



# Shakespeare Matters

"The Voice of the Shakespeare Fellowship"

Vol.4:no.2

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

Winter 2005

## Who wrote *The Spanish Tragedy*?

By C. V. Berney

**T**he *Spanish Tragedy* was one of the most popular and important plays of the Elizabethan era. If you ask an academic who wrote it, the reply will be "Thomas Kyd, of course," and it will be given in a voice ringing with authority and certitude.

But it may not be quite that simple. In their introduction to the play, Brooke and Paradise note that

The early editions of *The Spanish Tragedy* are all anonymous, and none of the theatrical notices of the play mentions Kyd. We owe our knowledge of his authorship to Thomas Heywood, who quotes three lines (IV.i.86-88) in his *Apology for Actors*, 1612, with the words: "Therefore, M[aster] Kid, in his Spanish Tragedy, upon occasion thus presenting itself, thus writes."<sup>1</sup>

So Kyd was identified as the author by a single arcane allusion published at least two decades after the play was written.

But surely, a lot is known about his life, his education, his writing habits. Actually, no. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* tells us he was baptized 6 November 1558 in London. It then discusses *The Spanish Tragedy*, and skips to his final months. He was rooming with Christopher Marlowe in 1593 when he was arrested for atheism and questioned under torture. After this ordeal he wrote a letter to the authorities stating that the heretical material found in his apartment was Marlowe's. He died the next year. The *Britannica* states "That letter is the source for almost everything that is

(Continued on page 19)

## Fellowship's 3rd annual meeting held in Baltimore



Among the activities at the 3rd Annual Shakespeare Fellowship Conference in Baltimore was the awards banquet, where special recognition was bestowed on Dr. Gordon Cyr (left) for Lifetime Achievement and Tom Regnier (right) for Scholarship. Outgoing Fellowship President Alex McNeil (center) presented the awards.



Playing Oxfordian Jeopardy (or, as billed in the conference program, JEOPardy) over the weekend are (from left) Hank Whittemore, Michael Dunn, and Ron Hess. Adapting the popular game show format to an Oxfordian-Shakespeare venue came about courtesy of Alex McNeil—himself once a contestant on the real Jeopardy show—who also presided over the questioning.

**S**ixty members gathered in Baltimore, Maryland, in early October for the third annual conference of the Shakespeare Fellowship. The program was varied, with over 20 speakers, a debate, and several theatrical performances, including productions of *Julius Caesar* by the Baltimore Shakespeare Festival, "Dethroning a Deity" by Michael Dunn in the persona of Charles Dickens, and *Shakespeare*, a show about Oxford as the bard, by Kinetic Energy of Australia. Keynote speaker Tom Regnier and Dr. Gordon Cyr received conference awards for outstanding scholarship and contributions to the Oxfordian movement.

Regnier, a lawyer and author of the 2000 *Miami Law Review* article, "Could Shakespeare Think Like a Lawyer?" instructed and entertained his audience with a fascinating paper titled "Shakespeare's Law." He cited instances from several plays, including *Hamlet*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure* and *Merry Wives*

(Continued on page 8)

## Letters:

To the Editor:

It doesn't seem six years since I began to perceive *The Sonnets* from a new angle and the picture started to change. After a long gestation it all happened quickly and I thought it was so simple that everyone would see it right away, even to the point of worrying it might be stolen out from under me. Of course, that's a laugher—a transformation of this size is not always welcome or easy. There are those who think "out of the box," and to them I'm grateful; others will need to reconfigure the whole thing so they can handle it in their own way.

Meanwhile I'd like to thank my colleagues Lynne Kositsky and Roger Stritmatter for their time and attention ("A Critique of the 'Monument' Theory," Fall 2004 issue).

My reply is in *The Monument*, now published and available to all (see page 29 for details on ordering a copy).

Hank Whittimore  
Nyack, NY  
15 January 2005

To the Editor:

An important argument to refute is the Stratfordian claim that a person of noble blood could not have written such masterworks as "Shakespeare's" plays, and that, to quote A.L. Rowse, such literary gems are "...never written by an Earl." To this Oxfordians seem to tick off the same boilerplate list of notable writers with aristocratic blood, a stable that includes Byron, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Conrad and others.

The name usually absent from the roster is that of Vladimir Nabokov, who, as biographer Brian Boyd has stated, "...was often acclaimed the greatest writer alive, the standard against which other writers should be measured, the one certain choice for a Nobel Prize."

Believed to be a descendant of the 14th century Russianized Tatar prince, Nabok Murza, he was distinctly of the Russian

*dvoryanstvo* (nobility), with a recent lineage that included his maternal grandmother, Baroness Maria von Korff, and paternal grandfather Dmitri Nikolaevich Nabokov, who was Minister of Justice under two Czars and who turned down the offer of an earldom from Alexander III in favor of a monetary stipend.

Exiled to Europe after the Russian Revolution, Vladimir Nabokov achieved fame there as the Russian-language poet and novelist "Sirin," then came to America to produce masterworks in English, his second language (he was also fluent in French), among them *Lolita*, *Pale Fire*, and *Ada*. He was an amateur lepidopterist of the first rank, describing a species new to science, and in his youth had excelled at both soccer and tennis.

Upon the publication of *Ada*, John Leonard of the *New York Times* wrote: "If he doesn't win the Nobel Prize, it's only because the Nobel Prize doesn't deserve him." When the Nobel Prize went not to Nabokov but to Solzhenitsyn in 1970, the latter wrote to Nabokov that *he* was much more deserving of the award, and later nominated Nabokov himself. Nabokov's reputation as a literary genius continues to grow long after his death.

Far from being an afterthought in this argument about literary claimants both common and royal, Vladimir Nabokov ought to be the poster boy of aristocratic legitimacy. The notion that because most geniuses do not spring from nobility, therefore *no* geniuses may spring from nobility, is ridiculous on its face, and there is no more palpable proof of this than the life and writings of Vladimir Nabokov.

Jack Wennerstrom  
Randallstown, Maryland  
3 November 2004

### A notice to our readers

**Our Winter 2005 issue is being sent to you later than normal, for which we apologize.**

**Please be assured that our next two issues (Spring 2005 and Summer 2005) will both be coming out soon and put us back on schedule.**

**Expect your Spring 2005 *Shakespeare Matters* in early June, and your Summer 2005 *Shakespeare Matters* in late July/early August.**

### Shakespeare Matters

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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).

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

## President's Letter

From Lynne Kositsky

As I sit down to write this, snow is swirling past my window and it's absolutely freezing cold. I can hardly believe that in six weeks we'll all be at Dan's Shakespeare Authorship Conference in Portland, with the trees blossoming and flowers in full bloom; two weeks later I hope to see you at Harvard in Cambridge for the Oxford Dinner, and at the end of September we'll meet at the Ashland, the home of the wonderful Ashland Shakespeare Festival, for our own annual conference.

Very good news on that front. The SOS board has voted overwhelmingly to join us. This will be the very first Shakespeare Fellowship/Shakespeare Oxford Society joint conference. We will publish information on the conference as soon as possible, both on the website and in *Shakespeare Matters*, and I urge our members to register and reserve hotel rooms as fast as they can, so as to secure the best available accommodation and theatre tickets.

I need to bring you all up to date on what has transpired at the Fellowship. In October, very regrettably, our president Charles Berney resigned, and his resignation was followed by that of new board member Michael Brame. As first vice president I was obliged to take over the presidency until our next general meeting, at which time a new president will be elected. The board appointed KC Ligon and Michael Dunn to fill the two empty seats. They will also remain in place until the next general meeting. This year our vice president is Roger Stritmatter, our treasurer is Steven Aucella, and our secretary is Ted Story. Bill Boyle remains the editor of *Shakespeare Matters*, and Earl Showerman is taking care of membership. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with any of us if we can be of help to you.

I'd also like to invite you to visit our website, [www.shakespearefellowship.org](http://www.shakespearefellowship.org), if you haven't already done so. You'll find a tremendous amount of information about the Earl of Oxford and Oxfordian events there, and you're also welcome to join us on the forum for stimulating (and sometimes heated) conversation about the authorship question. Our administrators—Ted Alexander, Marty Hyatt, and Roger Stritmatter—keep the boards running smoothly and can help you with any problem you might encounter.

Please renew your membership if it's time for you to do so, and consider giving a donation to our foundation. Every penny that you give to the Shakespeare Fellowship goes to producing a fine newsletter, running the website, and initiating outreach and education.

Warm regards to you all.

## From the Editor

### The Monument theory

As our readers know, our last two issues presented a new theory on the Sonnets (Hank Whittemore's Monument theory, Summer 2004) firmly supported by some of us, followed in turn by a critique of that theory (Fall 2004) which just as firmly rejected it. One would expect in this issue to see a continuation of the dialogue, but the truth is we did not receive a single letter or proposed article either pro or con. We did however have many talks with folks, and understand that our publishing the theory under the headline "Sonnets solved" rankled more than a few. And with the publication of *The Monument* delayed six months, people felt they didn't know enough to comment on the record.

Well, *The Monument* is now published, and as Whittemore says on the Letters page in response to the Fall 2004 "Critique" article, "my reply is in the book." We hope that we do hear from those who read the book in the coming months, because this writer—your editor—and at least a few others in the Fellowship stand by the Summer 2004 issue's headline: Sonnets solved. If you disagree, let's hear from you.

### *Sideways*

It was just a year ago, in our Winter 2004 issue, that we felt moved to comment on a movie (*Peter Pan*) that had nothing to do with Shakespeare because it did seem to have something to do with the concept of "authorship."

Well, darned if the same thing didn't happen again this past winter, and we again feel obliged to bring it up, just briefly, since it seems the perfect comment on what Prof. Greenblatt still doesn't get for all his research on matching up the Stratford man with the Shakespeare text.

The movie is *Sideways*, which just won an Oscar for best screenplay, and which was being talked about as a movie that everyone loved because it was so different and, well, real. The experience we had watching it (not having known a thing about it when we entered the theatre) was that this *had to be* someone's true story; the scene in which the lead character Miles starts explaining the meaning of life and the universe through grape vineyards and wine was the tipoff.

So we came home, "googled" the movie on the internet and quickly found the author: Rex Pickett—the mirror image of Miles. An article about him (in *The Guardian*) notes that in the 1980s Pickett—"a never-published, depressed and miserably divorced author who used his interest in wine to mask his drinking problem"—decided to write "Sideways," a story about a "never-published, depressed, miserably divorced, drinking-too-much" writer (Miles) who takes his old college buddy on a tour of wine country (which of course also happened) the week before his wedding.

Anyway, the simple point here is when, oh when, will the Stephen Greenblatts of the world remember again something they probably already, deep down, know—that the best writing usually comes from a writer honestly, truthfully, spilling his guts? So please, Professor, stop trying to find Stratman in the plays and instead open your eyes to the proposition that Hamlet is the author. It's a simple revelation that changes everything. Trust us, we know.



# Paul Nitze dies at 97

*Prominent American ambassador, diplomat and Medal of Freedom recipient was also an outspoken Oxfordian*

## Paul H. Nitze, 1907-2004

Paul H. Nitze, an adviser to every president from Roosevelt to Reagan (except Carter), a senior foreign policy strategist on arms control, and a staunch supporter of the earl of Oxford as William Shakespeare, died at his home in Washington, DC last October at the age of 97.

Nitze credited Charlton Ogburn, Jr., with persuading him in the 1940s that Oxford was Shakespeare. In 1991, through his connection with the Folger Shakespeare Library, Nitze arranged for Charles Beauclerk, Earl of Burford, to launch his Oxfordian speaking tour at a meeting of the Friends of the Folger. He introduced Burford to the group.

Over the years, he provided support for Oxfordian periodicals, and in 1994 he contributed the foreword to Richard Whalen's book, *Shakespeare: Who Was He?*

In 1995, Nitze gave a dinner meeting at his home that brought together two Oxfordians and two leading Stratfordians. The Oxfordians were Felicia Londre, distinguished professor at the University of Missouri, who has published on Oxford as Shakespeare, and Whalen, who was then president of the Shakespeare Oxford Society. The Stratfordians were David Bevington of the University of Chicago, editor of the HarperCollins collected works of Shakespeare, and Werner Gundersheimer, then director of the Folger.

The purpose, says Whalen, was to explore ways to lessen tensions and foster greater understanding between the two sides in an informal setting: "Paul was charming, gracious and adamant. Quietly and resolutely, he made clear his conviction that Oxford wrote the works of Shakespeare and that recognition for him was long overdue."

Two years ago, at the age of 95, Nitze was honorary chair of the Shakespeare

Oxford Society conference in Washington, DC. At a special dinner in his honor, the society presented him with a plaque recognizing his dedication to the Oxfordian cause.



*Ambassador Paul Nitze (r), pictured with Richard Whalen at the SOS Conference in Washington DC, 2002.*

Last year, the Navy named a guided-missile destroyer for him. Only seven other warships have been named for a living person. Nitze attended the christening.

Nitze played a major role in shaping government defense and foreign policy during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the State Department early in his career, he led a task force on policy toward the Soviet Union that would prevail for decades. Later, he helped negotiate the SALT I treaty and reduce Soviet missile armaments. In 1962, he was one of the top advisers to Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis. He made headlines in 1982 with his "walk in the woods" with a senior Soviet official in a one-man attempt to strike an arms deal.

His government positions included assistant defense secretary, secretary of the Navy, deputy defense secretary, and special adviser to President Reagan on arms control. Reagan awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the government's highest honor for civilians. In its obituary, *The New York Times* called him "a formidable bureaucrat with a brilliant mind and a persuasive pen."

Nitze was co-founder of the School of Advanced International Studies in Washington. Later, it became a unit of Johns Hopkins University, which renamed it in his honor. More than 11,000 students have done graduate studies there.

A Harvard graduate, Nitze went into investment banking and then began government service at the start of World War II. It was in the late 1940s that he met Ogburn in Jakarta, when both were in the State Department. Nitze said in the foreword to Whalen's book that Ogburn (who would publish *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* forty years later) "had strong views about the future of the French and Dutch colonial regimes in Southeast Asia...[and] strong views about the Shakespeare authorship question." Ogburn persuaded Nitze.

"I have devoted most of my life to the practice and theory of politics," wrote Nitze. "For me, Shakespeare is the supreme commentator on the human condition and realities of political society in which men and women must live.... No other writer, no political philosopher, has surpassed Shakespeare's extraordinary insight into the moral and political problems that beset individuals in a society of laws, customs and conflicting needs and ambitions.... Shakespeare has the insider's knowledge of the way power can be used for good or for evil.... The case for Oxford [as Shakespeare] is most persuasive."

## Preview of the 2005 Ashland Authorship Conference

The Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society will be gathering together in Ashland, Oregon, home of the renowned Oregon Shakespeare Festival, in fall 2005 (September 29 to October 2) for each organization's annual membership meetings and for a jointly sponsored Ashland Authorship Conference. Papers are now being accepted for the conference, and registration forms will soon be posted at both the Fellowship and SOS web sites.

The conference will take place at the historic Ashland Springs Hotel and includes tickets to *Richard III* and *Twelfth Night* as well as a backstage tour, a First Folio viewing program, and presentations by noteworthy Oxfordians, members of the festival artistic staff, and faculty from Southern Oregon University. Invited faculty include: Dan Wright, Mark Anderson, Roger Stritmatter, Thomas Regnier, Matthew Cossolotto, Stephanie

Hughes, Paul Altrocchi, Michael Dunn, Blair Oliver, Liz Eckhart, Earl Showerman, and Michael Cecil. Presentations given by Shakespeare festival members will include James Newcomb, an Oxfordian who is starring in the title role of *Richard III*, Dr. Todd Barton, longtime resident composer and music director, and Renaissance music performed by the Terra Nova Consort.

Other plays being produced during the conference include *Love's Labour's Lost*, Marlowe's *Faustus*, *Room Service*, *The Belle's Stratagem*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Gibraltar*, and *Napoli Milionaria!* Ashland is also home to the Oregon Cabaret Theatre.

For further information on the Oregon Shakespeare Festival program and plays, consult [www.osfashland.org](http://www.osfashland.org), for lodgings consult [www.ashlandsspringshotel.com](http://www.ashlandsspringshotel.com), and for questions regarding the conference program contact local coordinator Earl Showerman at [earlees@charter.net](mailto:earlees@charter.net).

## Authorship question surfaces on the Charlie Rose talk show

While most of the authorship news over the past six months has revolved around Stephen Greenblatt's new Shakespeare biography (*Will in the World*), another story has also been in play, and has yielded yet another public supporter of Edward de Vere as the true Shakespeare.

A new film version of *The Merchant of Venice* opened recently, and has received very positive reviews. It stars American actor Al Pacino, and British actors Jeremy Irons and Michael Radford (it is reviewed in this issue on pp 30-32). Last December, in an interview on the Charlie Rose show (which had just a few weeks earlier had Greenblatt as a guest) the three actors talked about the film, and towards the end of the show the interview took a sudden turn into authorship waters.

Fellowship member Ted Alexander, writing on the Fellowship's internet Discussion Forum, posted about the exchange, which came about when Irons matter-of-

factly wondered whether Shakespeare had indeed written the plays. Alexander wrote that Rose seemed "stopped cold" by the comment; Rose then said to Irons that in a recent interview with a Harvard professor (obviously Greenblatt) the professor had stated how "unlikely it was that anyone else had written the plays."

Irons's reply to that was to expound for a moment on the Stratford man's lack of qualifications (nothing written in his hand, illiterate family, etc.—all suggesting that he couldn't read or write), and then to make several comments about how well Edward de Vere *did* fit the role of author, including his visits to Italy, how the plays are based on stories written in Latin, Greek and Italian (which de Vere could read), how he had access to a vast library while growing up, etc.

So, even in the midst of the Greenblatt blitz, it turns out the true story continues to sail on and gain new supporters.

## *Soul of the Age* to begin filming in UK this fall

*Independence Day* director Roland Emmerich wants to shed his reputation for making special-effects blockbusters by shooting "more difficult, socially relevant" films, he said recently.

"I'm older now; I want to do other things," the German-born director said during a news conference at the Berlin Film Festival where he is president of the Competition jury. "*The Day After Tomorrow* was the first step. I did what I always do, but for the first time, there was a message, as well."

Emmerich used the occasion to introduce his new production company Reel Machine. A joint venture between Emmerich and German film fund VIP, it will fully finance projects that Emmerich develops and/or directs.

Emmerich's first feature under the Reel Machine label will be *Soul of the Age*, a political thriller set in Elizabethan England that explores the controversial theory that William Shakespeare was not the author of his famous plays.

"I am convinced that the William Shakespeare we know was a fraud," Emmerich said, "that he almost certainly did not write the Shakespeare plays." He plans to begin shooting *Soul* in England in the fall with an all-British cast.

"This will be a chance for me to show people I can work with actors, that I can direct drama," he said.

Emmerich said he will use substantial special effects in the film—including recreating the entire city of London in the 17th century. The project is a major departure from his previous films.

—Reuters/Hollywood Reporter

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# Have you no shame?

*Greenblatt's Strat bio—and its reception—raises the stakes in the authorship battle*

One featured event at both the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society fall conferences was a critique of Prof. Stephen Greenblatt's Shakespeare biography, *Will in the World* and commentary on the numerous reviews it has received in the mainstream press—some quite glowing. Interestingly, however, despite these sometimes ecstatic reviews (e.g. *The New Yorker*), his academic colleagues have been much cooler in their appraisal of it, correctly noting that there is *no* evidence for most of what Greenblatt writes or, as Peter Dickson pointed out during his presentation at the SOS conference in Atlanta, the evidence that *is* there (i.e. the Stratford man's documented Catholic connections) may in fact help to *disqualify* him from being the author of the Canon rather than qualify him.

In Atlanta Dickson gave a talk in which he displayed and read from the various Shakespeare biographies published over the past 20 years and demonstrated how the authors were more and more contradicting each other as they tried to make sense of the real historical evidence aligned with the Stratford man's putative authorship of the Canon.

Dickson has been researching this Catholic question for nearly 10 years now, and has been predicting for almost as long that differences among mainstream scholars on what he calls the "Catholic issue" would become a schism in the Stratfordian camp, and as events have unfolded over the past several years, his prediction is coming true. Both Michael Wood last year (*In Search of Shakespeare*) and Greenblatt's *Will in the World* this year played the Catholic card—as a way to flesh out the barren biographical story and to provide an element of intrigue to it—but many of their colleagues will have none of it.

And of course the irony here is that this "fleshing out" of the Stratford story and "adding intrigue" to it is clearly in response to the Oxfordian challenge over the past 20 years, but in reading any of



*Peter Dickson at the Shakespeare Oxford Society conference in Atlanta (above) and Ken Kaplan at the Shakespeare Fellowship conference in Baltimore (left) both gave excellent presentations laying bare the shallowness of Greenblatt's Will in the World and his utter failure to explain "how Shakespeare became Shakespeare."*

*Dickson gave a bravura performance—with the last 20 years of Shakespeare biographies lined up on a table in front of him—and emphasized how each of these books reveals that the "Catholic question" is beginning to tear the Stratfordian camp apart.*

*Kaplan stayed with just Greenblatt's book, which provided plenty of material on the "coulda, woulda, musta" nature of its thinking.*

these books there is scarcely a mention of the authorship debate or Oxford (though it should be noted that Greenblatt did say last summer, in the July/August 2004 *Harvard Magazine*, that his work in writing *Will* had now made him "respect the preposterous fantasy [of alternative authorship] rather more than when I began ... because I have now taken several years of hard work and 40 years of serious academic training to grapple with the difficulty of making the connections meaningful and compelling between the life of the writer and the works he produced").

It is just this point about Greenblatt's attempted "meaningful and compelling" connections that was the focus of Ken Kaplan's "State of the Debate" comments at the SF conference in Baltimore. Writing on the Fellowship Forum after the conference Kaplan summed up his talk by noting that "the real significance of the Greenblatt bio is the complete capitulation and tacit acknowledgment of the Oxfordian position and thrust through the last 15 years... books [such as Greenblatt's and other Shakespeare biographers'] would never have emerged if the Oxfordians had not

made such a powerful case of the relationship of the author's life to his work ... This is Stratfordia desperately attempting to ape the Oxfordians."

Kaplan continued

If one is allowed to "imagine" the life to the extent that [huge vacuums] such as the "lost years" can be filled in with entire speculation based on a "mistaken" name on a document [i.e., the "Shakeshaft" name in Lancashire] than the cries of "fantasy" hurled at Oxfordians have no meaning. If Shakespeare is so obtuse, so hidden, that even Strats are now explaining his life and motivation in terms of some form of psychological "concealment," then what's the point of saying "Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare?" ... Therefore, if the imagined life is all we are left with, then I imagine Oxford...

Kaplan's comments are an apt summation of the state of the debate, circa 2004. One could almost say at this point that the behavior of the Stratfordian camp is tantamount to an Oxfordian victory, but we know life is not that easy.

Still, one can only marvel at the shame-

lessness with which this "reinvention" of the Stratford man rolls along with scarcely a hint of introspection on the contradictions it spawns (at least Greenblatt's comments in *Harvard Magazine*, re: alternative authorship, are a bit of a hint).

We'll give the last word here to Richard Whalen, who, in addition to reviewing Greenblatt's book in this issue (page 22), also wrote a letter directly to him asking how he could continue to defend the indefensible.

He asks, "You say in your preface that nothing survives that provides a clear link between Shakespeare's timeless works and Will's particular life. Then, how do we know Will wrote them?"

Whalen then continues:

Same name? Not so. As you know, it was "Shakspere" or a close variant in all the official Stratford church records, his will and the three supposed signatures in London. Because Will was a member of acting companies? That doesn't make him a writer. *Groatsworth?* A convoluted passage that might make him a wannabe actor,

hardly a writer. Testimony of contemporaries? Nothing in Stratford; no comments in London on "Shakespeare," i.e. his works, that link to Will of Stratford. The monument? The original was not the effigy of a writer, per the eyewitness historian Dugdale (1634) and scholarly Rowe (1709). The FF? Nothing definite; only ambiguous allusions. Centuries of tradition? Unreliable and rejected by many eminent writers, jurists, etc. including the late Paul Nitze, who contributed a foreword to my book, *Shakespeare: Who Was He?* (Greenwood/Praeger) and a growing number of professors who, in contrast, find many clear and solid links between Shakespeare's works and the earl of Oxford.

Now that you have somewhat more respect for the case for an alternative author, why not research and write a companion volume on "How Oxford Became Shakespeare." It would be a bombshell in the literary world. I'd help behind the scenes. You'd be even more famous. Think about it.  
—Richard Whalen (My review is attached.)

To date, Whalen has not heard back from Prof. Greenblatt about either his review or his offer of help.

—W. Boyle

## Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference

Concordia University, Portland, Oregon

April 7th to 10th, 2005

I hope that you are looking forward with as much eagerness as I to another illuminating and entertaining conference on the Shakespeare Authorship Question at Concordia University in April. A compelling array of speakers will address us this year, including:

Keynote Speaker **Dr Michael Delahoyde** from Washington State University, and, from universities across America and Europe, **Professor Elizabeth Eckhart**, **Professor Edith Friedler**, **Professor Sandra Schrujjer**, **Professor Richard Hill**, **Professor Tom Shuell**, **Professor Kevin Simpson**, **Professor Ren Draya**, **Professor Alan Nelson**, **Professor Roger Stritmatter** and **Professor Jon Wyneken**, as well as authors **Hank Whitemore**, **Mark Anderson** and **Ramon Jimenez**, **Dr Jan Sheffer** of the Peter Baan Institute in the Netherlands, **Dr Eric Altschuler** of the Institute for Neural Computation at the University of California, San Diego, the **Rev'd John Baker**, **William Jansen**, Mary Sidney expert **Robin Williams**, University of Oregon English doctoral student **Dan Mackay**, *Oxfordian* editor **Stephanie Hopkins** Hughes, *Shakespeare Matters* editor **Bill Boyle**, myself and many others.

We also will be entertained and enlightened by actor **Michael Dunn** who will perform for us, in the persona of Charles Dickens, his most recent contribution to the repertoire of dramatic Oxfordian critiques of Stratfordian orthodoxy, *A Deity Dethroned*.

On the Saturday evening of the conference, during our annual Awards Banquet at the Columbia Edgewater Country Club, we will confer the SASC's Distinguished Achievement in the Arts Award on **Mark Rylance**, the Artistic Director of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London (Mark also will be providing us with a film of the Globe that he is making especially for the SASC), and we will bestow the conference's Excellence in Scholarship Award on **Charles Beauclerk** of Hadleigh, England. The banquet address will be given by **Michael Cecil**, the 8th Marquess of Exeter and the present Lord Burghley. Obviously, this is not a conference you want to miss!

I very much look forward to seeing you in April and sharing with you, through the forum of this international conference, the excitement of the most recent advances that are being made in publication, research and insight by some of the best minds addressing the Shakespeare Authorship Question in the world today. Be sure to consult the conference website for continuous updates regarding the conference, and visit the university's website ([www.cu-portland.edu](http://www.cu-portland.edu) for downloadable directions to the university and a map of the university if you are not familiar with the campus (we're a five minute drive from the Portland airport).

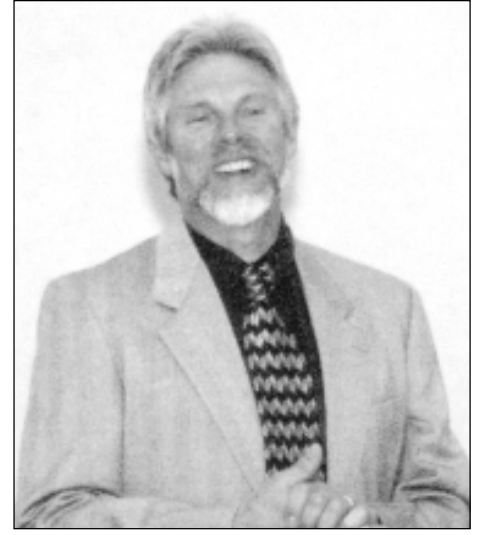
Professor Daniel Wright, Director  
The Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference



*Conference (cont'd from page 1) of Windsor.* In each instance Regnier emphasized that Shakespeare's use of legal terms was not only highly accurate, but, more importantly, demonstrated a highly sophisticated, deeply ingrained understanding of the law—he could think and speak the law, which is a far cry from just quoting it.

Dr. Gordon Cyr spoke about Shakespeare and music, with particular emphasis on a recent book by Ross W. Duffin (*Shakespeare's Songbook*, 2004). Cyr (a composer and musician himself) said that anyone dealing with Shakespeare's song lyrics is at a disadvantage because no one really knows what tunes were meant to accompany a particular song.

He noted also that Duffin does not deal at all with the authorship question (even though his mother Eileen Duffin was an



Lynne Kositsky (left) was conference co-chair (with Roger Stritmatter), and is now serving as the Fellowship's President for 2004-2005. Fellowship trustee Earl Showerman (right), chair of the 2005 conference in Ashland, Oregon, presented a preview of the conference and its exciting venue in Ashland, home of the world famous Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

## **SHAKESPEARE LOVERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!**

### Two Major Oxfordian Organizations to Sponsor Joint Conference in Ashland, Oregon, September 29-October 2, 2005

**A Joint Statement from  
Lynne Kositsky (President,  
Shakespeare Fellowship)**

**and**

**James Sherwood (President,  
Shakespeare Oxford Society)**

We are delighted to announce that our two organizations will sponsor our first-ever joint conference in Ashland, OR, September 29-October 2, 2005.

We believe the venue in Ashland—home of the world-famous Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF)—offers a perfect location for our joint conference. The conference will bring together a wide spectrum of speakers and participants to explore the exciting and important issues surrounding the authorship of the plays and poems of William Shakespeare.

We ask all Shakespeare lovers who are interested in the authorship question to mark their calendars for September 29-October 2, 2005. We believe this joint conference will prove to be a milestone event in celebrating the immortal works of Shakespeare, while opening many eyes with regard to the identity of the true author.

Local Oxfordians, including OSF headliner James Newcomb, who stars in the title role in the 2005 production of *Richard III*, will welcome conference attendees to this picturesque Oregon townlet.

Speakers are already signing up to deliver 30-minute presentations at this first ever joint Conference. We are however, eager to add more speakers to our conference roster. Papers focused on this year's plays, *Richard III* and *Twelfth Night*, are most welcome. How does thinking

about de Vere as the real author inform your understanding of *Twelfth Night*? Is *Richard III* history or Tudor propaganda? And how does the answer to this question affect our image of the author responsible for the play? What rules of evidence and inference should guide our understanding of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatrical literature? What is rotten in the state of Shakespearean orthodoxy?

Please email us with an abstract or paper proposal topic. Slots for presentation are reserved on a first come, first serve basis. Plan ahead!

We hope to see all lovers of Shakespeare at our joint conference in Ashland.

For more information please visit the Fellowship at: [www.shakespearefellowship.org](http://www.shakespearefellowship.org), and the Shakespeare Oxford Society at: [www.shakespeare-oxford.com](http://www.shakespeare-oxford.com).



Oxfordian and he dedicates the book to her!), and therefore he can ignore Oxford altogether in considering such problems as matching up tunes and lyrics for such compositions as "When Gripping Grief,"—a work which Cyr considers to be experimental in a way that only Oxford could have or would have done.

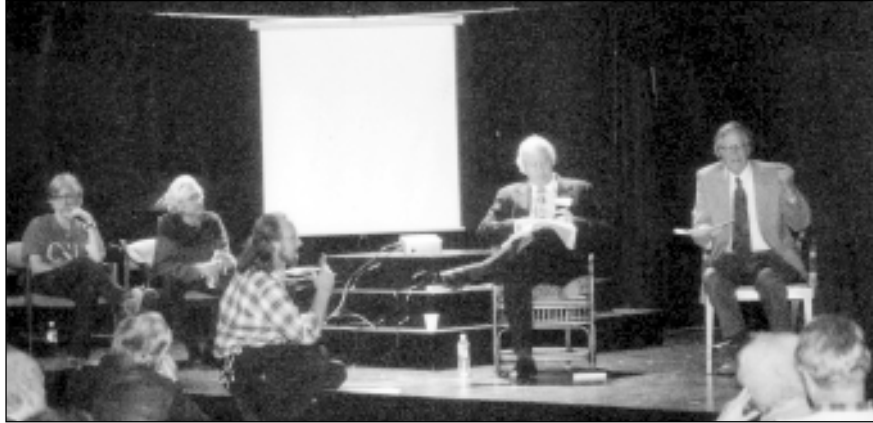
### Stratfordian hypocrisy

Professor Daniel Wright, director of the Shakespeare Authorship Conference at Concordia University (Portland, OR), got the conference in Baltimore off to a rousing start with a presentation that demonstrated the vacuity and perverseness of Stratfordian attacks on Oxfordian efforts to construct a biography of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare when one looks, in contrast, at the dozens of varieties of Stratfordian biography that have been trumpeted by orthodox biographers in recent years alone.

His presentation, "Having it Both Ways: A Study in Stratfordian Hypocrisy," focused on the airy attempts of biographers like Harvard professor Stephen Greenblatt to create and account for the person of an author where no such plausible author exists, coupled with those biographers' Establishment denigrations of the efforts of Oxfordians to put a face on the author that actually is consistent with that of the writer who called himself "Shakespeare."

### Earl of Leicester

Dr. Charles Berney presented a paper entitled "The Earl of Leicester in the Plays of Shakespeare." He postulated three behavioral traits that would remind an Elizabethan audience of the Earl: (1) an illicit



*Special events this year included the debate (top photo) held on the stage where Julius Caesar would later be performed. Roger Stritmatter and Hank Whittmore (middle photo, left to right) represented the Oxfordian side. Also on stage was Shakespeare, a two-person show presented by Graham Jones and Jepke Goudsmit (bottom photo, left to right), who came all the way from Sydney, Australia, to share their compressed bio-drama of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare.*

relationship with a queen; (2) a love of ornate clothing; and (3) a tendency to solve problems in interpersonal relationships by means of poison. Chuck noted that Claudius is the prime example of a character based on Leicester, but that Laertes develops a Leicesterian side in Act 4 when he proposes using a poisoned sword in his duel with Hamlet (LAERTES is a perfect anagram for

ALESTER, and the mountebank from whom he bought the unction reminds one of Dr. Julio Borgarucci, a prominent member of Leicester's entourage). Further references to Leicester in *King Lear*, *Titus Andronicus*, *1, 2, 3 Henry VI*, and *Richard III* were discussed.

### Sonnets and Psalms

Marty Hyatt made two presentations on structural patterns in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. In his first talk, Hyatt presented two new arguments for a 1603 "dating" of sonnet 107. Citing contemporary sources, Hyatt showed that numerological significance was attributed to Queen Elizabeth's age in 1596, during her 63rd year, and again in 1603, when she died during her 70th year. One's 63rd year (the "grand climacteric") was believed to be a critical time in life should one survive that long. And a lifespan of 70 years matches the biblical lifespan given in Psalm 90. Hyatt described a symmetrical pattern in the sonnets in which a grand climacteric of sonnets is marked out in sonnets 38 through 100. The interesting point is that sonnet 107, in which "the mortal moon hath her eclipse endured," falls 7 sonnets later, apparently marking Elizabeth's death in 1603, 7 years after her grand climacteric year. Hyatt's other new argument for dating sonnet 107 to 1603 involves shared imagery with Psalm 72 in which, for example, it is said that there will be an "abundance of peace,

so long as the moon shall endure." Psalm 72 has often been categorized as a "coronation" psalm, and Hyatt believes some of its words and images were used in the composition of sonnet 107 to reinforce the succession theme.

In his second presentation, Hyatt described a number of impressive correspon-

*(Continued on page 10)*

*Conference (cont'd from page 9)*

dences between the sonnets and contemporary versions of the Psalms, confirming a suggestion made by Alastair Fowler on how the 154 sonnets might be matched to the 150 Psalms. However, Hyatt also described some strong counter-examples to this scheme suggesting that Shakespeare did not limit himself to one use for the Psalms.

### From Boar's Head to John Dee

Barbara Burris drew attention to the role of the thumb ring in the personal symbolism of the Ashbourne portrait. Noting other heraldic changes made by Oxford, she connected the boar's head Barrell found on the thumb ring to several other pieces of evidence: 1) an ewer given to Oxford by the Queen, 2) Prince Hal and Falstaff at the Boar's Head tavern in Eastcheap in *Famous Victories* and the Henry plays, 3) Oxford's home at London Stone near the Boar's Head ("Bore's Head, neere London Stone") and 4) a 1602 Privy Council order allowing a troupe of Oxford's layers to continue using their favorite place, the Boar's Head Tavern.

In 1602 the Earls of Oxford and Worcester amalgamated their companies, and two members of the Oxford Worcester group who played at the Boar's Head tavern in 1602 were the well-known Shakespearean actors John Lowin and William Kemp (Ward, Barrell). From 1598 to 1603 there were five actors at the Boar's Head with connections to both the Lord Chamberlain's Servants or Men and the Oxford and Oxford/Worcester troupes (Detobel).

From Knight's 1839 *Illustrated Shakespeare* Burris showed a 19th century drawing of a Boar's Head tavern sign with a 1568 date on the back and a known tavern keeper's name from that year, which was found in a pile of rubbish left from the great fire of London. She connected the iconography of the book and thumb ring in the portrait to the two most personal literary activities of Oxford—his personal verse in the golden book in his hand, and his plays in their most personal connections with the Henry plays and the Boar's Head tavern.

In a talk near the conclusion of the conference Burris's husband, Ron Halstead, looked at connections between Edward de Vere and John Dee, often considered the



*William Niederkorn (l) spoke on Abel LeFranc's case for Oxford's son-in-law the Earl of Derby being Shakespeare, while Jonathan Dixon (r) presented his well-researched case debunking the famous Robert Greene Groatworth quote about the "Upstart crow" (see his essay on p. 12).*

model for *Prospero* in *The Tempest*. Dee was a court astrologer and mathematician with an undeserved reputation as a necromancer. Dee referred to letters from Oxford in 1570, the basis for Ward's guess that Dee taught de Vere astrology. Halstead examined two of Dee's publications near that time that discuss philosophical alchemy. Orthodox scholars have shown the influence of alchemy on *The Tempest*. Halstead argued that Dee taught de Vere the new alchemy, and the influence is seen in *The Tempest*. A parallel influence is that of Dee and alchemy on the imagery of the sonnets, since Dee had met Conrad Gesner in Europe in 1563, and Gesner's book *The New Jewell of Health* was translated by Oxford's physician and dedicated to the Countess of Oxford in 1576. The image of "Lady Alchemy" on the title page is used in the Folger edition of the Sonnets today.

### V&A, letters, and Abel LeFranc

In other presentations over the four days Dr. Roger Stritmatter gave a presentation on *Venus and Adonis*. Stritmatter demonstrated how Elizabethans portrayed themselves allegorically, recalling that Keats had stated that Shakespeare himself had "lived a life of allegory." He went on to show the necessarily allegorical nature of *Venus and Adonis*, delineating the main characters (Venus and Adonis) as representations of Elizabeth and Oxford, and suggesting that the "purple flower" which

"sprung up chequer'd with white" from Adonis's blood likely represented Southampton, the dedicatee of the poem.

Dr. Ren Draya spoke on the importance of continuing research into the correspondence that survives from the 16th century, and the fact that almost all of Shakespeare's plays includes letters passing between the characters. She drew particular attention to the fact that, ironically, no letters have ever been found written by Will from Stratford.

*New York Times* editor William Niederkorn spoke on Abel LeFranc and his case for William Stanley, Earl of Derby, as the author of the canon. Niederkorn researched the LeFranc papers in Paris while there on assignment by the *Times*. He mentioned the possibility that Fernando Stanley, Lord Strange, had been poisoned, thus enabling William to acquire his title and fortune. LeFranc was particularly convinced that *Love's Labour's Lost* was by Derby because of his connections to the French court and the obvious associations of the names of many characters. Thomas Stanley was also given a prominent role in the downfall of Gloucester in *Richard III*.

### Debate

Dr. Stritmatter and Hank Whittemore squared off against Dr. Alan Nelson and Terry Ross, the webmaster (with David Kathman) of the Shakespeare Authorship page, in a public debate co-sponsored by

the Baltimore Shakespeare Festival. The debate was familiar territory, with Nelson trashing Oxford as usual and Ross listing the familiar reasons why Shakespeare was Shakespeare and since no one had ever questioned it then, why question it now? Ross also added that if it wasn't Shakspeare (a proposition which, of course, he doesn't believe), Sackville was a better candidate; this is a topic he will expand on at the Shakespeare Authorship Conference in Portland in April.

Whittemore and Stritmatter in turn emphasized the barrenness of the Stratford story and the numerous reasons why Oxford's life fits the Canon. Whittemore emphasized the numerous connections Oxford had with known Shakespeare sources (Ovid to Lyly, etc.); he also noted the importance of viewing Hamlet as an authorial voice for actors (he had once been an actor), and how this made sense of so much in the play. Finally, he said—as he had at the SOS conference in NYC a year earlier—that Oxfordians are on a great adventure in appreciating Shakespeare and understanding his true role in Elizabethan history, while Stratfordians are on a sinking ship.

Nelson and Ross also gave individual presentations during the weekend. Ross spoke on ciphers and codes, and of course took shots at any and all anti-Stratfordians who had ever touted codes in the debate, including Dr. John Rollet's 6-2-4 decipherment of the Sonnets dedication ("These sonnets all by ever"). Nelson spoke on his Oxford biography *Monstrous Adversary* and answered questions about it.

Other papers of note included "Counterfeit Supposes" by Jonathan Dixon (published in this issue, beginning on page 12), and a joint presentation by Charles Boyle, William Boyle and Hank Whittemore on Whittemore's "Monument" theory of the Sonnets and its implications for the authorship debate, as covered in our last two issues; a lively Q&A exchange followed. Ken Kaplan spoke on the State of the Debate and Greenblatt's book (see pages 6-7)

The conference was a resounding success. The 2005 conference will be a joint event with the Shakespeare Oxford Society, to be held in Ashland, Oregon, from Sept. 29 to Oct. 2. Details regarding the joint conference can be found on pages 5 and 8.

## The Astronomy of the Sonnets

For centuries men studied the stars for one reason only: to predict future events. The terms 'astrologer' and 'astronomer' were interchangeable. The relative positions of the permanent stars were unalterably fixed by divine decree, and the planets, the 'Wanderers,' moved among them, indicating the fates of individuals and dynasties, if one knew how to interpret them aright. The stars were the messengers of the gods.

The view of the old astronomy was that each planet was embedded in its own crystalline shell, which rotated about the earth independently of the others. The smallest shell was that of the moon, and the largest was that of the fixed stars. Everything above the lunar sphere was immutable: change (weather, meteors) occurred only in the sublunary regions.

This view of the universe, based on the idea that the sphere is perfect and therefore divine, and on ignorance of what the stars really are, was only gradually overturned. Two major contributors to the revolution were Tycho Brahe, the first man to make a quantitative science of observation, and Johannes Kepler, who developed theories of planetary motion of unprecedented accuracy. One significant event early on was the appearance of the 'new star' of 1572, now called *Tycho's supernova* (referred to in the first scene of *Hamlet* as "yond same star that's westward from the pole"). Tradition held that the 'new star' must be near the earth, below the moon, since the higher spheres were unchanging. Using large instruments of his own design, the pragmatic Tycho took observations over several months that showed that the new star did not change its position with respect to the fixed stars, and thus was far from earth, contradicting traditional beliefs. Tradition also held that the planets had to move in perfect circles. Kepler spent much of his life trying to calculate planetary orbits in this way. His breakthrough came when he abandoned that premise and asked 'What are the planets really doing?' He then found that if he did the calculations using ellipses rather than circles, he was able to fit Tycho's observations to within their very narrow margins of error. Another 'new star' was seen in 1604; it is known as *Kepler's supernova*. It is surely merest chance that

the first supernova coincided with Henry Wriothesley's conception and the second with Oxford's death (although a wise man has noted that "Chance is the fool's word for fate").

All this is fascinating stuff, to be sure, but what does it have to do with *Shakespeare's Sonnets*? At the Shakespeare Fellowship conference at Baltimore in early October 2004, Hank Whittemore spoke on his theory that the central block of 100 sonnets is intimately related to Henry Wriothesley's imprisonment and eventual release in the wake of the Essex rebellion of 1601. He regards the sonnets as all based on a triangular relationship involving Wriothesley, Queen Elizabeth, and the author, Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford.

The next day Marty Hyatt spoke on mathematical relationships within the sonnets. There are 154 sonnets, with a textual hint that one of them should be ignored, leaving 153. Marty pointed out that 153 is a triangular number of rank 17, and that if the remaining sonnet numbers are arranged as a triangle, related sonnets cluster along the sides. Marty showed a slide illustrating this. I was immediately struck with the visual image of the triangle, recalling the triangular relationship postulated by Hank the previous day.

It seems to me that Hank, Marty and others are doing with the sonnets what Tycho and Kepler did with the stars—that is, transcending traditional assumptions and looking objectively and structurally at what is actually there. Of course the first traditional assumption that must be discarded is the myth of the talented yokel from Stratford—in the present publication that goes without saying. The chance of an orthodox scholar penetrating to the heart of the sonnets is about the same as a camel going through the eye of a needle. But even the Oxfordian community, I believe, has a preponderance of people with a literary orientation, with the unconscious assumption that the meaning is all in the words. Hank and Marty have shown that in a coded message (as the sonnets surely are) knowledge of the underlying structure is necessary to achieve understanding of the words. I believe our understanding of the sonnets is on the verge of passing from astrology to astronomy. —CVB

# “While counterfeit supposes bleared thine eyne ...”

## *Intertextual evidence for Shakspeare as an authorship front man*

By Jonathan Dixon

If in nothing else, anti-Stratfordians are unified in their belief that William Shakspeare was not “William Shakespeare.” Yet uncertainty and disagreement exist over what was the Stratfordian’s role in the authorship question. Was he strictly a businessman with few theater connections who just happened to get confused with the authorship late in the day because of his similar name; or was he actually an actor and involved theater partner? Was he tied to the works of “Shakespeare” from the beginning, or did that connection begin in the 1600s, after the deaths of those directly involved? Was he a play-broker and middleman dealing in old and anonymous plays whose name was merely associated with the plays at first; or was he part of a deliberate deception, working with the true author as an actual “front man” and actively pretending to be the author himself?

Three works published within an approximately two-year period in the early 1590s suggest that the last scenario may have been the case: that Shakspeare—by then in his late twenties and apparently a successful entrepreneur and theatrical jack-of-all-trades—may actually have been deliberately employed as a front-man for the hidden author of the Shakespeare works. Further, they suggest that there were rumors about this pretense, and that some who were in the know were offended by it.

Before looking at those three works, however, a prelude ...

### **1584—Robert Greene’s *The Mirror of Modesty***

In his dedication to the Countess of Derby in *The Mirror of Modesty*, Robert Greene wrote:

your honor may think I play like Aesop’s Crow, which decked her self with others’ feathers or like the proud Poet Batillus, which subscribed his name to Virgil’s

verses, and yet presented them to Augustus. (3:7)

In this passage Greene is referring to the story of the Roman actor Batillus: Caesar Augustus had expressed admiration for a certain anonymous poem and, hearing this, Batillus claimed to be the author. The true author was, in fact, Virgil, who exposed Batillus as a fraud.

By itself this passage means little. However, we should note that in it Greene is tying the image of Aesop’s crow to the historical Batillus’s practice of fraudulently passing himself off as the author of another’s work:<sup>1</sup>

AESOP’S CROW ———> BATILLUS

Now to the first of those three works from the early 1590s:

### **1591—Robert Greene’s *Farewell to Folly***

Several years later Greene returned to “Batillus” in *Farewell to Folly* (originally registered in 1587, but published in 1591). In a letter addressed “to the Gentlemen Students of both Universities” he wrote:

Others will flout and over-read every line [of this pamphlet] with a frump, and say ‘tis scurvy, when they themselves are such scabbed Jades that they are like to die of the fashion, but if they come to write or publish anything in print, it is either distilled out of ballads or borrowed of Theological poets, which for their calling and gravity, being loathe to have any profane pamphlets pass under their hand, get some other Batillus to set his name to their verses: Thus is the ass made proud by this underhand brokery. And he that can not write true English without the help of clerks of parish churches will needs make himself the father of interludes. (9: 232-33)

Greene seems to be referring to a recurring pet peeve: plagiarists and people who take credit for others’ work.

In answer to Diana Price’s use of this quote as evidence supporting the hypothesis that William Shakspeare was a front man, Stratfordians on the *humanities.literature.authors.Shakespeare* online forum have pointed out that the historical Batillus was actually a poet himself (although a bad one), and have argued that in this passage Greene was using “Batillus” to mean simply a “bad poet,” not a front man. They have produced examples of the name “Batillus” being used to describe a bad poet—including one in which Greene referred to himself as a “Batillus.” They argue that in this passage Greene is simply saying that some anonymous bad poets got *other* bad poets to take credit for their work. Furthermore, they claim triumphantly, since the original Batillus was himself a poet, for Oxfordians to refer to Shakspeare as a “Batillus” is thus to acknowledge that Shakspeare was indeed a poet. Also, countering Price’s use of the word “Batillus” to describe a “front man” or “agent,” they point out that the historical Batillus *stole* credit for Virgil’s verse; he was not employed as a front man.<sup>2</sup>

That is all more or less true. However, these orthodox critics are willfully ignoring the most dangerous point of this passage as it relates to the authorship debate: Whatever terminology Greene chose to use, in this passage he is explicitly describing the practice in his day of poets of dignity and rank who wished to remain anonymous to protect their reputations employing other people to take credit for their work.

Greene’s quote should be recognized as one of the most powerful pieces of evidence in the entire anti-Stratfordian case. It should be presented in any presentation on the authorship question because it provides positive proof—repeat—*proof* that in Elizabethan England front men were indeed employed, and possibly paid by, anonymous highly-placed writers for the use of their names. (Greene’s use of the word “brokery” suggests there



was payment somehow involved — that it was a kind of business arrangement.) Further, it confirms that those writers took this course to protect their reputations.

To reverse the direction of the argument for the sake of clarity: Greene tells us there were authorship front men used in his time. That being so, he chose to call them “Batilluses.” Whether the historical Batillus was himself a poet, good or bad, isn’t the point here. The point is that it was the *writers* who initiated the deception, who “got” the front-men. Unlike the historical Batillus, who initiated his own deception and was exposed, Greene’s modern-day “Batilluses” were actually employed by the anonymous writers whose work they took credit for. So, yes, while it is true that the original Batillus was not strictly a “front man,” Greene makes it clear that his modern “Batilluses” were.

Whether those modern-day fronts were also poets themselves, or could have been non-writers, is open to debate. Greene’s reference to a near-illiterate styling himself “the father of interludes” indicates they may *not* have been practicing writers.<sup>3</sup> At any rate the parallels between the historical Batillus and these “Battiluses” aren’t as literal as Stratfordians would insist. Batillus was recognized as a bad poet, a plagiarist who incorporated pieces from others’ work into his own and as someone who had gone the extra step of blatantly taking full credit for a hidden author’s work.

Greene singled out “Theological poets” as those taking part in this practice, but he did not state they were the only ones to do so. While Greene’s passage does not provide proof that poets who were members of the nobility also employed fronts, it is reasonable to assume they might have done so.

That assumption is actually supported by the author of *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), thought to be George Puttenham, who wrote:

Among the nobility or gentry as may be very well seen in many laudable sciences and especially in making poesy, it is so come to pass that they have no courage to write and if they have are loath to be known of their skill. So as I know very many notable gentlemen in the Court that have written commendably, and suppressed it again, or else *suffered it to be published without their own names to it*: as if it were a discredit for a gentleman to seem learned. [Sobran 134; emphasis added]

The phrasing “published without their *own* names to it”—rather than just “published without their names to it”—suggests these works were published not just anonymously, or with made-up pseudonyms, but with *other people’s* names to them.

So, while Greene’s quote may not be a smoking gun proving the Earl of Oxford was Shakespeare, it is a smoking gun proving that the basic Oxfordian

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hypothesis of an illustrious author taking a real-life front man to protect his reputation was, indeed, a genuine practice of the time. It renders moot all objections from Stratfordians that such an arrangement is incredible. While we may not know the details in the case of a “fronted” Shakespeare authorship—how Shakspeare might have come into the picture, what part payment might have played, how much those around might have known, and so on—Oxfordians can no longer be attacked on the question of *whethersuch* real-life front men were used.

In fact, Greene opens up a whole new area of exploration in Elizabethan literature, for given what he tells us, the logical questions become: How widespread was this practice? Who exactly were those hidden poets of “calling and gravity”? What authors are not to this day getting the credit they deserve? And of the names we have on title pages, which were “fronts”? Which works were intentionally misattributed to protect an author’s

reputation?

For scholars of Elizabethan literature to avoid these questions is, at best, a case of poor scholarship and, at worst, intellectual dishonesty, for given what Greene tells us, *all* printed names on title pages become suspect to some degree. The logical questions to propose are: Which names on title pages seemed to be most questioned and doubted? Which writers most have a reputation for “borrowing”? Around which authors did there seem to be authorship-related rumors? Which personages who fit the description “of calling and gravity” were rumored or reported as having published anonymously?<sup>4</sup>

The most notable answer to these questions is “Shakespeare.” On this point it is worth noting what Diana Price points out in *Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography*:

- In 1595, in *Polimanteia*, a writer “W.C.” indicated his belief that “Shakespeare” was Samuel Daniel by praising Shakespeare and some of his poems and characters in a note beside a passage about Daniel (225).
- In satires published in 1598—and subsequently ordered burned by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1599—Joseph Hall and John Marston implied that *Venus and Adonis* was by Francis Bacon (225; also Michell, 126-129).
- In 1599 the authors of the *Parnassus* plays attributed a quote from *Romeo and Juliet* to Samuel Daniel—even though that attribution occurs in an exchange in which the name “Shakespeare” is mentioned two lines earlier, and even though *Romeo and Juliet* had been attributed to Shakespeare a year earlier by Meres, and in that same year by Weever (84).
- Sometime between 1598 and 1601 Gabriel Harvey expressed his belief that “Shakespeare” was Sir Edward Dyer (225). (see note 10 below.)

These examples prove that from 1595 to 1599, at the very least, there was a belief in the Elizabethan literary world that the authorial name “William Shakespeare” did not refer to a real person. They also prove that there was confusion and acknowledged mystery around the authorship of Shakespeare’s works.

Historically, Stratfordians and anti-Stratfordians alike have claimed that doubts about the authorship did not begin until hundreds of years after Shakespeare’s time. That dating is not correct. The above

*(Continued on page 14)*

*Counterfeit supposes* (continued from page 13) examples make it clear that the Shakespeare authorship mystery began during Shakespeare's lifetime, even as the works were first appearing.

Anti-Stratfordians should make much more of those questioning allusions in any debate for they clearly belie the eternal orthodox protest that "no one doubted Shakespeare's authorship during his lifetime." Indeed, I can think of no other Elizabethan writer for whom there is such consistent recorded doubt and identity confusion in the contemporary record. It is especially worth noting that these guesses about "Shakespeare's" identity occurred within the same time period during which Shakspeare, we are told, was at the height of his fame and public exposure, hanging out in taverns with other leading writers, hobnobbing with the nobility, and acting onstage in front of thousands of people.

Which brings us back to 1591 and *Farewell to Folly*. Here, through Greene's second allusion to Batillus, we can build an interesting chain of association:

AESOPS CROW —>BATILLUS —  
—>CONTEMPORARY AUTHORSHIP  
FRONT MEN

Special note should again be taken of the last sentence of Greene's paragraph, for there is a jarring shift in subject. First Greene is talking about how readers of his pamphlet might react to it. Then suddenly—though somehow included in his same train of thought as plagiarists and front-men—he is thinking of someone who can't write without the help of literate clerks.<sup>4</sup> What? How could his readers, who "over-read every line" of his pamphlet, not be able to write "true English"? Greene is clearly referring to a near-illiterate who is wanting to "make himself the father of interludes"<sup>5</sup>—that is, of theatrical pieces. Where does that come from?

### 1592—Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*

Only a year after the publication of *Farewell to Folly*, in the first section of his *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, appeared an apparently autobiographical account of how Greene was cheated and misused by a little-educated, pompous, well-off "country author" and "player" who paid down-and-out writers to create plays for him (Price 46).<sup>6</sup>

This account—rarely mentioned by orthodox scholars—is followed by Greene's frequently-quoted open letter to three playwrights, in which he urges them to cease providing plays to actors who will misuse them, as he himself was misused. In it Greene singles out one particularly offending actor—the "upstart crow" and "Shake-scene"—and implies that moneylending was one of the actor's offenses ("an usurer").

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(In that same year appears the first recorded activity of "Willelmus Shackspere" in London—as a moneylender, making a very large loan of seven pounds.)<sup>7</sup>

Yes trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tigers heart wrapped in a Players hide*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country. (qtd. in Sobran 33)

Greene's *Mirror of Modesty* dedication now becomes important, for the image of Aesop's crow is presented there—equated with Batillus—and provides a reasonable basis for interpreting this passage; here Greene is again using the image of the crow in the same way, implying this "Shake-scene" actor was one of the "Batillus" front men about whom he had complained only a year earlier.<sup>8</sup>

In support of this interpretation, I have elsewhere argued that in this passage the word "supposes" is meant to be taken in the

now obsolete sense of "pretends" (Dixon, *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Spring 2000, p. 7). To review, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in the sixteenth century some definitions of the word "suppose" included:

12. To feign, pretend; *occas.* to forge. *Obs.*
13. To substitute by artifice or fraud [...] *Obs.*

Related entries makes it clear that "suppose" had a definite secondary connotation of fraud and deception that it has since lost. For example, in *The Taming of the Shrew* Shakespeare, using the noun form of the word, wrote:

... Here's Lucentio,  
Right son to the right Vincentio,  
That have by marriage made thy  
daughter mine  
While counterfeit supposes bleared  
thine eyne. (5.1.118-121)<sup>11</sup>

In this example Shakespeare uses "suppose" as a noun which is translatable as "pretenses" or "substitutions."

Another example: the *OED* lists the following definition for the related word "supposed":

2. 'Put on,' feigned, pretended, counterfeit. *Obs.*

The following example is given: "He cuts the ring from the purse, and by his supposed man (rounding him in the eare) sends it to the plot-layer of this knauerie."

This sentence is from a work listed as *Conny Catch*—dated 1592, written by Robert Greene.

Thus, if (1) Greene is known to have connected the image of Aesop's crow with the image of a writer who deceptively took credit for another's work (Batillus), (2) Greene is known to have complained in print—only a year before *Groatsworth* was published—about the practice in his day of anonymous authors employing front men who were credited with their work, and to have called such front men "Batilluses," and (3) Greene is known to have used—in the very same year *Groatsworth* was published—the word "supposed" to mean "pretended," it is reasonable to assume that when he again referred to the image of a crow wearing others' feathers—one "supposing he could bombast out a blank verse"—Greene meant

the upstart actor was *pretending* he could bombast out a blank verse.

If Greene had meant that the “Shake-scene” was just a full-of-himself actor/writer who *believed* himself to be a great playwright, as traditional scholars insist, why would he have chosen the image of Aesop’s crow at all? This is an important point, for Aesop’s crow was not just a self-satisfied bird who “believed” himself to be genuinely beautiful. He was a fraud and con artist. Aesop’s crow was actively trying to deceive, to appear to be what he *knew* he was not. If “supposes” means “pretends,” Greene’s metaphor remains parallel, for Aesop’s crow *pretended* to be a beautiful bird. For the crow allusion to work we must also assume the “Shake-scene” was *pretending* to be an author. Consistent with Greene’s earlier usage of the crow image, pretending to be authors is exactly what “Batilluses” do.<sup>9</sup>

Another word in this famous passage has a secondary meaning which may be relevant to this point. Commentators always read the word “conceit” here as referring to a quality of “conceited-ness.”

However, the *OED* lists additional meanings for “conceit,” other than the usually understood “high self-estimation”:

III. Fancy; fanciful opinion, action, or production.

7. A fanciful notion; a fancy, a whim.  
[example—1611 DEKKER *Roaring Girl*: “Some have a conceit their drink tastes better in an outlandish cup than in our own.”]

7b. Fancy, imagination, as an attribute or faculty  
[example—1590 GREENE *Orl. Fur.*: “In conceit build castles in the sky.”]

8b. A fanciful action, practice, etc.; a trick.  
[example—1579 LYLly *Euphues*: “Practice some pleasant conceit upon thy poor patient.”]

“Conceit” thus also has meanings which imply something fantastically imaginary, unreal, untrue, and perhaps even purposely deceptive; and Greene is listed as having used the word in this sense only two years before *Groatsworth*. Commentators may have been misreading this passage for years.

An equally plausible reading, but one radically different from the traditional, might be:

Yes trust them not: for there is an upstart **con artist fraud**, acting the part of a playwright, who with his *Tigers heart wrapped in a Players hide*, **pretends** he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his own

---

**“... within ... seven months  
two works were registered  
in which references were  
made to an actor who had  
an identity secret—who  
was in a ‘mask,’ ...  
‘beautified’ with others’  
feathers ... ‘supposing’  
to be a playwright.”**

---

**imaginative production** the only Shake-scene in a country.

This sounds very much like the near-illiterate who “needs make himself the father of interludes,” mentioned the year before, and the little-educated, play-commissioning actor from the previous section of *Groatsworth*. (Notice the reiteration of the word “country” here, pointing to an identification of this upstart “Shake-scene” with that pompous “country author” player.)

**1593—Gabriel Harvey’s *Pierce’s Supererogation***

This new interpretation of *Groatsworth* is supported by the appearance seven months later of the pamphlet *Pierce’s Supererogation*, by Gabriel Harvey. As Mark Anderson has discovered, near the end of that pamphlet Harvey writes, in a section on the keeping of secrets:

Pap-hatchet talketh of publishing a *hundred merry tales* of certain poor Martinists; but I could here dismask such a rich mummer and record such a *hundred wise tales* of memorable note with such a smart moral as would undoubtedly make this pamphlet the vendablest book in London and the register one of the famousest authors in England. But I am none of those that utter all their learning at once... (qtd. in “Supererogation,” *Shakespeare Matters*, Spring 2003, p. 31)

A “mummer” is defined by the *OED* as “an actor in a dumb show.” Anderson translates this passage as:

Just as John Lyly (who took the nickname “Pap-Hatchet” in the Martin Marprelate quarrel) threatened to unmask Martin Marprelate, I could here unmask a rich actor — and in doing so, I could make this book the best-selling book in all of London and make yours truly the most famous author in all of England. But I won’t do that ... (“Supererogation” 31)

Greene’s *Groatsworth* was registered on September 20, 1592. Harvey’s pamphlet *Pierce’s Supererogation* was registered on April 27, 1593. Thus, within a space of only seven months two works were registered in which references were made to an actor who had an identity secret—who was in a “mask,” who was “beautified” with others’ feathers, who was “supposing” to be a playwright. The time span between the two works can be shortened even further if we consider that some time must have passed between the registration of *Groatsworth* and its availability on the bookstands, and between Harvey’s writing of this passage and its own registration.

I disagree slightly with Anderson’s interpretation, for it implies that it was solely the dismasking of the mummer which would have made Harvey famous. Harvey’s phrasing implies that the actor’s secret was just one of many secrets he could have revealed. Still, why would a secret about a well-heeled actor be such a spicy topic that Harvey would single it out, among all his other “wise tales”?

*Groatsworth* is known to have caused a commotion upon publication, for when Thomas Nashe was accused of writing it he vehemently denied the charge, and the printer Henry Chettle reported there were protests specifically about the “upstart crow” letter and felt compelled to  
(Continued on page 16)

*Counterfeit supposes* (continued from page 15) apologize. Harvey would almost certainly have been aware of this debacle, for he was involved in a pamphlet war with Nashe and his circle—which included Greene—at the time, and would very likely have found it difficult to resist getting a job in.

Was Harvey bragging that, if he had wanted to, he could have revealed the truth of the situation alluded to in Greene's controversial letter to playwrights? Was he saying that he could have "dismasked" the upstart actor who was pretending to be a playwright? If not, it then falls to orthodox scholars to provide an alternate explanation of who this "rich mummer" was, why he was in a "mask," why his secret was so sensational, and why he should have been on Harvey's mind at the time Harvey was writing this pamphlet.

With such a tempting reward before him, why did Harvey refrain from spilling the beans? Might it have been because some persons "of calling and gravity" (to recall Greene's phrase) would have been displeased? That is a reasonable guess, for as Anderson points out, displeased persons of calling and gravity are precisely those who ended Harvey's writing career: in 1599 the Archbishop of Canterbury and other authorities ordered all his works burned, and Harvey was ordered to stop writing ("Supererogation" p. 31). And Chettle did allude to "diverse of worship" having interceded in the "upstart crow" affair. (If Greene's letter had been simply a matter of jealousy among playwrights—among the "Elizabethan equivalent of comic book writers"—as Stratfordians insist, one must wonder why people of "worship" would have even cared.)

In fact, Harvey himself hinted that this was the case. Immediately following on the above passage he continued:

... and the close man (that was no man's friend, but from the teeth outward; no man's foe, but from the heart inward), may perchance have some secret friends, or respective acquaintance, that in regard of his calling, or some private consideration, would be loath to have his coat blazed, or his satchel ransacked.

Apparently this "rich mummer" had friends in high places. It is interesting that Harvey follows his coy threat to dismask the actor with a reference to this "close" [i.e. secretive] man having an acquaintance

of "calling" who is apparently "loathe" to have the actor's secret publicly exposed. This language, of course, recalls Greene's original "Batillus" commentary two years earlier about "poets, which for their calling and gravity, being loath to have any profane pamphlets pass under their hand ..." And given the "calling" of this secret friend, one wonders if the coat he was loath to have "blazed" was a coat-of-arms, and what exactly he might have had in his

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***"Harvey follows his coy  
threat to dismask the actor  
with a reference to this  
'close' [i.e. secretive] man  
having an acquaintance of  
'calling' who is apparently  
'loath' to have the actor's  
secret publicly exposed."***

---

satchel that he was afraid people would discover.

The reference to the mummer's hypocrisy—that is, being charming toward people (a friend "from the teeth outward"), while nursing secret malevolent thoughts toward them (a foe "from the heart inward")—also sounds very like the Shake-scene actor of six months earlier, described as having a "tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide."

Given the relatively compact time frame here—1591 through early 1593—it is reasonable to hypothesize that in the early years of the 1590s rumors were floating around the London literary world of at least one person—an actor—who was taking credit for others' writings; that there was curiosity about the situation; and that some people in the know were offended by it.

It is also worth noting that Harvey's description of the mummer as "rich"—something very few actors of the time could claim to be—again recalls the well-off, moneylending, play-commissioning

player Greene had described seven months earlier.<sup>10</sup>

That is not the end of the story, however. An epilogue:

### **1603—Henry Crosse's *Vertues Commonwealth***

As Diana Price has shown, in 1603 Henry Crosse referred back to *Groatsworth*, echoing Greene's complaints about actors in general, picking up on his connection between actors and moneylenders, re-using some of Greene's wording ("anticks," "puppets"), and reiterating the "Grasshopper and the Ants" fable told in the final, rarely-mentioned section of *Groatsworth* (54-56). Crosse wrote:

He that can but bombast out a blank verse, and make both the ends jump together in a rhyme, is forthwith a poet laureate, challenging the garland of bays, and in one slaving discourse or other, hang out the badge of his folly. Oh how weak and shallow much of their poetry is ... in so much that oftentimes they stick so fast in mud, they lose their wits ere they can get out, either like Chirrilus, writing verse not worth the reading, or Batillus, arrogating to themselves, the well deserving labors of other ingenious spirits. (qtd. in Price 55)

Some Oxfordians argue that Greene's earlier passage about the upstart actor "bombasting out a blank verse" refers to the actor's improvising on stage—that is, verbally adding words to the playwright's written text—and not to the actual writing of plays. Crosse, however, makes it clear that the bombasters he is thinking of were dealing in *written* words ("writing verse not worth the reading")—whether they actually wrote them or not.

Here it is also notable that Crosse refers back to the subject of Batillus at all, as Greene himself *didn't* mention "Batillus" in the "Shake-scene" passage Crosse is referring back to. The fact that Crosse should have done so is an indication that in the Elizabethan mind the association of "Aesop's crow = Batillus" was a readily understood convention.

It should also be noted that Crosse's passage is the only contemporary interpretation of the *Groatsworth* letter we have. Stratfordians may continue to argue that the "Shake-scene" passage simply reflects Greene's envy that a mere



actor should show success at writing, but the existing documentary evidence does not support that interpretation. Instead, it suggests that Elizabethans interpreted the passage as referring—at least in part—to an unethical “Batillus”-type figure, one associated with actors, taking credit for others’ work.

In response, Stratfordians protest that the moralist Crosse was complaining about bad and unethical poets in general, not about the “Shake-scene” actor specifically. (In their minds, of course, he is Shakspeare/Shakespeare.) Still, it cannot be denied that a passage about heartless actors misusing playwrights *for some reason* put Crosse in mind of unethical poets taking credit for others’ work. On the surface those are two quite different subjects. One wonders why they were so associated in Crosse’s mind that the *Groatsworth* letter should have inspired that mental leap. Further, it cannot be denied that the specific passage which turned Crosse’s mind to thoughts of Batillus “arrogating to [himself] the well-deserving labors of other ingenious spirits” was a passage in which one—and only one—offending actor was singled out: the “Shake-scene.” Even ten years later people were still suspecting something fishy with “Shakespeare” and the actors.

All this presents a picture that is internally consistent from a number of different angles. In the case of *Groatsworth* specifically, it is the most reasonable interpretation—and it completely undercuts Stratfordians’ only contemporary document tying (they believe) Shakspeare of Stratford to a literary career. In fact, it actually turns their strongest weapon against them. To review:

1591: Robert Greene stated that in his time there was a practice of certain highly-placed anonymous writers of “calling,” in order to protect their reputations, employing front men to take credit for their work. Greene associated such front men with the historical Batillus. (He had earlier associated Batillus with Aesop’s crow.) Greene then tied those contemporary front men to a near-illiterate who wished to be thought “the father” of theatrical pieces.

1592: Greene wrote of how he was misused by a little-educated, well-off “country” actor who hired others to write plays for him. Then, in a letter warning playwrights against unethical actors in

general, Greene expressed anger at one specific actor, referring to him (again in reference to “the country”) as a “Shake-scene,” emphasizing his callousness and hypocrisy, associating him with Aesop’s crow, and saying he “supposed” himself a playwright. He connected this actor to moneylending activities. In this same year Greene had elsewhere used the word “supposed” to mean “pretended.”

1592: “Willelmus Shackspere” is recorded as having loaned a large amount of money in London.

1592: Greene’s “Shake-scene” letter created a controversy and Chettle acknowledged that highly-placed people had interceded and put pressure on him about publishing it.

1593: About six months later, Harvey—in a pamphlet that was part of his ongoing war with the literary circle with which Greene was associated—bragged that he knew a sensational secret about a well-off, malicious, hypocritical actor whom he could have “dismasked” if he had wanted to. This actor had a highly-placed “secret acquaintance” of “calling” who was “loath” to have the actor’s secret, and his own identity, revealed.

1603: Ten years later Crosse referred back to *Groatsworth*, interpreting the “Shake-scene” letter as referring in part to moneylending actors and people who were involved in such unethical “Batillus”-type activities as taking credit for others’ writing.

Stratfordians have always insisted that the blank-verse-bombasting “Shake-scene” actor of *Groatsworth* is their beloved moneylending Stratfordian entrepreneur, William Shakspeare. Anti-Stratfordians can now afford to cheerfully agree with them on this, for given the picture presented above, the case for the “Shake-scene” being merely a front man for the true, hidden author of the Shakespeare plays—Greene does, after all, allude to *3 Henry VI* in his passage—is quite substantial indeed.

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1. Here is the relevant Aesop fable of the crow (a “jackdaw” is the smallest member of the crow family) who “decked” and “beautified” himself with others’ feathers:

The Vain Jackdaw

Jupiter determined, it is said, to create a sovereign over the birds, and made proclamation that on a certain day they should all present themselves before him, when he would himself choose the most

beautiful among them to be king. The Jackdaw, knowing his own ugliness, searched through the woods and fields, and collected the feathers which had fallen from the wings of his companions, and stuck them in all parts of his body, hoping thereby to make himself the most beautiful of all. When the appointed day arrived, and the birds had assembled before Jupiter, the Jackdaw also made his appearance in his many feathered finery. But when Jupiter proposed to make him king because of the beauty of his plumage, the birds indignantly protested, and each plucked from him his own feathers, leaving the Jackdaw nothing but a Jackdaw. (Aesop)

2. It is impossible to reference all the messages regarding “Batillus” posted on the *hlas* discussion group, of course, but anyone who goes to Google can search the term for themselves under “Groups.” Restrict the search to the group “humanities.lit.authors.Shakespeare” and enter the search term “Batillus.”
3. Greene’s sentence — “And he that can not write true English without the help of clerks of parish churches will needs make himself the father of interludes.” — of course puts one in mind of the infamously crude surviving signatures of William Shakspeare, about which experts on historical documents and handwriting have made comment. (See Price, Ogburn, Whalen for more detailed commentary.)
4. It is worth mentioning that in 1589, immediately before this decade of ambiguity and confusion about the Shakespeare authorship, the author of the *Arte of English Poesie*, in addition to revealing that some noblemen were publishing poetic works under names other than their own, also singled out Edward de Vere as being “first” among a number of noblemen who would have been acknowledged to write “excellently well” if their “doings could be found out and made public with the rest.” (Sobran 134)
5. The *OED* defines an “interlude” as

1. A dramatic or mimic representation, usually of a light or humorous character, such as was commonly introduced between the acts of the long mystery-plays or moralities, or exhibited as part of an elaborate entertainment.

Interludes were popular in the early to mid-1500’s, and by the time of Greene’s quote in 1591 would have been old hat; yet he speaks of the near-illiterate in the present tense. We may guess he was deliberately choosing an old-fashioned “crude” style of drama to point up the unsophisticated nature of the one who “can not write true English,” yet would “make himself the father” of theatrical pieces.

6. I have written as if it is a fact that Robert

(Continued on page 18)

*Supposes (Continued from page 17)*

Greene was the author of *Greene's Groatworth*. As is well known in anti-Stratfordian circles, there is room to doubt this. I wrote as I did for the sake of clarity and convenience, for it doesn't hurt the case if *Groatworth* was actually written by Chettle or some other person claiming to be Greene.

If such was the case, it would merely indicate that someone was attempting to write in Greene's style, using his previous imagery and language. That person can still easily be posited to have been someone involved in the London literary and theatrical scene who was "in the know" about the upstart "Batillus" actor, and Greene's history with that actor. In fact, it can be posited even further that the anonymous writer purposely chose to complain about this apparently touchy subject (if we are to take Harvey's reticence to reveal it as an indication of such) under the name of "Robert Greene" because he knew that: 1) Greene had already protested against the practice of employing front men only a year before; and 2) Greene was now safely dead and beyond retribution.

Most Stratfordians, however, continue to insist that Greene was the true author of *Groatworth*. Oxfordians can now easily afford to agree with them in this, for, given the above, that position hurts them even more than if Greene had *not* been the true author. Given Greene's documented attitude toward the "Batillus" front men of his time, his documented equation of a crow wearing others' feathers with Batillus, and his documented use of "supposed" to mean "pretended" in the very same year *Groatworth* was published, it is consistent with his prior writings that he should have used the image of Aesop's crow to complain of an actor/front man pretending to be a playwright.

7. As Diana Price points out, orthodox scholars typically reject this 1592 "Clayton loan" as referring to "some other Shakespeare," even though it is congruent with Shakspeare's known later moneylending activities. The only reason this fact is rejected is that it does not square with Stratfordians' *belief* about Shakspeare's early London career. It is awkward for them to picture their gentle, sensitive, aspiring poet making his City debut as a moneyed "usurer" (20-23) (This even despite the fact that in that very same year Robert Greene clearly implied that the "Shake-scene" — whom Stratfordians believe *was* Shakspeare — *was* involved in moneylending: That section of Greene's paragraph is typically edited out and ignored in orthodox biographies.

8. Although in this passage the crow isn't specified as Aesop's crow, as in Greene's first allusion, and although the Classical

image of a crow was also used generally in Elizabethan times to refer to a plagiarist, or an undeserving bird on a privileged perch (Price 48), we may guess that here Greene was referring again to Aesop's crow, for it was only Aesop's crow who specifically "beautified" himself with others' feathers.

9. Another fable by Aesop sheds light on the character of the crow as a "pretender," rather than a "believer":

The Jackdaw And The Doves

A jackdaw, seeing some Doves in a cote abundantly provided with food, painted himself white and joined them in order to share their plentiful maintenance. The Doves, as long as he was silent, supposed him to be one of themselves and admitted him to their cote. But when one day he forgot himself and began to chatter, they discovered his true character and drove him forth, pecking him with their beaks. Failing to obtain food among the Doves, he returned to the Jackdaws. They too, not recognizing him on account of his color, expelled him from living with them. So desiring two ends, he obtained neither. (Aesop)

10. It is worth noting that Harvey makes this seemingly out-of-the-blue allusion to the "rich mummer" at the end of a pamphlet in which, as Anderson points out, he also ridicules an incident from the life of Edward de Vere, and seems to allude to, and parody, Shakespeare's soon-to-be published *Venus and Adonis* ("Potent Testimony", "Ross's Supererogation"). It can thus be argued that Edward de Vere, the well-off actor Shakspeare, and the author "Shakespeare" were all apparently associated in Harvey's mind. If Harvey was indeed aware of de Vere's authorship secret and his use of Shakspeare as a front, his reference to a secret about a "rich mummer" suddenly makes a lot of sense: In such a context it would have been a very pointed "tale" for him to single out — a way of indirectly saying, "Hey, Oxford and your cronies: I know your secret and could ruin it for you if I wanted to." In fairness, however, it must also be noted that several years later, sometime circa 1598-1601, Harvey seemed to be of the opinion that Sir Edward Dyer was the author of *Venus and Adonis*, writing, "The younger sort takes much delight in Shakespeare's *Venus, & Adonis*: but his Lucrece, & his tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, have it in them, to please the wiser sort. Or such poets: or better: or none. [following appear the Ovidian lines from the title page of *Venus and Adonis*]

Vilia miretur vulgus: mihi flavus Apollo  
Pocula Castalieae plena ministret aquae:

quoth Sir Edward Dyer, between jest, & earnest. Whose written devises far excel most of the sonnets, and cantos in print."

(qtd. in Price 225, citing G.C.M. Smith, *Gabriel Harvey's Marginalia*, 232-233) This, of course, suggests that Harvey believed that Dyer, not Oxford, was Shakespeare, and thus conflicts with the above Oxfordian interpretation of *Pierce's Supererogation*. Or, perhaps, it implies that Harvey knew *both* Oxford and Dyer to have had hands in writing "Shakespeare." Whatever the case, this quote definitely indicates that Harvey believed there was some kind of authorship deception going on around the writer "Shakespeare," and demolishes once and for all the bedrock Stratfordian claim that "no one doubted Shakespeare's authorship during his lifetime."

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*Spanish Tragedy* (continued from page 1)

known about Kyd's life." Strange how elusive these Elizabethan dramatists are.

Like *Taming of the Shrew*, *The Spanish Tragedy* opens with an induction scene. The ghost of Don Andrea, a Spanish nobleman killed in a battle with the Portuguese, appears with Revenge, a spirit, and they discuss the circumstances of his death. (One is reminded of the scene (5.2) in *Titus Andronicus* in which the empress Tamora presents herself to the seemingly deranged Titus in the character of 'Revenge.') The scene shifts to the Spanish court. Balthazar, the Portuguese prince who killed Don Andrea, is led in as a captive. Two young courtiers, Horatio and Lorenzo, argue over who was responsible for his capture. Horatio is awarded the ransom, but Lorenzo is given custody of Balthazar. Horatio visits Bel-imperia, fiancée of the slain Don Andrea, and they fall in love. However, the King of Spain, who is Bel-imperia's uncle, decides to award her to Balthazar to seal the peace between Spain and Portugal.

Lorenzo and Balthazar visit Bel-imperia's house and find her intimately involved with Horatio. They murder Horatio, and the rest of the play follows the efforts of Hieronimo, Horatio's father, to find the murderers and avenge his son's death. He eventually does so by staging a play within the play, in the course of which Bel-imperia stabs Balthazar, then kills herself, and Hieronimo dispatches Lorenzo and commits suicide.

The common wisdom is that *The Spanish Tragedy* is the direct predecessor of *Hamlet*. The *Britannica* says of Kyd that "his characterization of Hieronimo in *The Spanish Tragedy* prepared the way for William Shakespeare's psychological study of Hamlet." Warren Dickinson has given a list of 12 specific parallels between the plots of the *Tragedy* and *Hamlet*, including similar use of a play within the play; spying, deception and counter-deception, and the death of almost all major characters at the end.<sup>2</sup> Dickinson has focused on plot parallels. Following in the footsteps of Brame and Popova,<sup>3</sup> we will examine similarities in word use ('fingerprints') between *The Spanish Tragedy* (ST) and the Shakespeare canon.

**Names.** The use of *Horatio* for a major character immediately reminds us of *Hamlet*, of course, and the fact that Horatio Vere was Oxford's cousin. An interesting contrast is that in the *Tragedy*, Horatio is the first character to be killed onstage, while in *Hamlet* he is virtually the last one left alive. The major female character is *Bel-imperia*, a name meaning 'Beautiful Empress,' which would make anyone in the Elizabethan court think immediately of the Queen. The other female character, Hieronimo's wife, is named *Isabella*, the Spanish form of 'Elizabeth.' Is the author trying to curry favor with someone? One of the minor characters is named

*Jaques*, a name that Shakespeare liked so well (possibly because of its scatological undertones) that he used it for two separate characters in *As You Like It*. Another name that Shakespeare fancied was *Balthazar*. He used it in four plays, including *Comedy of Errors*, *Much Ado*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. In *Merchant of Venice* the name is used both for one of Portia's servants and for Portia herself, disguised as a young judge.

**Haggard.** The frequent use of hawking imagery by Shakespeare has often been noted.

- Petruchio: Another way I have to man my haggard,  
To make her come, and know her keeper's call . . .
- Hortensio: I will be married to a wealthy widow  
Ere three days pass, which hath as long lov'd me  
As I have lov'd this proud disdainful haggard.  
*Taming of the Shrew* 4.1.193, 4.2.37
- Othello: . . . If I do prove her haggard,  
Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings,  
I'd whistle her off, and let her down the wind  
To prey at fortune. *Othello* 3.3.260
- Ursula: I know her spirits are as coy and wild  
As haggards of the rock *Much Ado* 3.1.36
- Viola: And like the haggard, check at every feather  
That comes before his eye. *Twelfth Night* 3.1.62

In *The Spanish Tragedy* we find

- Lorenzo: In time the savage bull sustains the yoke,  
In time all haggard hawks will stoop to lure . . .  
*ST* 2.1.3

The first half of this quote is also found in *Much Ado* (1.1.260):

- Don Pedro: Well, as time shall try:  
"In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke."

*The Riverside Shakespeare* explains the punctuation<sup>4</sup> by saying the line is an inaccurate quote from Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. Eva Turner Clark says the quote is from *Hekatompathia*, a collection of sonnets attributed to Thomas Watson,<sup>5</sup> published in 1582. Several modern Oxfordian scholars believe that 'Thomas Watson' was one of Oxford's pen names.

**Tickle.** The use of 'tickle' as an adjective or adverb (meaning 'easily affected; not firm or steadfast') is relatively rare.

- Lucio: I warrant it is, and thy head stands so tickle on thy  
shoulders  
That a milkmaid, if she be in love, may sigh it off.  
*Measure for Measure* 1.2.172
- York: Anjou and Maine are given to the French,  
Paris is lost, the state of Normandy  
Stands on a tickle point now they are gone.  
*2 Henry VI* 1.1.214
- Lorenzo: Now stands our fortune on a tickle point  
And now or never ends Lorenzo's doubts. *ST* 3.4.74

(Continued on page 20)

*Spanish Tragedy* (continued from page 19)

**Coy.** The use of 'coy' as a transitive verb is also rare.

Titania: Come sit thee down upon this flow'ry bed,  
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,  
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,  
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.  
*Midsummer Night's Dream* 4.1.1

King: Brother of Castile, to the prince's love  
What says your daughter, Bel-Imperia?

Cyprian: Although she coy it, as becomes her kind,  
And yet dissemble that she loves the prince,  
I doubt not, I, but she will stoop in time. ST 2.3.1

(With this example we get a hawking allusion thrown in for free!)

### Soft and Fair.

Benedick: Soft and fair, friar. Which is Beatrice?  
*Much Ado* 5.4.72

Hieronimo: . . . —Soft and fair, not so;  
For if I hang or kill myself, let's know  
Who will revenge Horatio's murder then?  
  
Nay, soft and fair! You shall not need to strive.  
Needs must he go that the devils drive.  
*ST* 3.12.16, 80

**I will be his priest.** This statement is made by Suffolk in *2 Henry VI* (3.1.271) as he, Margaret, Beaufort and York plot to murder Gloucester. A footnote in the Riverside edition glosses it as "perform the last rites for him"—that is, dispatch him. It is used in exactly the same sense in the *Tragedy* (3.3.36).

Pedringano (grappling with watchmen): Now by the sorrows of the souls in hell/ Who first lays hands on me, I'll be his priest.

**Ifs and ands.** In Scene 3.4 of *Richard III*, the protagonist gets Hastings to say that those practicing witchcraft on Richard's body deserve death. He then accuses Hastings's wife and mistress of the deed.

Hastings: If they have done this deed, my noble lord—

Richard: If? Thou protector of this damned strumpet,  
Talk'st thou to me of "ifs"? Thou art a traitor.  
Off with his head!

Dickinson<sup>6</sup> quotes a somewhat earlier version, *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third* (1594).

Richard: If, villain—feedest thou me with ifs & ands . . .

In the *Tragedy* (2.1.77) we find

Lorenzo: What, villain! Ifs and ands? (offers to kill Pedringano)

**From my bed.** In *Midsummer Night's Dream* (3.1.129) Titania is roused from her nap by the transformed Bottom.

Titania: What angel wakes me from my flow'ry bed?

This is surely a comic echo of the tragic scene (ST 2.5.1) in which Hieronimo hears the moans of his murdered son.

Hieronimo: What outcries pluck me from my naked bed . . .

**Swear on my sword.** After his encounter with the Ghost, Hamlet (1.5.143) urges secrecy upon his companions.

Hamlet: Never make known what you have seen tonight.  
. . . Nay, but swear't.  
. . . Upon my sword.

A similar scene (ST 2.1.87) occurs in the *Tragedy*.

Lorenzo (offering his sword):

Swear on this cross that what thou say'st is true  
And that thou will conceal what thou hast told.

**Ambiguous replies.** There are scenes both in *Hamlet* (1.2.120) and the *Tragedy* (3.14.160) in which the protagonist gives an ambiguous response which is accepted at face value by his antagonist.

Hamlet: I shall in all my best obey you, madam.  
Claudius: Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.

Hieronimo: . . . it is fit for us  
That we be friends: the world's suspicious,  
And men might think what we imagine not.  
Balthazar: Why, this is friendly done, Hieronimo.

**Pocas palabras.** This is a Spanish phrase: literally 'few words'—a genteel form of 'shut up'. Hieronimo uses it in the *Tragedy* (3.14.118). These two are the only words of Spanish to be found in the play. Shakespeare uses a truncated version of the phrase in *Much Ado* (3.5.17).

Dogberry: Comparisons are odorous—*palabras*, neighbor Verges.

From the above examples I conclude that there is a remarkable overlap between the vocabularies of the author of *The Spanish Tragedy* and the author of the Shakespeare plays. The overlap is not only one of vocabulary, but extends to the dramatic imagination itself, and is so strong that I believe it indicates they were the same person.

**Xenolingual passages.** In 10 instances, characters suddenly break out into Latin. These passages range from two words ("Vindicta mihi"—'Vengeance is mine') to 14 lines in length. This is perhaps understandable; Latin is the language of classical allusion, and in fact several of the passages contain quotes from or allusions to works by Claudian, Virgil, Curtius, Statius and Seneca. More puzzling is the fact that on three occasions a



character switches to Italian, although those who do so are supposed to be native Spaniards. Are we dealing with an author who occasionally thought in Italian? One would almost think he spent the better part of a year in Italy, conversing with the natives. (There is no record of Kyd's having visited the continent.) Another puzzling twist occurs in Scene 4.2, when Hieronimo instructs those who are to perform in his play within the play (Hieronimo, like Hamlet, writes lines for players).

Hieronimo: Each one of us  
Must act his part in unknown languages,  
That it breed the more variety:  
As you, my lord, in Latin, I in Greek,  
You in Italian; and for because I know  
That Bel-imperia hath practis'd the French,  
In courtly French shall all her phrases be.

French, Italian, Latin and Greek are the languages in which we know Oxford to be competent. The author does not follow through with the polyglot play: a note inserted in the text reads "Gentlemen, this play of *Hieronimo* in sundry languages was thought good to be set down in English, more largely for the easier understanding to every public reader."

**The author's range of knowledge.** One scene in the *Tragedy* (3.13) deals with a group of petitioners who approach Hieronimo in his capacity as marshal with various legal problems. The dialog here is sprinkled with legal terms, and is quite detailed. At the end of that scene, the protagonist's knowledge of music is revealed.

Hieronimo: And thou, and I, and she will sing a song,  
Three parts in one, but all of discords fram'd—  
Talk not of chords, but let us now be gone,  
For with a cord Horatio was slain.

T. W. Ross, editor of a modern edition of the *Tragedy*, spends three pages enthusing about the author's skillful use of the "flowers of rhetoric," by which he means devices such as apostrophe, anastrophe, anadiplosis, hyperbole, stichomythia, psychomachia, parallelism and polyptoton, all of which he finds utilized in this play. He writes "By varying the rhetorical tricks and by assigning them to appropriate characters and situations, a master playwright like Kyd could use them functionally, not simply for decoration".<sup>7</sup> Ross cites Sister Miriam Joseph, who has published an extensive study of these same rhetorical devices as found in the works of Shakespeare.<sup>8</sup>

**The strange case of the 'additions'.** Another puzzling circumstance is the existence of a set of 'additions' to the play. Brooke and Paradise<sup>1</sup> sum it up.

On Sept. 25, 1601, and June 22, 1602, Philip Henslowe, in behalf of the Admiral's Men, made large payments to Ben Jonson for two sets of 'adicyons' to a play referred to under the title of *Jeronimo*. Critics do not see Jonson's hand, however, in the remarkable additions which appear first in the 1602 Quarto . . . They are of surprising literary quality, surpassing the original play in this respect, but are not recognizably Jonsonian and probably date from 1597, when Henslowe produced a revival of the play, which he marked as 'new'.

Kyd couldn't have written the new lines; he died in 1594. The

immediate thought that comes to mind is that Oxford wrote the play when he was young, perhaps about the time of *Titus Andronicus* (which Clark<sup>9</sup> dates to 1576), then provided improved dialog for the revival, as suggested above. But then why was *Jonson* paid? — Oxford was in continual need of money. Oh, right—a nobleman couldn't take money for literary work. Jonson was a go-between. And Kyd was a beard.

**Conclusion.** So what have we found out? In Kyd we have a shadowy figure from the Elizabethan age whose life is known to us only through a handful of documents, none of which have anything to do with poetry or drama. Establishment scholars tell us that this man wrote a wildly successful play, a play requiring detailed knowledge of law, music and falconry, plus fluency in Italian and Latin, familiarity with Latin classics, and the skill in the 'arts of rhetoric' of a master playwright—a play that prefigures *Hamlet* in at least a dozen ways. Establishment scholars also tell us that the Shakespeare plays—works requiring detailed knowledge of law, music, falconry, classic literature, and the arts of rhetoric—were written by a shadowy figure from Stratford, whose life is known to us only through a handful of documents, none of which have anything to do with poetry or drama. In the immortal words of the Bard,<sup>10</sup> "It's *déjà vu* all over again." Or, to put it more plainly, I believe that Edward de Vere wrote *The Spanish Tragedy*,<sup>11</sup> as well as the works of Shakespeare.

#### End Notes:

1. Tucker Brooke and Nathaniel Paradise, *English Drama 1580-1642* (Heath, 1933), p. 130. Scene and line numbers follow this edition.
2. Warren Dickinson, *The Wonderful Shakespeare Mystery* (Omni, 2002), 309.
3. Michael Brame and Galina Popova, *Shakespeare's Fingerprints* (Adonis, 2002).
4. *The Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans, ed. (Houghton Mifflin, 1974) footnote, 335.
5. Eva Turner Clark, *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays* (Kennikat Press, 1974), 539.
6. Dickinson, 313.
7. Thomas W. Ross, ed., *The Spanish Tragedy* (Univ. California Press, 1968), 6.
8. Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1947)
9. Clark, 47-48.
10. I'm referring, of course, to the contemporary poet and philosopher, Yogi Berra.
11. I have recently learned that Dr. Daniel Wright has been studying *The Spanish Tragedy* for several years, and has reached similar conclusions.

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*"So what have we*

*found out? ...*

*In the immortal*

*words of*

*the Bard,*

*It's déjà vu*

*all over again."*

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# Book Reviews

***Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, by Stephen Greenblatt. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004.)**

By Richard F. Whalen

"LET US IMAGINE..." (in capitals) are the first words of Stephen Greenblatt's bogus biography of William of Stratford.

And with those words the Harvard professor openly admits that he has invented yet another imaginary life for the Stratford man as the great poet and dramatist. He does not apologize for his speculations. He defends them. "It is important," he says, "to use our own imagination" since "nothing provides a clear link" between Shakespeare's works and the life of William of Stratford.

Lacking any clear links, he resorts to a deluge of qualifiers—"perhaps" and "must have" and all the rest, often three or four to a page. In an interview, he guardedly confessed that trying to find the links was so hard that he even gained a bit of respect for non-Stratfordians.

Of course, he's not the first who's been driven to invent Will's biography. Garry O'Connor's recent *Popular Life* (2000) is even more blatant if less well informed. Greenblatt, however, is at or close to the peak of the Stratfordian establishment. He is considered the godfather of New Historicism. He occupies a chair at Harvard University. He is the editor of the Norton collected works of Shakespeare, where he first started openly imagining Will's life.

So this fictionalized biography from a celebrity popularizer triggered a barrage of reviews. In publishing circles, it's rumored that Norton gave him a big advance, perhaps even a million dollars. Norton's publicity juggernaut garnered reviews weeks before publication. The early reviews were ecstatic, or seemingly so. Later reviewers have been much more skeptical.

In *The New Yorker*, Adam Gopnik went into ecstasy, calling it "most complexly intelligent and sophisticated...most keenly enthusiastic...[with] exquisitely sensitive

and persuasive connections between what the eloquent poetry says and what the fragmentary life suggests." (See Dan Wright's review of Gopnik in the Fall 2004 issue of *Shakespeare Matters*.)

In *Harper's Magazine*, whose editor is Oxfordian, the reviewer John Leonard

***Will in the World: might it be a word play on Will o' the Wisp? Will o' the Wisp. n. something that deludes or misleads by means of fugitive appearances. (OED); from a phosphorescent light seen at night on marshy ground, combining Will, a pet name for William, and wisp, a torch of dry grass. Hence, in days gone by, sprites (named Will) waving torches to delude. Synonym, an airy nothing, as in A Midsummer Night's Dream, "The poet's pen...gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name." (5.1.7) (Roget's)***

rhapsodizes to such an extreme that it might almost be taken as satire. Leonard is a known satirist.

*The New York Times* ran no fewer than four pieces on Greenblatt's book: a duly appreciative but cautious review by the lead, daily book reviewer; a major review in the Sunday book review section that allowed that Greenblatt's speculations are "not always convincing;" an article by Greenblatt himself in the *Sunday Times Magazine* adapted from a chapter speculating that Will Shakspeare created Shylock after he saw the Iberian Jew and Queen's physician Ruy Lopez drawn and

quartered for alleged treason; and Greenblatt's Op Ed article comparing the Bush-Kerry TV debates to the famous speeches by Brutus and Antony to the Roman crowd in *Julius Caesar*. Perhaps (there's that word again) the *Times* was overcompensating for its recent articles on Oxford and the authorship controversy,

Much more skeptical was Wellesley professor William Cain in the *Boston Globe*. Greenblatt's book is important, he begins, but adds that it "is also a disquieting book, because ultimately it is based less on hard facts than on conjecture and speculation, much of it credible and convincing, much of it not." He gives examples of speculations and concludes that "as a person, Shakespeare [of Stratford] is beyond our grasp. *Will in the World* is thus a wonderful work of the imagination, an engaging and risk-taking evocation of a Shakespeare who may have been the man Greenblatt describes but who, quite simply, may not have been that man at all." The *Providence Journal* reviewer warned that "readers will hardly realize how far out on a limb they've been teased." In *The Spectator*, Catherine Duncan-Jones of Oxford University, herself a Shakespeare biographer, blasted Greenblatt's book. He "attributes to his hero some inner musings of staggering banality," she writes. He copes with the lack of documents "by means of quasi-novelistic speculation." He "combines a good deal of insight and sensitivity with a strangely uncritical mish-mash of ideas fixes and nonsense." In the end, Greenblatt's Will "is no more believable than any of the versions summoned up in recent biographies, including my own." Her own, *Ungentle Shakespeare* (2001), paints Will as "perhaps" a rather coarse, stingy bisexual.

A long review in the London *Sunday Times* praises Greenblatt's book but at the very end admits that the biography of the Stratford man as Shakespeare the writer is "incomprehensible," which is Greenblatt's opinion, too.

He has even conceded newfound respect for arguments for someone else as the dramatist. Although he does not

mention the authorship controversy in his book, in an interview in *Harvard Magazine* he said that writing the book “has made me respect that preposterous fantasy—if I may say so—rather more than when I began...because I have now taken several years of hard work and forty years of serious academic training to grapple with the difficulty of making the connections meaningful and compelling between the life of this writer and the works he produced.”

If meaningful connections are hard to find, make them up, and Greenblatt makes them up one after another, taking the usual Stratfordian flights of imagination to new heights on the wings of “maybe” and “doubtless” and “nor is it implausible to suggest....”

His most outrageous flight of imagination is when he speculates that Will met the Roman Catholic priest Edmund Campion and “exchanged whispered words.”

“Let us imagine,” Greenblatt continues, “the two of them sitting together, then, the sixteen-year-old fledgling poet and actor and the forty-year-old Jesuit. Shakespeare would have found Campion fascinating....” And on and on about Campion and what he “might have noticed” about Will. Even Greenblatt admitted to interviewers that this is a bit much, calling it the “most implausible” moment in the book, a “fantasy rift,” which he nevertheless defended as helpful in understanding “sanctity” in Shakespeare’s works.

Fantasy is everywhere in the book.

Will at age five, “intelligent, quick and sensitive, would have stood between his father’s legs [and] for the first time in his life William Shakespeare watched a play.”

Will’s teacher in Stratford, recognizing his gift for writing and acting, perhaps gave him a leading role in the Plautus play that is the source for *The Comedy of Errors*.

Will conceivably saw the spectacles at the Queen’s Progress at Kenilworth in

1575, or would “at the very least have heard about them.”

Will “almost certainly” saw Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*, probably several times; it was, perhaps, the first play he saw in a public theater.

Will’s father might well have been a drunkard.

Scholars of literary biography will shudder, while grudgingly admiring Greenblatt’s audacity.

***“In the summer of 1585, William of Stratford may have been working in the glover’s shop, perhaps, or making a bit of money as a teacher’s or a lawyer’s assistant. In his spare time he must have continued to write poetry, practice the lute, hone his skills as a fencer—that is, work on his ability to impersonate the lifestyle of a gentleman. His northern sojourn, assuming he had one, was behind him. If in Lancashire he had begun a career as a professional player, he must, for the moment at least, have put it aside. And if he had a brush with the dark world of Catholic conspiracy, sainthood, and martyrdom—the world that took Campion to the scaffold—he must still more decisively have turned away from it with a shudder.”***

***—From Will in the World by Stephen Greenblatt (Emphases added).***

Greenblatt often exploits use of the “if...then” speculative device: “If Will returned to Stratford in 1582 in the wake of a tense sojourn in Lancashire, if he agreed to go to Shroton that summer...then his wooing of Anne Hathaway was manifestly...” etc., etc. Based on no evidence at all. He uses such suppositions to digress into lengthy essays on Will’s supposed schooling, the Queen’s Progress, Marlowe’s

influence, the streets of London, etc., in the time-honored device of “Shakespeare” biographers. If the book has any redeeming value, it is in the many, extended, imaginative, colorful, sometimes lyrical, descriptions of the life and culture of London and the countryside.

Greenblatt treats evidence cavalierly. About the deer-poaching story, he concludes, “The question, then, is not the degree of evidence but rather the imaginative life that the incident has, the access it gives us to something important in Shakespeare’s life and work.”

Despite the license Greenblatt gives himself to imagine whatever he wants, his Will of Stratford stubbornly remains a dim, dull, frugal nonentity, mismatched in marriage, quietly sober in London, a decent chap but a bit of a bore. He kept his head down and stayed out of trouble. He “embraced ordinariness,” says Greenblatt.

Like most such “biographies” of Shakespeare, the second half lapses into essays on the poems and plays, with much less about the man. They sound like recycled Harvard undergraduate lectures on the sonnets and the plays, especially *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter’s Tale* and *Macbeth*.

Greenblatt’s bogus biography and Will’s imagined career end not with a bang but with a disquieting whimper, suggesting, of all things, an obsession with incest: “Perhaps Shakespeare was drawn home by something else...his daughter Susanna... Three of his last plays...are centered on the father-daughter relationship and are so deeply anxious about incestuous desires.” The pleasure of living near his daughter and her family, says Greenblatt, “had a strange, slightly melancholy dimension, a joy intimately braided together with renunciation...a strangeness that hides within the boundaries of the everyday, and that is where he was determined to end his days.”

Strange, indeed.

*Column**A year in the life*

By Hank Whittemore

## 1601 (III): “On better judgment making...”

“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted *forty days and forty nights*, he was afterward hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that *proceedeth* out of the mouth of God.’ – Matthew, 3.17-4.4

That *every word* doth almost tell my name,  
Showing their birth, and where they did  
*proceed*. Sonnet 76, lines 7-8

We continue the life of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, by drawing upon the “hymns” or “prayers” of *Shake-Speares Sonnets* as a “monument” to preserve “the living record” of Henry Wriothesley, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton, for posterity.<sup>1</sup> The chronicle contains exactly 100 central entries from Sonnet 27 upon the Essex Rebellion on February 8, 1601, to Sonnet 126, the envoy immediately following Queen Elizabeth’s funeral on April 28, 1603; and when the first forty entries of this crucial sequence are placed side by side with the first forty days and nights of Southampton’s imprisonment in the Tower of London, they conclude with Sonnet 66 on March 19, 1601, when Oxford expresses his emotional exhaustion in response to word at last that Queen Elizabeth has stopped the younger earl’s execution.<sup>2</sup>

Southampton stood trial for treason with Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex on February 19, 1601, and both were condemned to death. Essex was beheaded just six days later; two of his supporters were executed on March 13 and two others followed to their deaths on the 18<sup>th</sup>, with dozens remaining in the Tower and other prisons. Southampton had led the planning to remove Robert Cecil from his power over the Queen and his ability to control the succession, but now his fate was in the Secretary’s hands and his own death was still expected to come next.

Londoners would gather each morning

at Tower Hill until at least March 25, drawn by “a rumor that Southampton was to be executed there that day,” but they were disappointed because “the decision had already been made to commute his sentence to imprisonment.”<sup>3</sup> Virtually all historians have assumed that Elizabeth actually signed or issued such an order, in response to Cecil’s pleading, but the government made no announcement and left no record of it. Meanwhile, the story that unfolds in the Sonnets is far from benign: the Secretary was keeping Southampton alive to hold him hostage in the Tower, thereby blackmailing Oxford into helping him engineer the peaceful succession of James of Scotland. Southampton would go free only after that goal had been attained; and because Oxford could neither predict when the succession would occur nor forecast the outcome, setting down the truth in the Sonnets would have afforded him some release from the tension that would continue for more than two years.

Having learned that Southampton has been reprieved, Oxford records a virtual suicide note in Sonnet 66, which has been likened to Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” soliloquy:<sup>4</sup>

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

The grievances he lists can be comprehended in specific terms only within the real-life context of this contemporary history, just as the wrongs cited by Hamlet can be grasped only within the dramatic context of the play. Now, for example, Oxford can be seen as referring to the limping, swaying figure of the hunchbacked Secretary, who “disabled” Essex and Southampton:

And strength by limping sway disabled

He can be perceived as referring to Cecil as the “authority” who has forced him to remain silent while writing privately and indirectly in these verses:

And art made tongue-tied by authority

He can also be viewed as referring to Southampton as the “captive” of Cecil, who has become the “Captain” of state and holds the power of life or death over him:

And captive good attending Captain ill

Oxford is portraying a struggle between “good” and “ill,” with the Secretary as the Biblical devil who has driven him to this suicidal frame of mind over the past forty days and forty nights of mounting suspense. He concludes Sonnet 66 by declaring his preference would be death if, by dying, he wouldn’t have to abandon Southampton:

Tir’d with all these, from these would I  
be gone,  
Save that to die, I leave my love alone.

Alone, that is, in the Tower and without his continued help.

Meanwhile, Oxford is recording the same story in the Dark Lady series. In parallel with (but in contrast to) his suicidal reaction in Sonnet 66, he expresses gratitude to Elizabeth in Sonnet 145 for sparing Southampton’s life; and in this context, a verse often deemed “unworthy” of Shakespeare suddenly makes perfect sense as, for example, he states directly that the Queen extended her sovereign mercy:

Straight in her heart did mercy come

He also records in Sonnet 145 that Elizabeth has altered her imperial “hate” to “love” by saving Southampton’s life, which Oxford equates with his own:

I hate from hate away she threw,  
And saved my life, saying, not you.

Sonnets 66-67 are at the center of the eighty-sonnet sequence recording Southampton’s long confinement in the Tower from the night of February 8, 1601, following the Rebellion, to April 9, 1603, the night before his release. The transition from one verse to the other is a dramatic, unexpected leap, from relief over the

sparing of Henry Wriothesley's life to grief and anger over the circumstances under which he now must continue to live. And just as Essex called his crime "this infectious sin" before submitting himself to the executioner's axe, Oxford complains in Sonnet 67 that Southampton must continue to "live" with "infection" or criminals in the Tower and thereby "grace" their "sin" with his "presence" among them:

Ah wherefore with infection should he live,  
And with his presence grace impiety,  
That sin by him advantage should achieve,  
And lace itself with his society?"

Southampton has escaped beheading "to live a second life on second head," in the words of Sonnet 68; but the Queen still chooses to "store" him in her prison-fortress, where he is reduced to the status of a commoner, as Oxford notes in Sonnet 69: "Thou dost common grow."

"His earldom had, of course, been lost through his attainder," Akrigg writes, "and he was now plain Henry Wriothesley. Although the lands which he had transferred to trustees by a deed of uses were apparently beyond the reach of the Crown, all his other possessions were forfeit."<sup>5</sup>

On March 23, the Council under Cecil's direction instructs Sir John Peyton, Lieutenant of the Tower: "Whereas we do understand that the Earl of Southampton, by reason of the continuance of his quartern ague, hath a swelling in his legs and other parts, you may admit Doctor Paddy, who is acquainted with the state of his body, in your presence to have access unto him, and to confer with him for those things that shall be fit for his health"—the same illness that had caused Oxford to write about Southampton's "fair health" in Sonnet 45. Now Cecil needs to keep the younger earl alive, however, to ensure Oxford's continued support; but he is not about to trust Southampton, so even the doctor may not visit him unless Peyton is present.<sup>6</sup>

Having avoided execution, Southampton in Sonnet 70 has "passed by the ambush of younger days," though he remains "suspect of ill" or a suspect-traitor. Thinking of the possibility that he himself might die before Southampton can be liberated, Oxford instructs him in Sonnet 71: "No longer mourn for me when I am dead . . . Nay, if you read this line, remember not the hand that writ it." They must deny even knowing each other: "O if (I say) you

look upon this verse, when I (perhaps) compounded am with clay, do not so much as my poor name rehearse."

Having dedicated *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* to Southampton and linked him uniquely to "Shakespeare," Oxford cannot reveal his authorship. Also, having allowed *Richard II* to be performed at the Globe on the eve of the Rebellion, he too easily could have been charged with having committed treason; and therefore

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***"Having avoided execution,***

***Southampton in Sonnet***

***70 has 'passed by the***

***ambush of younger***

***days, ' though he***

***remains 'suspect of ill,'***

***or a suspect-traitor.***"

---

he too must pay a form of penance.

"After my death, dear love, forget me quite," he instructs in Sonnet 72. "My name be buried where my body is, and live no more to shame nor me nor you."

In Sonnet 73, a magnificent funeral dirge about "bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang," Oxford refers to the same "dead birds" of *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, also a funeral dirge, to be published this year under the Shakespeare name. According to the bargain with Cecil, the truth of his political support for Essex and Southampton must be buried.<sup>7</sup>

He anticipates the "fell arrest" of his own death "without all bail," alluding in Sonnet 74 to Southampton's actual arrest without bail. But while Oxford is recreating the younger earl's life in the Sonnets, he cannot avoid including his own for posterity as well: "My life hath in this line some interest, which for memorial still with thee shall stay . . . My spirit is thine, the better

part of me." Southampton is "to my thoughts as food to life," he adds in Sonnet 75. "Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day, or gluttoning on all, or all away," he concludes, indicating the "day by day" entries of this diary while Henry Wriothesley is "away" in the Tower.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Invention**

Sonnet 76 is the fiftieth sonnet, marking the fiftieth day of Southampton's imprisonment since the Rebellion; and together with Sonnet 77 it's positioned at the exact midpoint of the 100-sonnet center, where Oxford explains his "invention" or special language for this chronicle. Speaking as the parent of the poems, he likens "my verse" to a womb that has become "barren" of new growth for Southampton; yet he continues without "variation" or "quick change" (quickening in the womb) to record events "with the time" without any new "methods" other than this one, which involves "compounds" of words akin to chemical mixtures in alchemy:

Why is my verse so barren of new pride?  
So far from variation or quick change?  
Why from the time do I not glance aside  
To new-found methods, and to compounds  
strange?

His method or "invention" employs the "noted weed" or familiar garb of poetry, enabling literally "every word" to "almost tell" (conceal yet also reveal) his "name" (E. Ver), while recording Southampton's life from his "birth" to where it has managed to "proceed" or be reborn in each new entry of the womb:

Why write I still all one, ever the same,  
And keep invention in a noted weed,  
That every word doth almost tell my name,  
Showing their birth, and where they did  
proceed?

The top line above demonstrates his invention with just five words:

- **All One** = Southampton, his motto *One for All, All for One*
- **Ever the Same** = Elizabeth, her motto *Ever the Same*

Edward de Vere includes himself ("ever") as he writes "still" or constantly about "all one, ever the same" or  
(Continued on page 26)



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

Southampton and Elizabeth, but this consistent subject matter is further compressed into the main topic, which is Southampton and Love:

O know, sweet love, I always write of you,  
And you and love are still my argument.

The Sonnets record the “Love” of Southampton in its struggle to survive in relation to the dwindling “Time” of Elizabeth’s life, leading inevitably to her death and England’s date with succession, which will also bring the diary to its end. This ongoing battle is severely restricted; therefore, to maintain an appearance of variety, he keeps “dressing old words new” or using different words to say the same thing:

So all my best is dressing old words new,  
Spending again what is already spent.

He concludes by picturing Southampton as “the Sun” whose “daily” rebirth – in the Tower, and in the Sonnets – is “telling” the recorded story:

For as the Sun is daily new and old,  
So is my love still telling what is told.

Because Southampton’s life informs the diary, Oxford transfers paternity of “this book” of the private verses to the younger earl in Sonnet 77, so it is now “thy book” containing “those children nursed, delivered from thy brain.” The bargain for Southampton’s eventual freedom with a royal pardon requires Oxford to sacrifice his own identity as “Shakespeare” (the so-called Rival Poet), who is able to express himself openly. “Every *Alien* pen hath got my use,” he states in Sonnet 78, referring to his own (“E. Ver’s”) pen name; and he confirms Southampton as the “onlie begetter” of the private verses: “Yet be most proud of that which I compile, whose influence is thine, and born of thee.”

His sacrifice continues in Sonnet 79 as “now my gracious numbered are decayed, and my sick Muse doth give another place.” The one permanently taking his place on Southampton’s behalf is the “worthier pen” of “Shakespeare” on the published page. As Oxford fades from view, the pseudonym rises in his place: “O how I faint when I of you do write, knowing a better spirit doth use your name,” he continues to

Southampton in Sonnet 80, “and in the praise thereof spends all his might to make me tongue-tied speaking of your fame.”

Southampton’s link to “Shakespeare” ensures his own immortality and Oxford’s oblivion in the eyes of their contemporaries: “Your name from hence immortal life shall have,” he writes in Sonnet 81, “though I (once gone) to all the world must die.” But the truth of Southampton’s life will survive in the Sonnets for future

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***“For Southampton to  
eventually be pardoned,  
Oxford silently takes  
the blame (and pays the  
ransom or price) for  
the treason of which  
Henry Wriothesley  
was found guilty...”***

---

generations of readers: “Your monument shall be my gentle verse, which eyes not yet created shall o’er-read.” Confirming that his pen name is the rival, Oxford refers in Sonnet 82 to “the *dedicated words* [public dedications] which *writers* [“Shakespeare”] use of their *fair subject* [Southampton], blessing *every book* [E. Ver’s books of narrative poems].”

For Southampton to eventually be pardoned, Oxford silently takes the blame (and pays the ransom or price) for the treason of which Henry Wriothesley was found guilty: “This silence for my sin you did impute,” he tells him in Sonnet 83, “which shall be most my glory, being dumb.” Referring to his public persona as Shakespeare as well as to himself as the author of the Sonnets, he adds to the younger earl: “There lives more life in one of your fair eyes than *both your poets* can in praise devise.” The Shakespeare name is Oxford’s

“counterpart” of the “lease” (as in “the lease of my true love” in Sonnet 107) by which he maintains his relationship to Southampton: “And such a counterpart shall fame his wit,” he states in Sonnet 84, “making his style admired everywhere.” Oxford’s “tongue-tied Muse” is confined to these unpublished sonnets, while “Shakespeare” flourishes publicly “in polished form of well-refined pen,” he states in Sonnet 85; but he hopes Southampton will respect him “for my dumb thoughts, speaking in effect.”

The so-called Rival Poet sequence ends with Sonnet 86, wherein Oxford declares his own pen name “did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse, making their *tomb* [the monument of the Sonnets] the *womb* wherein they grew.” He adds: “Was it his [Shakespeare’s] spirit, by spirits taught to write above a mortal pitch that struck me dead?” The answer is yes; and addressing Southampton, he adds that “when your countenance filled up his line, then lacked I matter, that enfeebled mine.”<sup>9</sup>

#### **April 8: James & The Tower**

King James writes to his ambassadors now in England, the Earl of Mar and Edward Bruce, directing them to give “full assurance” of his favor “especially to Master Secretary [Cecil], who is king there in effect.”<sup>10</sup> He also tells them to “renew and confirm” their friendship with Peyton, who has charge of Southampton and other Rebellion conspirators in the Tower.<sup>11</sup>

#### **April 9: “Misprision”**

“Farewell,” Oxford begins Sonnet 87, indicating that the day-by-day entries of his diary have abruptly ended. From here on, for the next two years of Southampton’s imprisonment through the night of April 9, 1603, he will continue writing to him, but at a much slower pace.

Now he supplies information that fails to appear in the official record, by indicating that the verdict against Southampton has been reduced from treason to “misprision” of treason, “an offence or misdemeanor akin to treason or felony, but involving a lesser degree of guilt, and not liable to the capital penalty.” This “better judgment” has provided legal ground for sparing Southampton’s life and will enable James, in the event of his succession, to legally grant him a pardon:<sup>12</sup>

So thy great gift [of life], upon misprision  
growing,  
Comes home again, on better judgment  
making.

Edward de Vere and Henry Wriothesley must remain apart, at least in the eyes of the contemporary world; and future readers will be left to ponder the conclusion of this sonnet:

Thus have I had thee as a dream doth  
flatter:  
In sleep a King, but waking no such matter.

#### April 21: Bacon's Declaration

An anonymous book is published under the title: "A DECLARATION of the Practices and Treasons attempted and committed by *Robert* late Earle of *Essex* and his Complices, against her Majestie and her Kingdoms, and of the proceedings as well at the Arraignments and Convictions of the said late Earle, and his adherents, as after: *Together with the very Confessions* and other parts of the Evidences themselves, word for word taken out of the Originals."

The work will be attributed to Francis Bacon, who wrote it at the command of the Queen; and she, along with Cecil and other Council members, have carefully edited the manuscript before its printing. It seems that Elizabeth commanded the first copies to be suppressed so that all mentions of "My Lord of Essex" could be changed to simply "Essex" or "the late Earl of Essex."

In his account of the trial, Bacon mentions the historical case of Richard II, noting that Bolinbroke (the future Henry IV) presented himself before the King with "humble reverences," but in the end that monarch was "deposed and put to death" – charging, in effect, that Essex and Southampton would have done the same to Elizabeth.

Bacon also refers to the "judgment" or verdict (the word used in Sonnet 87): "Upon all which evidence," he writes, "both the Earles were found guilty of Treason by all the several voices of every one of the Peers, and so received judgment."

#### Early May: "Kindness & Kindred"

Writing to Cecil about his bid for the Presidency of Wales, Oxford uses a tone of affection that far exceeds the dictates of this subject matter – perhaps, between the lines, also thanking his ex-brother-in-law for helping to save Southampton from execution.

"My very good brother," he writes, "I have received from Henry Lok your most kind message, which I so effectually embrace, that what for the old love I have borne you ... Wherefore not as a stranger but in the old style, I do assure you that you shall have no faster friend & well wisher unto you than myself either in kindness, which I find beyond mine expectation in you; or in kindred, whereby none is nearer allied than myself," he continues, alluding

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*"Little Cecil trips up and*

*down / He rules both*

*Court and Crown / With*

*his brother Burghley*

*clown / In his great fox-*

*furred gown / With the*

*long proclamation / He*

*swore he saved the town /*

*Is it not likely!"*

---

to the Rebellion only once by admitting he cannot "so well urge mine own business to her Majesty" during "these troublesome times" and therefore he must depend on the Secretary, to whom he signs off "in all kindness and kindred" – calling to mind Hamlet's remark about Claudius, in another context: "A little more than kin, and less than kind."<sup>13</sup>

#### May 10: Public Libels

The Lords of the Council express anger at actors depicting real individuals in an "obscure" way that nonetheless identifies them: "Certain players at the Curtain in Moorfields do represent in their interlude the persons of some gentlemen of good desert and quality that are yet alive, under obscure manner but yet in such sort that all the hearers may take notice both of the matter and the persons that are meant thereby. All are to be examined."<sup>14</sup>

Not at all obscure, however, are

widespread public libels against Cecil, who is "much hated in England by reason of the fresh bleeding of that universally beloved Earl of Essex." One libel is a printed ballad, sung in streets and taverns, which includes:

"Little Cecil trips up and down/ He rules both Court and Crown/ With his brother Burghley clown/ In his great fox-furred gown/ With the long proclamation/ He swore he saved the town/ Is it not likely!"<sup>15</sup>

#### May 11: "Hater of Ceremonies"

Oxford thanks Cecil as his "very well beloved friend and brother" for helping to further his bid to be made President of Wales. In view of his "kindness to me" as well as their family alliance, he finds no reason but to make "especial account" of him "before all others." He is glad "to find an especial friend constant and assured in your word, which thing I vow to God to acknowledge to you in all faith, kindness and love" and "in whatsoever I may stand you in stead (which according to mine estate now is little, but in goodwill very great), I will acknowledge with all alacrity and well-wishing perform, and this I both speak and write unto you from my heart."

Oxford refers to the "friendship which you have done me above thanks, which I will freely impart to you at my coming to the Court, which I think shall be tomorrow, by the grace of God; till which time, as a hater of ceremonies, I will refer all other thanks and observations, which in me are as far from ordinary accomplishments as my thankful acceptance of this your friendly and brotherly office is near my heart simple and unfeigned..."<sup>16</sup>

#### May: Secret Correspondence

James writes clandestinely to Cecil about the succession. By prearrangement, he refers to him as "10" and signs off as "Your most loving and assured friend, 30." The King assures Cecil he "never had any dealing" with Essex that "was not most honorable and avowable," declaring that "in all times hereafter, the suspicion or disgracing of 10 shall touch 30 as near as 10." Once he rules England, he will bestow "as great and greater favor upon 10 as his predecessor [Elizabeth] doth bestow upon him." Cecil "may rest assured" of the King's "constant love and secrecy."<sup>17</sup> Upon receiving this letter, Cecil meets with Mar and Bruce, who set off to bring his warm

*(Continued on page 28)*

*Year in the Life (cont'd from page 27)*  
response back to Edinburgh.

#### **May 27: "Ransom & Fine"**

John Chamberlain writes to Dudley Carlton about the aftermath of the Rebellion, saying he expects that "there shall be no more blood drawn in this cause." One reason is that the Council has created a commission "to ransom and fine the Lords and Gentlemen that were in the action." (These fines include: Rutland, £30,000; Bedford, £20,000, down a list of prisoners allowed to buy their freedom; but Rutland's ransom will be reduced to £20,000 and the other fines accordingly.)

No such "ransom" may be paid by Southampton, who is still listed by the authorities as "condemned to death."<sup>18</sup> Instead, as Oxford has implied in Sonnet 34, the imprisoned earl can "ransom all ill deeds" only by fulfilling Cecil's demands. Both must remain silent about their relationship; and behind the scenes, Oxford will do what he can to support the Secretary's effort to bring James to the throne.<sup>19</sup>

#### **June: "30" to "10"**

James writes again as "30" to Cecil, addressing him as "Right trusty and well-beloved 10." Having received the Secretary's vows of affection and loyalty, the King admits it was "continually beaten in my ears" that Cecil held "unquenchable malice against me," so he couldn't trust him. James will keep these discussions from the Queen to avoid her "jealousy" and will "rule all my actions for advancing of my lawful future hopes by your advice, even as ye were one of my own councilors already."<sup>20</sup>

James also indicates his complete faith in the infamous Lord Henry Howard, whose presence in the secret correspondence as code number "3" has been thrust upon Cecil. In 1581, Howard responded to Oxford's treason charges with wild accusations in return; and now, two decades later, the same would-be traitor is playing a crucial role in determining England's future. The Secretary's biographer Handover writes of him in the harshest light:

"It was regrettable that Cecil had to make Howard his chief confidant for the next two years ... No man was more fitted for conspiracy, no man so venomous against those he hated, or so obsequious to

those he hoped to make his friends. His mind, remarkable for its great learning, was so perverted that in a bawdy and outspoken age he wrapped up his filthy imputations in Latin and ascribed them to ancient authors. Not only was he impure in thought and deed, but he lacked a grain of loving kindness, of nobility of mind or generosity of heart. Few men have been so purposely bent upon destroying the fellowship of man.

"Nothing good could come from Henry Howard; unless to be consistently loyal to

---

***"Both must remain silent***

***about their relationship;***

***and behind the scenes,***

***Oxford will do what he***

***can to support the***

***Secretary's effort to bring***

***James to the throne."***

---

Cecil because it served his own ends may be accounted a virtue. That loyalty was to serve Cecil well in the difficult and secret business that he had in hand. But Henry Howard could touch nothing that he did not corrupt; and he touched Cecil."<sup>22</sup>

#### **June 30: Danvers Escheat**

Oxford writes a memorandum about his attempts to gain lands forfeited to the state by Charles Danvers, who was executed in March for his role in the Essex Rebellion. Soon afterward, the Queen told Cecil she was granting her interest in the Danvers lands to Oxford, who now sets forth on a long, torturous and ultimately losing effort to recover them.<sup>21</sup>

#### **July 15: Siege of Ostend**

Archduke Albert of Austria (married to Isabella, daughter of Philip II of Spain) begins his attempt to capture Ostend, a small Dutch coastal town that has been fortified since 1583 because of its strategic

value against Spanish forces in the Netherlands war. The siege will become infamous for the heroism and endurance of participants on both sides (Oxford's cousin, Sir Francis Vere, is leading the English army in support) as well as for the amount of bloodshed during this "long carnival of death" (costing some 70,000 lives on the enemy side) to continue for more than three years until the surrender of Ostend on September 20, 1604.

It seems likely that Hamlet is referring to this siege when, at the end of Act Four, he castigates himself for his inability to act "while to my shame I see the imminent death of twenty thousand men that, for a fantasy and trick of fame, go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot that whereon the numbers cannot try the cause, which is not tomb enough and continent to hide the slain [i.e., the town was too small to contain the armies fighting over it]."

#### **August 4: "I am Richard"**

The Queen invites the noted historian William Lambarde, 65, whom she appointed in January as Keeper of the Records at the Tower of London, to present his digest to her at Greenwich Palace. As he will record in writing soon afterward, Elizabeth receives him in her Privy Chamber and opens the book. "You shall see that I can read," she quips before going over the listed items, reading some aloud and commanding the antiquary to explain various terms. He expounds on several meanings, to her satisfaction. The Queen tells him "that she would be a scholar in her age and thought it no scorn to learn during her life, being of the mind of that philosopher who in his last years began with the Greek alphabet."

Elizabeth comes to the pages related to Richard II, who was deposed by Bolinbroke in 1399, and blurts out: "I am Richard the Second, know ye not that?"

Lambarde assumes, no doubt correctly, that Her Majesty is referring to the fact that Essex was regarded as a Bolinbroke and that, during most of her reign, Elizabeth herself had been compared to the deposed monarch. "Such a wicked imagination was determined and attempted by a most unkind Gentleman," the antiquary replies, adding that Essex was "the most adorned creature that ever your Majesty made."

"He that will forget God will also forget his benefactors," the Queen snaps back,

but now it appears she has been thinking of play *Richard II* by Shakespeare (with its censored deposition scene) and how the Essex-Southampton faction had attended private performances prior to its staging at the Globe on the eve of the Rebellion. "This tragedy was played forty times in open streets and houses!" she exclaims.

Their discussion of the Tower records resumes, but then the Queen returns to the subject of Richard II and demands whether Lamarde has "seen any true picture or lively representation of his countenance and person."

"None but such as be in common hands," he replies.

"Lord Lumley, a lover of antiquities," Elizabeth says, "discovered it fastened on the backside of a door of a base room, which he presented unto me, praying, with my good leave, that I might put it in order with the Ancestors and Successors. I will command Thomas Knyvet, Keeper of my House and Gallery at Westminster, to shew it unto thee."

Without doubt the Queen is haunted by Richard the Second. Suddenly, for her, past and present have merged; distinctions between reality and art are blurred; and the circumstances of this year are mirrored by historical scenes of the king on stage and portraits of him on canvas. Meanwhile, Elizabeth surely knows that Oxford brought Richard's tragedy to life in the play and that, in turn, he must have sanctioned Southampton's use of it for the Rebellion: "Authorizing thy trespass with compare," as he put it in Sonnet 35.

The Queen is now speaking to the man she has put in charge of the records stored in the Tower, the very place where Southampton continues to languish—and we can only imagine the images bouncing off each other in her mind, as she and Lambarde continue to pour over this royal scrapbook that leads, inexorably, from then to now.<sup>23</sup>

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Sonnet 55, lines 7-12: "Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn/ The living record of your memory:/ 'Gainst death and all obliuious 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>2</sup> Oxford uses the numerical sequence of Sonnets 27 to 66, in conjunction with the

calendar, to inform us that March 19, 1601 is the date of the Queen's decision to spare Southampton. As an insider at Court, he obviously learned information as soon as possible, earlier than outsiders learned it; and because of this numbering of the Sonnets, we now have the exact date of the reprieve, which can be determined by no other historical document.

<sup>3</sup> Akrigg, G. P. V., *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); referred to hereafter as "Akrigg *Biography*," p. 131.

<sup>4</sup> Tucker, T. G., *The Sonnets of Shakespeare* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1924), p. 141, noting that some of Shakespeare's complaints in Sonnet 66 "appear again" in Hamlet's soliloquy; Duncan-Jones, Katherine, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Arden Shakespeare, 1997), p. 242: "The catalogue of eleven wrongs [in Sonnet 66] is analogous to the sevenfold catalogue in Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' speech, though it is fear of 'something after death,' not of deserting his love, that restrains Hamlet." She adds: "This despairing poem is probably located where it is by design. Multiples of six have adverse connotations, alluding to the biblical 'beast' associated with universal corruption."

<sup>5</sup> Akrigg *Biography*, op. cit., p. 131.

<sup>6</sup> Stopes, Charlotte Carmichael, *The Life of Henry, Third Earl of Southampton* (New York: AMS Press, 1969, from the edition of 1922), p. 224.

<sup>7</sup> The printed author's name for *The Phoenix and the Turtle* is hyphenated as "William Shake-speare".

<sup>8</sup> The phrase "all, or all away" reflects Southampton's motto *Ung par Tout, Tout par Ung* or *One for All, All for One*; "all" is used 118 times in the Sonnets; the total, including various forms (alone, alike, etc.), is 216 times; and "one" is used 42 times.

<sup>9</sup> The lines in Sonnet 86 echo Touchstone's

speech to William in *As You Like It*, 5.1.40-43: "For it is a figure in rhetoric that drink, being pour'd out of a cup into a glass, by filling the one doth empty the other; for all your writers do consent that *ipse* is he: now, you are not *ipse*, for I am he." (In both the sonnet and the play, Oxford is referring to his identity as author of the Shakespeare works.)

<sup>10</sup> Handover, P. M., *The Second Cecil* (Great Britain: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1959), p. 238; James believed (as Essex had charged) that Cecil had supported the Infanta of Spain in succession to Elizabeth; the truth of the matter has never been resolved.

<sup>11</sup> Akrigg, G. P. V., *Letters of King James VI & I*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 175; referred to hereafter as "Akrigg *Letters*."

<sup>12</sup> Oxford English Dictionary: *Misprision of Treason*.

<sup>13</sup> Chiljan, Katherine, *Letters and Poems of Edward, Earl of Oxford*, 1998, p. 65

<sup>14</sup> Stopes, op. cit., 242.

<sup>15</sup> Stopes, op. cit., p. 235; among others lampooned were (apparently) George Carey, Lord Chamberlain Hunsdon; the Earl of Bedford; Lord Gray; and Walter Raleigh; the "much hated" quote about Cecil is from Weldon, Sir Anthony, *Secret History of the Court of James the First*, 1817, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> Chiljan, op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>17</sup> Akrigg *Letters*, op. cit., pp. 178-180.

<sup>18</sup> Stopes, op. cit., p. 234.

<sup>19</sup> Stopes, op. cit., p. 233.

<sup>20</sup> Akrigg *Letters*, op. cit., pp. 180-183.

<sup>21</sup> Ward, B. M., *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* (London: John Murry, 1928) p. 337, quoting Oxford to Robert Cecil on March 22, 1602: "It is now a year since Her Majesty granted me her interest in Danvers' escheat..."

<sup>22</sup> Handover, op. cit., p. 240.

<sup>23</sup> Lambarde's testimony is reprinted by Coyle, Martin, ed., *William Shakespeare: Richard II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 19-20.

#### Advertisement

## The Monument

Hank Whittemore's 900-page edition of the Sonnets shows how Edward de Vere built a "monument" to preserve "the living record" of Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton. This record reveals that Oxford, forced to condemn Southampton to death, saved him by paying "ransom" that included his own identity. Here is the story of the authorship mystery as told by "Shakespeare" for posterity. For immediate shipment send \$75 (plus return address) to:

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*Confidential Video Bard*

# The Merchant of Venice: 2004 and 1980

By Chuck Berney

Imagine that a Shakespeare play goes unfilmed until the BBC productions, and then decades later is remade as a gorgeous, internationally-financed movie with famous stars. Now imagine it again.

The first time, it was *Titus Andronicus*, done by the BBC in 1985, then redone by Julie Taymor in 2000, with Anthony Hopkins in the title role (reviewed in SM 2.1, Fall 2002). This time it's *The Merchant of Venice*. An excellent version by the BBC came out in 1980, then Michael Radford's lush production was released in the waning days of 2004—just in time to be eligible for the next round of Academy Awards (alas, in vain). Radford is a relative newcomer to the world of film. He is perhaps best known for *Il Postino* (1994), a romantic comedy also set in Italy. His *Merchant* was filmed on location in Venice and Luxembourg, and like Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) and Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993), immerses us in the sights, sounds, and smells of Renaissance Italy. It contains two towering performances by seasoned male stars. Al Pacino's turn as Shylock is the more noticeable one—all the critics have praised it—but Jeremy Irons as Antonio is equally subtle and profound.

The film opens with some text explaining the legal status of Jews in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Venice, and then gives us a wordless crowd scene illustrating the hostile treatment of Jews in which we see Antonio contemptuously spitting on Shylock. The scene shifts to an interior with Antonio and friends, and the first line of the film is the same as that of the play: Antonio says "In sooth I know not why I am so sad." Irons does indeed look sad—every molecule in his face sags.

The negotiation for Antonio's borrowing the money from Shylock (1.3) is brilliantly staged. The scene opens with a goat being slaughtered in the marketplace. During the ensuing dialog between Bassanio and Shylock (then joined by Antonio) the anonymous butcher hacks a pound of flesh off the carcass and wraps it up for the Jew. This scene makes bloody explicit what otherwise would be merely an abstract possibility.

Joseph Fiennes had the title role in

*Shakespeare in Love* (1998) and played Leicester in *Elizabeth* (1998), which perhaps explains why I don't like him much. I was wishing for someone different to play Bassanio, and then it occurred to me that

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***"To see Radford's film is  
to be transported  
through time and space  
to 16<sup>th</sup>-century Venice;  
to watch the [BBC]  
video is to see a group  
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actors perform  
Shakespeare's play."***

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perhaps the director intended for the character to be borderline unlikeable. Both the text and the film make it clear that Bassanio is a spendthrift whose sole business enterprise is his plan to marry an heiress. Fiennes' 'Shakespeare' was a loser who spent most of the film dithering over "Romeo and the Pirate's Daughter," and his 'Leicester' was a weasel who spent most of the film professing love for Elizabeth while banging the court beauties (in this, at least, the film was historically accurate). Joseph Fiennes is apparently the poster boy for flawed studliness.

Lynn Collins is lovely as Portia, and effective in the trial scene as the young legal expert Balthasar. To make the disguise more believable, the director has given her some stubbly facial hair, which seems to be modeled on what we see in the Droeshout portrait. Zuleikha Robinson plays Shylock's daughter, Jessica, with the collagen-engorged lips so characteristic

of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Jewish virgins.

My nominee for Most Enjoyable Performance in a Minor Role: David Harewood as the Prince of Morocco. He's black as coal and merry as a cricket, and he's surrounded by a posse of homeys who hum and chuckle appreciatively at his every *bon mot*.

The BBC video is a very different experience from the movie. To see Radford's film is to be transported through time and space to 16<sup>th</sup>-century Venice; to watch the video is to see a group of accomplished actors perform Shakespeare's play. One notable difference is that the BBC retains all the dialog, while Radford cuts at least two-thirds of it. Another difference is the characterization of Shylock. Pacino inhabits the role and makes it tragic; the BBC's Warren Mitchell gives us a lively Shylock with a garment-district accent and a ready laugh. It's a comic performance that sometimes works better than the tragic one—for example when Mitchell as Shylock gleefully proposes the "merry bond" (1.3.139) one can almost believe Antonio's acceptance. And Mitchell can turn on the tragedy when required, as when Tubal reports his daughter's spending (3.1), or at the end of the courtroom scene (4.1).

Gemma Jones is an excellent actress—she had the lead in the BBC's 1978 series *The Duchess of Duke Street*—but in this production she seems a little weird. In her first scene, with long blonde curls and a wedding-cake dress, she looks (and sounds) like Glinda the Good from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). I find John Nettle (Bassanio) to be more likeable than Joseph Fiennes, and Leslee Udwin is touching as Jessica. John Franklyn-Robbins, in the title role, is noble and affecting, without neglecting the darker currents in the character.

**Oxford's offstage cameo.** I call your attention to Scene 1.2, in which Nerissa is asking Portia how she likes the various suitors.

Nerissa: What say you then to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

Portia: You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him. He hath neither



Latin, French, nor Italian;  
and you will come into the court  
and swear that I have a  
poor pennyworth in the English.  
He is a proper man's  
picture, but alas! who can  
converse with a dumb-show?  
How oddly he is suited! I think he  
bought his doublet in  
Italy, his round hose in France, his  
bonnet in Germany,  
and his behavior everywhere.

'Falconbridge' is the family name of Philip the Bastard, the hero of *King John*, and next to Hamlet perhaps the clearest authorial voice in the canon. The names 'Falconbridge' and 'Oxenford' are precisely parallel in construction: an animal (two syllables) followed by a means of crossing a river (one syllable).<sup>1</sup> Latin, French and Italian are the foreign languages in which Oxford was most fluent; the indication that Portia's offstage suitor can't speak them I take to be 'allusion by negation' (just as the admonition 'Don't think of a purple elephant' invariably evokes the mental image of a grape-hued pachyderm). I take "Who can converse with a dumb-show" to be another such allusion—Oxford was a voluble and witty talker, the very opposite of a pantomime artist. We then switch to a positive allusion: France, Germany and Italy were countries that Oxford visited during his grand tour of 1575-76. He could hardly have been known as 'the Italianate earl' without a wardrobe of Italian doublets, and it's generally agreed that

Oxford is the figure caricatured by Barnabe Riche as "riding towards me on a footcloth nag, apparelled in a French ruff, a French cloak, a French hose . . ." And finally we have Portia's surmise that "he bought . . . his behavior eVery-where." Alfred Hitchcock made a practice of including a brief uncredited appearance in each of the films of which he was the *auteur*. I believe Portia's description of her offstage English suitor to be Oxford's equivalent of Hitchcock's prank. As a wise person once said, "The advantage of being an Oxfordian is that you get the jokes."

**Significance of names.** In reading the play I came across a situation that puzzled me. *Balthasar* is the servant Portia sends to Bellario to implement her impersonation of a judge. It is also the name she adopts as that judge. I don't think of Shakespeare as being a lazy writer—why would he use the same name twice?

The Book of Daniel recounts that when King Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Israelites, he caused a group of youths to be sent to Babylon. Among these was Daniel, who as a captive was renamed **BELTESHAZZAR**. The king had an ominous dream which proved opaque to all the wise men of his kingdom, but Daniel was able to interpret it. "Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon" (*Daniel* 2.48). As governor, Daniel gained a reputation as a wise and

upright judge.

Some time later, Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son, Belshazzar. The young king fell into impious ways. He gave a great feast at which wine was served in the holy vessels of the Israelites. A disembodied hand appeared and wrote a cryptic message on the wall of the palace. Daniel, the expert interpreter, was brought in, and the message was declared to be "You have been tried in the scales and found wanting." "And that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain" (*Daniel* 5.30).

Various authorities state that *Balthasar*, the name used by our author for both the servant and the assumed judge, is a modified form of **BELSHAZZAR**, the Chaldean king. But this name differs by only one Hebrew letter (tet, ט) from **BELTESHAZZAR**, the name given Daniel as a captive. Some scholars speculate that 'ט' is a particle meaning 'servant of,' so that the modified form *Balthasar* could apply both to the servant and the person served, illuminating Shakespeare's use of the same name for the servant and the disguised Portia. Also illuminated is Shylock's cry of "A Daniel come to judgment! Yea, a Daniel!" when the Portia upholds the validity of his bond (4.1.221)—in assuming the name *Balthasar* Portia has literally become a Daniel. And note too how the image of being 'tried in the scales' resonates with the courtroom scene in the play.

Scholars have speculated on the origin of the name *Shylock*, which is found  
*(Continued on page 32)*

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*Video Bard* (continued from page 31) nowhere else in literature. Eva Turner Clark<sup>2</sup> has theorized that it comes from the last name of Michael Lock, who misrepresented the value of ore returned by Martin Frobisher, thus causing Oxford to invest £3000 in a disastrous enterprise, together with the slang meaning of 'shy,' which the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives as "of questionable character, disreputable, 'shady'." Ian Wilson speculates that the name comes from the Hebrew **SHALAKH** (שלח), "generally translated as cormorant, a particularly apposite choice for *The Merchant of Venice's* voracious Jew, though from whom Shakespeare might have learnt this particular piece of Hebrew is one of his many mysteries."<sup>3</sup> Allan Bloom suggests that the name comes from a character mentioned in Genesis 11.12-15.<sup>4</sup> The name is rendered *Salah* in the King James version; in the original Hebrew it's שלח, where the first letter (shin) can be pronounced *sh*, and the final letter (khet) is a guttural, like the 'ch' in German: thus **SHALACH**.<sup>5</sup> Genesis 11.14 states that "*Salah* lived thirty years and begat *Eber*."

The distinction between *band* *vis labile* between languages (e.g. English *even* and German *eben*) and within Hebrew: the first consonant in the Hebrew alphabet, כ, is named bet or vet, and is pronounced *b* or *v*.<sup>6</sup> The translators of the King James Bible chose to render כ as *b*. If we choose the alternative rendition, *v*, the verse, roughly translated, becomes '*Shylock was Ever's father*.' Perceptive Oxfordians (Mildred Sexton, for one) have long regarded Shylock as a Burghley figure—Burghley

being William Cecil, Lord Burghley, who was E. Vere's guardian and father-in-law. Either this is an outrageous coincidence or it sheds further light on the author's choice of the name. I'm beginning to believe there are no arbitrary names in Shakespeare.

#### END NOTES

1. W. S. Gilbert used this method of allusion in writing his 1881 comic opera *Patience*. The character based on poet Algernon Swinburne was called 'Reginald Bunthorne.' In both cases the last name is an animal followed by a feature of the landscape (brook, thicket), both monosyllabic.
2. Eva Turner Clark, *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*, Kennikat Press, New York, 1974, pp. 335-336.
3. Ian Wilson, *Shakespeare: The Evidence*, St. Martin's Griffin, New York, 1993, 215. How these Stratfordians love their mysteries! There is no mystery about how Oxford could have learned Hebrew: his confidential steward was Israel Anez, or Ames, a member of a prominent Jewish family (Clark, p. 347).
4. Allan Bloom, *Shakespeare's Politics*, Basic Books, New York, 1964, 33.
5. Hebrew words are read from right to left. Most of the letters are consonants; vowels are usually indicated by diacritical marks, omitted here.
6. *Encyclopedia Americana*, Grolier, Danbury CT, 2003, vol. 14, 34. I thank Rabbi Jonathan Kraus of Temple Beth El in Belmont, Massachusetts, for help with the Hebrew language.

## Oxford Week in Boston

There will be two authorship events in Boston in late April, organized and sponsored by the Friends of the Oxford Library.

First, there will be a reception and talk (with refreshments) at the Social Law Library in downtown Boston on April 21 (5:30 to 8:00) featuring Hank Whittemore and his just-published book on the sonnets, *The Monument*. The talk ("Unraveling history") will focus on the legal language in the sonnets and Whittemore's thesis that the language corresponds to the trial and imprisonment of the 3rd Earl of Southampton for his role in the Essex Rebellion. Former SF President Alex McNeil, an administrator of the Appeals Court, will also participate.

On the next day (April 22) there will be a reception (with refreshments) in the Harvard Faculty Club (5:30 to 8:00), with talks to be given by three prominent Oxfordians: Hank Whittemore, Mark Anderson (whose Oxford bio *Shakespeare by Another Name* will be published in August), and Prof. Daniel Wright, director of the Shakespeare Authorship Conference.

The theme for the evening will be "The real Will in the real World," with all three speakers addressing the shortcomings of Prof. Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World*. Tickets for April 22 are \$20. Please RSVP by April 19 to Chuck Berney (617-926-4552) or Bill Boyle (617-628-3411). Make checks payable to: FOL (c/o C. V. Berney), 91 Standish Rd., Watertown, MA 02472.

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