meet it is I set it down that one may smile, and smile, and be a villain – at least I am sure it may be so in Denmark. (*Writes*)" – *Hamlet*, 1.5.106; and this appears to reflect Oxford's habit.<sup>9</sup>  
 Scholars such as Duncan-Jones see linkages

of two or three sonnets throughout the sequence, particularly among the 80 "prison" verses, to the point where they all read as a continuous narrative poem.  
<sup>10</sup> Sonnet 106: "When in the Chronicle of wasted time..."  
<sup>11</sup> Sonnet 107, celebrating Southampton's release from the Tower on April 10, 1603: "Not mine own fears nor the prophetic soul/ Of the wide world dreaming on things to come/ Can yet the lease of my true love control./ *Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.*"  
<sup>12</sup> May, Steven, *Studies in Philology* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 48; and *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets* (Asheville: Pegasus Press, 1999), 255, 330; the poem was later entitled *The Passion of a Discontented Minde*; to May goes credit for confirming Essex's authorship and offering details of its composition in the Tower.  
<sup>13</sup> *The Arraignment, Tryal, and Condemnation of Robert Earl of Essex*, 1679, edited by Margaret Pierce Secara and reproduced at <http://renaissance.dm.net/trial/index.html>. A direct record is in Calendar of State Papers Domestic, Acts of the Privy Council (Cecil Papers, Hatfield House); and William Camden included an account in his *Annals* of 1630.  
<sup>14</sup> Sonnet 76: "And keep invention in a noted weed"  
<sup>15</sup> Strickland, Agnes, 675.  
<sup>16</sup> Stopes, Charlotte Carmichael, *The Life of Henry, Third Earl of Southampton* (New York: AMS Press, 1969, reprinting of the 1922 edition), 243.  
<sup>17</sup> Stopes, op. cit., 198; Handover, P.M., *The Second Cecil* (Great Britain: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1959), 224, citing the Camden Society, 66.  
<sup>18</sup> Researcher Nina Green first suggested that Oxford may have been "40" on her private

email forum *Phaeton*; otherwise the most frequently mentioned possibility has been Oxford's friend Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham, Lord High Admiral (and hero of the 1588 victory over the Armada), who was also one of Elizabeth's closest confidantes.  
<sup>19</sup> Akrigg, G. P. V., ed., *Letters of King James VI & I* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 192-195; James wrote to the Earl of Mar and Edward Bruce on April 8, 1601, that Cecil "is king there [England] in effect."  
<sup>20</sup> Duncan-Jones, Katherine, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Great Britain: the Arden Shakespeare, third series, 1997), 206; Bellamy, John, *The Tudor Law of Treason* (Great Britain: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1979), 33; Booth, Stephen, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1977), 211.  
<sup>21</sup> May, *Studies in Philology*, op. cit., 95, citing *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, ed. John Roche Dasent (London, 1906), XXXI, 155, 262.  
<sup>22</sup> Salisbury Papers, vol. XI, p. 72: "After February 19, 1601."  
<sup>23</sup> Stopes, op. cit., 224.  
<sup>24</sup> "Elizabeth did not waver – though once, it is true, she remanded the order for Essex's execution, then canceled her remander" – Bowen, op. cit., 163.  
<sup>25</sup> Duncan-Jones, op. cit., writing that "whereas in Sonnet 1 [and other marriage sonnets] procreation was recommended as the means of preserving *beauty's rose*, that power is here attributed to poetry."  
<sup>26</sup> TIME, appearing only in the Fair Youth series (1-126) represents the ever-dwindling time left in the life and reign (and ultimately the dynasty) of Queen Elizabeth; this is the concrete timeline of the diary.

(Continued on page 32)

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*Year in the Life (continued from page 31)*

- <sup>27</sup> Nearly all editions emend “monument” to the plural “monuments,” but I see no reason for it.
- <sup>28</sup> Within the monument is this diary linked to real events in real time, so the record of Southampton’s life is in fact “living” and dynamic, as he had promised in Sonnet 18: “So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”
- <sup>29</sup> Southampton, upon his release in Sonnet 107, will have been “supposed as forfeit to a confined doom” or judgment of perpetual imprisonment.
- <sup>30</sup> Oxford is writing of various kinds of “judgment” aside from the biblical Final Judgment. One meaning is related to the verdict of high treason against Southampton at the trial, which will be reduced to a “better judgment” of “misprision” of treason, enabling him to be released and to gain a royal pardon. This reduction of the verdict will be announced in Sonnet 87: “So thy great gift [of life] upon *misprision* growing / Comes home again, on *better judgment* making.”
- <sup>31</sup> “Lovers” as Brutus uses the term: “Romans, countrymen, and lovers, hear me for my cause.” – *Julius Caesar*, 3.2.13, i.e., loyal subjects or supporters.
- <sup>32</sup> Hotson, Leslie, *Mr. W. H.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 28.
- <sup>33</sup> Chiljan, Katherine, ed. (*Letters and Poems of Edward, Earl of Oxford*, 1998), 123; Oxford to Elizabeth, June 1599, Cecil Papers 71.26.
- <sup>34</sup> Stopes, op. cit., 225-26.
- <sup>35</sup> Chiljan, op. cit., 106.
- <sup>36</sup> Wilson, J. Dover, ed., *The Sonnets* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), notes for Sonnet 66.

*Will in the World (continued from page 4)*  
 living-but-thought-about-as-if-dead John Shaksper—“a play about a son struggling to set his father’s soul free.” Greenblatt, however, in any event, does not think that *Hamlet* is Shakespeare’s most autobiographical play; he thinks that distinction belongs to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. He suggests, too, that Shakespeare lived a double life—one amongst the London glitterati and another, quietly and alone, in rented rooms or in occasional domestic retreat during summer holidays with the wife and kids in Stratford – the same wife with whom he did not want to share a grave, a daughter with whom he would have a difficult relationship, and a little boy who may have inspired but did not even appear in, let alone dominate, the dramatic action in the play ostensibly loosely named after him.

Shakespeare’s “life,” as one can readily see both in Greenblatt’s book and Gopnik’s survey, makes absolutely no sense of the man—Adam Gopnik’s desperate attempt to give Greenblatt’s chaotic and disharmonious biography shape and symmetry aside. Greenblatt, like the biographers before him, is left largely to supposition, conjecture, guesswork, intuition, imagination and reliance on hearsay and rank nonsense in attempting to sort the man from the legends and reconcile the man to the works. He seems, in his attempt to come to terms with the phantom writer from Stratford, to want it each way, all ways and every way – and perhaps, finally, we cannot fault Greenblatt or reviewers like Adam Gopnik too much for that. Theirs, after all, is the

path of all would-be Shakespeare biographers and their apostles who, like so many before them, have begun their hopeful journey to the Emerald City of Stratford by taking one of many roads only to have their journey ended by discovering that once they gain entry to the citadel, they find out they’ve entered a world where horses constantly change their colors and all the residents are dupes who are ruled by a fraud.

Greenblatt’s “biography” (for which, it is rumored he was paid \$1 million dollars), leaves readers, therefore, right where they began: dazed and baffled in Munchkinland, ready for yet another house to be dropped on them, lost in the forest, or drugged and asleep amongst the poppies. When will readers, one has to wonder, stop paying heed to the frenzied wizards of Stratfordianism and, fed up with being told to stop their pestering inquiries because “Oz has spoken!” start to exercise their curiosity and discover that the man who is the real wizard is the man behind the curtain?  
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