

SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY

NEWSLETTERS

1985



P.O. Box 16254, Baltimore, Maryland 21210

A SALUTE TO OUR MAN IN ENGLAND

For over fourteen years Harold W. Patience has been the Shakespeare Oxford Society's most active officer in England. You probably know him best as the secretary of the English Chapter of the Society--the man who collects the dues and distributes our newsletter to the English membership. But Harold Patience means more to us than that. Thanks to his tireless, cordial hosting, many visiting American Oxfordians have been able to tour Castle Hedingham, St. Nicholas Church, and other sites of Oxfordiana trouble free and with increased enjoyment. And, because of his frequent appearances in print, the English public is becoming more and more aware of the authorship question. Harold also regularly keeps us informed about interesting happenings in the field--and with any time left, pursues investigations challenging areas.

In this issue of the Newsletter we are happy to present two of his most recent reports and to wish him "all happiness" and more time to study upon his retirement from work in 1986.

Helen Cyr,
Secretary

THE SONNETS ON TELEVISION

By Harold W. Patience

American members may be interested to hear that a series entitled The Sonnets of William Shakespeare is currently (November, 1984) running on Channel 4 (Commercial) TV. On each weekly episode (which lasts only 15 minutes) a notable actor, dressed in Elizabethan costume, twice recites a particular sonnet. Between these readings a prominent actor, writer or public figure explores the mystery and meaning of the verse in question. The venue for each short discussion is always appropriate: Hampton Court, Penshurst Place, Hatfield Houses, being examples.

On 27th October, Sonnet 94 ("They that have power to hurt and will do none.") was recited by the actor Michael Bryant. The commentary given by John Mortimer, Q.C., was --to quote from a program note--"A witty and irreverent interpretation. Standing in Lincoln's Inn refectory where Twelfth Night was first performed, he says the sonnet is all about judges." On the walls of the magnificent refectory we would see famous portraits: Queen Elizabeth I, Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Nicholas Bacon, Francis Bacon, and others.

In the opinion of John Mortimer Sonnet 94 contained a scathing attack on Francis Bacon, who harbored a marked hostility to Shakespeare's friend the Earl of Southampton and who, after the revolt of 1601, played his part in the condemnation of the latter to imprisonment in the Tower of London and the execution of the instigator of the uprising, the Earl of Essex. "In view of this," remarked John Mortimer, the theory that Francis Bacon wrote the works of Shakespeare is plainly ridiculous." Oxfordians will applaud such perception.

As so often happens, however, the expression of such dogmatic opinions by those of orthodox faith creates (unknowingly to the proponents) a situation whereby "purposes

mistook" are "fall'n on th'inventors' heads." For if it is ridiculous to suggest that Bacon wrote Sonnet 94 then surely it is just as ludicrous to suppose that a commoner would have dared to attack such a personality as Francis Bacon in print. When consideration is given to Shakespeare's obvious obsession with the technicalities of law practice, which in his works often intrude where least expected and quite out of context, it would seem that the real "Shakespeare" must be sought among those talented Elizabethan noblemen who studied at Gray's Inn and thereby acquired the necessary legal knowledge.

A MONUMENTAL MYSTERY

by Harold W. Patience

I would like to offer a few comments on the evergreen theory that original Shakespeare manuscripts, or at least a message for posterity, may have been placed "within this monument." Firstly, however, may I draw the reader's attention to an excellent coverage of this subject in the Appendix of Charlton Ogburn's new book, The Mysterious William Shakespeare, The Myth & the Reality.

It was whilst Mr. Richard Horne was on one of his several visits to the "de Vere country" of Essex and Suffolk counties several years ago that we first crossed swords over this intriguing subject. I had expressed to Mr. Horne my theory that the stone "cube" forming the superstructure of the monument (surmounted by a jawless skull) could very well be a repository of manuscripts. Mr. Horne disagreed; my "cube", in his opinion, was in fact an optical illusion--an impression gained by placing oneself full-front to the structure and gazing upwards. This impression, said Mr. Horne, is reinforced by all published photographs of the monument. In the opinion of Mr. Horne there was no "cube". The stonework extended right back to the stained-glass window of the church (i.e., to the rear of the monument) and was in all probability quite solid. Mr. Horne's sketch, based on his idea of the true shape of the superstruc-

ture, subsequently appeared in a Newsletter.

It now appears, however, that my argument to the effect that the superstructure, bearing the coat-of-arms, in unique as far as monumental design of the period is concerned, is in some degree supported by certain evidence. A photograph in the Sept., 1980, issue of the journal Essex Countryside shows the monumental bust of Robert Salmon, Master of Trinity House and a member of a family of mariners. The monument was placed in the church of St. Clement's, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, in 1617. In essentials it is of the same design as the famous one erected in Stratford-upon-Avon church, perhaps in that very same year. The two structures show the following variations:

1. There are no "cherubs" on the superstructure of the Salmon monument. (Consider the curious apparent symbolism of the Stratford edifice. One "cherub" holds a spade; an invitation to dig within? The other, whether we accept as authentic the hour-glass shown in the Dugdale engraving or the inverted torch we see today, was surely made to clutch something which embodied esoteric significance.)
2. The small supporter of the coat-of-arms of Robert Salmon is attached to the superstructure at dead centre. There was no requirement for any stonework, whether in the form of a cube or otherwise, to act merely as a support for a heraldic device.

One gets a strong impression that the atone superstructure of the Stratford Monument, being quite superfluous, must have been deliberately designed for some special purpose.

Discussing the Stratford Monument in his book The Shakespeare Authorship Question: Evidence for Edward de Vere (1971) Craig Huston made the following observation:

"Above the statue (bust) is what looks like a stone box which might contain something."

WHEN ONE AND ONE AND ONE EQUALS ONE

by Phillip Proulx

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me
still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.
To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her fould pride.
And whether that my angel be turn'd
fiend
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
But being both from me, both to each
friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell:
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live
in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one
out.

Ménage à trois, sexual recriminations, and off-color puns: are these the particulars which Shakespeare so elquently expresses in Sonnet 144? Yes! At least conventional commentators so state. And, what strained conjecture they vainly try to substantiate. However, their interpretations of this sonnet suffer from their belief that Shakespeare was the man from Stratford.

Standard comments upon Sonnet 144, as exemplified by Louis B. Wright,² A. L. Rowse,³ and, more recently, Robert Giroux,⁴ argue there are three actual persons involved in Sonnet 144: Shakespeare, The Fair Youth, and The Dark Lady. These commentators propose this sonnet expresses in serious terms the sexual and spiritual involvement of these three persons in a triangle of passion, with a pun about venereal disease adding spice to the sonnet. However, nothing could be further from the meaning of Sonnet 144.

Sonnet 144 is an autobiographical expression of friction and conflict between the two emotions of "comfort" and "despair". There are not three living

persons involved. There is but one, and that is the author in the role of protagonist.

In Sonnet 144, Shakespeare uses a common thematic structure of Elizabethan times in presenting the age-old conflict between good and evil spirits: "The Church inculcated belief in good genius or guardian angel, told off to watch over every human soul, and also in the host of evil spirits who strove without ceasing to thwart the good angel's gracious ministrations... So in Shakespeare's SONNET CXLIV the poet has two loves, of comfort and despair, which 'like two spirits' do 'suggest' him still...⁵

Thus in Sonnet 144, Shakespeare has transformed his aristocratic nature into the guardian angel spirit which is a "man right fair". His playwriting role is presented as a female spirit, replete with all the negative associations attributed to an aristocrat involving himself with the public stage. Augmenting the structure of good spirit versus evil spirit, and consistent with the religious theme of the sonnet, the evil spirit is female, as we learn from Thomas Fuller in his Holy and Profane State that "witches (evil spirits) are commonly of the feminine sex." Also, throughout the sonnet, the author plays upon the motif of the good spirit as being a guardian angel: a guardian angel was not considered to be within the body of a person. Thus consistent with the religious framework, there is presented the idea of the guardian angel as being lured away from the locale of its sould in charge: "Tempteth my better angel from my side" (Line 6).

The friction and conflict expressed in Sonnet 144 arises from the frustrating stigma placed by Elizabethan times upon persons of nobility being associated with the public theater. This opprobrium forced a lack of direct acknowledgement for de Vere as a public playwright. It is this forced silence, either by custom or direct order, which is a fundamental cause of the inner turmoil expressed in Sonnet 144. Indeed, it is a theme which is repeated more than once in the sonnets: "Whilst I, whom fortune of such triumph bars,/ Unlooked for joy in that I honor most," (25); "With

what I most enjoy contented least," (29); "And art made tongue-tied by authority," (66).

Thus in the first quatrain of Sonnet 144 are presented the two most important influences upon the author's life, and in the expected order. Indeed, the first influence presented in the sonnet is nobility, which Shakespeare states is of "comfort" and "a man right fair": conventional commentators acknowledge the phrase "a man right fair" concerns an aristocrat. However, most maintain it is a reference to the Earl of Southampton. The other love mentioned in the first quatrain is of "despair" and is labelled by the author as "a woman coloured ill".

In Sonnet 144, Shakespeare is discussing the forces upon his life which produce the emotions of comfort and despair. He is not musing about actual persons and their effect upon him. The phrase "two loves I have" is an expression of emotions in the same vein as one would express his love of music or love of painting.

The second line of the first quatrain is direct and accessible if it is interpreted for what is stated and not what others wish it to say: "Which like two spirits do suggest me still." The simile "like two spirits" refers to the phrase "two loves" which produce the emotions of "comfort" and "despair". We need only read the phrase "do suggest me still" to understand the meaning of this phrase. Instead of reading the word "suggest" as connoting "prompt", as Wright does, or "urge", as Rowse does, the word "suggest" should be interpreted as it is denoted--to bring or call to the mind; to show indirectly.

The claim that there are three persons involved in Sonnet 144 is further negated by line 11 which reads, "But being both from me, both to each friend." Most commentators argue the meaning of this line is that the "Fair Youth" and "The Dark Lady" are absent from the protagonist and are physically involved with each other. However, consistent with the inter-

pretation of "two spirits" in line 2, this phrase should be interpreted as meaning that both spirits emanate from the protagonist. Thus, "both to each friend" means the protagonist is saying, "both to each, I am a friend." That the author is using the motif of spirits may be discerned from the amorphous description of the "good spirit" and the "evil spirit", as compared to the usage of concrete images and descriptions when he is writing about living persons: "...Thine own deep-sunken eyes" (2); "A man in hue...which steals men's eyes..." (20); "Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel" (131).

"Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,/ Till my bad angel fire my good one out," is not a couplet containing a pun upon venereal disease but an expression congruous with the religious motif of the sonnet. Thus, the guardian angel is from heaven and the evil spirit from hell. When Shakespeare uses the expression "fire my good one out", fire refers to the belief that there are fires in hell.

In conclusion, Sonnet 144 is an excellent example of the strained and misguided interpretations which commentators continually offer to fit their conceptualization of the author as being the man from Stratford. Sonnet 144, far from being a literary exercise upon a sexual triangle with a pun about venereal disease, is an eloquent expression of friction and conflict which the author experienced over the irreconcilability of his aristocratic status and his association with the public theater.

NOTES:

1. William Shakespeare, The Sonnets of William Shakespeare (New York: Avenel Books, 1961), p. 80.
2. Louis B. Wright, ed., Shakespeare's Sonnets (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967), notes opposite Sonnet 144.
3. A. L. Rowse, ed. Shakespeare's Sonnets (New York: Harper & Row, 1964) p. 299.
4. Robert Giroux, The Book Known as Q (New York: Atheneum, 1982).
5. H. Littledale, Folklore and Superstitions: Shakespeare's England (London:

NOTES: (Continued)

Oxford University Press, 1970)
p. 534.

THE DARK LADY ALN'T NO LADY

by Phillip Proulx

In the old age black was not counted fair,
Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;
But now is black beauty's successive
heir,
And beauty slander'd with a bastard
shame:
For since each hand hath put on nature's
power,
Fairing the foul with art's false borrow'd
face,
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven
black,
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners
seem
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
Slandering creation with a false esteem:
Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says beauty should look
so.¹

Most annotators offer comments upon Sonnet 127 which are typical of the following: "Dark coloring once was not accounted beautiful, at least it was not so called; but now darkness is acknowledged to possess beauty, and beauty itself is called a counterfeit. For nowadays everyone has assumed Nature's power to create beauty from ugliness, and true beauty is no longer appreciated. Thus my mistress is brunette, with black eyes that seem to mourn because of the artificial beauty assumed by many, who prefer false styles and bring into disrepute the work of Nature. But her black eyes are so attractive in their mourning that everyone acclaims her as the model of beauty. (Compare Love's Labour's Lost, IV. iii. 286-93.)

Sonnet 127, far from being a literary exercise which deals with the trite

subject of how Elizabethan ladies used make-up, comments upon the circumstances of Elizabethan theatre, and how these circumstances affect the author. Also, it is a sonnet which deals intimately with the authorship question.

That Sonnet 127 does not deal with the subject of the physical beauty of Elizabethan ladies is indicated by the first quatrain: "In the old age black was not counted fair,/ Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;/ But now is black beauty's successive heir." Throughout Shakespeare's era, blonde beauty was the ideal in courtly and literary circles. To accept standard comments concerning this sonnet, we must believe that blondes were coloring themselves black; which did not happen during Elizabethan times. Also, the author emphasizes that it was in the past-- "in the old age"--that black was not counted acceptable.

What Shakespeare is doing in Sonnet 127 is using "black" as a metaphor for playwriting. It must be remembered that black was closely associated with writing during Elizabethan times: "...It is enough to state the fact that the English generally of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries wrote a style which, in the forms of its letters, bore to the more formal characters found in contemporaneous literary MSS. and to the printing type which has been called 'black letter'..."³

With the above in mind, that "black" is a metaphor for writing, then the first quatrain may be interpreted as stating that in old days playwriting was not considered proper, or if it were, it could not be acknowledged as being worthwhile. But now writing is beauty's heir; however, writing is slandered with a false pretender.

Continuing with the personification of writing, the second quatrain states that since authors have learned the art of playwriting, they are misusing their talent by not being honest. Therefore, writing is not beauty and does not deserve a place of reverence. Thus "Nature's power" is not an allusion to women using make-up

but a reference to playwriting. "Art's false borrowed face" is not a comment upon women's countenances but the recognized power of playwriting to present the unacceptable as acceptable.

That Shakespeare is not musing about a living woman in Sonnet 127 should have been noticed long ago for with the third quatrain an interesting development occurs. It is that this quatrain is conditional in respect to the above circumstances which are described in the first eight lines: "Therefore my mistress' eyes..." In other words, due to the situation described above, my mistress' eyes are raven black. If the condition did not exist, then would the mistress' eyes be so colored? Shakespeare implies that his mistress has the ability to change the color of her eyes, an ability suited for metaphors not living persons.

"At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack, / Sland'ring creation with a false esteem," is the author's comment, I believe, upon the man from Stratford aggrandizing himself as being a gentleman. And, it is this pretension which is one of the motivating forces of the sonnet.

To conclude, Shakespeare is not dealing with the superficial topic of how Elizabethan ladies used make-up to color their faces. This is a sonnet which uses "black" as a metaphor for playwriting and comments upon current conditions with respect to Elizabethan theatre.

NOTES:

1. William Shakespeare, The Sonnets of William Shakespeare (New York: Avenel Books, 1961), p. 70.
2. Louis B. Wright, ed., Shakespeare's Sonnets (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967), notes opposite Sonnet 127.
3. Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, Handwriting: Shakespeare's England (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 285.

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"THE MYSTERIOUS WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE" IN THE NEWS -- AN UPDATE

Since our last issue, two Stratfordian contenders mentioned in this space have led with their chins in discussing Charlton Ogburn's new book. So it should come as no surprise to Oxfordians that those chins have become somewhat yolk-smeared.

In the February 3 "Letters" section of The New York Times Book Review, Robert Giroux protested what he imagined to be an invidious comparison of himself with Richard Nixon--a comparison, of course, which the S.O.S. Newsletter editor neither made nor ever entertained. But after recovering from the putative "scurrility" of this comparison, Mr. Giroux launched what he fondly supposed was a death blow to the correspondent's "faulty scholarship:" "Because of 'social prohibition,' Mr. Cyr claims, 'none of the noble playwrights,' except Thomas Sackville, published plays in their lifetime, which might prove the Oxfordian thesis (for which there is not a shred of evidence) that Oxford needed Shakespeare's name as a cover for 'his' plays. Mr. Cyr's scholarship is faulty: Edmund Blount published the living Earl of Stirling's plays in 1604, the year Oxford died. Sir Philip Sidney's plays, 'The Lady of May,' was published by his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, in 1598, after her brother's death."

Now, aside from the irrelevance of citing a posthumous publication (Sidney's play, to wit) as evidence for a nobleman's publication of his own plays "in his lifetime," the reader who has followed this controversy from our last issue ("An Hundredth Sundrie Flawes" in the (New York) Times Review," S.O.S. Newsletter, Fall 1984, pp. 5-8), will notice an important omission in Mr. Giroux's misquotation of the letter in question. In his December 9 review, Giroux had listed a handful of aristocrats who wrote plays, including Sackville, and then asked why the Queen "did not mind" these dramatic activities on the part of some of her favorite courtiers.

The Newsletter's editor, in correcting Mr. Giroux's misapprehension on this point, wrote that the activity frowned upon by the Queen was publication by a nobleman of his own verse or drama, and then went on to say that none of the handful of "noble playwrights Mr. Giroux cites published their work." Giroux, it will be noted, has quietly suppressed the underlined words in this sentence, in order to cast doubt upon the very existence of the "social prohibition" in question.

But Giroux's imputation of "faulty scholarship" to someone who has not taken into consideration an example he himself had not mentioned in his review has resoundingly backfired--and in a manner that calls into question this controversialist's qualifications to lecture the unsuspecting on the issue of Shakespearean authorship.

The "Earl of Stirling"

If Robert Giroux had taken the trouble, before penning his unfortunate letter, to consult the Dictionary of National Biography, he could have discovered for himself that his "Earl of Stirling" is a very shaky witness for his case. In a letter to the New York Times Book Review which was not published, the Newsletter editor wrote,

"Although the Scottish poet William Alexander was indisputably 'living' at the time of Blount's publication of his plays, he was scarcely in a position to defy the 'social prohibition' of which I wrote: Alexander was not created Viscount Stirling' until 1630--fully 26 years later! Indeed, he was not even knighted until 1609, describing himself before that year, not as 'Sir William,' but only as 'William Alexander, Gent.'" (The present correspondent did not mention that the full title of "Earl of Stirling" was not bestowed until 1633.)

How Mr. Giroux can imagine that the example of this insignificant literary figure bears any analogy to the need for

secrecy on the part of a premier hereditary earl of the realm, like the poetical, playwrighting Earl of Oxford, passeth all understanding.

Mr. Ogburn, Prof. Charney,
and William Buckley

On the same day (February 3) in which Mr. Giroux's ill-fated letter appeared in the N. Y. Times (see above), national public television stations in most major cities carried William F. Buckley, Jr.'s "Firing Line," with Charlton Ogburn and Prof. Maurice Charney (of Rutgers University) as Mr. Buckley's guests.

Whatever may be said about the merits of the Oxfordian case as presented by Mr. Ogburn, any fair-minded viewer (or, at least, any viewer without Stratfordian stars in the eyes) would have to conclude that Prof. Charney received a drubbing--and not all of it from Mr. Ogburn.

Like many of the targets in "The Mysterious William Shakespeare," the Rutgers scholar shows himself unacquainted with the authorship issue in general. But more alarming--from the standpoint of assessing the quality of Shakespeare studies in U.S. institutions of higher education--was Prof. Charney's seemingly total unawareness that many of the points made by Charlton Ogburn, which the professor promptly dubbed "preposterous," had long ago been conceded by scholars of impeccably "orthodox" persuasion!

In fact, the word "preposterous" was overused by Prof. Charney to the point of risibility, when, for example, he asked Mr. Ogburn why he maintained that Shakespeare could not write. Mr. Ogburn good-naturedly replied, "Because I'm preposterous."

Let us examine some of the instances to which Prof. Charney applied this much-abused adjective:

1) The theory that Ben Jonson composed the preface in the 1623 First Folio signed by Heminge and Condell.

2) The theory that the character Sogliardo in Jonson's Every Man Out of His Humour is a lampoon of Shakspeare of Stratford.

3) The theory that William Cecil, Lord Burleigh is satirized as Polonius in Hamlet.

The list could go on.

"Was Malone 'Preposterous'?"

As to 1), Mr. Ogburn had used this theory as an argument for his belief that Jonson had been principal editor for the First Folio. After Prof. Charney had applied his ubiquitous epithet, Mr. Ogburn mentioned that Edmund Malone had come up with this hypothesis after comparing Jonson's style with that of the prefaces. [Actually, it was Malone's quondam collaborator and later rival, George Steevens, who proposed this theory. It appears in a note he wrote appearing in Boswell's Malone, v. 2, published in 1821, after Malone's death. Ed. note.]

Mr. Buckley helped keep the discussion on track--after repeated professional attempts to derail it--by persisting in his question to Prof. Charney, "Was Malone, then, 'preposterous'?"

Had there been time on the show, the same question could have been posed to the professor, with the names of a host of Stratfordian scholars substituted: "Were James Boaden, Dr. Furness, Andrew Lang, etc., etc., also 'preposterous'?"

"An Essential Clown"

Opinions may differ as to whether Ben Jonson's "essential clown"--as he describes him--Sogliardo in Every Man Out... is a reference to Shakspeare of Stratford. Prof. Charney, however, who claims Jonson as his scholarly "specialty," seems never to have heard of the reference, or that Sir Edmund K. Chambers mentions this interpretation in his two-volume study of Shakespeare. There can be no question that it is Shakspeare's attempts to garner a coat-of-arms for his family and himself that is being lampooned in Jonson's play. Interested readers can see for themselves in Sir

George Greenwood's invaluable The Shakespeare Problem Restated (London, 1908, pp. 461-463).

Burleigh as Polonius

The most astonishing display of Prof. Charney's insularity from scholarship in his own field was indicated by his apparent unawareness that "many scholars have argued that Burghley is being satirized as Polonius in Hamlet (Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare, Oscar Campbell and Edward G. Quinn, eds., New York, Crowell, 1966, p. 90). That other scholars held this belief is made plain by E. K. Chambers (William Shakespeare, Oxford, 1930, v. 1, p. #18) prompting Mr. Buckley once again to defend Sir Edmund from Prof. Charney's charge of "preposterous."

Space does not permit the numerous other specimens of Maurice Charney's propensity to "shoot from the hip." To his credit, the professor conceded that Mr. Ogburn's book was "fascinating" and beautifully written." The book's beauty must have so bedazzled the professor that he missed its content!

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UPDATE II: RECENT REVIEWS OF CHARLTON OGBURN BOOK KEEP AUTHORSHIP
ISSUE ALIVE IN THE MEDIA

"Shakespeare's Birthday" - April 22/23 - was the occasion for two hour-long radio interviews with our Honorary President, Charlton Ogburn, on WJNO Palm Beach. Mr. Ogburn's interviewers were Dr. Jo Turk (on the English Department faculty at Palm Beach Atlantic College) and Lord Richard Afton, a British correspondent living in that area. An article about Mr. Ogburn also appeared in the Palm Beach Post.

Such media attention toward our respected colleague owes much, of course, to last year's publication of his book, The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth & the Reality, by Dodd, Mead. A handsome full-page ad for the book appeared in the May 5 issue of the New York Times Book Review, citing praises from book and drama critics such as Kevin Kelly, Charles Champlin, and Prof. E. A. J. Honigman (see Newsletter, Fall 1984), Mary O'Hara (Pittsburgh Press) and Joseph Sobran of the Washington Times and National Review magazine, as well as from Clifton Fadiman and David McCullough, noted historian and host of PBS's fine Smithsonian World program.

The most important notice of Mr. Ogburn's path-breaking work since our last issue, however, is that of Joseph Sobran and Dr. Louis Marder, editor of The Shakespeare Newsletter.

Mr. Sobran gave glowing accounts in both the Washington Times and the National Review of his own radical turnabout - after reading Mr. Ogburn's book - from scoffing "orthodoxy" to pro-Oxfordian "heresy." His February 21 Times piece opens dramatically, "If you happen to own any real estate in Stratford-upon-Avon, I have some simple and urgent advice for you: sell. Sell it all. Sell it fast. Sell it while you can still get something for it." Having expected at the outset of his reviewing assignment to have "some fun" at Mr. Ogburn's expense, Mr. Sobran progressively realized that he was reading "an altogether sane, scholarly, and deliciously written literary and historical study" that could not help but force "Shakespeare specialists to come to terms with rich and striking parallels" between the plays and Oxford's life. Mr. Sobran's later (April 5) National Review article is equally full of insight, and he puts his finger on some of the very problems which acceptance of the Stratfordian chronology imposes, and of which Mr. Ogburn in his view disposes.

Both of Mr. Sobran's reviews reveal their author to be a perceptive, well-read, and scholarly "book man," who obviously did not come to his new viewpoint frivolously. Welcome to our side, Joseph Sobran!

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Louis Marder devotes substantial portions of two SNL issues (Winter '84 & Spring '85) to news and commentary about the new book (as well as carrying the Shakespeare Oxford Society columns funded by Russell des Cognets - in both issues discussing Mr. Ogburn and his critics - and our Society's half-page ad in the Winter issue). In the earlier SNL, Dr. Marder restricts his comments pretty much to reporting the views of various critics (both pro and con), but in the Spring '85 issue Dr. Marder editorializes for a full page - in "Is the Real Shakespeare Mysterious?" (page 2).

We wish we could report that Dr. Marder's generosity in according space to our view was matched by an improved understanding of the authorship issue. Alas, such is

not the case. Although praising many qualities of the book ("It is fascinating, informative, provocative, stimulating, and mind-boggling."), the SNL editor misrepresents Mr. Ogburn's argument as fully as did the far less charitable Robert Giroux in the December 9, 1984 New York Times Book Review.

The Shakespeare Oxford Society Newletter's response to Dr. Marder will appear in the next issue.

BOOKS ON ELIZABETHAN LIFE

by Harold Patience

American members may be interested to hear that the will of John, 16th Earl of Oxford (father of Edward de Vere) is given in full in Elizabethan Life: Wills of Essex Gentry and Yeomen by Dr. F. G. Emmison, published by the Essex Record Office in 1980.

As regards Edward de Vere, Dr. Emmison comments as follows:

"The existence of his Will or administration is not mentioned in the Dictionary of National Biography or other biography. The editor has made a fresh attempt to trace it but it is not among any of the central of Essex probate courts; although the Earl was buried in Hackney parish church (Middlesex), he died in Stoke Newington (Middlesex) within the probate jurisdiction of the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's Cathedral, whose records yield no reference. Burke's Complete Peerage states that he died, 24 June 1604, intestate."

This was the fifth, and final, volume in Dr. Emmison's Elizabethan Life series, the earlier books being titled:

1. Disorder (1970)
2. Morals and the Church Courts (1973)
3. Home, Work and Land (1976)

4. Wills of Essex Gentry and Merchants (1978)

With volume 5 Dr. Emmison (former County Archivist of Essex) brings to a conclusion his major detailed survey of the social and economic world of our Elizabethan ancestors as revealed to us through the wealth of Essex archives.

O'ER GREEN MY BAD¹

by Elisabeth Sears

(The full text of Elisabeth Sears' 20-page monograph, which appears here in a version especially edited for the Newletter, may be obtained by sending 90¢ for postage to the Shakespeare Oxford Society.)

In a book published recently by Yale University Press, The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry, the author, Dr. Gordon Braden, observes that though it is common knowledge that Shakespeare was strongly influenced by Golding's English version of the Metamorphoses, he finds this rather odd because Golding was Shakespeare's opposite, "even his enemy in a more serious way".

Golding was a Puritan, the declared enemy of taverning, tipling, gaming, playing, and beholding of Bearebaytings and Stageplayes...²

Braden adds:

Golding's favorite author to translate was Calvin - seven separate works between 1567 and 1578, the first exactly contemporary with the Ovid. Moral didacticism, mixed with anti-papist rhetoric, fills most of his prefaces.³

By contrast, John Frederick Nims, in his introduction to the 1965 Macmillan reprint of The Metamorphoses, takes note of Golding's "sharp eye on the life around him, an ear for racy speech, and a gift for energetic doggerel."⁴

Braden remarks on the discrepancy between Golding's Calvinist attitude and

didactic style and explains that for such reasons "Ovid is often considered a matter for surprise and something of a puzzle."⁵

Braden follows all this with an unconvincing rationalization of Golding's Janus-like outlook by passing it off as typical of the Elizabethan period. This may be true of the times in general, but not to that extent in one individual, (with the notable exception of William Cecil, whose piety blew with the wind of State Policy!) However, this really does not explain the paradox of a dour, self-righteous Calvinist translating the highly imaginative, sensuous, and pagan Metamorphosee, while simultaneously rendering a series of tracts that preached against the very frivolity of mind and conduct that are exemplified by Ovid's work. This is a non-sequitur!

There is also a problem of time involved in this enigma. To translate one opus at a time is a great labor. Therefore, it stretches one's credulity to suggest that one man did two translations at once which were so inimical to each other and each of which required a great expenditure of time and effort. Would Arthur Golding have had the time or the mental flexibility to grapple with both of these works simultaneously?

Another aspect to consider is that radical difference in the two styles involved, even allowing for one being poetry and the other being prose. Braden observes that

Wortham, studying the progress of Golding's prose, finds an alteration in the very concept of translation, a cutting back of expansion and elaboration (those things that attracted Shakespeare) in the direction of exact verbal correspondence -- 'What might almost be called the Calvinist principle of translation.'⁶

Braden adds one other telling point to this argument:

...the moralization (in the Metamorphosees) is almost all in the two prefaces and Ovid himself is remarkably unaltered.⁷

Further on, Braden deals with mistakes in translation, childish diction, and awkward inaccuracies. He also notes that the "poem is not being recast in any detail or rigor as a Christian allegory, but simply moved to England..."⁸

A youthful student, though highly talented, might make just such errors in translation, and might naively envision the stories in his native locale, but surely not the mature, well-educated scholar, Arthur Golding. Indeed, it becomes increasingly difficult to associate the stern Calvinist, Golding, with the translation of Ovid. It seems inevitable that we must restructure our thinking on the authorship of this work.

Supporters of the Earl of Oxford in his identity as "Shakespeare", have often suspected that the boy-genius assisted his uncle in the translation of Ovid. Could he have been the sole transcriber of that monumental work? Certainly Oxford's talent was evident at an early age. Having outstripped his tutors in learning, Edward de Vere was sent off to Cambridge University before his ninth birthday. Since there is poetry surviving today that he wrote in his early teens, we also know that he began writing very young.

Because the English Renaissance traditions restricted a nobleman from publishing works under his own name, an Earl would be obliged to print them either anonymously, or "alonymously." Both Oxford and his uncle, Arthur Golding were living at Cecil House in 1565, and the publication of The Metamorphosee should have helped the impoverished uncle financially, as well as enhanced his reputation as a scholar. Therefore, Golding's name would have been a natural choice for this service.

Another reason for masking the true identity of the transcriber might have been Oxford's extreme youth and his situation as a ward of William Cecil. Sir William

could not afford to risk the criticism that might ensue, not the possible loss of this lucrative wardship should his young charge, The Lord High Chamberlain of England, publish in his own name the censuous, pagan Metamorphosee. On the other hand, printing it anonymously might have invited questions or speculations about the translator's identity. It would be safer to assign the work discreetly to another individual.

Surely Golding would have objected to being associated with such a frivolous work, for the apologetic and morally didactic preface seem to indicate that some sort of compromise was worked out. Perhaps the patronage of the Earl of Leicester, who was then closest of any to the Queen, was sought and obtained for protection from censure; certainly Leicester was the most powerful protector available. Cecil was always a careful man.

Golding's circumstances, though, did not seem to improve nor his lifestyle to change after the great success of The Metamorphoses. Even though it went through eight printings in his lifetime, he was still impoverished and much in need of William Cecil's continuing patronage. Could it be that Cecil absorbed the profits from the publishing venture along with much of Lord Oxford's other property and wealth?

Returning to Dr. Braden's observations, we find that:

Much of the evidence of Golding's influence on Shakespeare is relatively circumstantial but there are so many little hits of similarities, and in many instances, almost direct quotations from Golding's Ovid, that it is impossible to ignore the close relationship.⁹

Braden claims that:

At the very least, Shakespeare used the Latin along with Golding... The unsurprising conclusion of all this labor is that Shakespeare could and did read Ovid in the original,

but consulted Golding, too.¹⁰

Braden's commentary keeps returning to Shakespeare-Golding similarities, such as run-on lines, "padding" techniques, and use of the word "and" as a "carry-over" to the next line, allowing for the fact that Golding, of course, is experimenting with the fourteener of his times and Shakespeare with the pentameter of twenty years later.

Braden admits that "Golding" did not master the fourteener, but also emphasizes that no one else did either and that in all probability no one ever could. He also notes that "Golding was victimized by his meter and that he made much use of Flickworter (M. W. S. Swan's term) to pad his lines." Words such as "do" and "did", "right" and "full" (as adverbials), "eo", "Thereat", "thereon", "whereby", etc. In addition to these, Golding used a doubling of adjectives:

The hearts of divers trim young men his
beautie gan to move,
And many a Ladie fresh and faire was
taken in his love.¹¹

Braden then demonstrates that "removal of the otiose adjectives in this last example, along with some simple tightening of the locutions, can turn Golding's lines into a tight pentameter couplet:

Divers young men his beautie gan to move,
And many a Ladie taken in his love.¹²

Braden claims:

It looks suspiciously as though Golding's lines have the content of pentameters spread across fourteen syllables.¹³

Let us now take a look at one excerpt from the Metamorphoses and watch the process of transition from Ovid to Golding to Shakespeare. This selection is taken from the very end of the story of Narcissus. First there is Ovid in the original followed by Dr. Braden's literal translation of the passages.

Nusquam corpus erat; crocum pro corpore
flore

Inveniunt foliis medium cingentibus al-
bis

(III.509-510)

(There was no corpse anywhere. Instead of a corpse they found a flower yellow in the middle, with white petals surrounding it.)¹⁴

Between this Latin of Ovid and the English of "Golding" an earlier translation intrudes. According to Braden:

...an anonymous translation of The Fable of Ovide Treating of Narcissus (1560) ends like this:

This body was there none, but growing
on the ground
A yellowe flower wyth lylly leaves, in-
sted therof they founds.¹⁵

In 1560, Edward de Vere was ten years old. Could this be the work of a youthful prodigy? It is ironic that Braden labels the piece:

Unpromising stuff (!) but it does allow one to see how the poetic torsion might lie not so much in the flower itself but, 'thsr of they found' being at the position of stress, in the action of discovering it. We may be reasonably sure that Golding looked at this version because he uses the same rhyme-words and one phrase verbatim (!!); but he rearranges things to mimic the movement of awareness better, and adds one crucial small word to sound the right notes:

But as for bodie none remaind: in stead
thereof they found
A yellow floure with milke white leaves
new sprung upon the ground.¹⁶

(III.641-42)

If we substitute Oxford's name for Golding's in this critique, we would assume that the fifteen-year-old Earl is improving on his own earlier attempts at translation and poetry, and later, in Venus and Adonis, we can see the maturing power of the writer. The cumbersome fourteeners have been replaced by graceful iambic pentameter.

By this the boy that by her side lay
kill'd

Was melted like a vapour from her
sight.

And in his blood, that on the ground
lay spill'd

A purple flower sprung up, check'ed
with white

1.1165-1168)

All in all, there is such a remarkably close relationship between each of these works (the anonymous translation of Narcissus, Golding's translation of Metamorphoses, and Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis) that it is difficult to see it as anything but the work of one man; possibly first as a child prodigy, then as a maturing young writer, and at the last, as the genius we call "Shakespeare". An extraordinary overview of the burgeoning of genius in Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford?

NOTES

1. Shakespeare, Sonnet #112.
2. An Elizabethan Puritan: Arthur Golding, by Louis Thorne Golding, New York, 1937, p. 67.
3. Braden, p. 3.
4. Introduction to The Metamorphoses; John Frederick Nims, New York, 1965.
5. Braden, p. 9.
6. Braden, p. 12.
7. Braden, p. 12.
8. Braden, p. 13.
9. Braden, p. 4.
10. Braden, p. 6.
11. Braden, p. 28.
12. Braden, p. 28.
13. Braden, p. 28.
14. Braden, p. 34.
15. Braden, p. 34.
16. Braden, p. 34.

DEBATERS CORNER

The Shakespeare Oxford Society's editorial staff does not endorse all theories presented by contributors. Therefore, for convenience of readers, we discuss dissenting views side by side. In this case, the Golding-is-Oxford-is Shakespeare theory has been

around for some time, and only recently has new research been applied, as Betty Sears' able presentation of the key arguments pro-Golding/Oxford will attest. However, there is a body of information that tends to support the counter argument, i.e., against the case for the Golding-Oxford-Shakespeare relationship that needs to be stated. Of course, new evidence may surface someday. But, for now, the current defense does not seem to hold up--at least in the eyes of this observer.

First of all, much is made of the contrast between the Calvinist attitude and the sensuous, pagan nature of Ovid's Metamorphoses. The idea that a "Janua-like outlook" was typical of the Elizabethan period is treated as "an unconvincing rationalization." Actually, there is a lot of evidence to show that at that time "Puritan" was a vague term encompassing a diverse range of people--from political extremists to anti-Catholics who merely felt that the English Reformation had not gone far enough. The writings of the time show that "mythology was a language, a kind of shorthand, which embodied and illustrated the forces of nature, and, especially human virtues and devices on a superhuman scale...The gods were the evil angels who fell with Satan."¹ Some myths were even seen to be "variante of Biblical truth." And any writer of the period could safely assume his readers to have a familiarity with classical myth, just as a modern writer today assumes the same for Freudian formulas. Thus, we find Puritans who could be deeply moral in their outlook, on the one hand, and yet capable of working with pagan texts, on the other. Nor is there any evidence that Golding himself was a "dour, self-righteous" person, even though a serious, practicing Calvinist.

It is suggested that "Golding had neither the time nor the mental flexibility" to deal with two or more translations at once. To the contrary, Golding's per-annum publication rate attests to his ability to turn out product rapidly.

Do errors in translation necessarily suggest a youthful translator, such as Oxford? Despite the high artistic level, the accuracy in translation for the period would be considered primitive by modern standards. On the other hand, the language, the doggarel of Golding's translation suggests a mature author. Then, too, Golding's concept of translation--exact verbal correspondence--is a literal, careful, approach. But Oxford was essentially a poet, not a translator. Unlike Golding, he would be expected to "cut loose" from the original, just as Shakespeare did. Also, recent statistical studies of Edward de Vere's word usage reveal stylistic differences with Golding that cannot be reconciled. "Thereat" and "thereon", for example, are nonexistent in the de Vere sample available, and rare in the vastly larger Shakespearean lexicon.

Also, for the theory to work, Oxford's and Golding's time table would have to be juggled. The dates of their going and coming do not match. As to Golding's financial situation--one, there wasn't much money to be made from poetry publishing, and two, as one biographer has said, Golding's debts were of the order that only the wealthy could afford. The Golding-in-debt argument really doesn't work.

All in all, the case for the Oxford-Shakespeare authorship of Golding's translation, as it now stands, hangs and falls on the unprovable assumptions about personality, cultural context, rate of output, time frame, style, and interpersonal relations.

--Helen W. Cyr

1. Bush, Douglas. "Classical Myth in Shakespeare", Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare, edited by Oscar James Campbell, p. 117.

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Georgetown College, Kentucky
Author of The Poems of Edward De Vere, Sevanteenth Earl of Oxford and
of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Eesex (1980)

A SIGNIFICANT EULOGY
by Harold W. Patience

In the parish church of the small Eesex village of Leaden Roding can be seen a brass inscription in the floor, near the vestry, which reads:

John Jocelyn, esquire, interred here doth lie,
Sir Thomas Jocelyn's third son of worthy memory.
Thrice noble was this gentleman by birth, by learning great,
By single chast (chaste) and godly life he won in Heaven a seate;
He the year One Thousand and Five Hundred Twentynine wss born,
Not twenty yearee old him Cambridge did with two degrees adorn.
King's College him a Fellow chooe, in Anno Forty-nine,
In learning tryde whereto he did his mind alwaies incline,
But others took the praise and fame of his deserving wit,
And hie inventione as their own, to printing did commit.
One Thousand Six Hundred and Three it grieves all to remember,
He left this life (Poor's daily friend) the Twenteighth December.

I have stressed important points of this extraordinary epitaph which, whilet shedding light on the literary custome of the day, assumes significance when we attempt to penetrate the Oxford/Shakspere mystery.

No great nobleman like de Vere, Jocelyn was merely the son of a knight. Yet (incredible as it eounds to us) othere were able to take "the praise and fame of his deserving wit". And take it, apparently, with impunity.

It should be noted that Jocelyn died six months prior to Lord Oxford's own demise at Hackney.

STRATFORDIAN METHODS OF CONTROVERSY
by Gordon Cyr

At the outset of "Is the Real Shakespeare Mysterious?" (The Shakespeare Newsletter, #185, Spring 1985, p. 2), Louis Marder confesses to being overwhelmed by the task of reviewing Charlton Ogburn's The Mysterious William Shakespeare. "How does one briefly review a book," writes Dr. Marder, "which contains 400,000 words when almost every line calls for comment, discussion, and argument?"

But as soon as he departs from pinpointing the few weaknesses of Mr. Ogburn's presentation, the methods Dr. Marder has chosen only succeed in giving his readers a distorted picture of the book's argument. In short, the reviewer appears to have "missed the forest for the trees."

The weapons the reviewer uses to tilt with Mr. Ogburn (and with other anti-Stratfordians as well) consist in the main of the "selective rebuttal" -- in which an item here or an item there is detached from the body of evidence for demolition, misleading the reader to infer that the whole case rests on the one isolated element -- and the "circular argument."

Stratfordians seem to chafe at our calling this second weapon to their attention. "It is not to argue in a circle," the reviewer writes, "...to say that the existence of numerous editions of the plays and poems with Shakespeare's name on the title page and the references and allusions to him as poet and dramatist, prove that he was the author..."

Let us examine why, protestations to the contrary, this constitutes a "circular argument." The tacit assumption is made, to begin with, that the name "William Shakespeare" can only refer to the Stratford man, and that the "references and allusions to him" as poet and dramatist are also to the Stratford man. Thus, a syllogism is constructed which goes something like this: "Major premise: The name 'William Shakespeare' can only refer to the Stratford man. Minor premise: The name 'William Shakespeare' appears on title pages of plays and poems. Conclusion: Therefore, the Stratford man wrote these plays and poems!"

But we need to remind Stratfordians, apparently, that their major premise is the point at issue. Indeed, the syllogism's conclusion contains this premise in disguise. Therefore, a logician would say that the perpetrator of this syllogism "argues in a circle," and that the major premise of this syllogism "begs the question," to wit, "what is the proof that the name 'William Shakespeare' can only mean the Stratford man?"

The usual response given to this question is refuge in yet another circular argument: "Jonson, who had discussed Shakespeare with Drummond of Hawthornden with no reference to any secret authorship, mentions from living memory that Shakespeare was the Swan of Avon. No member of the Chamberlain's or King's Men ever suspected or thought that their colleague was too stupid a lout to be the author of the plays he was bringing and producing with them. No stretch of the imagination can wish the names of Heminge, Burbage, and Condell out of Shakespeare's will..."

Each of the several questions begged in this tirade would require a separate essay in which to discuss them and to expose the illogic underlying them: Under any assumption of what Ben Jonson did or did not know about the authorship, why should we expect a "secret authorship" even to be discussed, by him or anyone else? The authorship of Huckleberry Finn or Tom Sawyer was by no means a secret -- at least in the sense anti-Stratfordians argue was the case for "Shakespeare's Works." But how often do we find

the name "Samuel L. Clemens" used in any discussion of the author "Mark Twain," whether in Clemens's own day or in ours? Naturally, anti-Stratfordians would expect, if the authorship were a secret, that there would indeed be some contemporaries who would identify the Stratford man with the author. If so, the issue to be resolved would best be phrased: In how much of a position to know all the facts were these contemporaries, and is there the possibility they could have been deceived?

The truly astonishing aspect of the authorship problem is that nobody seems to have made this identification during the Stratford man's lifetime. It seems to have occurred to no one, when he or she was speaking of the Stratford man, that he or she thought of him as an author. Nor did anyone, when speaking of the writer "Shakespeare," appear to have thought of him as the Stratford man. No one, that is, until seven years after the Stratford man's death when the first complete edition of Shakespeare's plays is offered to the public, we find it stated there -- for the first time, by Jonson, Heminge, Condell, Digges, or anyone else -- that the two entities are one and the same! And upon this rock, the Stratfordians must build their church; they have no other.

Moreover, what warrant does anyone have for assuming what any member of the Chamberlain's or King's Men "suspected" or "thought" about the intellectual capacities of the author? Or whatever they may have even known about the authorship? The important thing is that they said nothing about it, at least at a time when their testimony might have counted.

As to the intellectual capacities of the companies' actors themselves, on the other hand, we have first-hand testimony about the low esteem in which these were held by at least one writer: the anonymous author of the Parnassus Plays. In one of these, "Richard Burbage" and "William Kempe" are made to say, it must be admitted, that their "fellow Shakespeare" is a writer who is superior to all the other

playwrights of the time, Ben Jonson included. But the terms in which these words are put into the mouths of "Burbage" and "Kempe" make it clear that Parnassus's author is convinced that these "mimic apes" do not have the least idea of what they are talking about, and that anything they might say about their "fellow" should be taken cum grano salis!

Finally, there is the bit about Heminge's and Condell's (and Burbage's) names interlined in Shakspeare's will. Stratfordians lay great stress on this item, for reasons that escape the editors. The fact that the bequests to them are interlined means one of two things: 1) that they are forgeries, added after Shakspeare's death, or 2) that Heminge, Condell, and Burbage were decidedly afterthoughts in the testator's intentions. If genuine, what more do these prove, than that the testator was a friend of these actors? They certainly do not prove that the deceased was an author, and they equally certainly do not prove the truth of the remarks attributed to them in the First Folio.

If, instead of the shillings bequeathed to these actors for the purpose of buying memorial rings, posterity had found the testator saying the following, "to my good friends, Richard Burbage, John Heiming and Henry Condell, I leave the care of my papers, books, and writings, to dispose of them as they see fit" -- wording similar to that of Shakspeare's: son-in-law, Dr. Hall -- there would doubtless be no authorship problem today! It is indeed the absence of such literary artifacts' mention in the Stratford man's will that renders suspect Heminge's and Condell's claims, in the 1623 Folio, that they have the "unblotted manuscripts" of the plays from the author himself.

What other reasons are there for impeaching the truthfulness of this 1623 publication? Not only does the claim that the Stratford man is the author seem at odds with every earlier record of the Stratford man's life, but several other claims made therein are contradicted, either by other records or by other known circumstances:

- 1) The claim that "William Shakespeare" was

among the "principal actors" in all the plays. 2) The claim that the printer's copy consists of manuscripts free of "blots" or errors. It has been proven that many of the Folio's plays were printed from earlier quarto editions. 3) The claim that all previous quartos were from "stolne and surreptitious" copy and that only the present edition is authentic (see Item 2). 4) Heminge's and Condell's claim that the author had died before he could exercise the "right" to oversee the publication of his writings. (If Shakspeare had "retired" by 1612, why could he not have exercised this "right" in the four years left to him? And what happens to the common Stratfordian contention that "Shakespeare" had given up his "rights" when he sold the plays to "his company?")

Further, we must come to grips with the inconsistencies of Ben Jonson's own testimony (quite apart from whether he was the actual author -- as George Steevens, supported by James Boaden, H. H. Furness, Felix Schelling, and Andrew Lang, ably contended -- of Heminge's and Condell's statements). At earlier periods of his life, Ben Jonson saw fit to lampoon Shakspeare's application for a coat-of-arms (Every Man Out of His Humour); to criticize the Shakespeare plays for not observing the Aristotelian unities, to accuse the Stratford man of having "from brokage g.i.e., brokerage, presumably of plays, ... become so bold a thief/As we, the robb'd, leave rage and pity it..." (On Poet-Ape. Emphasis ours. This is an identification which Louis Marder accepts. See "Most Singular and Choice Epithets," SNL #180, Winter, 1983, p. 45.); to complain that "Shakspeeer wanted g.i.e., "lacked" art" (Conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden).

Near the end of his life, Ben Jonson made some similar carping criticisms of the man he claimed he "loved...this side idolatry." In spite of this profession, he overlooked "Shakespeare" when, in another chapter of the same book, he listed all the great writers of his day who merited his attention (Discoveries...)!

Yet, on one occasion only, to wit: the 1623 First Folio, Jonson is full of the highest praise for the "art" of the very man he claimed only four years before had lacked such art! Are anti-Stratfordians, then, not entitled to some suspicions, at least, as to the evidentiary value of this one document's claims -- so widely incongruous with the record at every other point?

The circularity of The Shakespeare Newsletter's argument about the First Folio testimony, as cited above, can thus be diagrammed as simply as the "title page" argument: Major premise: Ben Jonson, Heminge and Condell (plus the other insignificant scribblers dredged up for the First Folio) are to be believed. Minor premise: Most of these writers imply that the Stratford man is the author. Conclusion: Therefore, the Stratford man is the author.

- - - -

Underlying most of the objections made to the anti-Stratfordian premise of a "secret authorship" are assumptions that the 1623 witnesses would have had to have been parties to a "plot" or a "conspiracy" to keep the authorship secret. If this assumption were correct, it would make the Stratfordian demand of their opponents to produce a revelation of such a plot by Shakespeare's contemporaries an even more unreasonable one than it already seems. But is the assumption correct? There is abundant testimony -- from Püttenham's The Arte of English Poesie (1589) to Lord Selden in King James's reign -- that it was infra dig. for members of the nobility to publish verse or drama under their own names. Stratfordians love to play down this fact, in as much as a concession to it would open the debate to consideration of whether "William Shakespeare" might not be the "own name" of an author who did not wish to put himself in such an undignified position! In truth, Robert Giroux denies this fact altogether, a denial which led him into his "Earl of Stirling" error in a letter to the New York Times Book Review editor last February (see Newsletter, Winter 1985) and The Shakespeare Newsletter #185, Spring 1985, p. 9)

Of more importance to our purpose here is that Puttenham's and Lord Selden's (and, one should add, the playwright Robert Greene's in Farewell to Folly, 1591) remarks on the subject prove that secret and pseudonymous authorship of poems and plays was a commonplace among the nobility. Such commonplaces, then, scarcely need plots, conspiracies, or "oaths in blood" for their maintenance, as Stratfordians seem to infer. A certain amount of deception, of course, would be involved, but in the climate described by Puttenham, etc., it would seem safe to guess that a simple agreement not to "tattle" in public would be all that was necessary.

Two other aspects of poetic and dramatic writing seem to be commonplaces of Elizabethan times: anonymity, and misattributions. (Prof. Steven May, a Stratfordian scholar who has made a special study of the Earl of Oxford's poetry, builds a case for Oxford's non-authorship of a number of verses subscribed with his initials!) If Stratfordians assume that a "secret authorship" would be bandied about town by the literary gossips of the day, why are we still so ignorant of the authorship of so much Tudor verse clearly fitting into these categories? In truth, authorship in general seems not to have been discussed in those days, which is why Shakespeare's name is hardly ever mentioned (nor anyone else's for that matter) when their works are talked about. It is at least worthy of note, then, that it is the Earl of Oxford's name which does come up -- at least in Puttenham -- when discussion takes place of the aristocratic obligation to be secretive in his activities and to publish "without [his own name] to it" -- i.e., to use a pseudonym, or, if not his "own name," then that of another?

Meanwhile, if proof is required that "William Shakespeare" was a "cover name," we have it in the 1599 Passionate Pilgrim. Scholars seem agreed that only a few pieces in this collection, ascribed on its title page solely to "William Shakespeare," are of Shakespeare's authorship, most of

the rest being assigned -- on these scholars' authority -- to Richard Barnfield. If the publisher (Jaggard) were not using the name "Shakespeare" as a cover for at least one author's verses, why did Shakespeare and Barnfield not protest Jaggard's unauthorized use of this name, as Thomas Heywood did for Jaggard's later edition of Pilgrim, which included one of Heywood's own poems? And if "Shakespeare" was used as a cover name for Barnfield's verses, why not for any other author as well? Finally, if it is Shakespeare whom Ben Jonson attacks as "Poet-Ape" (as, at least, Dr. Marder seems to think), in which sonnet he is described as a play-broker (who would "buy the reversion [i.e. "reversion] of old plays"), why should we assume he had anything more to do with the plays than to lend his name to their publication? And why should we not also assume, as Jonson apparently did, that this "poet-ape" proceeded from this activity to that of stealing plays (or parts of plays; it is not clear which), which he would then pass off as his own?

It should be clear by this time to anyone not viewing the authorship issue through rose-tinted glasses manufactured in Stratford-super-Avon, that the mere mention of the name "Shakespeare" in Elizabeth's time in connection with literary matters cannot be regarded as proof of identity, given all the circumstances mentioned above. Stratfordians are able to use this argument, as we have shown, only by assuming the point at issue. But they have another variant of this circular reasoning when they come to dealing with the Oxfordian theory in particular.

For this variant, Stratfordians (like Robert Giroux -- see Newsletter, Fall 1984) call to the witness stand one Francis Meres, author of Palladis Tamia (1598), who therein lists both the Earl of Oxford and Shakespeare among those "best for comedy," as well as listing Shakespeare separately as best in other literary genres, such as tragedy, historical plays, and verse. The SNL review under discussion expresses the Stratfordian view of Meres's testimony most succinctly: "We Stratfordians ask how comes it that Oxford and Shakespeare

were one person if they are mentioned there as two different people?"

This question assumes, of course, that Meres had personal acquaintance with the writers he discusses and that he in fact knew that Oxford and Shakespeare were two different people. But Meres makes no such claim, and on the basis of what he wrote (as against what we only think he meant), more than one assumption is clearly possible:

- 1) He knew that Oxford and Shakespeare were two separate people (the Stratfordian view).
- 2) He did not know that they were two separate people.
- 3) He believed them to be two separate people, even if in fact they were not.
- 4) He knew that "Shakespeare" was a pseudonym for the Earl of Oxford, but included the earl's name separately out of respect for the author's desire to conceal his hand in the particular poems and plays that Meres listed (only one of Ogburn's hypotheses. Note that Meres's listing of Oxford is remarkably unspecific about the earl's comedies.).
- 5) He knew that "Shakespeare" was a pseudonym, but not whose.
- 6) He knew that "Shakespeare" was a pseudonym, but believed that someone other than Oxford, e.g., Bacon, Derby, Marlowe, or a group of writers, was the author.

The reader will observe that four out of these six possibilities require that Meres had no personal acquaintance with these authors. But there is independent confirmation that Meres's knowledge -- at least about Oxford -- is second hand at best. And who provides us with that confirmation? Why, none other than Louis Marder himself! In his attempt to downgrade Oxfordians' citation of the earl's contemporary reputation as a playwright, Dr. Marder opines that Meres derived his reference to Oxford from Puttenham, the reputed author of The Arte of English Poesie, the 1589 publication we have had occasion to mention above. This seems

to be a reasonable enough inference. But in using it, Dr. Marder saws off the branch upon which he thinks himself comfortably perched: the assumption that Meres knew for a fact that Oxford and Shakespeare were two separate people!

- - - -

We now come to the other type of Stratfordian rejoinder found in the SNL review: the selective rebuttal. In order to overcome the paucity of linkages (except for the First Folio, and it should be mentioned, the inappropriate scribblings -- composed by nobody-knows-whom engraved upon the Stratford monument, erected and paid for by nobody-knows-whom and nobody-knows-when) between the Stratford man and literary activities of any kind, Stratfordians must needs downgrade the very necessity for a rival candidate's need to conceal his or her authorship. Consequently, the fiction must be maintained that there is nothing in the Shakespeare works that would have placed their author's life or liberty in peril.

To promote this blinkered view, the reviewer writes, "I do not find it easy to believe that...Hamlet and Ophelia are derived from Oxford's marriage to Anne Cecil, or that Oxford's escape from the pirates in 1576 is mirrored in Hamlet's similar escape, that the 'politic worms' eating Polonius is a reference to Burghley's remarking that he was born during the Diet of Worms, that Horstio is Oxford's cousin Horace (Horatio) being exhorted to tell the truth about him..."

Oxfordians will take notice of the omissions from this catalog of parallels: 1) the phrase "politic worms" is coupled in the play with the pun about the worm being "your only emperor for diet" -- which nails this allusion to the Diet of Worms, when Emperor Charles V was crowned; 2) the description of Polonius as "fish-monger" and its relation to "Cecil's Fast," Burleigh's law encouraging the fish industry; 3) the similarity of style between Polonius's advice to his son and to Burleigh's Certain Preceptes -- designed for his own son, Robert, and not published until 1618; 4) other of Polonius's lines in Hamlet constituting a parody of a letter

from Burleigh to Queen Elizabeth -- a letter which the Stratford man could certainly not have seen; 5) the 1603 quarto's designation of Polonius as "Corambis" and the pun this name makes on Burleigh's motto. The list could go on and on.

But it would be futile to add any more items to the heap of parallels between the Shakespearean corpus and Lord Oxford's curriculum vitae. Mr. Ogburn has more than enough in his book to convince any unprejudiced reader. No, the SNL editor knows these facts already, either from the book under review or from the pages of his own newsletter (see "Polonius as Lord Burleigh: Oxford's revenge on his father-in-law?" SNL, #167, Dec. 1980, p. 48). For any Stratfordian to admit, however, that Shakespeare had Queen Elizabeth's right-hand man in mind when he created the character of Polonius would force said Stratfordian to answer the obviously awkward question, how was it that a person of the modest social credentials possessed by Shakspeare was allowed to produce, let alone publish, a play satirizing such a public figure on the stage, in which the hero not only murders him, but speaks contemptuously of his corpse? How did it come about that, in an age when John Stubbs had his hand cut off for publishing a pamphlet daring to advise the Queen against her proposed marriage to the Duc d'Alencon, the middle-class Warwickshire citizen never suffered even a day's imprisonment? It must be remembered that portraying a public official on the stage -- at least in the public theaters -- was a crime, punishable by at least a loss of liberty -- a fact which Ben Jonson, George Chapman and others discovered to their own discomfort.

For the Stratford bourgeois implausibly put forward as Hamlet's creator, substitute the Earl of Oxford, and all the problems mentioned above disappear. Oxford had the motive, as Burleigh's put-upon ward and son-in-law, and the intimate knowledge of Burleigh's habits and correspondence to commit his satire to paper. Oxford enjoyed the friendship, the confidence, and the protection of Queen Elizabeth herself, who presumably would have been willing to put up with more from him

than she would tolerate from others. She of course would not have allowed even such a favorite as Oxford to publish such a play as Hamlet. Nor did he, whether he used the pen-name "William Shake-speare" or not. The corrupt text and numerous errors which disfigure the First Quarto Hamlet (1603) prove that his was a pirated, unauthorized publication that no author could ever have sanctioned. The vastly improved text of the Second Quarto a year later, with the name "Corambis" changed to "Polonius," certainly suggests a clumsy effort at "damage control" ("one cannot unring a bell," as lawyers say of excluded testimony which has already been heard by the jury).

These considerations (and many more) seem to us to make a strong circumstantial case at least against the possibility that Shakspeare of Stratford could have been the author of Hamlet. Yet, in The Shakespeare Newsletter's editorial reply to our Society's column in the summer issue ("What does it mean to 'argue in a circle?'", SNL #186), a Stratfordian lawyer -- a Mr. Luis Kutner of Chicago -- is cited to the effect that, "circumstantial evidence without supporting evidence is compounding fiction." This, in our view, is special pleading. By "direct evidence," Mr. Kutner means that we Oxfordians should produce an Elizabethan "blabber" about the "secret plot" he believes we think existed, despite the improbabilities involved in fulfilling such a request. Lawyers for the Stratfordian side also seem to think that the First Folio testimony counteracts the circumstantial case against their candidate the record otherwise presents. We have already discussed the possibility of perjury. We would only add a factor every lawyer, including Mr. Kutner, knows very well: testimony by dead witnesses is not subject to cross-examination. Another thing Mr. Kutner knows very well is that many cases are decided on circumstantial evidence, and that such evidence, if there is enough of it, is considered more reliable than the arguably more error-prone observations of "eye witnesses."

But, in fact, Oxfordians do have such direct evidence to support the strong circumstantial case Mr. Ogburn has presented -- with parallel after parallel throughout the

whole Shakespeare canon with the earl's life circumstances. We have, as we have shown above, the "direct testimony" of Puttenham in The Arte of English Poesie that as of 1589 Oxford either "used a pseudonym or someone else's name when writing poetry, that he was forced to write in secret, that he was "best" among the nobility who wrote comedies, and that he was "first" among those who wrote "excellently well, if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest."

Therefore, Oxfordians can claim -- contrary to Samuel Schoenbaum's dismissal of our case as, "a row of zeroes adding up to zero" -- that by the rules of "common sense" and of "putting two and two together," the circumstances favor our candidate's authorship of at least a large portion of what we know as "Shakespeare's Works" over that of the Stratfordians' candidate. We can show motive, opportunity, and (pace scholastic special pleading to the contrary) chronology. The Oxfordian theory is thus found to be "Copernican," in that the planetary orbits of Shakespearean research can now be explained more simply, whereas the infinity of bibliographical, biographical and other cruxes of Stratfordian "Ptolemaicism" have only produced thousands of books and theses, many thousand more of guesses and hypotheses -- but no resolutions to date.

* * * * *

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LORD OXFORD SUES FOR A PATENT OF MONOPOLY

by Steven W. May
Georgetown College

The 1000 pound annuity which the crown granted to Oxford on 26 June 1586 provided the Earl with no more than a minimally adequate income. As William Harrison explained in his "Description of England" (1587), "no man is commonly created baron except he may dispend of yearly revenues £1000" (ed. Georges Edelen, p. 100). Small wonder then that the Earl vigorously pressed a number of suits in an effort to augment his income, the most intense of which was his struggle for the tin monopoly during the mid-1590s. As early as 1592-3 he was seeking the monopoly on oils, wools, and fruits (Ward, pp. 306-311), and it is now clear that, prior to this and perhaps even before he received his annuity, Oxford had devised a monopoly for himself as "Gauger of vessels for beer and ale."

The basic proposal involved checking the quality and quantity of drink as it was sealed into vessels by the brewers. The patentee, Oxford, was to receive from the brewers one penny for every barrel so inspected and two farthings for each smaller container. The crown had apparently denied Oxford's suit by 17 May 1587 when one Sir Robert Styvard or Styvart submitted a revised but similar proposal. It too was refused. A third attempt was undertaken by Julius Caesar, the Elizabethan lawyer and one of her Majesty's Masters of Requests. The Office of Requests sorted out those petitions to the Queen and Privy Council submitted by poor and out-of-court suitors. By virtue of his office there, Caesar apparently read Styvard's petition, then devised his own variation upon it. Among his papers in the British Library (Add. MS. 12497, ff. 409-410v) are his notes differentiating the Earl of Oxford's suit from that of Styvard. Caesar recorded that both were denied because they violated an act of 23 Henry VIII charging the Wardens of the Cooper's Guild with the responsibility of gauging all such vessels for a mere one farthing apiece. But then Caesar took up Oxford's idea, proposing to gauge all the vessels at a cost of just four pounds per year from the Queen. There was a catch, however. He also asked for all forfeitures due for violations of the act of 23 Henry VIII, presumably, fines paid by brewers caught sealing their vessels without due inspection. "And this being never sued for by the Erle," he concluded, "maye without his ill taking it . . . be graunted unto Cesar." That it was not is shown by Sir Thomas North's letter which Caesar preserved (f. 411), explaining that his suit "will hardly be harkened unto" because it offers the Queen no increase in her own revenues. But even this may not have ended the effort to implement Oxford's plan, since an anonymous petition to the Queen dated 1592 in the Salisbury MSS (HMC Part 4, pp. 260-261), asks for the same sort of monopoly as was originally proposed by Oxford, the fees however to be two pence per barrel and a half-penny for the smaller vessels.

Beyond the need for additional income, the Earl's gambit as would-be gauger of these vessels tells us something about his status at court during these years. Caesar is careful to distinguish his suit from Oxford's, in part so that the Earl would not be offended should the monopoly be granted to another. Meanwhile, Oxford's on-going efforts to secure one monopoly after another point to the inadequacies of his annuity.

Even more interesting is the fact that his search for a viable and lucrative monopoly went on with undiminished fervor after his marriage in 1591 to Elizabeth Trentham. Among other unknowns in the life story of De Vere, the exact financial arrangements which accompanied the Trentham match are worthy of further investigation.

SCHOLAR OF OXFORD'S POETRY
HIGHLIGHTS NINTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

by Gordon Cyr

The Shakespeare Oxford Society's Ninth Annual Conference took place October 11 and 12 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Washington, D.C. Although we missed the presence of some stalwart participants in past conferences, such as our Honorary President, Charlton Ogburn, Morse Johnson and Warren Hope, the event was blessed by many new members whose enthusiasm and support for the Oxfordian cause were positively contagious!

Among the items of business discussed were a proposal from the chair (Gordon Cyr, Executive Vice-President) that the meetings be held every two years rather than every year. There were several offers to assist the Executive V.P. in the matter of hosting alternate year meetings in the volunteer's own area. The E. V. P. agreed to work with volunteers in this respect for next year's meeting. Announcements included the sad news of longtime member Eleanor Brewster's death earlier this year (see In Memoriam this issue), the glad tidings of Warren Hops's recently acquired Ph.D. in English literature from Temple University in Philadelphia, and the forthcoming publication of William P. Fowler's new book, Shakespeare Revealed in Oxford's Letters. Dr. Hope (who was Editor of the Newsletter from 1981-1983) will be an important "first" in American Oxfordian research: an anti-Stratfordian member in good standing in academic English Literature circles.

Ruth Miller's announcement was read to the audience--that a tour of Castle Hedingham was planned for June 6, 1986 sponsored by the Essex County Archives. Interested persons should contact Ruth Loyd Miller, P.O. Drawer 1309, Jennings, Louisiana 70546.

Helen Cyr, S.O.S. Secretary, announced that the complete file of back issues of the Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter (June 30, 1965 - Spring 1985) has been put on microfilm and is now available to members (see advertisement in this issue). Cyr also described the next project which will be the badly needed indexing of the Newsletter.

The first conference session was principally occupied with Helen Cyr's report, "New Developments in the Oxford-Shakespeare Word Study." Since the issue of her earlier "Lexical Choices...", Cyr has been engaged in investigations of word combinations (or "clusters") common to Oxford's poetry and Shakespeare's works. For her inquiry she took the precaution of checking each item with concordances of other Elizabethan writers, a procedure which helped her eliminate some of the parallels discovered by previous Oxfordian researchers. Although she has come up with an impressive number of examples showing that several "Shakespearean" word combinations were once for which the Earl of Oxford also had priority, Cyr cautioned members of the audience that further eliminations could occur with additional investigation.

Saturday morning's session began with Gordon Cyr's paper, "Historical Methods, Historical Fallacies, and the Authorship Question" (to be published in full in the next issue). This presentation was based on an application of David Hackstt Fischer's principles described in his book Historians' Fallacies to the arguments used by Stratfordian commentators in defense of the received authorship theory. Some of Prof. Fischer's examples of faulty reasoning found among various eminent historians were quite amusing, and Oxfordians were shown many ways they could rebut some of the more egregious props in the Stratford mythos.

After a "coffee break," the principal

guest of our conference, Prof. Steven W. May (on the English faculty of Georgetown College, Kentucky), read his paper, "The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford: New Directions; New Opportunities." Prof. May is known to our Society's members as author of "The Poems of Edward De Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford and of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex," in Studies in Philology (Univ. of North Carolina Press) vol. lxxvii, no. 5, 1980. Though not an Oxfordian himself, Prof. May admits to being a "fan" of the earl, basing his admiration on Oxford's acknowledged verse -- an admiration he says has increased since the publication of his 1980 article. Moreover, he began his conference presentation by admitting he believed "it to be within the realm of possibility that Edward De Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, wrote some or all of the works ordinarily attributed to William Shakespeare," even though he had to qualify this with the "bad news" that the information currently available does not warrant such a conclusion. The rest of Prof. May's paper dealt with both biographical and literary findings he had made since his publication, or at least ones he could not include in that article. Oxford emerged, in May's talk, as an innovator, whose eight poems published in the 1576 Paradise of Dainty Devices "create a dramatic break with everything known to have been written by Elizabethan courtiers up to that time." Prof. May also elaborated on his reasons for accepting or rejecting poems hitherto thought by Oxfordians to be canonical. He stressed that all such conclusions are tentative and could be upset by new evidence. And if Oxfordians are disappointed to find a few of their favorite poems taken away from the earl, they were cheered by Prof. May's vigorous defense of Oxford's authorship of "My mind to me a kingdom is," as against the Rawlison MS attribution of this poem to Sir Edward Dyer. The Newsletter editors are also cheered by Prof. May's reasons for as-

signing Oxford's known poetry to the years 1570 - 1575, a date which allows Oxford clear priority in the use of the Shakespearean "word-clusters" discovered by Helen Cyr (see above).

In the afternoon session, a last-minute change in the agenda was made to accommodate Joseph Sobran, a new member of the Society who, as book reviewer for the Washington Times and other publications, had begun reading Charlton Ogburn's The Mysterious William Shakespeare as a "scoffer," and midway through became an Oxfordian! Mr. Sobran described for the audience why he became convinced that Mr. Ogburn was "on the right track," and detailed some of his encounters with Stratfordians since his "conversion." He said that the first half of the book (the "negative case" against Shakespeare) did not convince him, nor did some of the arguments from "style." Though Mr. Sobran felt that verbal "idiosyncrasies" could be like fingerprints -- which will continue to show up through a person's stylistic development -- it would be difficult to prove that "early Beethoven" wrote "late Beethoven" without our access to the connecting links.

More persuasive to Mr. Sobran were the numerous biographical events of Oxford's life that Mr. Ogburn found strewn throughout the Shakespeare canon, such as Oxford's Minola character in The Taming of the Shrew. Or the capture of Oxford's ship by pirates, seemingly reflected in Hamlet. When a disinterested reader gets a certain number of coincidences, in Sobran's opinion, they cannot be as airily dismissed as they were when the speaker confronted Samuel Schoenbaum one day, and was told, "a row of zeroes still adds up to zero." Mr. Sobran countered this image with the argument that "it was more a matter of multiplying fractions," and pointed out that the only "hard coincidence" the Stratfordians had come up with was the Kathleen Hamlett inquest into her drowning in Stratford. Other scholars of what Sobran called the "upper Stratford school" have also tried to establish biographical links in the plays and poems to the Stratford man, but without convincing results. The quiet is a valuable one, So-

bran says, because every author he has ever studied derives his or her work from two areas: 1) the author's life, and 2) the author's reading. The "converging probabilities" in the two areas are more certain for Oxford than for Shakspeare. If they should be proved to lead to Oxford's authorship, then Shakspeare's and Oxford's paths must have crossed at some point, a conclusion with which Oxfordians cannot quarrel, however difficult or impossible it may prove to establish this.

The conference concluded with Helen Cyr's "Report on The Shakespeare Identity Crisis: A Reference Guide," a Shakespeare Oxford Society publication in progress now scheduled for release in early 1986.

IN MEMORIAM ELEANOR BREWSTER

We regret to announce the death, July 7, 1985, of one of the most productive of Oxfordians, Eleanor Brewster. Ms. Brewster was author of two valuable books on Oxfordian topics, Oxford, Courtier to the Queen (1964) and Oxford and His Elizabethan Ladies (Dorrance, Philadelphia, 1972). Though born in Brooklyn, Ms. Brewster lived most of her life in Connecticut, from where she frequently travelled to England for research on her favorite topic, the authorship of Shakespeare's works. Eleanor Brewster was a longtime member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society and of the Shakespearean Authorship Society of England, with whose members she was in frequent contact. Up to the end of her life, Ms. Brewster was a regular correspondent with the editor, offering many valuable suggestions and much wise counsel. She will be greatly missed.

"MAKE THEE ANOTHER SELF FOR LOVE OF ME"

by Edmond Lafew

One point of consensus has remained between the majority of Shaksperians and Oxfordians despite all their asperities in the last 65 years in the case of Shakespeare's Sonnets, Nos. 1-17. That is, the poet addressed Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, to persuade him to accept Lady Elizabeth de Vere as his bride. The lad's guardian and the girl's grandfather, the great Lord Burghley, had contracted their marriage with the Dowager Countess of Southampton but the boy would not consent. This theory survived the near-complete historical blank between Southampton and either Shakspeare or De Vere. On the base of Venus and Adonis's double-tongued dedication and the fulsome one of Lucrece, the Stratfordians erected an elaborate romance of the poet and his patron. They have supposed that he wrote the successive Sonnets with Wriothesley as their object. Only the purest ignorance accounts for Oxfordians who continue their foolish consistency. Gerald W. Phillips proved that basis more short than waste or ruining 53 years ago, but both sides neglected his work, to the especial shame of the Verists. For Elizabeth's supreme Councilor had proposed the union three years before Venus and Adonis circulated in public, and while he'd sponsored John Clapham's Narcissus (dedicated to Child Henry in 1591) these seventeen sonnets emerged under no sanction and in definite direction.

Not even the Stratford faithful can defend the idea of their rustic idol writing in his own voice to an earl, since the poet's paternal--dare I say, patronizing--approach to his theme must have only affronted all parties. (If a relation of the boy or girl had commissioned Shaksper to compose sonnets assuming their persona, we have precedent.) But this pays no heed to the sincere, urgent, but haughty character of these sonnets which we can justly attribute to the girl's father, Edward De Vere whose poetic skill had been long known. No other than he would have taken this mooted match to his heart, though none can name

the cause! All assume the poet's fully unreasonable affection for the young Earl: indeed, he appealed to the boy's self-esteem--as Clapham's allegory of Narcissus was well-founded; not that supposed of Venus and Adonis, however--yet this required no equal estimate in the poet's mind. Since Southampton took no interest in his betrothal, one may deduce that these sonnets had scarcely come to his hand but they slipped through his fingers: this accounts for the author of V&A parodying this group of Sonnets, and Meres' description of 'sugred sonnets among his private friends.' (Herford Rendall, before Phillips, remarked the "correspondences," only Phillips recognizing the misattribution of the long poem.)

Follow: 18 months prior to Burghley's brokering the marriage in Dec. 1587, Oxford had lost his wife, leaving him at age 40 with three daughters but no son. The 17th Earl, descended in the male line from a liegeman of William the Conqueror, had no heir to his title, offices, and estates. Marriage had brought him brief comfort and may have provoked such a tirade as Hamlet's against it (III, i, 122-157). His 'prophetic soul' could scarcely foretell his wedding the young and fair Elizabeth Trentham, Her Majesty's Maid of Honor, in two more year, nor her delivery of Henry de Vere on 24 Feb. 1593. It appears (certain) that Henry Wriothesley entered De Vere's biography the second time, five weeks later, standing at the fount as godfather to Oxford's first heir on 31 Mar. in Stoke Newington. This event lends a key to the dedication of V&A. The future fellowship of the two noble Henries upholds this conclusion, as does the delay in christening the boy, although the document escaped discovery.

I cannot imagine the Earl striving to further Burghley's plan for the sake of an alliance with the House of Wriothesley. Glancing at their

history shows no honor that a De Vere might covet, whose ancestor had dethroned the last Plantagenet and altered England's future. Yet these seventeen sonnets reveal the poet's desperation to see the youth marry this young lady and father offspring, particularly a son. While he flatters him abundantly, he makes no mention of her qualities, her noble blood, her dowry... nothing! (Not the mode of any pen for hire, who must gratify his patron, if not the recipient.) As the marriage had been contracted, he would find no point to designating the intended bride. Both father and fiancée knew the girl's apparent virtues, but De Vere was almost a stranger to his daughter bred in Burghley's domain. In the remaining 137 sonnets this topic never recurs, denoting his sudden disdain of the Wriothesley progeny: no felicitation--no more appropriately, consolation--for his wedding to Elizabeth Vernon in Aug. 1598 or their daughter born in Nov.² Or rather that the Bard had no more interest in Southampton and therefore the other sonnets concern him not at all. I find tacit agreement that none of Sonnets 1-17 can be ranked with Shakespeare's finest, but once released from the theme of Southampton's beauty and conceit, he springs forth superb poetry. One then ought not presume a single figure inspired both kinds. For readers in the dark: the "fair youth" was the unacknowledged son whom Phillips poeited in his Tragic Story of "Shakespeare" (London, 1932) and Barrell certified as Edward Vere (b. 1581) in Shakespeare Fellowship Newsletter (12/41 - 10/42). How regrettable that two such Verists could not see "division grow together" in what would appear one cause!

I conclude that Edward de Vere in middle life, yet to his mind disabled beyond mere age, sought the hope of renewal in the prospect of a grandson who should carry on his lineage and inherit Castle Hedingham, which he alienated to his three daughters and Burghley in 1591. After his own remarriage restored some brightness to his outlook in Dec. 1591, this necessity pinched him no longer. The espousal of Vere and Stanley in 1595 roused from him no prayer for generation because a lawful son of Vere had arrived two years before. Perhaps he re-

sponded to the pleasure of this Indian Summer in improvising The Merry Wives of Windsor, one of his last comic works and notably free of the comber aspects in most Shakespeare comedies.

Notes

1. As Shaw, an highly peculiar Shaksperian, belivsed the Countees of Pembroke did for her son's benefit: Preface to the Dark Lady of the Sonnets (where he also credits Jonson with William Browne's epitaph for her.)
2. Though their amour's semblance to that of Claudio and Juliet in Measure for Measure must have struck him even more than us: he'd drawn the play from the consequences of his affair with Anns Vavasor. (If Wriotbealey plays any role in Shakespeare you will find it in Mercutio and Gratiano.)

THE WORK OF THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY

Because there are so many new members (recruited with the publicity attendant on Charlton Ogburn's new book), this is an appropriate time to review for their benefit the role and the achievements of the Society. Such a review will also remind members of longstanding why we need their financial support to push forward with new projects.

CLEARINGHOUSE. Of course, everyone knows that through the Newsletter the Society functions as a clearinghouse for the accumulation of data and theories. Not so well known is the fact that the Society also answers reference questions from the general public and from members. The Society offers advisory service to members engaged in research: proofreading manuscripts, correcting serious errors of fact in the light of new information unearthed or reinterpreted.

REBUTTAL. The Society formally rebuts erroneous public statements, oral and written, made by leading Shakespearean scholars, either through direct contact (telephone or letter) or via the Society's sponsored column in the quarterly, The Shakespeare Newsletter (sponsored courtesy of Russell de Cognats).

MICROFILM PROJECT. To better serve the reference function of the Society, we have just completed the collating and micro-filming of the Newsletter, 1965 - 1985. The next step will be to do the same for the old Shakespeare Fellowship publications.

NEWSLETTER INDEX. In June 1986 the Society will begin the indexing of the Newsletter from its beginning to the present. A plan for continuous update has also been developed. This work is necessary for scholars to have easy access to information published in past issues. Many important findings have become "lost" for the lack of an index.

MAINSTREAMING WITH ACADEME. The Society is working to achieve the highest standards of historical research and is reviewing Oxfordian research, past and present, that does not hold up under scrutiny, i.e., "cleaning up our act". (Through its rebuttal program, the Society is trying to encourage orthodox scholars to do the same!) The Society is also taking steps to join Shakespearean societies in order to become better acquainted with Shakespeare scholars, the ultimate goal being to persuade the Stratfordian community to concede that there is indeed an authorship problem.

PARTICIPATION IN SHAKESPEARE DATA BANK PROGRAM. The Society has "signed on" to participate in the Shakespeare data bank project, coordinated by Louis Marder, editor of The Shakespeare Newsletter.

RESEARCH. In addition to the creative work being done by individual members, the Society itself sponsors research. For example, Richard C. Horne, former S.O.S. president,

uncovered the fact that in 1603 the 17th Earl of Oxford was a member of the Privy Council. In recent years the Society has continued to be involved in important research efforts.

RESEARCH/SIGNATURES. In 1977-79 the Society employed two leading forensic specialists, "document examiners", one American, one British, to study the six extant signatures of "Shakespeare". The experts applied the same precise techniques of measurement and knowledge about the psychology of signature writing that they would ordinarily employ in their court case work. Their findings: extreme irregularities among the six signatures, indicating one of the following: physical incapacity, lack of versatility with the process of handwriting, or as one examiner put it, "lack of a clear image as to the formulation of the letters."

RESEARCH/ASHBOURNE PORTRAIT. The Society participated in clearing up some false assumptions about one of the "Shakespeare" portraits, the Ashbourne portrait, in the custody of the Folger Library. The same conservator that the S.O.S. had called in for a lecture on techniques of examination and the possibilities for determining the true identity of the man whose likeness was overpainted on the Ashbourne work, turned out to be the expert hired later by the Folger to clean the very same painting. With the careful removal of the surface grime and overpainting, the portrait's subject was at last able to be identified by the Folger Library. And the Shakespearean Oxford Society independently verified with firsthand examination (at the invitation of the Folger) what was revealed in the underpainting and independently confirmed the identification of the "sitter." The portrait's subject was definitely not Edward De Vere.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE OXFORDIAN RESEARCH have been suggested and in-

spired by the recent successes of Steven W. May, Georgetown College, who has discovered considerable new material connected with the Elizabethan courtier poets.

PUBLICATIONS. The Society is about to come out with a new publication, The Shakespeare Identity Crisis: A Reference Guide. A future work scheduled for publication is The Oxford Documents (a compendium of documents connected with Edward De Vere).

RESEARCH/WORD STUDY. With stylometrics being so much in the news of late, the Society tackled a study to determine the feasibility of comparing Oxford's few extant writings with the Shakespeare canon. Although the present Oxford sample is small, the study revealed some unusual likenesses between the two bodies of text. A follow-up word cluster investigation is now underway and has already revealed some common Oxford/Shakespeare parallels not yet found in the corpora of other contemporary Elizabethan writers.

--Helen W. Cyr

DEBATERS CORNER

Although the editors find themselves in agreement with many of the arguments "Edmond Lafew" presents in his articles, published in this issue, we question the initial assertion that a "majority...of Oxfordians" agrees with a "majority" of Stratfordians that the first seventeen "marriage sonnets" urge the 3rd Earl of Southampton to marry Oxford's eldest daughter, Elizabeth Vere.

No poll, of course, has been conducted among Oxfordians to establish this view's allegedly majoritarian support. But that a number of important Oxfordians have held a different opinion is beyond dispute. The stature and experience of some of these workers, both living and dead (with Charlton Ogburn among the former and Capt. Bernard M. Ward among the latter!), render their hypotheses at least worthy of attention, however individual Oxfordians (in-

cluding the editors) may disagree with them.

The article's author has not adduced sufficient evidence, moreover, to prove that this interpretation is the correct one on the subsequent sonnets' omission of "generational requests" to Southampton (or to anyone else). A plausible explanation is indeed the one which Lafew puts forward: Oxford's fathering of a legitimate male heir in 1593 removed the necessity of urging some nobleman to marry a daughter. But this male heir's fortuitous arrival also harmonizes with the theory of Oxford's illegitimate fatherhood of Southampton and with the corollary view that it was not Oxford's own daughter whom the sonneteer had in mind as Southampton's marriage partner.

The objections put forward here do not, certainly, prove the contrary of Lafew's argument. However, the language of exaggeration ("purist ignorances," "foolish consistency," and "to the especial shame of the Verists") is surely unjustified by the nature of the evidence offered. As former president, Richard C. Horne, wisely counseled one Oxfordian in early 1970,

"Personally, I try to keep from taking a vulnerable position, that could furnish ammunition to our enemies to discredit the cause. I do not intend to write a book, am not bound to defend the conjecture and hypotheses of others from friendship, or sense of obligation, to them. This does not mean that I underestimate the value of conjecture, for without it we would not have many of our discoveries and inventions. It is also a valuable basis for a start for proof. Privately, and as an individual, I have a few working conjectures which are pleasing to me, sometime helpful, but I respect those of others, which could be right and mine all wrong."

There is little evidence also for Lafew's inference that Venus and Adonis constitutes a parody of the "marriage sonnets," and that consequently the two texts must be of different authorship. This was a view advocated many decades ago by the late Oxfordian, Gerald W. Phillips. But the Newsletter editors can only find that Mr. Phillips's contentions deserve the well-known Scottish verdict: not proven.

Finally, we must side with Charlton Ogburn in his finding that Merry Wives of Windsor is an early comedy of Oxford's, in conceding the likelihood that certain additions of a topical nature (such as the "Cosen Garmombles" pointed out by Enoch Powell) could have been added much later. Mr. Ogburn's reasoning is too detailed for our inclusion of it here, but we urge all of our Society's members to read it for themselves in The Mysterious William Shakespeare. All that we can say is that his arguments convinced us.

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