



Shakespeare Matters

"The Voice of the Shakespeare Fellowship"

"Stars or Suns:" The Portrayal of the Earls of Oxford in Elizabethan Drama

By Richard Desper, PhD

In Act III Scene vii of *King Henry V*, the proud nobles of France, gathered in camp on the eve of the battle of Agincourt, speculate in anticipation of victory, letting their thoughts and their words take flight in fancy. While viewing the bedraggled English army as doomed, they savor their expected victory on the morrow and vie with each other in proclaiming their own glory. The dauphin¹ boasts of his horse as another Pegasus, leading to a few allusions of a bawdy nature, and then a curious exchange takes place between Lord Rambures and the Constable of France, Charles Delabreth:

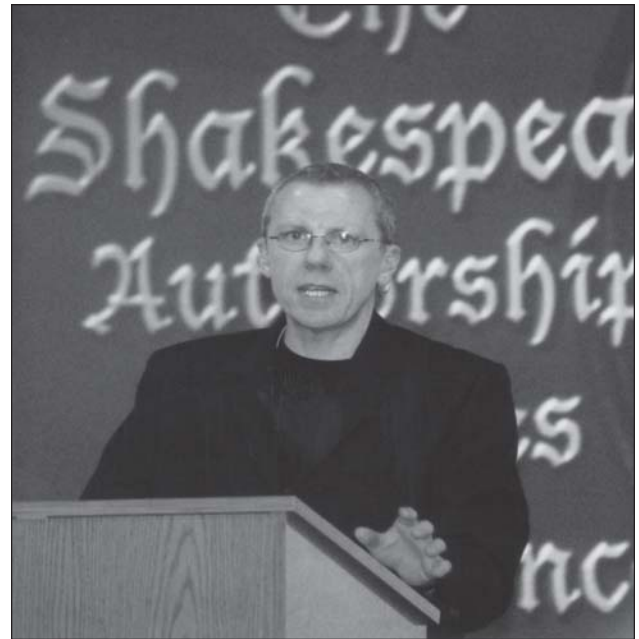
Ram. My Lord Constable, the armor that I saw in your tent to-night, are those stars or suns upon it?

Con. Stars, my lord.

(*Henry V*, III.vii.63-5)²

Shakespeare scholars have remarked little on these particular speeches, by default implying that they are words spoken in passing, having no particular meaning other than idle chatter. One can count at least a dozen treatises on the text of *Henry V* that have nothing at all to say about these two lines.³ Yet numerous lines in this scene have been cited as containing a variety of allusions of a classical, scriptural, or more common nature. The only comment to be found on these lines is the negative verdict of C. W. Scott-Giles in *Shakespeare's Heraldry*: "The reference to stars on his armor in act III does not appear to have any heraldic significance" (116).⁴ Scott-Giles is a preeminent authority on the subject of heraldry, and his book an exhaustive treatise on heraldry in relation to Shakespeare plays.

(continued on p. 25)



Professor William Leahy explains plans for a Shakespeare Authorship Studies Master's Program at Brunel University.

Photo by William Boyle.

Brunel University to Offer Masters in Authorship Studies

While Concordia University has encouraged study of the Shakespeare authorship issue for years, Brunel University in England now plans to offer a graduate program leading to an M.A. degree in Authorship Studies.

In a major advance for Shakespeare Authorship Studies in academia in England, William Leahy, senior lecturer and head of English at Brunel, this past April announced a new Masters Degree program in Shakespeare Authorship studies. Speaking on the first day of the 10th annual Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, Leahy declared that "the authorship issue's time has come. It's time to make it legitimate, remove any stigma and encourage free and open inquiry into the issue. It's a phenomenon of English literature that deserves study and analysis at the graduate level." He added that the program

(continued on p. 14)

Letters:

June 10, 2006

Dear Editors:

We can all be grateful to Prof. Draya for drawing our attention to the prominent position of the outsider in Shakespeare. Since Prof. Ren Draya invites “further lines of investigation,” let me propose illegitimates. Surely, these must be considered quintessential outsiders, bereft as they are of name and patrimony. Prof. Draya mentions Kent in *King Lear*. But what about Edmund, who rousingly challenges us to “stand up for bastards”? Then there’s the Bastard in *King John*. There are also characters who seem to hover in a no-man’s land because of uncertainty over their origins. I would place in this camp Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Orlando in *As You Like It*, and, I would argue, Hamlet himself, given Gertrude’s affair of unstated duration with brother-in-law Claudius.

If we trace the trajectory of Prof. Draya’s argument that the author himself was most likely some kind of outsider, this may or may not point in the direction of Edward de Vere. As between the 17th Earl of Oxford and the Stratford man, it is the latter, a country bumpkin warbling preternaturally elegant verses at the court’s gate, who must be awarded the palm for outsider status. But the focus changes a good deal if we accept the theory that Edward de Vere was the secret child of Princess Elizabeth by Thomas Seymour, a child who, had he been legitimate, would have stood first in line for the throne of England. Such a bizarre predicament would make “Shakespeare” the supreme outsider, whose ironic perspective would be directed to so many alienated characters.

Malvolio is an interesting case. Wouldn’t it be more accurate to see him as an insider and social climber who offends everyone with his pomposity and ambitious fantasies? And isn’t Malvolio yet another caricature of that stalwart and redoubtable insider, William Cecil? If we had to nominate candidates for outsidership in *Twelfth Night*, wouldn’t more logical

choices be Feste, and the sexually ambiguous Viola, washed up on the shores of Orsino’s sad country?

Prof. Draya is on the right track.

Sincerely,

David P. Gontar

February 28, 2006

Dear Editor:

Why have Oxfordians gotten into such a snit over Stephen Greenblatt’s *Will in the World*? Just because it’s an imaginary biography of his Shakespeare of Stratford by a Harvard professor is no reason to be upset.

So what if his man didn’t really write the great poems and plays. Most people think it’s true that he did, and it’s “the essential truth” that counts, isn’t it?

“The essential truth” (as opposed to plain old truth) was the defense put forward earlier this year by author James Frey when his best-selling *A Million Little Pieces*,

billed as a memoir of redemption, came under fire as full of made-up events. “Myriad embellishments,” according to one critic. Like three months in prison instead of a few hours in a police station.

Then the story came out. Initially, Frey’s agent had stumbled. She peddled the book as fiction. Nobody bit until Doubleday, with an eye to the main chance, snapped it up and published it as a true-life memoir. Never mind that it was largely fiction. It’s the *essential truth* that matters. Oprah Winfrey’s endorsement propelled it to the top of the best-seller lists. Called to account on the Internet, Frey went on *Larry King Live* to defend his flights of imagination: his book told – you guessed it – the *essential truth* of his tale of his recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. Initially, Oprah defended her recommendation but then admitted being duped.

For all we know, Greenblatt’s agent may have peddled his book as either biography or as historical fiction, a perfectly respectable category. Norton, with an eye to the main chance, decided to

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The purpose of the Shakespeare Fellowship is to promote public awareness and acceptance of the authorship of the Shakespeare Canon by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), and further to encourage a high level of scholarly research and publication into all aspects of Shakespeare studies, and also into the history and culture of the Elizabethan era.

The Society was founded and incorporated in 2001 in the State of Massachusetts and is chartered under the membership corporation laws of that state. It is a recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit (Fed ID 04-3578550).

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buy it and market it as biography. Never mind that it was mostly imagined. Let's be brazen about it. Let's open with the words, in capitals, "LET US IMAGINE." Let's sell a lot of books. Let's make a lot of money.

Frey's "essential truth" was his personal redemption. Greenblatt's "essential truth" was his imaginary Shakespeare as the Stratford man. Who's to gainsay them when there's hundreds of thousands of dollars at stake?

Frey ultimately apologized for "alter(ing) events all throughout the book."

No need, however, for Greenblatt to apologize: He told readers in his introduction that his book is an "exercise in speculation."

The message is clear. If readers will pay for something made up, academicians will supply it and publishers will publish it. If they want something made up, so be it. To paraphrase the motto of a famous but anonymous University, *Veritas non in vino sed fictioni*.

So what if Greenblatt panders to the collective will to believe in the Stratford man and his much-embellished life? That's the way to get rich, by making stuff up. Hard to argue with that.

Let's face it. In the world of publishing these days, to have a best-seller it's the *essential truth* that counts, and that phrase is slippery enough to mean anything. Truth is not truth, and no one cares whether truth is truth to the end of time. Truth is what most people want to believe most of the time, right now. Myriad embellishments don't diminish the *essential truth*. They enhance it. They embroider it. People want to live rewarding lives in comfort, secure in the knowledge of what's what and who wrote Shakespeare.

To get rich, Make It Up!

Sincerely,

R. Cetus Hunter

(letters cont. on p. 30)

From the Editors

Something Rich And Strange: The Emerging World of Authorship Studies

There's never a dull moment in authorship studies. This issue of *Shakespeare Matters* features a smorgasbord of news, scholarship, and new perspectives on where we are headed and how we are going to get there:

- An interview with Professor William Leahy of London's Brunel University on prospects for authorship studies in academia;
- An expanded version of Richard Desper's important work on the curious Oxfordian mousetrap in *Henry V*;
- A skeptic's primer on Sonnet dedication solutions by David Moffat;
- Bonner Miller Cutting's analysis of the "case of the missing Shakespeare Folio";
- Michael Delahoyde on music and dueling monkeys in de Vere's Venice;
- And of course, for those preparing to launch into the archives, the second in Ian Haste's instructional series on reading secretary script.

The issue represents something of a watershed for several reasons. Many readers may already be aware of the pioneering work contributed to the Oxfordian cause over many decades by Ms. Cutting's parents, Ruth and Minos D. Miller. Since Ms. Miller's passing, Ms. Cutting has stepped up to the plate to make her mother's previously unpublished work accessible to a wider Oxfordian audience; we were pleased in our Fall 2005 issue (5:1) to publish Ruth's article on Oxford's "crown signature" (for the corrected complete version of the article, please see our forthcoming Fall 2006 issue), and the current issue features Ms. Cutting's own study of Lady Anne Clifford's famous 9x18 foot "Great Picture."

The patron's portrait memorializes a group of Elizabethan and Jacobean writers, among them Spenser, Jonson, Donne, and Sidney – but not Shakespeare.

Ms. Cutting's article reveals the double jeopardy into which orthodoxy has plunged itself by refusing to deal openly and honestly with the historical record. It was Professor Nelson who first drew our collective attention to the "Great Picture" as a witness in the authorship controversy. But while Shakespeare's absence in the painting was for Nelson proof positive that Lady Clifford – the second wife of folio dedicatee William Herbert – did not know who Shakespeare was, Cutting offers a more nuanced and intriguing interpretation:

The surviving triptych serves as a looking glass into the past. It is an historical mirror reflecting not just the Countess' own world view but the attitudes and tastes of the "Stuart cultural milieu which she shared".....the "reptilia" of Queen Elizabeth's court were not given flattering characterizations on Shakespeare's stage. For the most part, it was their misbegotten deeds that made for such good copy, thereby accounting for the general spirit of cooperation among the aristocracy as a whole in first, maintaining the secret of the author's identity and later, its final elimination. The motive was straightforward: if the identity of the writer were revealed, the identities of the people would fall into place. Many a reputation would be sullied, perhaps beyond redemption. From the standpoint of an aristocracy that was powerful and vain, the Shakespeare canon was not an acceptable public relations piece.

(10)

(cont. on p. 22)

From a Never Writer...News

The Famous Poet "Shakes His Spear"

The March 2006 issue of *Notes and Queries* contains an authorship blockbuster, apparently not recognized for its implications. We are indebted to Thomas Reedy for noticing the implications of this startling new development. Fred Schurink of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne has discovered a new and unique reference to the bard in the 1628 (3rd) edition of Thomas Vicars' manual of rhetoric, *Χειρουργικα: Manductio ad artem rhetoricam*.

To the list of outstanding English poets, including Geoffrey Chaucer, Edmund Spenser, Michael Drayton, and George Wither that appeared for the first time in the 2nd 1624 edition the 3rd edition adds: "To these I believe should be added that famous poet who takes his name from 'shaking' and 'spear,' John Davies, and my namesake, the pious and learned poet, John Vicars" ("Istis annumerandos censeo, celebrem illus poetam quo a quassatione & hasta nomen habet, Ioan Davisium, & cognominem meum, poetam pium & doctum Ioan Vicarium" Vicars 70). Vicars is widely regarded as the best classical scholar and leading educator of the Stuart period.

This reference is remarkable for several reasons. For one thing, "Shakespeare" is the only poet on the list who is not named

as a real person, but is instead invoked as linguistic construct. Even more intriguing, the reference falls alongside two other names which are disturbingly ambiguous in their double denotation: there were *two* prominent early modern writers by the name of John Davies: John Davies of Hereford (1565?-1618) and Sir John Davies (1569-1626) and *two* John Vicars. The only conceivable reason for including the virtually unknown poet John Vicars is his status as a "namesake" (cognominem) for the writer of the work. Vicars' word, *cognomen* has a telling second sense, above and beyond the well-known sense of a "family name," one that would have formed a most apt commentary on idea of Shakespeare as an assumed name: "a second cognomen, called agnomen by later grammarians, was given as an honorary name to a person for some achievement" (Traupman 99). It is almost as if the writer, a leading rhetorician and educator of his day, is saying, "wink, wink, which spear-shaker do I mean?"

Works Cited

- Schurink, Fred. "An Unnoticed Early Reference to Shakespeare," *Notes and Queries*, March 2006, 72-74.
 Traupman, John C. *The New College Latin & English Dictionary*. New York: Bantam Books, 1966.

Fellowship Trustee Nominations for '06 Elections

The Nominating Committee (K.C. Ligon, Sean Phillips and Sarah Smith) nominates the following persons to the Board of Trustees:

Alex McNeil (for three year term), attorney, previously served as Treasurer (2001-2003) and as President (2003-2004). Graduate of Yale College and Boston College Law School.

Richard Desper (for three year term), retired research chemist with degrees from M.I.T. and UMass, author, independent scholar. Currently serving as Treasurer.

Roger Stritmatter (for three year term), author, independent scholar, professor at Coppin State University, currently serving as Vice-President.

Bonner Miller Cutting (two year term), writer and concert pianist, graduate of Tulane University, member of Phi Beta Kappa, MA in Music, Faculty of the American College of Musicians, judge for

National Guild of Piano Teachers. Daughter of Ruth Loyd Miller and Judge Minos D. Miller.

Ted Story (for President), Artistic Director, Producer, Director, Actor and Dramaturg for thirty-five years, currently serving as President.

Alex McNeil, Richard Desper and **Roger Stritmatter** are currently serving as Trustees, and are renominated for another term. Ted Story is currently serving as President, and is renominated for another term. Bonner Miller Cutting is being nominated to serve the remainder of the term of Lynne Kositsky, who is resigning from the Board for personal reasons. The Shakespeare Fellowship bylaws also permit nominations to the Board of Trustees to be made by petition. For further information about this process, interested persons should contact K.C. Ligon at dialector@gmail.com. Petition nominations must be submitted by September 27, 2006.

Shapiro to Write Book on the Authorship Question

Columbia University's James Shapiro, author of the much-acclaimed minimalist bardography, *1599: A Year in the Life of Shakespeare*, has publicly acknowledged in a May 15 article in the *Daily Telegraph Online* that "the past year has been a good one for the anti-Stratfordians: *The Oxfordian*, the journal of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, attracted attention with the publication of Mark Anderson's 'Shakespeare' *By Another Name*, while the British media proclaimed the arrival of a fresh contender, Sir Henry Neville, proposed by Brenda James and William Rubenstein (sic) in their book *The Truth Will Out*."

A June 18 interview of Shapiro by Jasper Gerard in the London *Sunday Times* reported on a further curious wrinkle: "For his next odyssey, Shapiro intends to examine why so many people do not believe that Shakespeare wrote, well, Shakespeare: 'People I respect are fascinated by this: Sigmund Freud and Henry James both believed it was someone else.' . . . He admits that this populist project alarms academics, who fear a Da Vinci Code-style thriller. 'My friends tell me I am going over to the dark side,' he laughs, 'but I doubt I am going to change my mind [about Shakespeare's identity]'. "



Fellowship Trustee Lynne Kositsky in the Folger: Lynne's 2000 young adult novel, A Question of Will, featuring the intrepid time-traveler Perin Willoughby, on display at the Folger Shake-Speare Library for the recent exhibit, "Golden Lads and Lasses: Shakespeare For Children."

Special Authorship Issue of Rocky Mountain Review

The Fall issue of the *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, the quarterly journal of the Northwest chapter of the Modern Language Association, the leading academic organization of literary scholars in North America, features two articles on the authorship question. "What's In a Name? Everything, Apparently," is a five-thousand word essay by your editor. Michael Delahoyde, Shakespeare Fellowship member and *Rocky Mountain* editor, reviews "Recent Publications in Oxfordian Studies," including *Great Oxford: Essays on the Life and Work of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, 1550-1604*, edited by Richard Malim; Mark Anderson's "Shakespeare" *By Another Name*, and Hank Whittemore's *The Monument*.

Tempest Essay Accepted by Academic Journal

The first of four essays on the date, sources, performance venue, and symbolic structure of *The Tempest*, written over the past two years by Lynne Kositsky and Roger Stritmatter, has been accepted by a major academic journal specializing in early modern and Renaissance studies. "I am pleased to say that we will be delighted to accept your article for publication," the editor wrote in an April 27 email. The date for publication of the first article, "Shakespeare and the Voyagers Revisited," has not yet been set. Two of the other three articles are currently under review at other academic journals.

(News cont. on page 24)

The Case of the Missing First Folio

by Bonner Miller Cutting

At the Shakespeare authorship conference held at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, in the spring of 2005, Dr. Alan Nelson continued his intrepid defense of William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon as the author of the Shakespeare canon. The presentation, as reported in *Shakespeare Matters* (Spring 2005), included a slide of a painting of Lady Anne Clifford, the 17th century's famous Triple Countess of Pembroke, Montgomery and Dorset. Hailed as one of the most renowned noblewomen of the era, her two marriages provided her with the three titles as well as abundant wealth. In a striking portrait of her known as "The Great Picture" (Figure One), a large collection of books are shelved in the background; they are boldly labeled to be readily identifiable. Nelson notes that Shakespeare's First Folio is *not* among the titles. Pointing to this omission as a signal that the Pembroke clan took no notice of Shakespeare, he uses Lady Anne as a witness for the defense of the orthodox position. In calling Lady Anne to the stand, Nelson has in effect sent a subpoena back through time. However, it will appear that despite what he may have intended, he has not called forth a milquetoast defense witness, but rather one who will upon cross-examination emerge as a powerful witness for the prosecution.

Actually, Nelson is right about one thing: Lady Anne Clifford is an historical person of interest. She was in the right place, at the right time, and with the right resume to know who Shakespeare was. But it is what she does not tell us that counts. In an article on the Shakespearean question published in the *Pennsylvania Law Review* United States Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens emphasized the importance of "significant silence," recalling the Sherlock Holmes story of the barking dog in his discussion of the absence of contemporary references to Shakespeare.

In the story, the dog does not bark because the culprit is someone known to him. The case of Lady Anne's Great Picture is right on point; posterity is presented with yet another case of the dog's "deafening silence."¹

The task herein is threefold. First, Lady Anne's place in the social and political milieu must be recognized. Second, her Great Picture must be understood as she intended it to be: an impressive pictorial

Lady Anne Clifford will testify to "who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out." (*King Lear*, V. iii). That Shakespeare is noticeably "out" is a case of conspicuous absence which makes perfect sense if the author is Edward de Vere. It does not square with the orthodox paradigm.

retrospective of her status and attitudes. Third, her omission of Shakespeare does not fit the orthodox story of Shakespeare if indeed the story were true. As we shall see, through the venue of this portrait, Lady Anne Clifford will testify to "who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out." (*King Lear*, V. iii). That Shakespeare is noticeably "out" is a case of conspicuous absence which makes perfect sense if the author is Edward de Vere. It does not square with the orthodox paradigm.

Lady Anne Clifford was the second wife of Philip Herbert, the Earl of

Montgomery. The Earl's first wife was Susan Vere, Oxford's daughter from his marriage to Anne Cecil. Susan Vere and Philip Herbert had ten children; six survived to adulthood thereby becoming Lady Anne Clifford's stepchildren upon their father's remarriage. It is unknown if Susan Vere and Anne Clifford were close friends, but certainly they knew each other. Specifically, as young noblewomen in the Court of King James, in 1608 they were cast together in Ben Jonson's second *Masque of Beauty*, then again in his 1609 *Masque of Queens*.² For the latter performance, Inigo Jones' costume designs for both Susan and Anne are still extant. The following year they were once again fellow dancers in Tethys' Festival. Anne was widowed in 1624. Susan died in 1629 and Montgomery soon after inherited his brother Pembroke's title. The wealthy and available widower moved quickly to propose the marriage-merger to Lady Anne Clifford, the widowed Countess of Dorset.

With her marriage to Montgomery, (hereafter called Pembroke), Lady Anne became attached to a mind-boggling collection of earldoms. Her father, George Clifford, was the flamboyant 3rd Earl of Cumberland and her mother, Margaret Russell, was the daughter of the Earl of Bedford. Nevertheless, it isn't her status at the top of the social register that makes her such a good witness, but her lifelong interest in literary pursuits. Lady Anne's mother, the Countess of Cumberland, hired the poet-historian Samuel Daniel to provide her daughter and sole heir with an education "not just equaling but superior to that [which] her male contemporaries received at the university." The beloved teacher of her youth succeeded in his tutorial job, developing in his student "a familiarity with the most widely studied works of her time."³ That Daniel's instruction stayed with her throughout her life is manifest in the fulsome recognition he receives in the



Figure One: Lady Anne Clifford, from the left panel of the Appleby Triptych, also known as "The Great Picture," reproduced with the kind permission of Abbot Hall Art Gallery,

Great Picture of her later years.

Evidence is abundant that Lady Anne took keen interest in contemporary writers as well as in their work. In 1620 she commissioned the monument to Edmund Spenser in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, paying the skilled mason Nicholas Stone the tidy sum of forty pounds for the project.⁴ It would appear that Lady Anne would have had the acumen to comprehend Shakespeare's literary significance; certainly she had the financial means to do for Shakespeare what she did for Spenser. That she did not is a signal that "Shakespeare" did not resonate with the aristocracy in quite the same way that Spenser did.

In any event, Countess Anne found many outlets for her initiative. Undaunted by the gender politics of the 17th century, she launched an assembly line of litigation against her Clifford uncle and cousin respectively, who had inherited the Cumberland title and properties superseding her through the laws of primogeniture. Lady Anne put up a fight of such magnitude that King James ultimately intervened to stop the bloodbath. When her cousin died in 1643 without male heirs, every single Clifford property came back to her estate and her control. Although her longevity was a factor in winning back her father's properties — it helped to simply outlive her Clifford cousin — her lifelong tenacity paid off. The decades of legal maneuvering put her in a stronger position than a woman might otherwise have been in to retrieve the property she considered rightfully hers.

She was victorious in a ferocious struggle for dominance. She wanted the world to know. But her personal victory came at a bad time. As previously noted, the year was 1643 and "the world" was caught up in a violent revolution. She and Pembroke had been estranged for some years; nevertheless, in wartime her safe-keeping was part of his noble duty. At his behest, she took refuge at Baynard's Castle, the fabulous London property belonging to the Herbert family. Pembroke apparently regarded Baynard's as his most defensible stronghold, moving his household goods — furnishings, silver, gold plate, tapestries, art collection and other valuables — from

(Cont. on p. 8)

(*First Folio cont. from p. 7*)

Wilton House to Baynard's early in the conflict. The Countess remained at Baynard's from 1642 until the summer of 1649 when the war ended. Of course she did not spend the war years "in idle cell," but characteristically spent the time after 1643 preparing for a triumphant entrance to her newly acquired Northern manor homes, in anticipation of the time when it would be feasible to assert her acquisition in person. To this end, she commissioned what is known today as The Great Picture.

The Great Picture is actually a triptych. Its dimensions when open are 9 feet high and span 18 feet across. It would seem to have been inspired by Sir Anthony Van Dyck's masterpiece of her second husband and his first family painted a few years earlier for the wall of the Double Cube Room of Wilton House. Although Countess Anne's pictorial representation of her own family is not as tall as her husband's, when the two four-foot side panels are opened up and added to the ten-foot center panel, the overall size is approximately equivalent.

In a historical peccadillo, Lady Anne Clifford has been incorrectly identified as Pembroke's Countess in the Van Dyck behemoth.⁵ There should not be the slightest doubt that the pretty blond woman on the wall at Wilton House is Pembroke's first wife, Susan Vere. Certainly Van Dyck, a master figure painter, would have had no difficulty capturing the dark hair and distinctive features of Anne Clifford. Countess Susan, though deceased, is given the respect she is due at her husband's side as the matriarch of the dynasty insured with her six surviving children.

This case of mistaken identity has ramifications in the authorship debate, especially in light of the Folger Shakespeare Library's insistence that the sitter in the Ashbourne Portrait of Shakespeare is Hugh Hammersley. Apparently, the dark cloud hanging over Oxford manifests itself again in an attempt to reassign the identity of a portrait of his daughter. If one examines the time line of this error, Countess Susan Vere was correctly identified prior to Charles Wisner Barrell's landmark study of the Ashbourne Portrait published in *Scientific American* in January of 1940.

Thereafter, the "powers that be" removed the correct information from public view, perhaps as it might trigger the obvious connection that the celebrated patrons of

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Shakespeare's First Folio were part of Oxford's extended family.⁶

Of course, one has the sense that Pembroke chose to immortalize his first Countess in the glorious Van Dyck portrait because he couldn't stand his second one. Besides, his redoubtable second Countess of Pembroke could take care of her own publicity. Countess Anne might have had a hankering to outdo his Great Picture, even

as she was living at his benevolence in the luxury of his magnificent London safe house.

So while still at Baynard's Castle, the Triple Countess began work on not one, but two massive triptychs. Once the war ended and Countess Anne gained access to her Northern properties, one triptych would go to her manor home of Appleby, eventually to be bequeathed to her older daughter; the other was destined for Skipton Castle, ultimately to be part of her younger daughter's inheritance. The triptychs were meant to last, although the one known as the Appleby Triptych is now the only one extant. The Skipton version, though more often studied by scholars, has not survived the ravages of time.⁷ That the two triptychs were destined for the inheritance of her two daughters further enhances a dynastic purpose to commemorate the high social distinction of the family in centuries past and to instruct generations yet unborn in cultural values that were important for those of their class to uphold.

A detailed examination of every inch of the Appleby Triptych is warranted but is beyond the scope of this article. A lot of information and imagery can be conveyed in a painting covering 162 square feet of wall space: A brief survey reveals fourteen figures, related inscriptions, coats of arms, memorabilia, jewels, armor, furnishings and the like, all bordered by several dozen shields with accompanying biographies going back six centuries. As the triptychs were intended to proclaim the legitimacy of the Countess' inheritance, the panels commemorate lifetime landmarks accordingly. The center panel memorializes her immediate family when her two older brothers were still living in 1590; she appears *in utero*. In the left wing she is "lively depicted" at age 15 when, at her father's death in 1605, she became his sole and rightful heir in her view of things. The right wing shows the Countess approximately forty years later when the coveted properties, "wrongfully detained," were finally hers. In order to bracket the chronology, the last date referenced in the painting is her younger daughter's marriage in 1647.

However, chronological incongruity

is allowed in the genre of Elizabethan memorial painting. Though the entire triptychs were painted in the mid-1640s, the center panel represents the 1590 time frame. In this panel her father is shown with his Order of the Garter, an honor not attained until 1592.⁸ Lady Anne appears in the girlhood panel of 1605 in a dress from 1617. Three of the books displayed behind her were published at later dates, and the lute at her side is post-1630. This “chronological dissonance” indicates that the objects and costumes were requested by the Countess, and her “lapses from strict accuracy” a permissible indulgence.⁹

Most striking of all are the numerous books that provide the backdrop of a library

Biographer Holmes does not comment on the absence of Shakespeare’s byline but ends his discussion of the Countess’ library with a Shakespearean quote, a handy device used regularly to give Shakespeare a presence which in fact he does not have.

for both side panels. This unique bibliographic representation has evoked much commentary over the centuries as scholars sense that the fifty books chosen for display were freighted to carry a message to future generations. Certainly their presence was intended to tacitly showcase the exceptional erudition of the seigneurial mistress when she received visiting nobility, gentry and clergy.¹⁰ That she intended her Great Picture to be viewed by many and “appraised approvingly” is the foremost reason why the absence of Shakespeare is puzzling. On this point more will be said shortly.

But first let us take an overview of the books that are there. Along with three obligatory Holy Bibles, the heavy hitters

appear on the Countess’ putative shelves: Plutarch and Ovid among the ancients, Chaucer and Castiglione among the greats of more recent centuries. It is, however, the contemporary English writers that deserve the most scrutiny. Starting with Edmund Spenser, there is a solid lineup of the Romantic School of writers, in fact the hangers-on of the Sidney crowd.¹¹ To be sure, some are more talented than others. Going down the line, one finds Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*, George Herbert’s *Poems*, and scraping the bottom of the barrel, Sir Fulke Greville’s *Works*. As with the Sidney cluster, other inhabitants of the shelves have personal connections. Ben Jonson shows up with his *Works* of 1616, and his circle of acquaintances is represented with his mentor William Camden’s well-received *Britannia*. Jonson’s cohort from his Mermaid Tavern days, the great divine John Donne, is represented twice with *Poems* and his *Sermons*.¹² The inclusion of Ben Jonson makes the absence of Shakespeare all the more imponderable.

In short, the the triptych displays the writers for whom the Countess felt a warm personal inclination or those who were generally politically acceptable. Phrased more diplomatically by biographer Spence, here was a woman who “recognized the dues of friendship” while she “kept abreast of current political and religious issues” (193). Of course her beloved teacher Samuel Daniel appears with *Chronicles of England*, and he is singled out for an additional tribute with a background portrait and a laudatory inscription. It would seem that William Shakespeare would fit comfortably among such distinguished company, say next to Arthur Golding’s translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, or maybe between John Florio’s translation of Montaigne’s *Essays* and John Gerard’s *Herbal*.

Ever mindful of the academic niceties, scholars tiptoe around Shakespearean irregularities. Again, the historiography is consistent. Biographer Holmes does not comment on the absence of Shakespeare’s byline but ends his discussion of the Countess’ library with a Shakespearean quote, a handy device used regularly to give Shakespeare a presence which in fact he does not have. Biographer Spence is

more forthright. He notes the lacunae, then by way of explanation surrounds the apple with a few oranges. But at least he noticed:

Throughout the centuries, biographers offer no clue as to what the “Soul of the Age” could possibly have done to offend. On the contrary, orthodox scholars generally insist that their convivial man was adequately noticed, even revered, by his contemporaries....he enjoyed the patronage of the Earl of Southampton, and the Countess’ husband and his brother lent their patronage to “his” First Folio. They were, of course, the “incomparable paire of brethren” who “prosequuted both [the plays] and their Authour living with so much favour.” The absence of “Shakespeare” sends a disconcerting signal that something is wrong with the traditional story.

The towering giants by today’s criteria, Shakespeare and Milton, are absent, likewise Raleigh, Sir Francis Bacon and James I. In view of the Pembroke’s patronage, Shakespeare’s absence is a little surprising, especially as the Lords Clifford figured in his *Histories* and by an understandable slip, Earl George as

(Continued on p. 10)

(*First Folio, Continued from p. 9*)

'Clifford of Cumberland.' She may have had political and personal reservations about the rest.

(Spence 194)

"Political and personal reservations"? Indeed. Throughout the centuries, biographers offer no clue as to what The Soul of the Age could possibly have done to offend. On the contrary, orthodox scholars generally insist that their convivial man was adequately noticed, even revered by his contemporaries. It is well accepted that he enjoyed the patronage of the Earl of Southampton, and the

The surviving triptych serves as a looking glass into the past. It is an historical mirror reflecting not just the Countess' own worldview but the attitudes and tastes of the "Stuart cultural milieu which she shared."...the "reptilia" of Queen Elizabeth's court were not given flattering characterizations on Shakespeare's stage. For the most part, it was their misbegotten deeds that made for such good copy, thereby accounting for the general spirit of cooperation among the aristocracy as a whole in first, maintaining the secret of the author's identity and later, its final elimination. The motive was straightforward: if the identity of the writer were revealed, the identities of the people would fall into place. Many a reputation would be sullied, perhaps beyond redemption. From the standpoint of an aristocracy that was powerful and vain, the Shakespeare canon was not an acceptable public relations piece.

Countess' husband and his brother lent their patronage to "his" First Folio. They were, of course, the "incomparable paire of brethren" who "prosequuted both [the plays] and their Authour living with so much favour." The absence of "Shakespeare" sends a disconcerting signal that something is wrong with the traditional story. Yet as Lady Anne was the impresario of her own triptychs, let us consider thoughtfully her biographer's comment and search for an author omitted because of a "political" or "personal reservation."

As the stepmother of Oxford's grandchildren, there might have been room for rancor within the family, especially as Pembroke settled on his second Countess the property that King James had given his first as a wedding present.¹³ Alienating his first wife's property could cause some serious ill will between his children and their stepmother. That's personal.

However, Countess Anne's lifelong and ultimately successful campaign to obtain her Clifford inheritance opens the door to something at a higher level. She encompassed a new dynasty for her two daughters, built on the shoulders of the great inheritance that reposed in her. The triptychs were the physical embodiment of the patrimony for which she had fought tooth and nail. As such, the shields and inscriptions bordering the paintings carried the chain of title, proclaiming the legitimacy of her claim to the ownership of the lands that made her rich. The books would instruct subsequent generations in the proper channels of religious and political thought. That is why the books were there, and why they were chosen most carefully. The very grandeur of the triptychs would give added value to the message contained therein. With such far reaching consequences in mind, she could not afford to make an error in judgment that reduced their impact.

If the orthodox story of Shakespeare's life is true, at least something representative of his work, if not the First Folio itself, should have been a proud trophy on the Countess' pictorial shelves. Aye, but there's the rub. As egregious as the omission might appear by today's conventional wisdom, leaving out Shakespeare must have been the right thing for an educated person to do in the middle of the 17th century. The surviving triptych serves as a looking glass into the past. It is an historical mirror reflecting not just the Countess' own world view but the attitudes and tastes of the "Stuart cultural milieu which she shared."¹⁴

The heart of the problem has been correctly assessed by many Oxfordians starting with Eva Turner Clark and, most recently, well covered by Mark Anderson in his comprehensive biography, '*Shakespeare' By Another Name*. As "Shakespeare," Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, wrote about the people he knew. Given that he was born into the aristocracy (whether that is a fault of his or not) he wrote about the people he knew first hand. It was the misbegotten deeds of the "reptilia"¹⁵ of the Court of Elizabeth that made for such good copy, thereby accounting for the general spirit of cooperation among the aristocracy as a whole in first, maintaining the secret of his identity and later, its final elimination. The motive was straightforward: once the identity of the writer was revealed, the identities of the people would fall into place. Many a reputation would be sullied, perhaps beyond redemption. From the standpoint of an aristocracy that was powerful and vain, the Shakespeare canon was not an acceptable public relations piece.

When Lady Anne's triptychs were underway in the 1640s, the Civil War was raging. It was a time of violent social revolution in which both the monarchy and the aristocracy were fighting for their very survival.¹⁶ The Shakespeare canon could negatively impact the "great ones" in this struggle. Ultimately, the Stratford-on-Avon legend became the tool which severed the umbilical cord connecting the ugly thing, from its birth mother. But that was down the road.

Conclusion

Meantime, the astute Triple Countess followed the smartest course of action. Like the dog that did not bark, she knew who Shakespeare was. So she left him out. Perhaps she, along with the better informed members of the other ruling families, hoped that the Shakespeare Problem would just fade away. Perhaps the Shakespeare canon would become no more than an esoteric offering to posterity, a quaint oddity along the lines of the Elizabethan neck ruff. Something subsequent generations could well do without. Whatever the future held in store, Countess Anne Clifford had correctly gauged public opinion and was playing to the crowd. Taken at face value, the two triptychs were advertisements of her authority and the legitimacy of her patrimony. Next, they would serve to inculcate her daughters with their illustrious place in the social order; there is nothing like a strong grasp of family values! The magnificence of the paintings would leave those who looked upon them gasping in awe. She had every reason to believe that her Great Pictures would continue to carry

When Lady Anne's triptychs were underway in the 1640s, the Civil War was raging. It was a time of violent social revolution in which both the monarchy and the aristocracy were fighting for their very survival. The Shakespeare canon could negatively impact the "great ones" in this struggle. Ultimately, the Stratford-on-Avon legend became the tool which severed the umbilical cord connecting the ugly thing, from its birth mother.

her message long into perpetuity. Ironically, she left out the one whose legacy would prove to be the most enduring.

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¹ Stevens, John Paul, "The Shakespeare Canon of Statutory Construction," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* [Vol.140: 1373 1992] 1382.

² Looney, J. Thomas, *Shakespeare Identified* Vol. II (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975, for Minos Publishing Co., copyright 1997) 3-8.

³ Spence, Richard T., *Lady Anne Clifford*, (Sutton Publishing Limited, 1997) 12-14.

⁴ Spence, 67, 68.

⁵ *Paintings & Drawings at Wilton House*, (Phaidon Press, 1968) Plate 4; Holmes, Martin, *Proud Northern Lady* (Phillimore & Co, 1975) 128; Spence, 102.

⁶ Howarth, David, *Images of Rule* (University of California Press, 1997) 227, 228; Howarth concurs with Freeman O'Donoghue's Catalogue of Engraved British Portraits in The British Museum Vol V (London, 1922) p. 49 in which "the print by Baron after Van Dyck" identifies the sitters "Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke and 1st Earl of Montgomery, W.L. seated with his first Countess Susan Vere." The fine compilation of plates of many of the great paintings in the collection at Wilton House, published in 1968 with a foreword by Sidney, 16th Earl of Pembroke, coolly identifies Anne Clifford as the Countess in Van Dyck's portrait. The two subsequent biographers of Anne Clifford pick up the mistake accounting for Susan's somber death pose simply as Anne's "detachment." In declaring "this disconsolate creature" to be "a posthumous likeness of Pembroke's first wife Lady Susan Vere," Howarth describes the woman as "shrouded in black, hands folded on stomach as was conventional in recumbent effigies of the dead...it was entirely appropriate that Van Dyck should have included the mother of Pembroke's children. The spirit of the 4th Earl's first wife thus complements the presence of Lady Mary Villiers, by whom Pembroke himself expected to be provided with grandchildren..."

⁷ Spence, 181-186. The triptychs are sometimes attributed to Jan Van Belchamp, but it is not certain who painted them. Readers can refer to Spence's biography for a discussion of the artists as well as detailed descriptions of the two versions and information about the scholars who studied them. He concludes that both triptychs were substantively alike, though minor differences did exist.

⁸ Kinney, Arthur F., *Titled Elizabethans*, (Archon Books, 1973) 67.

⁹ Spence, 184.

¹⁰ Spence, 189-195. Spence furnishes a complete list of the fifty books on pages 190-191.

¹¹ Looney, J. Thomas, *Shakespeare Identified* Vol. I (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press for Minos Publishing Co., 1974), 300. Well known to Oxfordians is the Oxford/Sidney rivalry which existed ostensibly on literary grounds between competing court poets of the Euphuist and Romantic schools respectively. Looney recognized the "social tendencies" inherent in this dichotomy, noting the "glamour that has gathered round one name and the shadow that has remained over the other." Lady Anne's exclusion of the Euphuist writers indicates that this trend was taking hold by the mid-1600s.

¹² Riggs, David, *Ben Jonson A Life*, (Harvard University Press, 1989) 192-195.

¹³ Spence, 101; Holmes, 129.

¹⁴ Spence, 253.

¹⁵ Ward, Bernard M., *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, (John Murray, reprint 1979) 97.

¹⁶ Stone, Lawrence, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, (Oxford University Press, abridged edition, 1967) The multiplicity of issues that erupted in the catastrophic Civil War of the 1640s need not be elaborated here. Stone demonstrates sufficiently that during this time of Revolution the "stock of the aristocracy was lower than it had ever been before or was to be again for centuries" (350).

Music, Monkeys, and Publishing in de Vere's Venice

by Michael Delahoyde, PhD

Culture and fashion in the Renaissance evolved slowly compared to the dizzyingly rapid life cycle of a contemporary trend, which is why I'm told by a fiber arts expert that paying close attention to clothing in Shakespeare probably wouldn't help us establish earlier dates for the plays. The so-called Renaissance itself spread slowly, with culturally

impoverished England waiting over two hundred years to catch up to – and surpass, at least in literature – its Italian predecessors. The popularity of a musician could last many decades after his death as his music gradually spread on quirky paths through Europe. So, although Antonio Gardano opened for business as early as 1538, his music publishing house grew increasingly influential for many decades and, I think, becomes relevant to Shakespeare studies later in the century, as indeed other connections also suggest.

After Gardano's death in 1569, Angelo, one of the sons who took over the business, edited and published *Il trionfo di Dori* in 1592, a collection of 29 six-part madrigals by assorted musical luminaries such as Luca Marenzio (d. 1559), already one of the key Italian composers to inspire the development of the celebrated English madrigal. All the madrigal texts in the publication end with the line "Viva la bella Dori," and so the book is assumed to have inspired in England *The Triumphes of Oriana*, the 1601 collection organized by Thomas Morley in honor of Queen Elizabeth in which each of the 25 pieces ends with "Long live fair Oriana!"

Less directly but much earlier, dealings of the Gardano publishing house may have had an influence on the Elizabethan arts. Shortly after opening up shop in the *Calle de la scimia*, or "Monkey Alley" (Bonds 146), Gardano published an anthology of motets with the title *Mottetti del frutto*. On the title page was printed a fruit-filled still-life image (Fig. 1). A rival music publisher in Ferrara – Buglhat, Campis, and Hucher – soon produced a collection of motets titled *Moteti de la Simia* ("Motets of the Monkey"). On the

title page of the cantus part, as an obvious insult to Gardano, a monkey is eating fruit (Fig. 2). This competitive firm also beat out Gardano in publishing first some further motets that Gardano had intended to issue. Thus, on a 1539 installment of *Mottetti del frutto*,

Gardano shot back at them by printing the image of a bear and a lion – components of his eventual company logo – devouring a monkey who clearly has just been eating fruit, as evidenced by the remaining debris (Fig. 3).

The cluster of associations – music, monkey, and Venice – occurs, of course, in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, a play that serves as the go-to source for rapturous Shakespeare quotations on the

subject of music, indeed on "the sweet power of music":

Therefore the poet
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods,
Since naught so stockish, hard, and full of rage
But music for the time doth change his nature. (V.i.79-82)

If Shakespeare merely rhapsodized about the emotional and mystical effects of music, as he does through Lorenzo here (cf. V.i.71-79), or offered merely a scattered selection of puns as do Julia and Lucetta in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (I.ii.77ff), we might be impressed that a merchant-class playwright in London had also picked up, aside from his acquired knowledge of countless other fields, some of the vocabulary and concepts of an art sufficiently connected to theater not to be too surprising. But Shakespeare knows specialized technical matters in music: the "gamut" in *The Taming of the Shrew* (III.i.67ff), the rhythm in "prick-song" and the "minim rest" in *Romeo and Juliet* (II.iv.21-22), stops and instrumental fingering in *Hamlet* (III.ii.364ff). "Out of thirty-seven plays of Shakespeare, there are no less than thirty-two which contain interesting references to music and musical matters in the text itself.



Figure One: Fruit Still Life on Gardano's *Mottetti del frutto*.



Figure Two: Bughat, Campis & Hucher's Monkey (*"Motets of the Monkey") devours Gardano's Fruit.



Figure Three: Gardano's Lion and Bear devour the Fruit Eating Monkey.

There are also over three hundred stage directions which are musical in their nature, and these occur in thirty-six out of thirty-seven plays" (Naylor 3-4). Even subtracting the obligatory horn alarms in military scenes of the history plays, that's a saturation. And yet, we are told that "In most English schools of the Elizabethan period music was probably not taught at all. It was early replaced by arithmetic in the curriculum for the smaller children, and was also crowded out in the grammar schools" (Watson, qtd. in Boyd 14).

Besides numerous other references to and various subtle significances of music, *The Merchant of Venice* also contains a disturbingly memorable reference to a monkey. When Othello blurts out "Goats and monkeys!" in front of a delegate from Venice (IV.i.263), we know he is tormented with images of animalistic lechery. But the monkey reference in *Merchant* occurs, like the music, in the context of extravagant entertainment, as Tubal reports that Jessica has swapped a ring — one with enormous sentimental value to Shylock — for a monkey (III.i.118f). The cheesiness is gruesome, and, interestingly, this use of the monkey by Shakespeare resembles the creature's appearance among the motet covers: that is, as a weapon of goading. For Tubal, according to Harold C. Goddard, is cruelly working on Shylock's emotions more subtly than an Iago (Goddard 96).

The cluster of associations — Venice, music, and monkeys — is yet another dismissable coincidence if one subscribes to the traditional authorship hoax. But we know that Edward de Vere immersed himself in Venetian culture during his 1575-1576 travels, and the work of Altschuler and Jansen demonstrates that the 17th Earl of Oxford is looking more and more responsible for not just the literary renaissance in England but the musical one as well.

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(Brunel University, cont. from p. 1)

would encourage research into the Shakespeare authorship issue in the widest sense, including its history, the various candidates proposed over the years, the controversy as a psychological and sociological phenomenon, and biographical and historical aspects of the issue. The program will begin in September 2007.

Leahy is the author of *Elizabethan Triumphal Processions* (Ashgate 2005) and was the recipient of the Brunel vice-chancellor's award for teaching excellence in 2005.

Oxfordians at the conference enthusiastically welcomed his announcement of the graduate program. Oxfordian professors in about a dozen universities in the United States raise the authorship issue in their undergraduate classes, but the M.A. program at Brunel will be the first degree-granting graduate program. Shortly after the April Conference, *Shakespeare Matters* caught up with Professor Leahy by email and he agreed to answer a few questions

There are a number of related discrepancies. The most significant, for me, is the "willed blindness" of orthodox scholars...there are manifold problems of biography. As Foucault, following Nietzsche, states, attributing an author to texts limits (indeed arrests) interpretation. This is true when the author is clearly known. To do so when the question of authorship is so open seems to me to be a form of anti-intellectual stubbornness and is perhaps, as Stritmatter (following Kuhn) says, indicative of a paradigm winding down.

regarding his "conversion" to authorship skeptic as well as his hopes and dreams for the new Brunel program.

SM: Can you describe for our readers how you started to question the orthodox view of Shakespearean biography?

Leahy: In 2005, I was asked to write an article for a fortnightly magazine, *New Statesman*, commenting on remarks made by Mark Rylance of the Globe, concerning the Authorship Question. Rylance had said that he believed in the possibility of the "group-theory:" that a number of writers, led by Bacon, were responsible for the plays and poems. My article was dismissive of both Rylance and the Authorship Question. That said, it also had some unkind things to say about the "theme-park" ambience of Stratford-upon-Avon. The article ignited my interest in the question and I began

to research it, attend conferences and so on. The more I learned about the phenomenon, the more I understood the serious "gaps" that are evident in the orthodox view of Shakespeare's biography as it relates to his accepted literary output.

SM: Where there any particular "Eureka!" moments along the way?

Leahy: I would love to say there were, but, to be honest (and a little boring) there were not. My academic background, with regard to Shakespeare studies, is steeped in the ways in which common people are represented in the plays, most particularly the history plays. Combined with my other main research area, Elizabethan processional literature and representation of the common people, this has led me to take a skeptical view of much conventional academic work. Thus, my view that common people of the time would not necessarily have celebrated the passing of Queen Elizabeth on procession has irked many mainstream scholars, not least because it goes against conventional "knowledge." My view that both common people and common soldiers in the history plays are given a voice which many in Shakespeare's audience would have recognized and related to has also been the source of some annoyance among scholars. This experience of skepticism in the face of (some) hostility serves me well in the current context.

SM: What, to you, are the most significant discrepancies in the orthodox view of the bard?

Leahy: There are a number of related discrepancies. The most significant, for me, is the "willed blindness" of orthodox scholars. With regard to the plays, there are problems of chronology, of attribution, of collaboration, of authenticity and of authority. With regard to the man, there are manifold problems of biography. As Foucault, following Nietzsche, states, attributing an author to texts limits (indeed arrests) interpretation. This is true when the author is clearly known. To do so when the question is so open seems to me to be a form of anti-intellectual stubbornness and is perhaps, as Stritmatter (following Kuhn) says in the *Rocky Mountain Review*, indicative of a paradigm winding down. Shakespeare Studies is a broad church and should be able to house the Authorship Question without such fear and loathing.

SM: How have your colleagues responded to your advocacy of the authorship question as a serious intellectual topic?

Leahy: I would say the response has been mixed. That said, colleagues who are skeptical have made it clear that they have trust in me and that, while they have no great desire to get involved with the Question, they fully respect my view that the phenomenon itself is a serious intellectual topic. They know that I am not merely having fun with it or approaching it in a cavalier fashion. My research output up to now has been of a sufficiently high standard for them to take my seriousness seriously.

SM: Can you please tell us something about yourself—your background, influences, and areas of academic interest and expertise?

Leahy: I came to academia quite late (I began my PhD at age 35) and specialized immediately in Shakespeare's History plays and Elizabethan processional literature. The common thread was the common people and how the literature reflected real lives. My research into processional literature particularly clarified to me how academia traditionally represented the common people in ways which, to my mind, were not entirely accurate. That common people supported and celebrated Queen Elizabeth on procession had become a form of conventional knowledge which my book on the subject sets out to challenge. As already stated, the parallels with the Shakespeare Authorship Question are clear. My research, as well as being historically based, is also influenced by the theories of Foucault, Barthes, Derrida and, most particularly, Walter Benjamin. The latter's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" confirmed my own approach in many ways, especially with his idea of reading "against the grain."

SM: Do you think that ideas about social class have played a role in shaping popular conceptions of Shakespeare and impeding the development of a discourse about authorship? If so, in what ways?

Leahy: If by this you mean the way in which orthodox scholars toss the accusation (very readily and often) at anti-Stratfordians that their position is defined by snobbery, I have to say that I reject it out of hand. Not only is this kind of name-calling unscholarly and unhelpful, it is also simply wrong. For, as Sobran says, to say that Shakespeare could not have written the plays because his education was not complete enough, is not snobbery but rather sociology. To say that only the select, aristocratic few received an education that could have allowed one individual to write all of the plays attributed to Shakespeare is not to criticize Shakespeare - it is merely to point out that Shakespeare is very unlikely to have received such an education and, furthermore, that there is a profound problem with the view either that he did, or that he picked up the education along the way. This is not to say that this did not happen; only that to say so is problematic because there is no evidence for it.

SM: What should organizations like the Shakespeare Fellowship do to promote the credibility of the authorship question in academia?

Leahy: This is a tough one and I am not sure that I am qualified to answer it, given that many people know much more than I do about the entire subject. My own approach goes something like this. I have no alternative candidate and do not seek a "revolution" in Shakespeare Studies. Rather, I perceive problems with certain plays, acts, scenes, lines, words. I wish to take them on a case by case basis, without an agenda, and simply seek to understand the nature

of the problem. For example, great work is currently being done (not by me) on shaking loose the conventional knowledge that Shakespeare must have seen the Strachey letter in order to write *The Tempest*. If this is the case, then the date for the authorship of the play is not set as it has been. The date could be moved back. This can now be the point at which new research takes place. Can we find a date? Are there any other records of shipwrecks to look at? So on and so forth. One can see that attributing the play to a certain date has, in the past, blinded researchers as they try to fit facts into theory. My approach is, rather than to come to a text with

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another author in mind, to approach it with a different research problem - is this dating correct? Is this placing correct? And so on. It is to look at the plays and poems piece by piece without an answer already in place.

SM: For our readers who are not familiar with Foucault's work, can you elaborate on the notion that attributing a given text

(Continued on page 16)

(Leahy interview, cont. from p. 15)

To interpret the text in light of what is known about the author can and does limit interpretation in the sense that other possible interpretations (not dependent in some way on the author's biography) are rejected or viewed with suspicion. A good example would be how Hamlet relates to the death of Shakespeare's son, Hamnet. To read the text in this way, closely adhering to the attributed author's biography can limit potential meanings... This is not to say that biographical interpretation is somehow wrong.... However, one must realize that doing this type of interpretation is limiting and is dependent upon ascribing an author.

to an author limits or "arrests" interpretation?

Leahy: I think that Foucault's idea which, in many ways is taken from Nietzsche, is meant in two ways and can be used by scholars in these two ways. Firstly, in most cases, the author of a work is known and to refuse to attribute that work to that author would merely be eccentric. However, to interpret the text in light of what is known about the author can and does limit interpretation in the sense that other possible interpretations (not dependent in some way on the author's biography) are rejected or viewed with suspicion. A good example would be how Hamlet relates to the death of Shakespeare's son, Hamnet. To read the text in this way, closely adhering to the attributed author's biography can limit potential meanings of the text. This is not to say that biographical interpretation is somehow wrong. It is most useful when used in combination with many other types of interpretation. However, one must realize that doing this type of interpretation is limiting and is dependent upon ascribing an author. Secondly, the idea relates to the fact that an author, according to traditional criticism, *must be* ascribed in order to stop endless interpretation and to impose order. That is to say, that for the institution of literary criticism to function effectively in the sense that it must be able to discern "good" literature from "bad" literature - it needs literary "heroes," or subjects to whom attribute works. Again, this is potent for the current discussion. Simply put, how many works of

"genius" or "great" literature exist written by "Anonymous"? Very few, I think. Knowing the author enables literary judgement in this sense, and the institution can, with this knowledge, pass its verdict on the piece of literature. Put this all together in the current context and one arrives at the common and traditional tautological formulation that Shakespeare's works must be great because he was a genius and, being a genius, all of his works must therefore be great. In many cases, this is the foundation for some of the great works of Shakespeare criticism.

SM: How do you see this process operating - counterproductively, you imply - in today's Shakespeare criticism?

Leahy: The cumulative force of attributing all of the works in the First Folio to Shakespeare is clear - it is impossible to reasonably question his authorship of any one of these texts. Part of the reason why it is impossible to put this question is precisely because they have always been attributed to him. Shaking the works loose from the attributed author (or at least seeing what happens to the works when you try) - which is my interest - is a difficult process even when the link between the author and the individual work is most tenuous. It is worth saying, I feel, that in my view attributing one author - whoever he is - to all of these works falls into the same "authorship" trap. Replacing Shakespeare with another author and arguing that this other author wrote, for example, all of the works in the First Folio is, I feel, an error.

SM: Can you give a thumbnail sketch of what Walter Benjamin's work is about and how you find his theoretical inquiries useful for your study of the authorship question?

Leahy: Benjamin was an essayist more than anything else. He wrote in the 20s and 30s and, as a German Jew, wrote the text to which I earlier referred in Paris in the late 1930s. His work must be seen in this context, written, as he said himself, in a time of "emergency." The "Theses" is useful in a number of ways to the literary skeptic because he argues against received knowledge stating that such knowledge is merely the "truth" as written by the victors in history. There is always another "truth" - that of the vanquished. This has been most useful for my various studies of early modern ritual and everyday life as experienced by the common people. Naturally enough, their view of their moment in history is very different to the aristocracy and, furthermore, is very different to the ways in which they have been traditionally represented by historians. These historians have, generally, seen historical events and periods through the eyes of the privileged, as history "from above."

SM: What does "reading against the grain" mean? And how is the concept relevant to the authorship question?

Leahy: Benjamin's phrase is really just an invitation to not necessarily believe what you read and furthermore, to question received knowledge at every opportunity. Again, this desire was based in his belief that history is written by the victors - the middle and upper classes, for example. The concept is useful to the

Authorship question as it invites us to read against the traditional Shakespearean grain. Simply put, the orthodox view in Shakespeare Authorship Studies regards itself as true and right - as knowledge. But, following Benjamin, that does not mean that it is. It merely means that this can be regarded as the view of the victors, a view which holds sway precisely because they have been and continue to be the victors.

SM: Could you elaborate for us on

Would people whose lives were defined by poverty on a daily basis in Elizabethan England truly and unquestionably support a system and the figurehead of that system which caused their everyday poverty? My desire was merely to shake loose the received knowledge that Elizabeth was celebrated and feted by the common people wherever she went and whatever she did. ...Indeed, most records that do exist are in some way articulating how a common person is to be punished for something or other. This only lends weight to my argument, I feel.

the notion that Elizabeth I may not have been in her own lifetime as popular a monarch as traditionally believed?

Leahy: My starting point for this view was simple - would people whose lives were defined by poverty on a daily basis in Elizabethan England truly and unquestionably support a system and the

figurehead of that system which caused their everyday poverty? My desire was merely to shake loose the received knowledge that Elizabeth was celebrated and feted by the common people wherever she went and whatever she did. While I feel I achieved this goal, I did not come to a concrete conclusion, not least because records concerning common people in Elizabethan England are few and far between. Indeed, most records that do exist are in some way articulating how a common person is to be punished for something or other. This only lends weight to my argument, I feel.

SM: Do you see any direct implications of this or possible connections to the question of Shakespearean authorship?

Leahy: Not really. My various papers on Shakespeare and the common people try to show how the plays represent current events concerning commoners and try to argue the point that they are often represented with a good deal of understanding regarding their living conditions.

SM: Can you say a bit more about the distinction between questioning the authorship of particular passages of the plays - which seems to be the trend within mainstream academic circles - and questioning whether the bard of Stratford was the real author at all? You seem to be interested in authorship in both senses, but aren't these in fact very different propositions, leading to different modes of inquiry? If the works are written by Oxford, by Neville, or by Bacon, doesn't the issue of possible collaboration become a rather minor and purely academic exercise by comparison?

Leahy: I am interested in all aspects of the authorship question. However, my greatest interest is in trying to get to the bottom of each play. There are all sorts of gaps and questions that could be viewed from new angles. As such, the micro-approach is probably the most productive for me. At the moment, I am much more interested in posing questions than I am in arriving at answers.

SM: What characteristics, beyond a superlative education, do you see manifest in the works that might lead readers to identify the true author?

Leahy: I am not sure, at the moment, that any one author could possess the many characteristics displayed in all of the plays.

SM: What do you regard as the strengths and weaknesses of the Oxfordian attribution?

I am interested in all aspects of the authorship question. However, my greatest interest is in trying to get to the bottom of each play. There are all sorts of gaps and questions that could be viewed from new angles. As such, the micro-approach is probably the most productive for me. At the moment, I am much more interested in posing questions than I am in arriving at answers.

Leahy: See my previous answer.

SM: Tell us something about your hopes and dreams for the Brunel Program.

Leahy: I want the Brunel course to inspire people, within the current context, to approach Shakespeare in the ways articulated by Benjamin. I do not want to find the real author, as such. I simply want the course to be a part of a shaking up of the certainties of traditional Shakespeare Studies and to form an academic basis that will, in time, enable the Authorship phenomenon to be regarded as a legitimate aspect of Shakespeare Studies.

Some Principles of Sonnet Dedication Solutions

By David Moffat

Because there are a few occasions in Oxfordian studies to suspect the presence of hidden messages, and because Oxfordians seem determined to suspect and seek them in any case, I want to offer some guidelines for this kind of search. To illustrate the guidelines, I will evaluate a few attempts to find a message in the dedication of Shakespeare's Sonnets (Figure One).

Connecting the Dots

The Winter 2005/2006 issue of *Shakespeare Matters* includes a brief contribution by Orda Hackney billed as a "minimalist sonnet dedication solution."¹

The author of the solution has counted the words, letters, dots and lines appearing in each of the three odd groupings of words in the dedication. Since there is indeed something very peculiar about the groupings of the words and about the presence of all the dots, one can agree that we are justified in seeing these as hints that there is something more within the text.

With the specifics of the solution, however, I take issue. Ms. Hackney asserts that the 18 dots in the first group represent the 18 letters in the words "William Shakespeare," and so on, as shown in the diagram above. Although there are some aspects of this unlikely solution that are reasonable, it immediately goes badly astray. Having counted the words, letters, dots and lines, why are we justified in throwing the word and letter counts away? More significantly, where in the dedication are the letters to spell "William Shakespeare"? They came from the solver's imagination — from outside the dedication.

Furthermore, if the dots in the first group represent a whole name, why do the corresponding lines in that group represent only a first name? Similar objections can be raised for the entire "solution."

Now we can state a few of the guidelines we should use in finding suspected coded messages:

1) The method of solution is either contained in, and implied by, objective features of the context, or it is a standard

the puzzle.

4) There is only one intended solution, chosen by the author of it, not by the solver.

In sum, I would challenge the author of this intended solution to create one like it, starting from the coded message, and ending up with a reasonable text, all in such a way that someone could solve it and know that it was the correct solution.

More Counting

In an attempt published in *The Oxfordian*² (and in at least two other venues!) John Rollett offers another a solution, this time one that doesn't violate any of the principles listed above.

Noting that the three word groups have 6, 2, and 4 lines, in that order, he assumes that we should take the 6th word of the dedication, the 2nd after that, the 4th after that, the 6th, 2nd, 4th again, and so on. This yields a very appealing, but ultimately disappointing, THESE SONNETS ALL BY EVER THE FORTH. Now the first five words standing alone would have been perfect, but there is nothing in the context of the dedication that says we should stop there, so we cannot ignore the last two words — nor can we explain them.

This attempt does illustrate another principle that should be followed when looking for coded messages:

5) The solution should be simple.

I say this because I believe that such messages are for the expected readership of the enclosing context, not for specialists using sophisticated tools and arguments.

But if we cling to the very attractive first five words, we violate another principle:

6) The method used should have a

TO. THE. ONLIE. BEGETTER. OF.
THESE. INSVING. SONNETS.
M. W. H. ALL. HAPPINESSE.
AND. THAT. ETERNITIE.
PROMISED.
BY.
OVR. EVERLIVING. POET.
WISHETH.
THE. WELL-WISHING.
ADVENTVRER. IN.
SETTING.
FORTH.
T. T.

Figure One: The 1609 Sonnet Q Dedication.

method implied by the context.

2) The method of solution is uniform for the entire message.

3) The components of the solution are completely contained within the context, not imported into the context. That is, only the context is required to solve

definite beginning and end.

Nowhere do we see a hint that we should stop after five words.

Into the Matrix

The same puzzle-solver recognizes that this attempted solution is not satisfactory, and so tries another approach, the letter-matrix. Here, unfortunately, as illustrated in Figures Two and Three, he goes further astray.

The two matrices purport to reveal the name HENRY (in the first matrix) and three sequences (in the other matrix), WR, ESLEY, and HTOI. He asserts that the third piece, HTOI, should be reversed and place between the first two pieces to yield WRIOTHESLEY. These solutions would be astounding, if it were not for a few interesting questions that the solver must first answer: How were the dimensions of the matrices chosen? How does the method predict that the pieces of the names would appear where they do appear? The dots between the words in the dedication certainly appear to be significant; why are they not included in the matrix? Why is the superscript R in Mr treated the same as other letters?

Obviously, this attempt violates several of the aforementioned principles, without offering any objective reason to take this approach. In particular, however, I want to emphasize that it violates the principle of simplicity and accessibility by the expected readership. It is difficult enough to code a message into a reasonable text so that word-counting would find it; I say it is very nearly impossible to create a coherent text starting with a message in a matrix, then filling out the empty spaces with letters. All this, while somehow conveying to the reader the dimensions of the matrix and where to look for fragments.

Matrix Redux

Yet another solver, Robert Prechter, tried his hand at using matrices, resulting in an even more appealing solution, but one with no objective guidelines for finding it (Figure Three).

As you can see, this is precisely the

T	O	T	H	E	O	N	L	I	E	B	E	G	E	T
T	E	R	O	F	T	H	E	S	E	I	N	S	V	I
N	G	S	O	N	N	E	T	S	M	r	W	H	A	L
L	H	A	P	P	I	N	E	S	S	E	A	N	D	T
H	A	T	E	T	E	R	N	I	T	I	E	P	R	O
M	I	S	E	D	B	Y	O	V	R	E	V	E	R	L
I	V	I	N	G	P	O	E	T						<i>etc</i>

T	O	T	H	E	O	N	L	I	E	B	E	G	E	T	T	E	R
O	F	T	H	E	S	E	I	N	S	V	I	N	G	S	O	N	N
E	T	S	M	r	W	H	A	L	L	H	A	P	P	I	N	E	S
S	E	A	N	D	T	H	A	T	E	T	E	R	N	I	T	I	E
P	R	O	M	I	S	E	D	B	Y	O	V	R	E	V	E	R	L
I	V	I	N	G	P	O	E	T	W	I	S	H	E	T	H	T	H
E	W	E	L	L	W	I	S	H	I	N	G	A	D	V	E	N	T
V	R	E	R	I	N	S	E	T	T	I	N	G	F	O	R	T	H

Figures Two and Three: The Rollett Cipher Dedication Solution, reprinted from the Oxfordian , Volume II (1999), 69.

answer we were looking for! Well, one of the answers we were looking for; we would be happy to have it tell us the real name of the Sonnets author—or any other message that supported the Oxfordian project.

As one can easily see from the figure, the words from the dedication are not in the original order, nor is this really a matrix. Some of the questions raised by this solution are: Why are the words taken in that order? How was it determined to put just so many words per line? What tells us to align them, left or right, this way?

The answers to these questions are found in the text of the article, which I will not quote here, in part because they are too

long, but mostly because they are a case of the special pleading needed to interpret what is not at all apparent to anyone in the context (the dedication) in which the message is presented. Briefly, this supposed solution leaves objectivity behind, violating all the principles that I have listed.

Interestingly, the solver in this case turns on its head my argument about the difficulty of actually coding a message in this way, saying that the odds of this solution being a coincidence, very low odds indeed, constitute an argument in its favor. But the fact is that every complex solution has low odds of being a coincidence. The odds of

THAT
 ETER-
 NITIE
 PROMISED
 BY OUR EVER LIVING POET
 WISHETH THE WELL WISHING
 ADVENTURE R
 I N SETTING
 FORTH
 TO
 THE ONLIE BEGETTER
 OF THESE INSUING
 SONNETS M'WH
 ALL
 HAPPINESSE
 AND= [Y]

Figure Four: One aspect of the Prechter solution, from Shakespeare Matters 4:3 (Spring 2005), 13.

being dealt any particular hand in 5-card poker are 1 in 1,302,540. But you do get a hand, do you not? Coincidence?

Anyone Can Try

Since anyone can try his hand at finding the (assumed) message in the dedication to the Sonnets, I will offer one that follows all the above principles.

The two obvious and unique features of the dedication are the dots and the word clustering. Both must be significant.

The most immediate impression about the dots (and the two hyphens that are made to resemble them) is that they are delimiters: they delimit words as well as the initials.

We should also pay attention to the word or line clusters. Their shapes are quite peculiar, but using that fact in decipherment seems a bit metaphysical. Perhaps we should count the lines (the simplest thing to do.)

Now I have made up a method:

- a. The first cluster has six lines, so select every 6th delimited item in it.
- b. The next cluster has two lines, so select

every second item in that one.

- c. The last cluster has four lines, so select every 4th item in it.

Applying these simple rules, we get:

THESE ALL BY EVER[,] POET[-]
 ADVENTURER

The naive observer might not know that EVER has already been established as signifying Edward De Vere, but those familiar with the subject probably would. That statement, along with a *must be* and two *shoulds* constitute the extent of my "special pleading." Obviously he was a POET, and ADVENTURER is not a stretch.

You can verify for yourself that this solution satisfies the principles I have laid out. Do I know that this is the correct message? No, I do not know for a fact that there is a message hidden in the dedication!

Summary

I have tried to argue (and to show) that we do not need to go out on a limb to find assumed coded messages. In fact, I have argued that the more sophisticated the method, the less likely it is to be valid.

Using six simple and common sense principles I have derived a solution to the Sonnet dedication that satisfies the fundamental meta-principles of simplicity of method and elegance of form.

I have tried to argue (and to show) that we do not need to go out on a limb to find assumed coded messages. In fact, I have argued that the more sophisticated the method, the less likely it is to be valid. Using six simple and common sense principles of simplicity of method and elegance of form I have derived a solution to the Sonnet dedication that satisfies the fundamental meta-principles of simplicity of method and elegance of form.

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¹Letter from Orda Hackney, "Letters," *Shakespeare Matters*, Vol.5, No.2, Winter 2005/2006, 2.


²John M. Rollett, "Secrets of the Dedication to Shakespeare's Sonnets," *The Oxfordian*, Volume II, 1999, 60-75.

³Robert R. Prechter, Jr., "The Sonnets dedication puzzle," *Shakespeare Matters*, Vol.4, No.3 (Spring 2005), 1, 12-19.



The Secretary Hand - Part 2


By Ian Haste

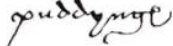
In the second part of a series, Ian Haste compares letters which are similar to each other: p x; g y q; u v w m n.


P  as in [St] Pawles

 Compare lower case p


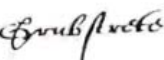
 with lower case x  The x

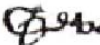
descender turns upwards  xiijs (13 shillings) and the p descender continues

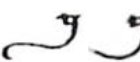

downwards  (puddyngs)

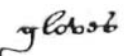
A more recognizable form of lowercase p  is also used, either as an initial letter or within the word, as in paper





G  as in  (Grubstrete)

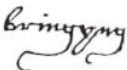
&  (Geven) (Given). Lower case g is similar to today's g.


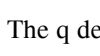
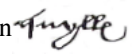
 as in gold  &



gloves  The g descender


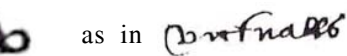

curves along to the left, but the y curves back and up to the right. y   The

g & y may be compared in the word

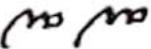
bringyng 



q   The q descender is short and straight down, as in  (quylls)

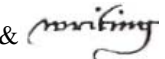
The letter u,  when it is the initial letter although not necessarily a capital, as in up  is interchangeable with v


 as in  (victualls)  (vith) and (gloves - above)



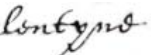
But when the u is within the word it resembles our modern u as in quills & puddings above. The final ascending stroke of the initial u, v & w curls back on itself as if to form the letter

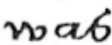
o. Here is the lower case w 



 as in  (when)

&  (writing) &

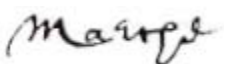
 (with white wood)

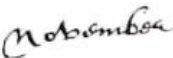
Compare the initial letters of unto, valentyne and was.   





The capitals M  and N  are recognizable today as shown in the months

Maye , Marche

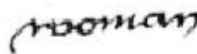
 and November



Lowercase m  has some similarity

to w  and may sometimes start with

a long descender but only when m or w are the initial letter of the word as in woman

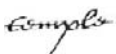



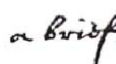
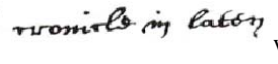
Based on what we have seen so far, can you name this man

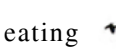
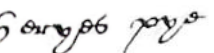
 and say

what he was doing? He was sitting on his

 with  at the



  and reading


  in laten while

eating   from a

How is my uncle's son?

  is

my cosen is a pore fellow.

Mr Mowlesworth was sitting on his chest with my nurse at the temple howse and reading a brief cronicle in laten while eating cheryes pye from a pewter dishe.

Next time, in part 3, we look at remaining letters of the alphabet.

(*Something Rich and Strange, cont. from p. 3*)

Moreover, while the article's focus is the sector of the painting featuring Lady Clifford, your editor was particularly impressed by Ms. Cutting's startling analysis of the interpretative history of another painting: the Van Dyck triptych patronized by Lady Anne's husband, which features his first wife, Susan de Vere. The peculiar history by which Susan Vere's presence in the painting was first acknowledged, and later suppressed, by art historians, reveals the intellectual paralysis on which the continued defense of orthodox beliefs about authorship continues to depend:

In an historical peccadillo, Lady Anne Clifford has been identified as Pembroke's Countess in the Van Dyck behemoth. There should not be the slightest doubt that the pretty blond woman on the wall at Wilton House is Pembroke's first wife Susan Vere. Certainly Van Dyck, a master figure painter, would have had no difficulty capturing the dark hair and distinctive features of Anne Clifford. Countess Susan, though deceased, is given the respect she is due at her husband's side as the matriarch of the dynasty insured with her six surviving children.

This case of mistaken identity has ramifications in the authorship debate, especially in light of the Folger Shakespeare Library's insistence that the sitter in the Ashbourne Portrait of Shakespeare is Hugh Hammersley. Apparently, the dark cloud hanging over Oxford manifests itself again in an attempt to reassign the identity of a portrait of his daughter. If one examines the time line of this error, Countess Susan Vere was correctly identified prior to Charles Wisner Barrell's landmark study of the Ashbourne Portrait published in *Scientific American* in January of 1940. Thereafter, the "powers that be" removed the correct information from public view, perhaps as it might trigger the obvious connection that the celebrated patrons of Shakespeare's

First Folio were part of Oxford's extended family. (8)

Ms. Cutting has promised a more detailed analysis of this intriguing instance

Leahy, on the other hand, represents a new breed of authorship skeptics. He is not an Oxfordian, nor even an adherent to any of the other alternative authorship schools. But he is dedicated to a path very different from the one exemplified in Shapiro's minimalist bardography... Rather than wallpapering over the authorship controversy with lucrative flights of biographical fancy that win social promotion, Leahy has a pedagogical mission...

of orthodox duplicity for a future issue of *Shakespeare Matters*.

Meanwhile the issue also features — and here is where our story starts to get even more interesting — an interview with William Leahy, Professor of English at London's Brunel University and founder of Brunel's new Shakespeare Authorship Master's Degree Program. The interview illustrates the dynamic character of the authorship even within academia. While "amateur" Oxfordians continue to overcome their scorned status to make seminal contributions to intellectual history — in articles revealing the sometimes high-handed manipulation of the professionals — mainstream academicians are starting to wake up to the authorship question and to the case for Oxford's authorship. In our News and Notes we report on Columbia Professor

James Shapiro's announcement of his intent to write a book on the authorship question. As many are aware, earlier this summer Shapiro was awarded the BBC 4 Samuel Johnson Award for his book on what the Stratford man wasn't doing in 1599. Isn't the obvious next step to write a book on authorship? Well, if one is feeling very nervous about defections from the Stratford church like that of Professor Leahy, and has the momentum of a multimillion-dollar congeries of academic/tourist/publishing industries at one's back, it probably is.

Leahy, on the other hand, represents a new breed of authorship skeptics. He is not an Oxfordian, nor even an adherent to any of the other alternative authorship schools. But he is dedicated to a path very different from the one exemplified in Shapiro's minimalist bardography; his interest in the Shakespearean question is authentic. Rather than wallpapering over the authorship controversy with lucrative flights of biographical fancy that win social promotion, Leahy has a pedagogical mission: He intends his students to actually engage the intellectual challenges posed by the presence of the authorship question. He understands that the Shakespearean industry's nearly total failure to offer a coherent and credible account of its own subject is in itself a significant intellectual and historical fact. He understands the literary public's growing wariness of the motives and methodologies of orthodox bardographers. He sees in Shakespeare a case study in how hypotheses are formed and tested, how paradigms grow, die, or mutate, and how students can be invited to become critical thinkers instead of just expected to imbibe the clichés of their elders about how well dressed the emperor is today.

Along with the Leahy interview, there are several bombshells in this issue: Michael Delahoyde's synopsis of the musical question is particularly striking, in view of all the ink spilled over the question of whether William of Stratford did or did not attend grammar school:

"Out of thirty-seven plays of Shakespeare, there are no less than thirty-two which contain interesting

references to music and musical matters in the text itself....over three hundred stage directions ...are musical in their nature, and these occur in thirty-six out of thirty-seven plays" (Naylor 3-4). Even subtracting the obligatory horn alarums in military scenes of the history plays, that's a saturation. And yet, we are told that "In most English schools of the Elizabethan period music was probably not taught at all. It was

We also had to laugh at the notice you'll find in our *News and Notes* of a hitherto unnoticed Stuart era reference to the bard as "that famous poet who takes his name from 'shaking' and 'spear.'"Shakespeare" is the only poet invoked not as an actual person but as a linguistic construct! Huh?

early replaced by arithmetic in the curriculum for the smaller children, and was also crowded out in the grammar schools."

(13)

Chalk up another startling example of the miraculous program at the Tavern of Universal Knowledge, where the Bard evidently caroused with the likes of William Byrd and Thomas Campion and exercised his hydrocephalous brain in sponging up a technical knowledge of music that surpasses that held by 99% of all English professors!

Richard Desper's study of the Earls of Oxford in the History plays, a substantial expansion of an article originally written in 1991 for the *Shakespeare Oxford Society* newsletter, rounds out the features in this

issue. Desper's original article documented in *Henry V* a curious "Oxfordian" allusion to the family history of the de Veres, in which the Lancastrian allies of the 13th Earl, in the thick fog of the battle of Barnet, mistook the heraldic star of the de Vere vanguard for the Yorkist sun. As a follow up on this article *Shakespeare Matters* asked Desper to conduct a more thorough literature review to see how orthodox scholars had dealt with the passage in question. The answer is clear: they haven't. So subtle is the allusion to the "stars and suns" friendly fire episode of the battle of Barnet -- a historical anachronism in a scene concerning a battle from a previous century -- that it has remained undetected, just under the surface of the Shakespearean play, for four-hundred years. Although the episode to which it refers is well known to English historians, Desper's review documents an orthodox intellectual tradition that has disregarded this potent dialogue as mere "idle chatter"! But Desper's new article goes beyond merely confirming more rigorously the conclusions of his 1991 article. He goes on to tackle the larger context of this Oxfordian "mousetrap" in *Henry V*, noticing that the exaggerated roles accorded to the historical earls of Oxford in anonymous Elizabethan plays such as *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, quite possibly written by Oxford himself for court performances during the 1570's and early 1580's, give way in the mature Shakespearean works to a diminishment of the historical roles of the same Earls, a trend foreshadowed in the anonymous play *Thomas of Woodstock*, a play sometimes known as *I Richard II*:

Oxford was generally recognized in court circles as a playwright for court plays, as well as a poet, but with the understanding that he was not to be linked to any particular plays. He is accorded some level of recognition among the courtiers, but for the record the plays themselves are to remain anonymous and unpublished. Anonymity becomes more difficult to achieve in the transition to the public stage, and a device is eventually required: The creation of a name, "William Shakespeare," for these public

stage plays to satisfy the public record. But along with this a second modification also becomes necessary: De-emphasizing the roles of past Earls of Oxford to remove them as possible clues to the author's identity.

For the record it is worth observing that history seems to be conspiring against orthodox complacencies. Professor Michael Egan, scholar-in-residence at

Experienced scholars understand that significant breakthroughs, including in literary studies, are grounded in the principles of simplicity, transparency, and collaboration. Yes, there is competition, but in scholarship the best scholars are always alert to what others are doing—the ethical ones acknowledge their debts and share the credit.

Brigham Young University in Honolulu, has just published a massive four volume attribution study of *Woodstock* that argues, convincingly in our view, that this anonymous Elizabethan play was written by "Shakespeare." In the Winter 2006 SOS (42:1) newsletter Ramon Jimenez reviews Egan's impressive study, concluding that Egan's case is "so thoroughly documented that it cannot be denied." If this conclusion is correct, *Woodstock* -- which airbrushes from view the controversial antics of Robert de Vere, 9th Earl of Oxford, Richard II's minion during the period depicted in the play -- constitutes another *mis en abyme* for the orthodox authorities.

In our *News and Notes* is notice of a hitherto neglected Stuart-era reference to the bard as "that famous poet who takes his name from 'shaking' and 'spear.'" This

(Cont. on p. 24)

(News and Notes cont. from p. 5)

New book on Countess of Pembroke as Sh.

Robin Williams' much ballyhooed new book identifying the Countess of Pembroke, Mary Sidney, as the bard, is now in print. The June 2006 *MSNBC Online* carelessly reproduces a June 18, 2004, *Newsweek* article by Anne Underwood that gives an ample if somewhat starry-eyed review to the theory and blithely announces that it will be discussed "next week at a conference of the Shakespearean Authorship Trust in London." Unwary readers may not realize that the conference in question took place two years ago.

Williams had twice before cancelled scheduled appearances at the 2003 Shakespeare Fellowship conference and the 2004 De Vere Studies Conference, before making her date with the Shakespeare Authorship Trust. Cynthia Lee Katona, Professor of Shakespeare and Women's Studies, Ohlone College, credits Williams' "rigorous scholarship and artful sleuthing" with insuring that "Mary Sidney Herbert will forever have to be mentioned as a possible author of the Shakespeare canon. Sweet Swan of Avon doesn't pretend to put the matter to rest, but simply shows how completely reasonable the authorship controversy is, and how the idea of a female playwright surprisingly answers more Shakespearean conundrums than it creates." Williams, a software writer, operates a blog on Mary Sidney: <http://marysidney.blogspot.com>.

Bard in Search of a Portrait

Searching for Shakespeare is getting to be big business these days. First it was Michael Wood; now the National Portrait Gallery and its powerful American allies have joined the search. The Yale Center for British Art is the proud sponsor of a new initiative in the enduring quest to solve the riddle of what the bard looked like. The Center's current free exhibition, "Searching for Shakespeare" (running



The Janssen "Shakespeare," now claimed by the Folger Library to represent Sir Thomas Overbury (1581-1613....hmmm.

through Sept. 17) features six wanabe portraits -- but according to a June 23 *New York Times* article by Grace Glueck, "today only three of them stand up, and even those are not indisputable." The display is conceived and organized by Tarnya Cooper, curator of the 16th century collection at London's National Portrait Gallery, where it first appeared. Ms. Glueck singles out the Janssen and the Droeshout for their alleged authenticity, but the show's curators seem to prefer the Chandos. Catriona Black's May 29 review in the *Sunday Herald* offers useful critique:

We are promised "the results of new technical analysis and research on several of these pictures casting new light on the search for Shakespeare's authentic appearance."...the gallery may have made promises it couldn't keep...we are treated to a museum-style show full of first editions, costumes and theatrical paraphernalia, with only one back wall devoted to the six "contenders." Discussion of their authenticity is disappointingly scant, and the Chandos portrait is presented, in one *big fait accompli*, as the obvious frontrunner.

In our next issue, *Shakespeare Matters* will report in detail from Yale - an Oxfordian review of "Searching for Shakespeare."

(*Something Rich and Strange, cont. from p. 23*)

little gem, discovered by Fred Schurink, appeared in the March 2006 issue of *Notes and Queries*. For reasons that Schurink does not explain, and which seem not to have troubled editors at *Notes and Queries* (who, let it be noted, have been fastidiously impartial and fair in evaluating the contributions of several prominent anti-Stratfordians who have published in their pages), "Shakespeare" is the only poet invoked not as an actual person but as a linguistic construct! Huh? For details turn to page 4.

Finally, a word needs to be said about David Moffat's review of Sonnet dedication solutions and principles of interpretation. Rarely does a short essay capture so much that is vital for an Oxfordian readership to understand about scholarly methods. Moffat does not adopt the orthodox tactic of ridiculing the search or dismissing those whose conclusions he criticizes as neo-Baconian cipher-mongers from the land of id. Indeed, he credits the Sonnet solvers with recognizing that "there is indeed something very peculiar about the groupings of the words and about the presence of all the dots," and that "one can therefore agree that we are justified in seeing these as hints that there is something more within the text" (18). Thus Moffat confirms the premises and purposes of the authors whose methodologies he goes on to critique. He offers an impartial and sympathetic review of their arguments before explaining why, in his opinion, their solutions ultimately fail to satisfy his six principles.

There are some important lessons to be learned here. Experienced scholars understand that significant breakthroughs, including in literary studies, are grounded in the principles of simplicity, transparency, and collaboration. Yes, there is competition, but in scholarship the best scholars are always alert to what others are doing—the ethical ones acknowledge their debts and share the credit. Transparency means that a solution can be easily understood and replicated, and that the solution can withstand independent and impartial review; simplicity can be

(*Rich and Strange concluded. p. 32*)

(*Stars or Suns, cont. from p. 1*)

Despite this authoritative pronouncement, the possibility remains that the line about “stars or suns” may constitute some form of cryptic allusion to an historical event far removed from Agincourt itself, although relevant to the themes of *Henry V*. Based upon a familiarity with the history and deeds of the Earls of Oxford, I proposed such an allusion in 1991 (Desper 3). The foremost military hero among the Earls of Oxford was John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford, and among his exploits and adventures during the Wars of the Roses was the Second Battle of Barnet. In this battle the ability to perceive the difference between stars and suns in military regalia had proven to be of critical importance. At Barnet the forces of the Earls of Oxford and of Warwick, supporting the House of Lancaster in an effort to restore the captive King Henry VI, took the field against the Yorkist forces of King Edward IV and his brother George, Duke of Clarence. What ensued is told by Scott-Giles (143):

Edward IV combined the two Yorkist badges of the white rose and the sun-in-splendor to form the badge of a white rose *en soleil*, or surrounded by golden rays. Though Shakespeare does not mention it, this badge played an important part in the second battle of Barnet (III *Henry VI* 5.2-3), where it was worn as a badge by Edward’s followers. On Warwick’s side was De Vere, Earl of Oxford, whose men were wearing his silver star as their cognizance. Warwick, seeing through a mist the star of Oxford, mistook it for Edward’s irradiated rose, and charged against his own supporters. In the confusion which resulted, the Lancastrians lost the battle.

Precedent exists for such an allusion to events of another time, even in this one scene, as Arden editor Walter notes, in the following lines:

Con. Indeed, my lord, it is a most absolute and excellent horse.

Dau. It is the prince of palfreys ...

[*Henry V*, 3.7.27-28]

In a footnote Walter notes (84) that the dauphin is incorrect in identifying a war horse as a “palfrey.” A war horse is a superb animal, but large and strong, like a Clydesdale or a Percheron, capable of

Despite this authoritative pronouncement, the possibility remains that the line about “stars or suns” may constitute some form of cryptic allusion to an historical event far removed from Agincourt itself, although relevant to the themes of *Henry V*... The foremost military hero among the Earls of Oxford was John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford, and among his exploits and adventures during the Wars of the Roses was the Second Battle of Barnet. In this battle the ability to perceive the difference between stars and suns in military regalia had proven to be of critical importance.

carrying a man weighed down by heavy armor and of performing valiantly in battle. On the other hand, a “palfrey” is a smaller creature, lighter and more nimble, more suited to be a lady’s mount than to the field of battle. Walter sees in the above passage an allusion to a situation in an earlier play, *Edward III*, in which, on the day of the Battle of Poitiers, the French Duke of Normandy sends a gift to Prince Edward:

P. Edw. What news with thee?

Her. The Duke of Normandy, my lord and master, / Pitying thy youth is so engirt with peril, / By me hath sent a nimble-jointed jennet, / As swift as ever yet thou didst bestride, / And therewithal he counsels thee to fly, / Else Death himself hath sworn that thou shalt die.

(*Edward III*, 4.4.88-94)

The Prince sees the offer as it was intended, an insult to his valor, and responds appropriately:

P. Edw. Back with the beast unto the beast that sent him! Tell him, / I cannot sit a coward’s horse.

(*Edward III*, 4.4.95-96)

Indeed, the “palfrey” of *Henry V* and the “jennet” of *Edward III* are the same general build of horse – a light animal bred for swiftness, valuable not for fighting in battle but for fleeing from it. Walter suggests that Shakespeare in *Henry V* is making his own subtle comment on the dauphin’s character, i.e., “the effeminate Dauphin is riding a lady’s horse” (Walter 84 fn), a situation which he compares to the more explicit insult of the Black Prince in *Edward III* by the Duke of Normandy in sending him a “nimble jointed jennet.” Indeed, even the dauphin’s presence in this scene is an unhistorical anomaly: by his father’s orders he was not present⁵ at the field of Agincourt. But the precedent of allusions between plays in *Henry V* 3.7 is established.

Sources of *Henry V*

The discussion of sources for *Henry V* have focused on three publications of the time: Hall’s *Union of the Two Noble Houses of Lancaster and York* (1550), Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1587), and the anonymous *Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* [sic] (Stationers Register of 1594; edition dated 1598 survives). Walter acknowledges palpable debts in *Henry V* to all three. The influence of Holinshed is evident, for instance, in Canterbury’s speech on Salic law, where Shakespeare appropriates

(Continued on p. 26)

(*Stars or Suns, cont. from p. 25*)

phrases (Walter xxxi) from Holinshed that do not appear in other histories. On the other hand, Walter (xxxii) sees the earlier Hall book as the source for scenes between Henry and his nobles, such as 1.2.136-70, or in speeches of the French Constable (4.2.16-24, 33-4). The occurrence of so much phraseology obviously based on Hall leads Walter to declare: "Shakespeare, in fact, knew his Hall so well that odd phrases and scraps of information came spontaneously into his thought and reappeared in the play" (xxxii).

Walter also sees Hall as the font from which Shakespeare drew his ardent patriotic spirit and stress on English unity, concluding that "Shakespeare's debt to Holinshed is in effect superficial, Hall is the source of his inspiration" (xxxii).

As for the anonymous *Famous Victories*, Walter, along with Dover Wilson, sees both it and Shakespeare's *Henry V* as being indebted to a common earlier source which has not survived (Walter xxxiv). According to Dover Wilson, the predecessor to the former was a pair of earlier plays which have survived as the single play *Famous Victories*.

Greer (238-41), along with Jimenéz (8) sees a close relationship between *Famous Victories* and three Shakespearean plays – *Henry IV parts 1 and 2* and *Henry V* – which span the same range in the history and show remarkably detailed coincidences in plot elements and other details. The orthodox scholar Pitcher (182-183) went further, declaring *Famous Victories* to be a work of Shakespeare that the playwright used as the basis for his later *Henry IV* and *V* plays. Ramon Jimenéz (2001 10) attributes all these plays to Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. One particularly telling argument for this view is documentary evidence that Richard Tarlton played the role of the Clown in *Famous Victories*. This would date the play (Jimenéz 2001 10; Pitcher 180-1) before Tarlton's death in September 1588. Such an early date is at odds with Stratfordian authorship and is more readily reconciled with the theory that Oxford was the author.

In this vein, Mark Anderson articulates the revisionist view of the relationship between such anonymously published

Elizabethan era plays and those published under the name "William Shakespeare":

Most scholars today assume the anonymous Queen's Men's plays *King Leir*, *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, and *The Troublesome Reign of King John*—all of which were later published—served as sources for their respective Shakespearean counterparts. But *source* is too timid a word for these texts. They are more likely to have been de Vere's first drafts, probably written in collaboration with

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Victories* that is not repeated
in the Shakespeare plays"
(Jimenéz 2001 8).**

secretaries and associates such as John Lyly and Anthony Munday.

(M. Anderson 208)

Indeed, when one accepts Oxfordian authorship of the plays published as the work of Shakespeare, the situation of the various anonymous "sources" of Shakespeare vis-à-vis those of the Shakespeare canon is greatly simplified. The anonymous plays may be seen as works of the playwright's early years, written to delight a court audience and to please the fancy of the courtier playwright. The author Shakespeare is no longer required to mine the earlier works of others for inspiration. But not just inspiration—in some instances

extended passages of text have been carried over intact into the Shakespearean canon, to an extent that would elicit cries of "Plagiarism!" by our present standards. The embarrassment of a Shakespeare who shamelessly incorporates many hundreds of lines of another's work into his own is obviated when Shakespeare and the anonymous predecessor are seen as one person. Admittedly, differences may well arise even as one person approaches a given subject matter at different times in his life, as youthful attitudes give way to a more mature approach. In some instances the older Oxford may find an earlier work still suited to his more mature tastes, while for others, extensive revision may have been required, in his mind, to achieve the work he wished to leave for posterity.

In the case of *Famous Victories* the wholesale importation of text into the Shakespeare play *Henry V* does not apply. Nonetheless, while details remain in debate, a serious argument can be raised supporting *Famous Victories* as a source of plot elements for *Henry V*. In the words of Jimenéz, "There is not a single scene in *Famous Victories* that is not repeated in the Shakespeare plays" (Jimenéz 2001 8). There are so many similarities in plot elements, e.g., the highway robbery; the meeting of the robbers in Eastcheap; the new King's turning away from his comic friends; the gift of tennis balls. All these similarities point up the curious omission between the two plays: why is such a prominent character in *Famous Victories* as the 11th Earl of Oxford totally absent in *Henry V*? The 11th Earl of Oxford has a notably significant role in *Famous Victories*, acting, as it were, as the king's right hand man, putting his ideas (such as the row of sharpened stakes to protect the English archers) into action. Indeed, he is not only the king's leading nobleman in the war with France; he is the *only* English nobleman (excluding royalty) in the cast of characters. *Henry V* has no shortage of noblemen accompanying him to France in the later play, but no Earl of Oxford. His absence is a notable anomaly. If *Henry V* is drawn from *Famous Victories*, as both Pitcher and Jimenéz contend, then Oxford seems to have been deliberately written out in the process of revision.

Before detailed examination of this specific point, however, it is appropriate

to discuss the issue of the portrayal of various Earls of Oxford in the history plays of the day. Examination of the content of a number of history plays of the Elizabethan era reveals a selective bias in terms of how various historical Earls of Oxford were represented. A prominent illustration is that of the transition, noted above, from the anonymous *Famous Victories* play to the "Shakespeare" plays of the "Henriad," *Henry IV (Parts 1 and 2)* and *Henry V*. In this

Examination of the content of a number of history plays of the Elizabethan era reveals a selective bias in terms of how various historical Earls of Oxford...A prominent illustration is that of the transition... from the anonymous *Famous Victories* play to the "Shakespeare" plays of the "Henriad," *Henry IV (Parts 1 and 2)* and *Henry V*. In this transition, many plot elements are preserved...But in the transition, the character of the 11th Earl of Oxford, who fought at Agincourt, is lost.

transition, many plot elements are preserved, as noted above, in the same order from one play to the next. But in the transition, the character of the 11th Earl of Oxford, who fought at Agincourt, is lost. Portrayed as the King's indispensable aide in the first play, he vanishes from *Henry V*. What was the reason for this disappearance? The earlier play was written to be staged for the entertainment of the Queen and her court and the identity of the playwright was kept obscure. The later plays of the "Henriad" were deliberately intended, however, for public performance, and the

prominence of such a character as the 11th Earl of Oxford (as portrayed in *Famous Victories*) could well raise a flag as to the identity of the playwright. If he was Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, as Jimenez has contended and as is seconded here, a tendency to glorify the roles of his ancestors in English history might give too obvious a clue to the playwright's identity.

Oxford was generally recognized in court circles as a playwright⁶ for court plays, as well as a poet, but with the understanding that he was not to be linked to any particular plays. He is accorded some level of recognition among the courtiers, but for the record the plays themselves are to remain anonymous and unpublished. Anonymity becomes more difficult to achieve in the transition to the public stage, and a device is eventually required: The creation of a name, "William Shakespeare," for these public stage plays to satisfy the public record. But along with this a second modification also becomes necessary: De-emphasizing the roles of past Earls of Oxford to remove them as possible clues to the author's identity. Furthermore, one should take into account the inclinations and aspirations of the author himself. By the early 1590's Oxford may well have been finding such strictures confining, and knowing his own worth as a writer, could be yearning to preserve at least his work, if not his name, for posterity.

It can be shown that this de-emphasizing of the roles of the past Earls of Oxford in the history plays is a repeating pattern, not an isolated situation involving *Famous Victories* and the "Henriad." A second example in which a past Earl of Oxford is diminished in his portrayal is the transition from the early anonymous play *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third* to the "Shakespeare" play *Richard the Third*. The historical John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford, is recognized as a leading supporter of the Lancastrian King Henry VI against the house of York. A leading Lancastrian participant in the Second Battle of Barnet in 1471, Oxford sustained his opposition (V. Anderson 111-7) even after the death of Henry VI in that year until he was forced to surrender at the island of St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall in 1473. Held a captive for twelve years in Hammes Castle near

Calais, he escaped in 1485 with the aid of his jailer, James Blount, as the two joined as allies of Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, in France. In the ensuing invasion of England, Oxford played a prominent role in the victory at Bosworth Field, in which Richard was deposed and Henry Tudor became King Henry VII.

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The True Tragedy has much to say of this Earl of Oxford and his role in the defeat of King Richard III. According to Jimenez, "in each of the three scenes in which Henry Tudor appears, the author of *True Tragedy* has placed the Earl of Oxford at his right hand, making him the leading spokesman for his supporters" (Jimenez 2004 133-5). In *True Tragedy* Oxford is ever responsive to the soon-to-be King Henry VII, speaking forty lines in all. Oxford responds to Richmond's opening speech with compliments, denunciation of Richard III,

(Continued from p. 27)

and vows of “perpetual love.” The closeness of Oxford and Richmond is further brought out in *True Tragedy* in a scene of Oxford “gently chiding Richmond for his unexplained disappearance two nights before the Battle of Bosworth.” And at the end of the play, as Richmond is presented with the crown, it is Oxford who shouts out the words proclaiming him to be King Henry VII.

In contrast, Oxford is limited to two lines in the “Shakespeare” play *Richard III*. While he wasn’t totally written out, as was

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would not have contradicted
him . . . by him everything was
done and without him
nothing.” The king lavished
great favor upon his friend,
creating him first Marquess of
Dublin and then Duke of
Ireland, the only man ever to
hold that title.**

his predecessor, the 11th Earl of Oxford, between *Famous Victories* and *Henry V*, the character of the 13th Earl of Oxford has been diminished from his deserved prominence to near insignificance between *True Tragedy* and *Richard III*. Again, this may be readily explained on the hypothesis that possible clues to the playwright’s identity were removed in the transition from the court version to the public stage version. Jimenéz has shown great similarities between the two plays, involving analysis of the text for similarities in language, incident, and detail (Jimenéz 2004 118ff) supporting his conclusion that the two were written by the same man. He

identifies that playwright as Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and dates the early version, *True Tragedy*, to Oxford’s teenage years. So again, we see an instance of a “vanishing Earl of Oxford,” as was the case of the 11th Earl of Oxford between *Famous Victories* and *Henry V*.

Beyond either of these “vanishing” Earls of Oxford, there is yet another predecessor whose absence from the history plays of the time must be noted and deemed of great significance, most notably by Daniel Wright, Rainbow Saari, and Roger Stritmatter. This would be Robert de Vere, 9th Earl of Oxford, close friend, ally, and confidant of King Richard II, the king at the center of two Elizabethan era history plays: *Thomas of Woodstock* and *The Tragedy of Richard the Second*. The 9th Earl of Oxford appears in neither play, a major and most significant omission considering his prominent role in history during the reign of Richard II. Young Robert de Vere was some five years older than the young Richard, and the two lads, both fatherless, were constant companions when Richard inherited his grandfather’s crown at the age of ten. Robert had great influence over the young king. According to the chronicler Froissart the young Earl of Oxford “managed the King as he pleased” and “if he said black was white, Richard would not have contradicted him . . . by him everything was done and without him nothing” (V. Anderson 72-83).

The king lavished great favor upon his friend, creating him first Marquess of Dublin and then Duke of Ireland, the only man ever to hold that title. While some have argued that there is no suggestion (V. Anderson 76) of a homosexual relationship between the two (such as the one between Piers Gavaston and King Edward II), the belief that Oxford was Richard’s lover seems to have been widespread. Oxford was embroiled in a sexual scandal when he abandoned his wife, Philippa, and abducted one Alice Lancecrone, a lady-in-waiting to Queen Anne, the “Anne-a-Beame” (Anne of Bohemia) of the *Woodstock* manuscript.

According to Froissart, Oxford’s treatment of his wife “was the chief thing that took away his honour” (V. Anderson 80). The sexual politics of the reign are

briefly alluded to in *Woodstock* in a conversation between The Queen and the Duchess of Ireland, Robert’s widow, who refers to her late husband as “that unloving lord,” and states that “King Richard was the cause he left my bed” (2.3.10-12).⁷ Thus, while Robert is not a character in *Woodstock*, his widow is there to lament his treatment of her.

Yet another instance of Robert’s embarrassment is reported in *Woodstock*, but attributed to a surrogate invented by the playwright. In 1387 conflict broke out between the king and “the Lords Appellant,” led by Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of

**When Lord Tresilian finds
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Gloucester, over Robert de Vere. The Lords wanted Oxford/Ireland to be tried for treason by Parliament. With the king’s connivance Oxford fled, raised an army, and faced the Lords near Radcot Bridge in Oxfordshire. When his troops declined to fight, Oxford abandoned them, doffed his armor, and disguised himself as a groom to escape capture. A similar episode occurs in *Woodstock*.V.ii when Lord Tresilian finds himself facing the Lords Appellant with an army that will not fight. Lord Tresilian decides that he will “neither fight nor die; but, thus resolved, disguise myself and fly.” This is obviously an allusion to Robert’s flight near Radcot Bridge,

sanitized by the change of the character's name.

Daniel Wright notes forcefully how the role of the 9th Earl of Oxford and his contribution to the downfall of King Richard II is glossed over in *Woodstock* and totally omitted in *Richard II*:

The author of [*Woodstock*] ... inexplicably determined that Robert de Vere neither be seen, heard nor indicted in this play ... transports Sir Robert Tresilian forward in time to become ... the principal agent of the King's corruption ... Bushy ... Bagot ... and Greene ... were not leading courtiers of the 1380's ... the leading courtier of the 1380's ... was Robert de Vere. Bushy, Bagot and Greene came into the King's service much later—after the Duke of Gloucester's death.

(D. Wright 15)

In summary, we see that the plays of the 16th century show a pattern in their handling of the past Earls of Oxford. The two early plays, *True Tragedy* and *Famous Victories* exemplify youthful exuberance in portraying the 11th and 13th Earls of Oxford in prominent roles. For *Woodstock*, another youthful effort, the historical role of the 9th Earl of Oxford during the reign of Richard II was rather indefensible and the playwright made only vague allusions to his failings. In the mature version the role of the pertinent Earls of Oxford were eliminated (in *Richard II* and *Henry V*) or minimized (in *Richard III*). Of all the plays published under the "Shakespeare" name, only *III Henry VI* retains a major role for an Earl of Oxford. However, this play is usually assigned to the early 1590s, early in the standard chronology of the Shakespeare plays, and may well be considerably earlier than that. As Oxford felt the need to revise and rewrite his plays for posterity, he may have felt the need to prioritize his time. He may have found neither the time nor the inclination to "polish up" *III Henry VI*, devoting instead his time available for history plays to a favorite character, Prince Hal, giving us *I* and *II Henry IV* along with *Henry V*. In the process he slipped into the latter a passing

nod – an interpretive mousetrap — to a valiant ancestor with a little passage about "Stars or Suns."

Endnotes

¹The Dauphin's presence at Agincourt is a liberty taken by the playwright for dramatic effect. His father, King Charles VI, had ordered his absence.

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²Throughout this work *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd Edition, is used as the source for Shakespearean text.

³The following authors have nothing to say about the "Stars or Suns" lines: Norwich; Neilson and Hill; Beaker; Irving and Marshall; Harbage; Greenblatt; Evans; Walter; L. B. Wright and Lamar; W. A. Wright; Evans and Tobin, and Rowe.

⁴ Dover Wilson cites Scott-Giles remarks in his own footnote in III.vii. Scott-

Giles, in turn, references Dover Wilson (p. 105).

⁵Curiously, while the royal Dauphin was absent from the field of Agincourt, a French knight having the surname "Dauphin" fought and died there; see Henry V: IV.viii.190. This knight is among the French dead listed by Holinshed.

⁶Oxford was, indeed, recognized as a skilled playwright in print by his contemporary, Francis Meres, in his 1598 book *Palladis Tamia*, as well as in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589).

⁷The text of Thomas of Woodstock is available online at <http://www.hampshireshakespeare.org/notes/TOWmain.html>.

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(Letters, cont. from page 3)

August 1, 2006
 To the Editor:

I am writing to both commend and criticize Paul Hemenway Altrocchi's article "Bermoothes: An Intriguing Enigma" (*Shakespeare Matters* 5:3, Spring 2006). Dr. Altrocchi is to be applauded for the information he has compiled demonstrating the viability of Richard Roe's "appealing, logically-coherent interpretation" of Ariel's lines in *The Tempest*: "Thou call'st me up at midnight to fetch dew/From the still-vexed Bermoothes"—namely, that "Bermoothes" was Shakespeare's original word for a shady district of Westminster known as the Bermudas, "dew" meant home-brewed liquor, and "still" referred to the alcohol distillation process in stills.

Unfortunately, Altrocchi's article is marred, firstly, by his misrepresentation of the Internet listserv Phaeton, introduced with the backhanded compliment of being "a small group of well informed Oxfordians who debate topics of authorship interest ... [w]ith Elasmobranchian elan, they hone their great white dentition and vent their cyberspace opinions". Altrocchi's biting sarcasm (sharkasm?) would be clever were his fish tale of the Phaeton group "who wish to set the world on fire" not all wet. The impression Altrocchi offers his readers is a thoroughly false one, lacing his article throughout with comments such as: "Phaetonite reasoning is this ... Phaetonites believe that ... The Phaeton group, therefore, feel strongly that ... Phaetonites say ... They believe ... the cyberspace group believes ... the Phaeton group contends ... This is the Stratfordian and Phaetonic interpretation ... The Phaeton internet group believes ... Yet this is exactly what the Phaeton group contends ... On this basis alone, the fiery Phaeton group's interpretation falters and fails." With such an allegedly unanimous voice, one wonders how Altrocchi could ever have introduced the group as one "who debate topics," unless, that is, it's Phaeton versus the rest of the world. The fact is, opinions expressed on Phaeton are rarely so unified. It is rather the

The Bermuda islands themselves were also referred to by Englishmen in this Spanish manner, as attested by the duke of Buckingham writing to Lord Cranfield on 31 July 1621: "The King's rent of £15,500 for tobacco, is now in danger to be lost, or at least to decline much, and all the money spent about the plantations of Virginia and Bermoothes will be lost, if there can be not some present course taken to restrain the planting of tobacco, here in England."

expressions and position of Nina Green, the moderator of the Phaeton listserv, which Altrocchi quotes and assails in this article. While I don't think anyone would argue that Ms. Green's is not the dominant voice, it is unclear why Altrocchi was compelled to misrepresent the entire group in this manner.

In any event, while I personally have no quarrel with Roe's hypothesis regarding Ariel's lines in *The Tempest*, and in fact agree Shakespeare probably had in mind what Roe proposes, I must nevertheless take issue with some of Altrocchi's surrounding arguments to support it. He twice implies that the criminal area in the London suburb of Westminster was known as the "Bermudas" as early as the 1560s. While it's not unreasonable to suppose the district itself existed by this time, Altrocchi offers no proof that it went by this name prior to Ben Jonson's "first" mention of it in *Bartholomew Faire*, acted in 1614. Now one may assume Jonson did not make the

name up, and that the district would have been established under that moniker well before 1614 for his audience to appreciate the allusion, but Altrocchi offers nothing—certainly no contemporaneous evidence—to justify his implication that it was so-called by the 1560s. Besides *Bartholomew Faire*, Altrocchi says Jonson mentions the Bermudas three more times, twice in *The Devil is an Ass*, acted in 1616, and once “[i]n his Epigram to the Earl of Dorset, circa 1611.” Altrocchi later reiterates that Jonson referred to the Bermudas-Westminster district “in three plays.” These were actually two plays; the “Epigram” to the earl of Dorset was not from a play, nor did it appear circa 1611, a confusing reference in itself since Altrocchi had earlier written “Jonson first mentions Bermudas in 1614, in *Bartholomew Faire*.” Jonson’s “An Epistle to Sir Edward Sackville, now Earl of Dorset” was printed posthumously in *Underwoods*, part of his 1640 *Works*. Sir Edward was the fourth earl of Dorset, succeeding his brother in 1624, which is therefore the epistle’s *terminus a quo*; it could hardly have appeared circa 1611.

Using the Castilian pronunciation of Bermudas, Altrocchi claims that Oxford coined “Bermoothes” to refer to the said criminal district. This may well be the case, but it’s interesting to note that the word appeared in both its English and Spanish renditions in the play *Anything for a Quiet Life* by Thomas Middleton and John Webster, with the latter usage referring to the same area near Covent Garden. Although not published until 1662, topical allusions date the play’s composition at circa 1621, two years before *The Tempest* ever saw print:

CHAMLET: Gentlemen, fare you well; I am for the Bermudas.

BEAUFORT: Nay, good sir, stay. And is that your only cause, the loss of George?

CHAMLET: The loss of George, my lord! Make you that no cause? Why, but examine, would it not break the stout

heart of a nobleman to lose his George, much more the tender bosom of a citizen?

BEAUFORT: Fie, fie, I’m sorry your gravity should run back to lightness thus. You go to the Bermoothes!

Possibly the playwrights had seen a production or a manuscript of Shakespeare’s *Tempest* from whence they gleaned their own usage. Or possibly de Vere did not coin the Westminster district with this spelling/pronunciation, but it was more commonplace than we know. The Bermuda islands themselves were also referred to by Englishmen in this Spanish manner, as attested by the duke of Buckingham writing to Lord Cranfield on 31 July 1621: “The King’s rent of £15,500 for tobacco, is now in danger to be lost, or at least to decline much, and all the money spent about the plantations of Virginia and Bermoothes will be lost, if there can be not some present course taken to restrain the planting of tobacco, here in England” (Brown, *The First Republic in America*, 426).

Altrocchi gives representative examples of the word “dew” referring to an alcoholic drink dating back to the middle ages, and still (pardon the pun) being used in that sense in Oxford’s lifetime. Since the word “had been applied for more than 300 years to alcoholic beverages,” writes Altrocchi, and considering that “De Vere coined 5000 new English words himself,” it is suggested that

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Letters (continued from page 3)

Oxford, in *The Tempest*, “coined the solo word ‘dew,’ meaning distilled alcohol.”

Unless, as Altrocchi offers, *The Tempest* was written in 1583-84 (pace Eva Turner Clark), there is a precedent for the use of “dew” as a distilled alcohol in Thomas Churchyard’s 1595 publication, *A praise of Poetrie* (bound with *A Musicall Consort of Heavenly Harmonie (compounded out of manie parts of Musicke) called Chvrchyards Charitie*):

Sweete dewe dropt out of Sydneys quill
As raine great moysture shoes [shows]
And from his muse there did distill
A liquor sweete as rose.

A quintesence, a spirit of wine
Naie [Nay] Nectar better namde
A breuage [brewage] for the Gods deuine
Of compounds made and framde.

That whosoeuer drinks thereon
Immortall shall be made...
(STC 5245)

As an aside, it’s interesting to note that Churchyard, using Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy* as his underlying theme, praises not only a number of the ancient bards, but his contemporaries Du Bartas, Spenser, and Daniel as those exceptional in poetry. Coming as it did on the heels of the

spectacularly popular *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, the name Shakespeare seems conspicuously absent, bearing in mind that Churchyard had served Oxford over a number of years. Perhaps he was still miffed at the earl over the Juliana Penn rent imbroglio of 1591.

Christopher Paul
Atlanta, Georgia

***(Something Rich and Strange,
concluded from p. 24)***

summarized by the motto known as Occam’s razor: *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem* (Don’t multiply entities beyond necessity).

Whether Mr. Moffat’s own solution is right or wrong is, in a certain sense, irrelevant. What he offers us is, in critical respects, even more important than the “correct” solution: An opportunity to evaluate competing solutions by appealing to a set of commonsense principles that should be applicable to any solution, including his own. These principles were not engraved on Mt. Sinai; anyone who contests their applicability (or their application) is welcome to write and explain to us why they should be modified or why their application should be adjusted.

But I hope that everyone can see the value of the exercise, and the importance for Oxfordians of having such principles, as we explore the *terra incognita* of authorship studies. Think of it: For four centuries the Stratfordians have been tiptoeing around those little periods as though they contained the next incarnation of the Bird Flu. Anyone who has attempted a solution has contributed to our understanding of how one might approach the unavoidable problem of actually coming to terms with that curious emblem of Shakespearean doubt.

Equally important, moreover, is the practice of courteous disagreement exemplified in Moffat’s essay. We hope to cultivate the practice at *Shakespeare Matters* of providing a dynamic forum for the exchange of ideas and for what the redoubtable Christian anarchist Peter Maurin used to call “clarification of thought.” True scholarship is like the river: You can tell the direction of the water, but you can’t step in it twice. All knowledge is contingent, and Oxfordians have just as much right to be wrong as orthodox scholars do. They at least have the virtue of being correct about the larger picture.

--Ed

In this issue:

Oxford Stars in Henry V...1

*Brunel University Offers MA in Author-
ship Studies...1*

The Case of the Missing First Folio...6

Rules for Sonnet Cipher Hunters...18

Music and Monkeys in De Vere’s Italy...12

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