

Editorial

Ill Met by Moonlight

In his *History of the Russian Revolution* Trotsky observes that war is the locomotive of history, drawing change swiftly in its train. In our own more modest realm, scandal and publicity, alas, are among the most powerful drivers of revolution. The stirrings-up wrought by the movie *Anonymous*, including its most controversial elements, have brought about notable changes in the historical situation of the SAQ and its contenders.

The most visible are recorded in this issue's first and most important contribution, the reply to the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT) organized by the Shakespeare Author-ship Coalition (SAC) under John Shahan's general direction. As most readers will know, alarmed by the looming impact of *Anonymous*, the SBT put together an audio website called "60 Minutes with Shakespeare." Visitors could listen to assorted academics, actors and otherwise famous people, including that well-known Shakespearean scholar, HRH Prince Charles, explain why the authorship question is, was, and will always be, complete nonsense. They posed themselves their own questions, answered them to their own satisfactions, and like the imperial votaress passed on.

But ill met by moonlight, proud Titania! Along came the SAC which put together its own website, "Exposing an Industry in Denial" (doubtaboutwill.org/exposing). *The Oxfordian* takes great pride in publishing what we confidently call "An Historic Document," for historic it is. We all sense a subtle shift in the wind's direction, a distant rumbling beneath our feet presaging seismic changes. Part of our new momentum is the detectable uneasiness on the other side, many of whose leaders seem aware of it too. Reading carefully through the statements crafted by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust one cannot fail to be struck by their frequent shallowness and even silliness.

Here's an example, a remark by Carol Rutter, Professor of Shakespeare and Performance Studies at Warwick University, who says at one point: "If you want to know what kind of playwright Shakespeare was, have a look at Peter Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*."

Imagine that. For the SBT's Shakespeare to work he has to be a bumbling, genial fool, well intentioned but incapable of delivering a prologue without making an idiot of himself. The real Shakespeare, on the contrary, was a sophisticated artist who blueprinted his dramas with as much care as Michelangelo designing the Sistine Chapel or Beethoven plotting the Ninth. How could it be otherwise? That's in the nature of great art. You don't write *King Lear* before breakfast and *Hamlet* in the forenoon.

But for the SBT, Shakespeare was an uneducated genius, a sort of *idiot savant* who somehow had greatness thrust upon him. But truth is truth, and that caricature must inevitably fade, is fading, it's almost gone.