



THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD NEWSLETTER

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An Hour With Wells and Edmondson

[Don Rubin and Patricia Keeney had the opportunity to interview Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson in August 2014 in Stratford, Ontario. Wells is Honorary President, and Edmondson is Head of Research and Knowledge, of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Wells had just given a lecture at the Stratford Festival and both he and Edmondson had participated in a book signing for their 2013 book, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy*.]

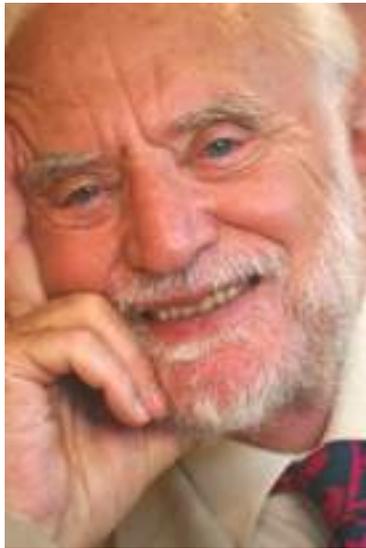
QUESTION (by Rubin and Keeney): Professor Wells, when we first met at a Shakespeare festival in Romania about three years ago, we asked you in passing if you had read Mark Anderson's book, *Shakespeare By Another Name*, a book that posed the possibility that Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, could have written the plays attributed to Shakespeare. You said then that you hadn't read the book and that you wouldn't read any such book until it had been categorically proven that the plays of Shakespeare were not written by William of Stratford.

Now you and Reverend Edmondson have come out with a book—*Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*—that is all about

the so-called authorship question. Why? What has changed in this time?

Why would you now say that anyone who even wants to argue the authorship question is “anti-Shakespearean”? It seems right off the bat you are slapping people like us, academics and writers who have taught and written about Shakespeare with love and care all our lives.

Why would you say that those of us who have trouble with the Stratford man's story are *anti-Shakespeareans*?



Stanley Wells

STANLEY WELLS: I think Paul should answer that.

PAUL EDMONDSON: Our thinking from the beginning was that Shakespeare has traditionally been connected to the town of Stratford-upon-Avon. To say he was not, immediately means you are against the idea of Shakespeare as the author of the plays. We say Shakespeare wrote

Shakespeare and to question that does make you anti-Shakespearean. We decided to take a stand. We won't separate the man from the plays. We won't do that. I don't see that being done with any other artist. No one says “I want Michelangelo but I don't want him to be connected to Florence.” You can't talk about Shakespeare without including one of the key places that makes Shakespeare Shakespeare. Therefore it seemed much more honest and upfront to say “anti-Shakespearean.” Refusing to accept that connection is to deny a basic part of Shakespearean studies. You can't separate the background from the work. You can't take that away. To do so is to create a totally different narrative. So no more Shakespeare without Stratford. The Warwickshire background is necessary. What he studied in the Stratford grammar school is significant.



Paul Edmondson

Q: So simply separating the plays and poetry from the small amounts of information that exist about the Stratford man makes one “anti-Shakespearean”? Isn't that rather offensive? Neither of us has any doubt that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare. The question is rather who exactly the person called “Shakespeare” was, and whether that name could have been a pseudonym?

SW: Well, if it were really the case that everyone agreed that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare we might have a place to start a discussion, but there are people out there who

(Continued on page 30)

From the President: A Tale of Two Journals

Dear Members of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship,

Around this time last year, as you may recall, we weren't sure if the Fellowship would be able to continue supporting both of its outstanding annual journals, *The Oxfordian* and *Brief Chronicles*, on the same scale as in the past. The costs of printing and mailing the journals (as well as the newsletter) had risen so rapidly that we considered a number of alternatives, including discontinuing one journal or the other or having alternating biannual journals.

We asked you, our members, for your opinions. In your emails and at last year's annual business meeting in Madison, Wisconsin, many members expressed a strong desire to continue publishing both journals each year. We decided to find a way to make that work without raising membership dues too high. We changed our dues structure so that there is now a basic electronic membership, which gives all members online access to all journals and newsletters. Members who wish to receive the printed newsletter naturally pay a bit more in dues to cover the printing and mailing costs. Members who want a printed copy of either journal may order and purchase them separately.

The next question was: how could we make printed journals available at a reasonable cost to our members and to the organization? The answer, it turns out, lies in the fairly new technology of print-on-demand. After researching the many print-on-demand companies available, we decided to work with CreateSpace, an affiliate of Amazon. Publishing with CreateSpace has a number of advantages: low set-up costs, ability to promote and sell the journal through Amazon, a modest royalty to the organization for each volume sold, and reasonable purchase price and shipping costs for our members.

On June 27, we were proud to make volume 6 of *Brief Chronicles* available on our website for members and also available in print from Amazon, not just to our members, but to anyone else who wants to buy it. Editors Roger Stritmatter and Michael Delahoyde have done a wonderful job with volume 6, filling it with many excellent articles. We hope you will read *Brief Chronicles* on our website if you haven't already done so or that you will order a copy from Amazon. See page 9 of this issue for details.

We also plan to publish volume 17 of *The Oxfordian* through CreateSpace in September. This edition of the journal will be the first under the editorship of Chris Pannell. I have seen a preview of this issue, and it is also filled with high quality articles. There is no doubt that enough Oxfordian scholars produce articles each year to fill two journals, and we are glad that we are able

The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

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The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship is a non-profit, educational organization dedicated to investigating the Shakespeare authorship question and disseminating the evidence that Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), is the true author of the poems and plays written under the pseudonym "William Shakespeare."

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship pursues its mission by supporting research, educational and scholarly initiatives, annual conferences, website and social media, and by publishing this Newsletter and two annual scholarly journals, *The Oxfordian* and *Brief Chronicles*.

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship was formed in 2013 when the Shakespeare Oxford Society, founded in 1957, and the Shakespeare Fellowship, founded in 2001, united to form a single organization. Dues, grants and contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

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to provide these two excellent publications to help keep up with the research.

Changing subjects, you may recall that in the last issue, I mentioned that I had included the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship in my estate plans, and I encouraged others to do the same. I'd like to direct your attention to an article, "Making a Planned Gift to the SOF" that appears on page 22 of this issue and details the many ways that a person may contribute to the SOF. There are more ways to make a planned gift than you may have imagined. I hope you will read the article and consider making your own gift.

Finally, we are all eagerly looking forward to our annual conference, which will be held in Ashland, Oregon, the site of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, September 24-27. Our conference organizers, led by Earl Showerman, have done a fantastic job in putting this conference together. We have an impressive lineup of speakers and some wonderful plays to attend. See page 5 of this newsletter for more information. There is still time to register. I hope to see many of you there!

Thanks to all of you for your continued support.

Tom Regnier, President

Letters to the Editor

In the Spring 2015 *Newsletter* Richard Waugaman wrote about a poem he had come across that had been published in 1578 in *A Gorgious gallery of gallant inventions...* entitled "A Letter written by a yonge gentilwoman and sent to her husband unawares (by a freend of hers) into Italy." Dr. Waugaman's study of the poem leads him to think it was written by Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, in the voice of his wife, Anne Cecil de Vere. After first reading through the poem as Dr. Waugaman asks us to do, I made a mental note: "You're making him run the other way, Lady!"

I do agree with Steven May that the "poem's speaker seems to be in exactly the state of Anne de Vere during her husband's sojourn" in Italy. However, it appears to me that Anne herself wrote it. What was that state, as she alternated pleading and demanding his return? Five times she tells him to "Remember": his "spouse," his "vowes," who "esteemes" him and "bewayles" his flight, "Remember Heaven" and "thy pretty tatling childe."

One summer when I was a teenager my mother was so alarmed by her sister's postpartum mental state that, afraid of what my aunt might do, she left her own children with me each day for several weeks while she went to care for her sister, her sister's newborn, and her other children. The tone of this poem-letter reminds me of this probable postpartum psychosis, especially when she tells him that, like Medea, "I should destroy thy seed." Scary.

Here are my impressions and some reasons why I think as I do:

1. It was probably written in late 1575 before Oxford left Italy.
2. Oxford received the letter and kept it.
3. The title given to the poem, and its publication in the *Gorgious Gallery*, was probably Oxford's doing. The title is similar to some of the titles Oxford (I'm sure) had given to the poems in *A Hundreth sundrie Flowres*. Some examples: "Written upon a

reconciliation betwene two freendes," and "An other Sonet written by the same Gentlewoman upon the same occasion."

4. The woman who wrote the letter had access to, and was very familiar with, "Golding's" translation of *Ovid's Metamorphoses* and the poems in *Flowres*, especially #7, a sonnet, and #41 in C.T. Prouty's edition.
5. Oxford wouldn't have used fourteeners as late as 1575. He probably had had enough of them with the *Metamorphoses* translation back in his teen years.
6. Some of the words in the poem, even common ones, were never used by Shakespeare: *awrong*, *beclogged*, *bemixed*, *damsels* (plural), *frequented* (past tense), *gad* (as a verb), *guideless*, *reclaim*, *reliever*, *sprig* (but once in the plural: "*sprigs of rosemary*" in *King Lear*), *trulls* (plural), *unpleasant*.
7. Sad to say, Shakespeare had this poem as well as "Golding's" *Metamorphoses* translation in mind when he wrote the *Pyramus and Thisbe* burlesque in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

We already have many, many probable early writings by Oxford, hidden in plain sight. Dr. Waugaman has uncovered a much more valuable work, perhaps the only one authored by the Countess with no help from anyone, especially her father.

Poor Ophelia.

Jacquelyn Mason
Dublin, CA

Congratulations to Richard Waugaman for tagging the poem, "Imagine when these blurred lines," in Thomas Proctor's *golden Gallery* (1578) as Oxford's ("A 1578 Poem about de Vere's Trip to Italy," in the Spring 2015 issue of the *Newsletter*). I believe it likely that Oxford penned fifteen other poems in the compendium, including three that I discuss in this issue [see p. 25 - ed.]

Robert Prechter
Gainesville, GA

From the Editor

I hope you'll read with care the interview, conducted by Don Rubin and Patricia Keeney, with Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (page 1). After you're finished, I don't know if you'll be laughing out loud or throwing your copy of the *Newsletter* across the room. But read it carefully, for if nothing else you'll easily spot all the classic examples of faulty reasoning: argument from authority, straw men, denigrating opponents as "amateurs," deliberately mischaracterizing the opposing arguments, and, of course, reasoning backwards from the desired conclusion. All of this may be found in a space of only about 2800 words.

Actually, the interview could have been encapsulated into about fourteen words, uttered early on by Edmondson: "We won't separate the man from the plays. . . . So no more Shakespeare without Stratford." As far as he and Wells are concerned, that's the end of the story, and anyone who refuses to agree with their Manichean view isn't worth hearing from.

But a couple of things caught my attention. First is Wells's statement (made before the interview, and brought up in Rubin and Keeney's first question) that he didn't intend to read Mark Anderson's *Shakespeare By Another Name* until it had been "categorically proven" that the Stratford man was not the author of the Shakespeare canon. That reminded me of something I'd read years ago in a biography of Galileo. Turning his telescope to the night skies, Galileo was the first to see the moons of Jupiter, objects which obviously revolved around something other than Earth. When he invited a professor of mathematics at the local university to look through the telescope, the professor declined the offer because he knew that there was nothing to see.

Second is Wells's description of Diana Price as a "good scholar," a rare compliment directed at someone who is not a Stratfordian. Price, of course, is the author of *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem* (first published in 2001). Among the most important findings in her book is the chart in which Price searches for corroborative evidence that Shakspeare of Stratford was a literary man. She contrasts what is known about him with what

is known about twenty-four of his literary contemporaries in ten specific areas: evidence of education; record of correspondence; evidence of having been paid to write; evidence of a direct relationship with a patron; extant manuscript; handwritten inscriptions touching on literary matters; commendatory verses or epistles sent or received; miscellaneous records referring to the subject as a writer; evidence of books owned, given, or borrowed; and notice at death as a writer. Among the twenty-four contemporaries, the median score was 6 out of 10, and only one writer scored as low as 3 (John Webster). Shakspeare of Stratford trails all the rest with a score of zero, despite the fact that his literary career was longer than most of the others' and despite the fact that more effort has been made to find any piece of evidence about Shakspeare than has been made for any of the other men.

Rubin and Keeney bring up Price's chart during the interview; Wells and Edmondson are obviously aware of it. Their response is that Price's "position only makes sense if you refuse to accept posthumous references. You can't simply ignore the Folio." Okay, then, let's consider the Folio and see how that affects Shakspeare's score. First, let's make the big assumption that the 1623 Folio is indeed intended to suggest that Shakspeare of Stratford is Shakespeare. By my count—and I think I'm being generous—from the introductory matter in the Folio you can infer that Shakspeare was paid to write (the fact that his fellow actors, Heminges and Condell, refer to his manuscripts); and you can say that he received the commendatory verses that appear in the Folio. Let's add up our scores. By golly! That brings Shakspeare up from zero all the way to 2, still below all of his contemporaries, and pathetically below the median score of 6. There's still nothing to connect him to the other eight criteria posited by Diana Price. What do you say to that, SBT Honorary President Wells and Head of Research and Knowledge Edmondson?

By the way, how did Paul Edmondson acquire his title "Head of Knowledge"? Was he formerly "Head of 'I Think So'" or "Head of Superstition and Belief," and was promoted? Or was he "Torso of Knowledge" or "Left Nostril of Knowledge," and was similarly promoted?

Alex McNeil

Are you receiving email from the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship?

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2. Send an email to: info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org and ask to be added to the email list.

What's the News?

Conference Update

It's not too late to register for the SOF Annual Conference in Ashland, Oregon, which takes place from September 24 through 27. Full registration includes all plenary sessions, a printed syllabus, an opening reception and two buffet lunches, and the awards banquet. Group ticket sales to the three Shakespeare plays in production at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival have been robust; unfortunately, the tickets reserved for us for *Pericles* have sold out. As of press time, tickets to *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Antony and Cleopatra* were still available on a first-come, first-served basis. [For conference registrants unable to purchase tickets to the OSF production of *Pericles*, a video of the 1984 BBC production will be screened at the Ashland Springs Hotel Ballroom on the same evening as the OSF production.]

For further information on lodgings, travel, registration and theatre tickets, go to:

<http://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/2015-conference/>

Conference Program Schedule

Thursday, September 24:

8:00-12:00 Conference Registration Opens
 9:00-12:00 Exhibit of Folio Editions (Hannon Library, Southern Oregon University)
 10:00-12:00 Screening of *Nothing Is Truer than Truth* (Ashland Springs Hotel Ballroom) Cheryl Eagan-Donovan
 12:00 -1:00 Lunch (on own)
 1:00 -1:15 Welcome, Introductions and Orientation
 1:15-2:00 Michael Morse: "Such virtue hath my pen": Onomastic Wit and Revelatory Wordplay in Shakespeare's Sonnets
 2:00-2:45 Jan Scheffer: Oxford's Capture by Pirates, April 1576
 2:45-3:00 Coffee/tea break
 3:00-3:45 Heward Wilkinson: Did We Mislay Hamlet's 'as 'twere' on the Way to the Authorship Amphitheatre?
 3:45-4:30 Don Rubin: Methinks the Man: Peter Brook and the Authorship Question
 4:30-5:00 Alexander Waugh & Roger Stritmatter: A New Shakespeare Allusion Book
 5:00-5:30 *Shakespeare Identified 100*
 5:30-7:30 Opening Reception with No-Host Bar and Appetizers
 8:00-10:40 *Much Ado about Nothing* (Bowmer Theatre)

Friday, September 25:

8:00-8:30 William J. Ray: The Droeshout Etching as a Revolutionary Renaissance Work of Art
 8:30-9:15 Robert Prechter: Why Did Robert Greene Repent His Former Works?
 9:15-10:00 Margrethe Jolly: Romeo and the Grafter
 10:00-10:10 Michael Morse: eMERITAS

10:10-10:30 Coffee/tea break
 10:30-11:30 OSF Actor Panel: *Much Ado about Nothing*
 11:30-12:15 Julia Cleave: Shakespeare and the Visual Arts: The Case of the Bassano Fresco
 12:15-1:30 Buffet Lunch
 1:30-2:15 Ros Barber: *Shakespeare: The Evidence*
 2:15-3:00 Alexander Waugh: 'Vulgar Scandal' mentioned in Shakespeare's sonnets
 3:00-3:15 Coffee/tea break
 3:15-4:15 Michael Delahoyde: *Antony & Cleopatra*
 4:15-5:00 Richard Whalen: The Queen's "Worm" in *Antony and Cleopatra*
 5:00-5:30 Julia Cleave: *Antony and Cleopatra* as Chymical Theatre
 8:00-11:00 *Antony and Cleopatra* (Allen Elizabethan Theatre)

Saturday, September 26:

8:00-9:30 Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship Annual Membership Meeting
 9:30-10:15 Mark Anderson: Shapiro *Agonistes*—Why James Shapiro's claims of a Jacobean phase to Shakespeare's career are wrong
 10:15-10:30 Coffee/Tea Break
 10:30-11:30 OSF Actor Panel: *Antony & Cleopatra*
 11:30-12:15 Kevin Gilvary: Who Wrote Shakespeare's First Biography?
 12:15-1:30 Buffet Lunch
 1:30-2:15 Katherine Chiljan: Origins of the Shakespeare Pen Name
 2:15-3:00 Roger Stritmatter: The Theology of *Pericles*
 3:00-3:15 Coffee/tea break
 3:15-4:00 Wally Hurst: *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*: Its Authorship, The Question of Collaboration, and its Place in the Shakespearean Canon
 4:00-4:45 Earl Showerman: *Pericles*: Shakespeare's Early Tragi-Comedic Miracle Play
 4:45-5:30 Ren Draya: Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: Music, Structure, and Fantasy
 7:30-10:30 Screening of BBC-TV *Pericles* in Ashland Springs Hotel Ballroom
 8:00-10:30 *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (Thomas Theatre)

Sunday, September 27:

8:00-8:45 John Shahan: Shakespeare Authorship Coalition Update
 8:45-9:30 James Warren: Oxfordian Theory and Academia: Past, Future and Present
 9:30-10:15 Tom Regnier: The Law of Evidence and the Shakespeare Authorship Question
 10:15-11:00 Coffee/tea break
 10:30-11:30 OSF Actor Panel: *Pericles*
 11:30-12:30 Legitimizing the SAQ Panel: Tom Regnier, Wally Hurst, James Warren, and John Shahan
 12:30-2:00 SOF Awards Banquet (Mark Anderson, keynote speaker)



Christ Church Oxford 2016 “Special Interest Event” on Shakespeare’s History Plays

Christ Church, a constituent college of the University of Oxford, has announced that its annual Special Interest Event for 2016 will be “William Shakespeare: The History Plays from Page to Stage.” It will be held from March 31 to April 3, 2016, and is open to the public. A group of “specialist historians and literary scholars” will discuss major aspects of the several plays; in addition to the six *Henry* plays and two *Richard* plays, *King John* will also be examined. According to the brochure, among the themes to be explored are “How much insight do they really give us into the 15th century?” and “Were they subversive and covert commentaries on politics in [Shakespeare’s] own period?”

Scheduled speakers include Dr. Rowena Archer, academic director of the program (“Lancaster and York: The Bard and the Wars of the Roses”), historians Dr. Helen Castor (“Sad Stories of the Death of Kings”), Dr. Hugh Doherty (“King John and No Magna Carta”), Dr. Alexandra Gajda (“Shakespeare, Elizabeth I and Queenship”), Dr. Rosemary Horrox (“Why Did Richard III Fail?”), Dr. Sarah Mortimer (“Performing Kingship in the History Plays”), and Dr. Malcolm Vale (“Henry V: Fact and Fiction”), and literary scholars Dr. Emma Smith (“Epic Serial or Opportunistic Franchise: Shakespeare’s Histories in the Early Modern Period”) and Dr. Bart van Es (“What Was Holinshed’s Chronicles?”). Selected scenes from the history plays will be presented under the direction of Vivien Heilbron.

The program fee is £499, and the en suite supplement is £75 per room. Fees include three nights’ accommodation at Christ Church, all meals, wines, refreshments, and a staff service charge. For further information, email specialinterest@chch.ox.ac.uk.

Has a Botanist Found the True Likeness of the Bard?

Many news media picked up the claim made by British botanist Mark Griffiths in the magazine *Country Life* (31 May 2015) that one of the figures depicted on the title page of a 1597 book is Shakespeare himself. The magazine modestly trumpeted the story as “The greatest discovery in 400 years: How one man cracked the Tudor code.”

Griffiths looked at the four figures depicted on the title page of John Gerard’s *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes*, a mammoth tome (almost 1500 pages) published in late 1597 or early 1598. Gerard was employed by William Cecil, Lord Burghley, and designed gardens for him at Cecil House and at Theobalds House. The figure on the upper left has been identified as Gerard himself

(holding a shovel); the figure on the lower left is Burghley; and the figure on the upper right has been identified as Flemish botanist Rembert Dodoens, whose book on botany influenced Gerard. Griffiths then concluded that the figure on the lower right is Shakespeare, and that Shakespeare helped Gerard by providing Greek and Latin translations for him.

Griffiths’s identification was based on two main arguments: (1) the figure is shown holding a narcissus lily, or snakeshead fritillary, in one hand (alluding to the flower that grew from Adonis’s spilled blood in Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*), and holding an ear of maize in the other (maize, or “sweet corn,” again evoked Adonis, the god of corn); and (2) a rebus found on the plinth beneath the figure, which Griffiths reads as a 4 (Latin *quater*) with an *E* to the right (making *quater*, or “shake”), separated by a vertical line reminiscent of a “spear,” above the letters *OR*, linking to the family coat of arms, colored gold (*or* in heraldic terms).

As expected, Griffiths’s discovery stirred up controversy. Most Stratfordians boldly asserted that the identification was incorrect (“obviously not Shakespeare,” decreed Stanley Wells). Others claimed that the “rebus” on the plinth was a device used by the printer, John Norton. As noted in the *de Vere Society Newsletter* (July 2015 issue), Alexander Waugh made a convincing case that the figure is certainly a poet, and that since poets were often nicknamed after their most famous works (including Shakespeare as “Adon” by Thomas Edwards in 1594), the allusions to Adonis were “indisputably” to Shakespeare. Waugh added: “This leaves only one important question unanswered. How did Shakespeare manage to enter the circle of Gerard and the service of Lord Burghley without



leaving a trace until now? If Mr. Griffiths and Professor Wells care to ask me, I should be happy to enlighten them.” Waugh later added that the rebus was not the printer’s device, that it contains the words “Adon,” “Oxenford” and “Earl.” “The important discovery,” Waugh noted, “is that

the other three characters are Gerard, Dodoens and Burghley ... all people who helped to make the book. De Vere obviously assisted, too.”

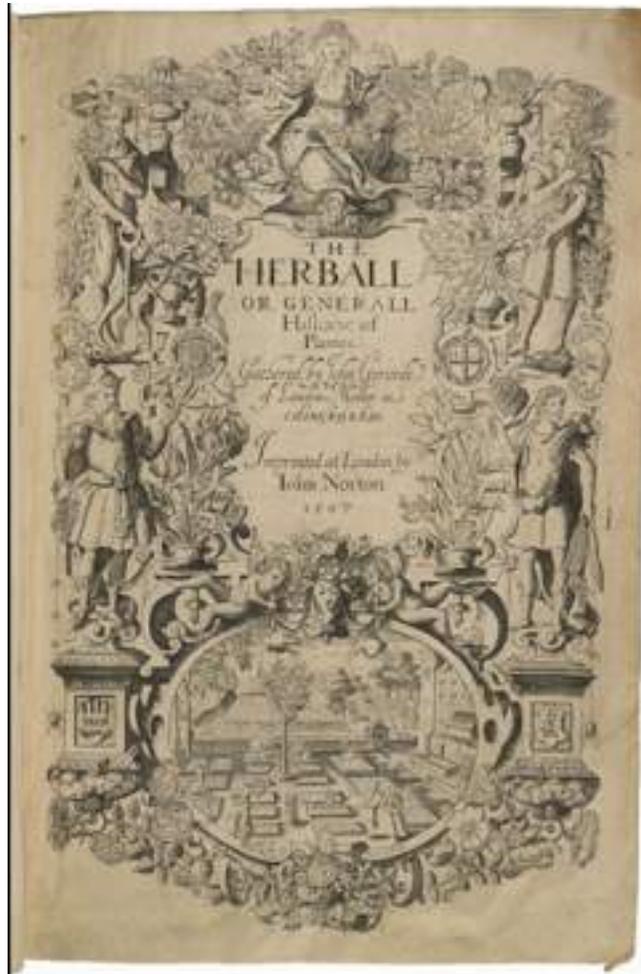
To his credit, Griffiths replied to Waugh. Also as reported in the *de Vere Society Newsletter*, he reiterated his conviction that Shakspeare of Stratford wrote Shakespeare, but went on. “I do not, however, dismiss the serious examination of the Oxford question for a moment. On the contrary, it has yielded some excellent results. . . . [S]erious Oxfordians do things rather well. You’ve a relish for historical investigation, an acceptance of biographical and topical relevance, and open-mindedness about interdisciplinary studies, and a curiosity about documents, records, artefacts, cryptology, and all manifestations of Elizabethan culture and politics. Shakespeare’s tragedy is that some—by no means all, but too many—of his academic supporters disdain such matters as irrelevant, presumptuous, old-fashioned, grunt work or, worse, done and dusted, conclusively resolved many years ago.”

Griffiths plans to publish the full results of his findings in a book, *The Fourth Man*, to be published in 2016.

Musicologist Sheds Light on Odd Word in *Loves Labours Lost*

An article in a recent issue of *Shakespeare Quarterly* was picked up by many media outlets, including Live Science.com and several newspapers. In the *SQ* note, Ross Duffin, Professor of Music at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, makes a solid case that a one-word line uttered by Moth at the beginning of act 3 of *Loves Labours Lost*—“Concolinel”—is a mistranscription of the title of a then-popular bawdy French song, “Qvand Colinet.”

“Concolinel” has baffled critics for centuries. They have suggested Irish, Gaelic and French cognates, but settled on nothing. At the outset of act 3 of *LLL*, Don



Armado implores his page, Moth, to “Warble, child; make passionate my sense of hearing.” The stage direction above his speech indicates “Song,” suggesting that music may already have started by the time Armado begins to speak. This makes it logical that Moth’s reply —“Concolinel”—must have something to do with music. So it does, and, if Professor Duffin is correct, it fits the comedic plot nicely. It turns out that the French song “Qvand Colinet” (first published in 1602, but almost certainly well known before) is a bawdy tune about “a penis that is too soft and too small,” and thus Moth is mocking the boastful Don Armado, who fancies himself as quite the ladies’ man and doesn’t realize he’s being mocked. Further evidence that “Concolinel” refers to a French song comes a few lines later, when Moth asks Don Armado if he will win his love with a “French brawl.” “Braule” (a corruption

of *branle*) refers to a type of French dance, and again Armado misunderstands (“How meanest thou? Brawling in French?”). Moreover, one of the lines from “Qvand Colinet” is “Et sa belle iaquette,” which, Duffin points out, could easily translate as “and his pretty Jaquenetta” (in the play, Armado has fallen for Jaquenetta).

Ross Duffin has long been interested in Shakespeare’s music. His book, *Shakespeare’s Songbook*, was published in 2004 and won an award from the American Musicological Society. He is a former chair of the Music Department at Case Western.

Once again, as with the possible identification of a likeness of “Shakespeare” by a professional botanist (see news note above), and with the recent analysis of Shakespeare’s “psychological signature” made by two psychologists (see Spring 2015 issue), we see that important contributions to Shakespeare scholarship are being made by scholars who are not in English Departments.



From the Nominations Committee

The Nominations Committee of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship has nominated the following persons for office:

- For a one-year term as President, and for a three-year term on the Board of Trustees: **Tom Regnier**.
- For three-year terms on the Board of Trustees: **Richard Joyrich** and **James Warren**.

Tom Regnier currently serves as President of the SOF, and is nominated for a second one-year term as President and for a three-year term as a trustee. He is a practicing attorney in the Miami, Florida, area. He received his J.D., *summa cum laude*, from the University of Miami School of Law, and his LL.M. from Columbia Law School, where he was a Harlan F. Stone Scholar. He has taught at the University of Miami School of Law (including a course on Shakespeare and the Law) and at Chicago's John Marshall Law School. Tom has frequently spoken at authorship conferences on aspects of law in Shakespeare's works, and he wrote the chapter on Shakespeare's legal knowledge in *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?* In June 2014, Tom delivered a presentation at the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C., entitled, "[Hamlet and the Law of Homicide: the Life of the Mind in Law and Art.](#)"

Richard Joyrich is a current trustee, and is being nominated for another term. He has been practicing radiology (specifically nuclear medicine) for over twenty-five years in Detroit. He has been a regular attendee at the Stratford Festival in Ontario as well as the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and other theatrical venues and has "completed the canon" (seen all of the recognized plays of Shakespeare) at least three times. He

was a contributor to the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition's *Exposing an Industry in Denial* campaign and has also contributed to the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*. He has served on the boards of trustees of the SOS and SOF since 2006 and is a past president of the Shakespeare Oxford Society.

James Warren has not previously served as a trustee. He was a Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Department of State for more than twenty years, during which he served in public diplomacy positions at American embassies in eight countries, mostly in Asia. He later served as Executive Director of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST) and then as Regional Director for Southeast Asia for the Institute of International Education (IIE). He is the editor of *An Index to Oxfordian Publications*, and has given presentations at several Oxfordian conferences.

No nominations were received by petition. Thus, under the SOF bylaws, no ballots will be sent to members, and the three persons nominated by the Nominations Committee will be deemed elected to their respective offices upon approval of motions to that effect made at the Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship in Ashland, Oregon, on Saturday, September 26, 2015.

The members of the 2015 Nominations Committee were Bonner Miller Cutting (chair), Cheryl Eagan-Donovan and John Hamill.

Leaving the Board of Trustees this year after completing her term is **Lynne Kositsky**. A longtime trustee and former president of the Shakespeare Fellowship, Lynne was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the merger of the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society, which was effected in late 2013. The Board of Trustees is deeply grateful for her many years of service.

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Next Volume of *The Oxfordian* Expected in September; *Brief Chronicles* Available Now

Chris Pannell, editor of *The Oxfordian*, has announced that volume 17 of the annual journal is expected to be available in September 2015. Contributors to the volume include Michael Delahoyde (“Subliminal Chaucer in Shakespeare’s History Plays”); Michael Dudley (“My Library Was Dukedom Large Enough”); Julie Elb (“‘A Mint of Phrases in His Brain’: Language, Historiography, and the Authorship Question in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*”); Robert Prechter (“Is *Greene’s Groatworth of Wit* About Shakespeare, or By Him?”); Gabriel Andrew Ready (“Honest Ben and the Two Tribes He Hath Left Us”); Don Rubin (“Spinning Shakespeare”); Earl Showerman (“The Rediscovery of Shakespeare’s Greater Greek”); and James Warren (“Oxfordian Theory and Continental Drift”). In addition, the journal will reprint an article by J. Thomas Looney that first appeared in a rare 1922 journal; the article was recently rediscovered by James Warren, who provides an introduction to it.

Volume 17 of *The Oxfordian* will be available online, free of charge to all SOF members, through the SOF website. Persons who wish to order printed copies will be able to do so via Amazon.com (and its British and German affiliates). Members will be notified by email when the volume is available.

The Oxfordian is one of two annual journals published by the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. The other journal is *Brief Chronicles*, volume 6 of which was published in June. It too is available online to members, and printed copies may be ordered. For further information, go to <http://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/publications/>.

“Shakespeare in Italy” Tour Planned for June 2016

Ann Zakelj has announced a “Shakespeare in Italy” tour for 2016. Zakelj was the principal organizer of the highly popular 2013 tour, “On the Trail of Edward de Vere in England.” Working with the same travel consultants, Philip Dean and his associates at London-based Pax Travel, she has put together a one-week trip from June 14 to 21, 2016, with an optional five-day extension to June 26.

For the “Basic Tour” (June 14-21), the center of operations will be the Hotel Verdi in the center of Padua, featuring excursions (by air-conditioned bus) to Venice on two days, Bassana dal Grappo, Verona, Mantua, Sabbioneta (“Little Athens”), and Milan. These trips will include visits to sites depicted in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Of course, the connections of

all these places to Edward de Vere—who spent quite a bit of time in northern Italy in 1575-76—will be highlighted. Optional excursions to either Bologna or Ferrara will be offered as well.

For the “Add-On Tour” (June 21-26), the base of operations will be the Hotel Athena in Siena, with excursions (again by air-conditioned bus) to Florence, Greve in Chianti, and Badia a Passignano for an optional wine tour; an optional excursion to either Lucca or San Gimignano is offered for the last full day of this tour.

The cost of the Basic Tour is \$1699 per person (exclusive of air fares), which includes all breakfasts, some lunches and dinners, local transportation, and entrance fees. The cost of the Add-On Tour is \$1238, with the same inclusions. For more information, contact Ann Zakelj (ankaaz@aol.com) Pax Travel, London (www.paxtravel.co.uk), or go to the “Shakespeare in Italy” page on Facebook.com.

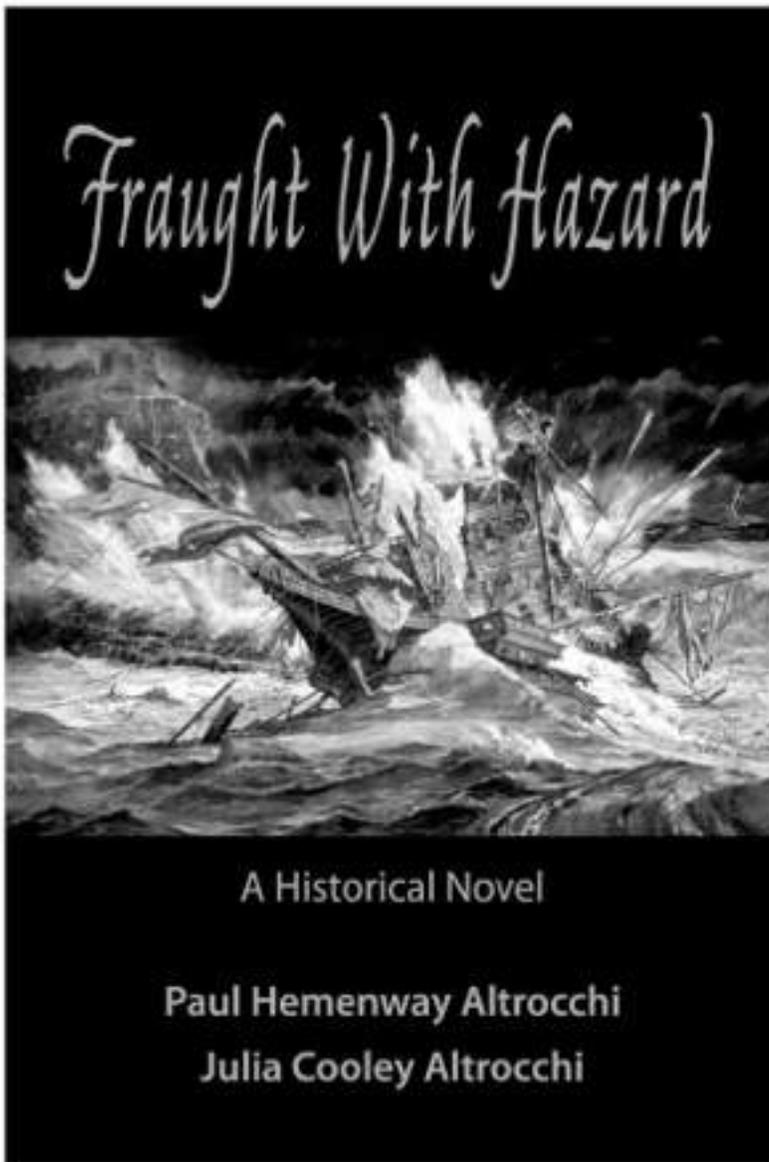
Authorship Issue Mentioned in 2014 Movie

As we note from time to time, the Shakespeare Authorship Question pops up in unexpected places. Oxfordian Ron Song Destro noted in a recent Facebook post that the 2014 feature film *The Gambler* includes a brief mention of it. The film, a crime thriller, stars Mark Wahlberg as Jim Bennett, an English professor who’s also a compulsive gambler and finds that his life is in danger. In one scene, when Professor Bennett informs his class that the first mention of Shakespeare is found in *Greene’s Groatworth of Wit*, a nerdy student asks: “Is the beautified feathers thing because Greene knew that Shakespeare was the earl of Oxford?” The self-assured and snide professor answers: “Absolutely.... (long pause).... not!” This elicits big laughter from the class. The professor continues: “Not even close. The earl of Oxford published poetry. And it wasn’t any good. If Oxford had been able to get a play on, he’d have broken a leg to do it. I mean, could you think of any human being that would, for ANY reason, not put his name on *Hamlet*? The Oxfordian thing... the anti-Stratfordian thing... what pisses people off about Shakespeare... what lies behind every controversy about Shakespeare... is rage. Rage over the nature and unequal distribution of talent. Rage that genius appears where it appears for no material reason at all. Desiring a thing cannot make you have it!”

Ron Song Destro also noted that the character’s “speech is so poorly composed, by the way, especially since it is supposed to have come from the mouth of a literature professor and writer, I wonder if Wahlberg created it on the spot?”



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- Alexander Waugh, English author of *Fathers and Sons: The Autobiography of a Family*

Amazon.com Books: hardcover \$27.95; softcover \$17.95

BOOK REVIEWS

Oxford's Most Illustrious Ancestor

John de Vere: Thirteenth Earl of Oxford 1442 – 1513, The Foremost Man of the Kingdom, by James Ross. The Boydell Press. 2011. Paperback ed. 2015.

Reviewed by Ramon Jiménez

In his opening paragraph, James Ross describes John de Vere, thirteenth Earl of Oxford, as “the last great medieval nobleman.” He continues:

Earl of Oxford for fifty years, subject of no fewer than six kings of England during one of the most turbulent periods of English history, De Vere's career included more changes of fortune than almost any other. ... He suffered personal tragedy as a teenager, with the execution of his father and brother, and a decade in prison in Hammes castle....

A more dramatic, uncertain, and unsettled life may only be imagined, yet by the age of forty-three, after a leading role in the Battle of Bosworth and the accession of the first Tudor king, the thirteenth Earl achieved such a level of wealth and influence that he was called “the foremost man of the kingdom.” But by then he was nearly alone. The entire previous generation of de Veres was dead. Only one of his four brothers remained alive, and he had no children of his own.

James Ross's biography of John de Vere is wide-ranging, detailed and heavily annotated. He cites dozens of manuscripts, hundreds of printed sources (including the well-known Paston Letters), and more than a dozen unpublished theses. But his narrative style is light and readable, he is careful to claim no more than he can document, and he often includes contrary opinions.

In 1462, at the age of nineteen, John de Vere barely escaped execution with his father, John, the twelfth Earl, and his older brother Aubrey for a plot against Edward IV, who had seized the crown from Henry VI the previous year. He recovered his family's wealth and lands, and his earldom only a few years later, after marrying Margaret Neville, sister of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, a key supporter of King Edward. But his alliance with Edward and the Yorkists was short and uneasy, as Warwick and Edward fell out over Edward's secret marriage to Elizabeth Woodville and whom to support in the French civil war. Under suspicion of treason, Oxford was seized and put in irons in the Tower late in 1468, with rumors flying about his beheading. Pardoned a few months later, he was among those who fled to France with Warwick in 1470 to join Henry VI and Queen Margaret.

Later in the year, Oxford was with the invading Lancastrian army, headed by Warwick and backed by France, that surprised Edward and caused him to flee to the continent with a few followers. In October, the thirteenth Earl bore the sword of state as Henry VI was recrowned at St. Paul's. Oxford was appointed Constable of England and Steward of the Royal Household, but Henry's restoration did not last long. Just a few months later, Edward and his army landed in Yorkshire and gained enough support as he traveled south that an opposing force under the Duke of Exeter and the Earl of Oxford was obliged to fall back rather than challenge him. In April 1471 Edward entered London unopposed and imprisoned Henry VI.

Less than two weeks later, Edward and his Yorkist army met the Lancastrians, under the command of the Earls of Warwick and Oxford, in a critical battle near Barnet, just north of London. In the early fighting, Oxford's men on the right routed the Yorkist left and entered the town, but in the ensuing confusion they were misidentified as Edward's troops and attacked by another contingent in their own army. The result was a chaotic retreat and a resounding defeat of the Lancastrian army, during which the Earl of Warwick was killed.

Ross is dubious of the traditional story that the badge that Oxford's men wore, “a star with streams,” Oxford's emblem, was mistaken for King Edward's badge, “the sun with streams,” causing the incident of friendly fire. He argues that Oxford's men, if not wearing the full de Vere coat of arms, would have been wearing a simple mullet, a five-pointed star, not a star with streams, which he asserts was “an unknown de Vere badge.” It is more likely, he writes, that the friendly fire was due to “a group of men in the fog returning to a battlefield which had swung nearly ninety degrees and coming up on their own men by mistake.”

Oxford again fled England, this time to Scotland, where he and his brothers were issued a six-month safe conduct by King James III. At about the same time, Queen Margaret and her son, the eighteen-year-old Prince Edward, landed in Dorset with yet another Lancastrian army that they had raised on the continent. The final crucial battle came in early May 1471 at Tewkesbury, where Edward overwhelmed their army, captured Margaret, and killed her son. Now Edward ordered the murder of Henry VI, thus ending, if only temporarily, the seven-decade-long reign of the house of Lancaster. Again in full control of the country, Edward awarded nearly all of Oxford's estates, including Hedingham Castle, to his own brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester.

The thirteenth Earl remained at large, returning to France and obtaining aid from Louis XI, who was eager “to stir up trouble for Edward.” In the spring of 1473, he led a dozen or so ships in raids on England's eastern and southern coasts, and late in September sailed to Cornwall and seized the castle on St. Michael's Mount.

He remained there for nearly six months with no more than eighty men, including his brothers, George and Thomas, before surrendering with only a promise that he and all his men, save two, would be spared their lives. Edward imprisoned Oxford in Hammes Castle on the outskirts of Calais, and a year later the three de Vere brothers were attainted, all their remaining lands and goods being forfeited to the King. In the meantime, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, the last of the Beaufort branch of the house of Lancaster, was seeking support in France for an overthrow of Edward IV.

Alliance With the Tudors

Ironically, it was the seizure of the crown by Richard III in 1483, and the subsequent alienation of many of Edward's followers, that led to Oxford's escape from Hammes. In late 1484, his custodian, Sir James Blount, abandoned his post, and the two of them joined Henry Tudor and his expatriate court in Paris. Oxford's reputation, military experience, and lengthy opposition to the Yorkists made him a most welcome addition to Henry's cause. In describing this incident, Ross cites a report that it was Thomas, Lord Stanley, Richard's Constable of England at the time, who persuaded Blount to release Oxford. What makes the story likely is that in 1472 Thomas Stanley had married Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry Tudor. This affinity would have given him ample reason to facilitate Oxford's support of his stepson.

In August of the following year, Henry's invasion fleet of less than 3000 men landed at Milford Haven in Pembrokeshire, friendly Tudor country. The march into Leicestershire and the subsequent defeat and death of Richard at Bosworth are well known. Despite Richard's superior numbers, Oxford's contingent of archers, in the vanguard, held off the Yorkists until the last-minute intervention of 3000 troops under the command of Sir William Stanley, Thomas's younger brother, secured Henry's victory.

Within a month of the victory at Bosworth, Oxford was made Admiral of England and Constable of the Tower of London (and keeper of the lions and leopards in the Tower). He officiated as Lord Great Chamberlain at the coronation of Henry VII, the first de Vere to do so in a hundred years. A year later the christening of Henry's son Arthur was postponed for four days so that Oxford could be present. With the recovery of his ancestral lands and various royal appointments, as well as additional purchases of rent-producing estates, by 1500 Oxford became one of the richest men in the kingdom. He restored and modernized Hedingham Castle after fourteen years of disuse, constructing the surviving bridge and the great hall, and building the first tennis court on the property. Ross supplies a map of five East Anglian counties showing more than eighty estates, manors and other properties in his possession. Rents from his properties, combined with fees from royal appointments,

wardships, etc., gave him an annual income of more than £4000. In contrast, the seventeenth Earl, just sixty years later, inherited an income of approximately £2200 per year.

But even after Bosworth, Oxford's military exploits were not finished. In June 1487 Henry VII defeated an invading army of diehard Yorkists under the Earl of Lincoln at Stoke Field in Nottinghamshire. As before, Oxford commanded the vanguard of 6000 men that "broke the back of the rebels' resistance" in the last battle of the so-called Wars of the Roses. (Despite writing at least four plays treating the wars, Shakespeare never used the phrase.)

For nearly thirty years after Bosworth, the thirteenth Earl reigned as the most important magnate in East Anglia and served in Henry's inner circle of counselors. Various documents of the time attest to his generosity toward his household and the surrounding community. To honor a family tradition, he arranged for the remains of his father, brother and mother to be moved from their graves in London to the family mausoleum at Earls Colne. According to Ross, the Earl could read French and Latin, as well as English, and was an occasional patron of literature, commissioning several translations into English by William Caxton. He had a particular interest in music and kept a "chapel," a choir or body of singers that doubled as a company of players. The thirteenth Earl died at seventy at Hedingham Castle in 1513, and the earldom passed to another John, son of his younger brother Sir George Vere.

In Ross's opinion, we can put to rest the report that Henry VII fined the thirteenth Earl 15,000 marks for "retaining" too many servants. That account appears in a 1621 biography of Henry VII by Francis Bacon, in which he claimed that at his departure from Hedingham Castle on one occasion, Henry noted the multitude of the Earl's servants ranged in lines on either side of him. According to Bacon, the Earl replied that most of them "are come to do me service at such a time as this, and chiefly to see your Grace." But there is no record of the Earl paying such a fine, and no record of its receipt by the Crown. Ross calls the story "century-old hearsay," citing two historians of the period who agree with him and one who doesn't. Bacon himself introduced the episode with the phrase, "There remaineth to this day a report . . ." Other background information—about the practice of fines for "retaining," and about the small amounts that the Earl *did* pay to the Crown—makes it nearly certain that the report is apocryphal.

The Thirteenth Earl and Shakespeare

Ross's biography fills a gap in the history of the Oxford earls, and enhances our understanding of the seventeenth Earl. Although they were only distant cousins, and separated by three generations, the seventeenth Earl, who at the age of twelve lost his own father, probably took a keen interest in the dramatic

reversals of fortune that his ancestor experienced. He would have found his exploits in the chronicles of Robert Fabyan, Polydore Vergil and Edward Hall, each of which was in the library of his tutor, Sir Thomas Smith, or that of his guardian, Lord Burghley. He must have been proud of Earl John's military activity, bravery and persistence of purpose. In one of a dozen short speeches he gave him in *3 Henry VI*, the thirteenth Earl alludes to Edward IV's executions of his father and brother, and declares, "while life upholds this arm / This arm upholds the house of Lancaster" (III.iii.101-105). In *Richard III*, Edward IV credits John de Vere with striking him down at the battle of Tewkesbury, but the historical Earl was not there. He was with the Earl of Richmond in the same play, however, at Bosworth, where, as the chroniclers report, he was put in command of the vanguard of Richmond's army.

The positive role given to Thomas, Lord Stanley in *Richard III*—only partially supported in the chronicles—has been noticed by several scholars, and is further evidence that the seventeenth Earl was the author of the Shakespeare canon. Without Thomas Stanley's intervention in 1484, John de Vere might have remained in Hammes Castle and Henry Tudor's invasion might have faltered. Similarly, without Sir William Stanley's last-minute support of Henry at Bosworth, it is likely that Richard would have prevailed. (In the play, this role is given to Thomas Stanley, later Earl of Derby, who withheld aid from Richard at the crucial moment.) Absent these actions by the Stanleys, the thirteenth Earl might have died in prison or fallen at Bosworth. In either case, it is likely that the Oxford earldom would have been extinguished, and there would have been no Tudor dynasty. The author of the canon had reason to be grateful to the Stanleys. (So had the author of *The True Tragedy of*

Richard the Third, Oxford's first attempt at the story, which included favorable treatment of the Stanleys.)

It is well known that Edward de Vere fervently wished to serve his Queen in the military. But to our good fortune, his contribution to the Tudor legacy, one hundred years after Bosworth, would be literary, not military.

The Bosworth Bas-Relief

The cover of the book is illustrated with a small section of the Bosworth bas-relief, the magnificent, sculpted chimney-piece discovered in an Essex barn in 1736. Its provenance prior to that is unknown, although local historians suggest that in the 1680s it was situated in Bois Hall, a manor in Halstead that may have belonged to the Earls of Oxford. After its discovery in 1736, it was restored and installed in the library at Gosfield Hall, just outside of Halstead. In her article in this *Newsletter* in 1993 (v. 29:4), Linda McLatchie described it as follows:

The artistic center of the carving is Henry VII, wielding a sword and rearing up on his horse. Directly behind Henry VII is John, 13th Earl of Oxford, commander of the Lancastrian archers during the battle. . . . All combatants are on horse, with the exception of Richard, who is unhorsed and lying under the hooves of Henry VII's horse. . . . The prostrate Richard, still in full battle armor, grasps his crown with both hands. Also shown fallen in battle, although still on horse, is the Duke of Norfolk. Other notables who are armorially represented are Herbert, Stafford, Surrey, Blount, Digby, Brandon, and Radcliffe.

Carved in stone, the bas-relief is nearly seven feet long and two feet high. At either end are statues of



Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth of York, grandmother of Elizabeth I. On the plinth holding Henry's statue, a red rose has been painted; on that of Elizabeth, a white rose—signaling the reconciliation of the houses of Lancaster and York.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Gosfield Hall had come into the possession of George Grenville, first Marquess of Buckingham. About two decades later, his son moved the bas-relief to his mansion at Stowe in Buckinghamshire, where it was installed in the Gothic Library. After a checkered history during the nineteenth century, the mansion was sold to a private party, and in 1923 opened as Stowe School, a public school for boys, where the bas-relief can be seen today in the headmaster's study.

The prominence of the thirteenth Earl in the Bosworth bas-relief, just behind Henry Tudor, makes it likely that it was he who commissioned it, and installed it at Hedingham Castle at some time during the two decades following the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. It is also likely that it was still there in the 1550s, and that the young Edward de Vere saw it every day during the time that he lived there. But, as noted, nothing is known of the bas-relief prior to 1736. Although the publisher claims that the bas-relief was "made for Castle Hedingham," both the archivist at Stowe School and the thirteenth Earl's biographer, James Ross, replied to my inquiries that they had no information about who commissioned it, who made it, when it was completed, or where it was installed. Answers to these questions, if they can be answered, will depend on further research.

***Unreading Shakespeare*, by David P. Gontar
New English Review Press, Nashville, TN, 2015
(available in paperback or in a Kindle edition at
Amazon.com)**

Reviewed by William J. Ray

Professor David Gontar has traveled far from the beaten path. He teaches at Inner Mongolia University in China, as distant from American academe as an airplane can reach. While there he has contributed to China's cultural life by applying to UNESCO to help protect the Xanadu site.

Gontar's intellectual approach has been to step away from Criticism's authority-based status quo and to read with an open mind, distancing as much as possible from the presuppositions, unstated sub-doctrines, and mandatory guidelines that define and constrict current Shakespeare studies.

For readers skeptical of a Stratfordian authorship position, the book's paradigmatic sentence is: "The imposition of biographical fables on these plays is the most common and insidious way to miss their meaning." He applies this maxim to alternative as well as

mainstream views, preferring to read anew what has always been on the printed page. He does not make a systematic effort to support the Oxfordian case. Instead he takes it for granted as a reasonable alternative to the ongoing tradition, which he views as clogged with stultifications and insupportable assumptions.

Such a literally critical position finds expression in a good deal of woodshedding on any number of respected critics, followed by Gontar's own interpretations. Dollimore, Appleford, G. Wilson Knight, Kermode, the poet-critic Ted Hughes, even T.S. Eliot get no obeisance from Dr. Gontar. Northrop Frye comes off rather well in the reckoning, however.

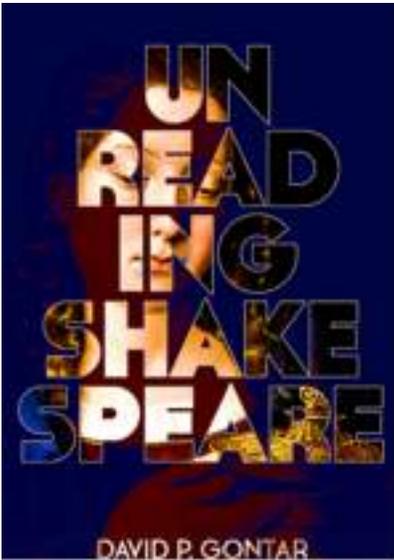
The twenty essays in *Unreading Shakespeare* are not related and need not be read in order. A concluding statement assists to sum up each argument. In general, the essays are entertaining and energetic, with copious quotations from Shakespeare texts in large readable print. Gontar assumes the reader is familiar with the given play, allowing him to lecture via present-tense syntax about the action, accompanied by declamations in a personal, informal writing style.

Some of the essays focus on the texts, while others examine theoretical matters. The latter deal with the interpretive mechanisms, or methodologies, of mainline critics—in almost every case, questioning their validity. As for getting the biographical sequence wrong, we know before the first page that traditional critics, from Knight and Eliot to Shapiro and Greenblatt, had to be wrong when it came to relating author to text. The officially accepted narrative was packaged fiction, but it resulted in an institutional aversion to even delving into the past. The mythology seemed sufficient, and questions about it would not be tolerated.

Though there is no shortage of individual blame to pass around over the years, in my view T.S. Eliot deserves some credit for writing of the *Sonnets*, "This autobiography is written by a foreign man in a foreign tongue, which can never be translated." At least he had the integrity to admit being stumped by such a work being associated with the presumed "Shakespeare." Hank Whittemore and others have given us ample reasons to consider connecting it to someone else.

Obviously, writer origin—i.e., attribution of the works to the correct person—went missing in Shakespeare studies from day one. To play devil's advocate for a moment, I wonder if Gontar's complaint that his fellow scholars misread the text because they have avoided the biographical point might be better approached as an institutional failing rather than a series of personal intellectual handicaps. Human groups are herd animals. The shifts and grunts from the forward co-ruminators usually determine in what direction the herd moves.

The Shakespeare detour to Stratford began as a political strategem, the Herberts' publication of the First



Folio in 1623. That publication's elaborately sanctified, but wholly fallacious, "front matter" set the trap for generations of academics to try to make sense of what was really no more than a cleverly constructed Everyman fable. Rarely did any individual scholar question the doctrine of immaculate Stratfordian conception. Those

who did paid the martyr's price. Cairncross, Feldman, Hughes, Ogburn—the list is not long because it is plain that non-conformists would be, and were, dealt with (as a bureaucrat I once knew put it) "immediately and in an appropriate manner."

Unreading Shakespeare gives us an excellent example of how a wrong reading became a long-lived, nearly ineradicable fixture. Essay 5 discusses Charles Lamb (1775-1834) propounding Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* as being not all that bad a sort—loyal, straitlaced, respectful of his liege, etc. We might reinterpret these praises as rationalizations for a dramatic dupe in the play, probably based on Christopher Hatton, the craven but courtly kiss-up to Queen Elizabeth. Sir Toby Belch, said to be based on Peregrine Bertie, Oxford's brother-in-law, contrasts. He is manly and vital, insouciant, renegade in temperament but capable of understanding, in short a soldier and courtier to reckon with in a rich barbaric state.

Gontar goes on to put Harold C. Goddard on the hot seat for also readjusting the *Twelfth Night* characters to suit his program of virtues. He could play a Victorian morals game, too. Malvolio gets a positive character report—he is not at all laughable (to which we add that the play itself needs the stooge to be just that). Thus, critical history curves and smooths the way to give status quo representatives a virtuous reading. *Ipso facto*, Shakespeare literature becomes co-opted for educational and ethical purposes. *Twelfth Night's* critical history serves as one example of Gontar's thesis, that "Unreading" the work, rather than actually reading it, has taken over.

Gontar's discussion of "Shakespeare in Black and White" is a significant addition to the literature, how the English felt and dealt regarding slavery and the Other, the Black being. The essay is lively and informative. In something of a parallel, in the introduction to the book Gontar puts Abraham Lincoln himself under the magnifying glass. He is not deified as the usual Christ-

like figure, caught in the American version of *The Iliad*, but is excoriated as a kind of tyrant who denied the South its constitutional states' rights. Though this struck me as an intemperate reading of history, never have I read Lincoln compared to, or consciously comparing himself with, Bolingbroke. Gontar offers a persuasive case that Lincoln studied Shakespeare's histories and tragedies, in particular *Macbeth*. It was *Julius Caesar*, played and studied by another reader, John Wilkes Booth, that became the model for the tragedy of Abraham Lincoln, the man and President.

English criticism has somehow managed to neglect such prodigious real-life reverberations of the Shakespeare canon. It has likewise neglected the obvious fact that the author of the plays was an astute, brilliant, rhetorically gifted and classically trained historian of governments, in the tradition of Thucydides. It was through the Bard, using the Thucydides model for high rhetoric, that the rough-hewn Kings of England strangely produced some of the most masterful speeches and soliloquies in any language.

The essay on Montaigne, whose language and philosophy is said to have affected "Shakespeare" considerably, shows the trained philosopher Gontar at work. Though he characterizes Montaigne as a Skeptic, equanimity places him as a descendant of the Stoics, those who saw that life is frequently a tragedy, for which there is no remedy but practicing Honor, to endure travail with grace. This seems to congrue with Shakespearean heroic forbearance. The Shakespeare concordance lists "honor" 690 times. A pertinent sidelight in the essay about Montaigne versus "Shakespeare" is the reference to Plato, who had an enormous influence on Shakespeare's philosophy. Its effect, apart from specific thematic influence such as in *Timon of Athens*, was to convey the model of the Philosopher King, in whom Knowledge serves Truth. But in the Machiavellian world of the "wolfish earls," Knowledge served Power. Amidst such ruthless conditions, the "Shakespeare" author got eaten alive before final physical death.

A brief review cannot capture the content of twenty essays, but one can see from the foregoing discussion that David Gontar is not afraid to say some unpopular, indeed impolitic, things. He has his opinions. I quote from Essay 16, "Shakespeare's Sweet Poison":

That which calls itself "feminism" today is anti-wisdom, dogma masquerading as thought. One of its most common symptoms is blindness to more holistic outlooks and the evidences that support those outlooks. Feminism is a species of faddism, the assumption that what is new and popular is better than anything in the past. As "ye olde Shakespeare," the "dead white male," is blithely tossed in with the dinosaurs (he didn't have Twitter or an iPhone, did he?), he is the bogeyman, the perfect target.

Gontar is also able to discuss Shakespearean texts with great familiarity and convincing power. Readers will find it another lively example, akin to Ricardo Mena's *Ver; begin*, of a new wave of "post-Stratfordian," emphatically anti-doctrinal, English criticism.

***Ver; begin* by Ricardo Mena,
with an introduction by Hank Whittemore
Self-published, 2015 (available in paperback or
in a Kindle edition at amazon.com)**

Reviewed by William J. Ray

To evaluate *Ver; begin* and the challenge it represents for modern Shakespearean scholarship, we revisit an imperative written by J. Thomas Looney:

We shall first have to dissociate from the [canon] writings the conception of such an author as the steady, complacent, business-like man-of-the-world suggested by the Stratford Shakspeare. Then there will be the more arduous task of raising to a most exalted position the name and personality possibly of some obscure man hitherto regarded as quite unequal to the work with which he is at last to be credited. And this will further compel us to re-read our greatest national classics from a totally new personal standpoint.

Especially the last sentence applies here. Dr. Mena has reread the authors surrounding "Shakespeare," i.e., Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and has realigned literary attributions unquestioned for centuries.

He concurs in general with the Oxfordian interpretation of history, that Edward de Vere through governmental and personal secrecy produced works inextricably bound to his life and station, including certain tabooed attachments to Elizabeth I, inevitably bearing manifold effects. The latter include episodic attempts to solve inconsistencies of the authorship story that were studiously ignored through time. He acknowledges the seminal influence of Hank Whittemore, who wrote the introduction.

Mena adds to the controversy by positing the literary parallelism occurring under the names Thomas Nashe, Edmund Spenser, and John Donne. In these sections of the book his textual and biographical arguments carry considerable power. As a consequence we face a new prospect, that the Elizabethan-Jacobean epoch produced not one prodigious mystery, but two or three. Authorship was a new and fluid concept. The interchange of language and phrasing among Oxford's circle has been noted before, but not a literary career starting with the names Nashe and Spenser and ending with the Protestant minister John Donne.

The lengthy volume, copiously punctuated with quotations from Oxfordian and Stratfordian sources, is memorable for something yet more *ad hoc*: its vital energy, freedom of thought, and imaginativeness to rearrange pieces previously frozen on the Elizabethan chessboard. This makes for an intellectual wild ride. A list of appropriate Internet texts follows each chapter. The quotations are credited but not annotated.

The book shares some minor defects of the industry's *de facto* underground, unfunded press. A detailed index would be helpful. There were typographical errors in the early copies, allayed now by more recent work on the Internet. That the manuscript could have benefited from an editor is like saying the woolly mammoth needed a trim. Several monographs twine together in a single revolutionary epic.

For instance, I have not seen anywhere that it was John Donne who facilitated the elevated style of the King James Bible. That he was utterly familiar with the Bible and one of the supreme English stylists gives this notion plausibility. It has far more plausibility than Streitz's Gothic explanation that Oxford fake-died in 1604 and spent his last years on Mercer Island rewriting the Bible.

In short, the book is an achievement. Perhaps just because of its driving, prolix, protean character, wherein discoveries fly out like sparks along the way, the reader sees a new perspective on the age that reaches beyond the Oxford-centered understanding. With that flair, I expect it will be picked up by a commercial publisher, Spanish or English. Ricardo Mena's website contains some of the liveliest literary commentaries available on the Internet.

I

Critical reviews condemned *Ver; begin* as all assertion and no evidence, the habitual response to new work in a field that grants credence to only that argumentation proceeding from credentialed labor. Let us take a moment to consider the general sufficiency of *status quo* standards in American discourse.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a Shakspeare doubter, saw respectable thought as symptomatic of a stultified culture:

Whoever looks at the insect world, at flies, aphides, gnats, and innumerable parasites, and even at the infant mammals, must have remarked the extreme content they take in suction, which constitutes the main business of their life. If we go into a library or newsroom we see the same function on a higher plane, performed with like ardor, with equal impatience of interruption indicating the sweetness of the act. ("Quotation and Originality")

Writing in *The American Scholar*, he hoped for the time when "the sluggish intellect of this continent will look from under its iron eyelids, and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exercise of mechanical skill." A century and a half later,

Richard Feynman, widely honored as the greatest mind in physics since Einstein, said that science is the belief in the ignorance of experts.

For our purposes, where convoluted Elizabethan history has called for courage and scope to mine hidden parallels and buried contexts, the followers of the world cultivate a respectful silence. Years pass. Evolution dozes. Progress consists in the automation of monthly stipend checks. On the other side, moderately independent academic thinkers such as Cairncross, Rendall, Looney, Slater, and Feldman paid the price for boldly publishing their views. Departmental proscriptions from even mentioning the Shakespeare identity—until very recently—have largely succeeded in maintaining conformity among the intellectual elites. Literary analysis consistently endorses an emotional attachment to the proverbial small-town success story patched onto high art.

Consider further that most scholars do not see that the Shakespeare literary identity might be a central historical issue for Western Civilization, never having heard it seriously discussed in their careers, and we have near-universal sanctioned ignorance self-perpetuated in the field. It takes at least five years just to get a frame of reference upon everything English criticism has missed. Academics do not have that amount of free time.

Perhaps because Ricardo Mena comes from the Spanish tradition, one recently freed of tyranny (and thus has known propaganda being made the rule of the land), he is not fazed by the official hypocrisy of the English Stratford paradigm. Santayana's morality lies back of the work, that skepticism is wholesome, that thinkers must not surrender lightly the duty of independent thought. This principled attitude, far from being contentious, imbues the book's literary criticism with positive rather than adversarial light. *Ver, begin* is a spiritual advance upon much invective and polemic that have gone before.

II

Printing deceptive author names was part and parcel of the English Renaissance. The evidence is overwhelming that Lyly and Munday had writing careers only in terms of their association with Oxford. The thirty-five Shakespearean phrases in the Marlovian canon indicate another such association. It is less clear that *The Shepherd's Calendar* would be so derivative and puerile coming from the supposed author, twenty-seven-year-old Edmund Spenser, or that he wrote *The Faerie Queene* as his "unripe fruit of an unready wit" at thirty-eight, unless the works were old. But they couldn't be and still pay up-to-date obeisance to the leading authors of the time.

One author who presented praises to "Spenser" was "E.K.," most of the monogram of E.C.O., *Edwardus comes Oxoniensis*, Oxford's Latin initials. Mena argues he was Gabriel Harvey, "the only person who can be the patron and tutor of the boy Immerito." The latter's respectful letters to Harvey support the speculation. But to have made the *Calendar's* French translations, imitative or not, John Donne would be a boy wonder of six in 1578.

True, he was a prodigy and, interestingly, he experienced tragic family loss, that of his father when he was four, paralleling Oxford's being orphaned at twelve. Writing anything at age six seems hard to believe.

Harvey, in a later exchange with Nashe, made a set of three name puns that emphasize John Donne's identity: "That is done cannot de facto be undone...how deservedly it is done." Harvey also incorporated a blatant allusion to the boy "Immerito," by reversing its Latin meaning, "undeservedly," to the signal "deservedly."

Mena drops the thread for a hundred pages before returning to Nashe and Harvey, at which time they are in conflict. Using extensive quotations from Nashe, he argues that Donne and Nashe are more than just allies in the 1590s battle for undefiled English. Not only are their prose styles Quintillian-like: "dense, convoluted, full of twisted logic." They also bear an identical aesthetic: "dark, obscure, complex poetry," though Nashe did not publish as a poet, only as a critic. Mena considers him Donne's manqué, a proxy name to be used or discarded in future.

More credence for the Spenser-Donne identity claim stems from "Shakespeare's" *Henry V* encounter between Fleuellen and MacMorris, who says in an Irish brogue: "tish ill done"—four times. *Ille* is "he" in Latin, so the phrase can be construed to mean, "'Tis he, Donne," i.e., "Spenser," the putative official in Ireland who somehow knew so much that went on in literary London.

Whether formed by Oxford or Harvey, the name cue, usually delivered in a triad quite characteristic of *The Faerie Queene*, tends to confirm stylistic similarity. The Donnean rhetorical qualities implicit in the epyllion mysteriously reappear in the theatrical nature of the later Donnean metaphysical language. The wonder inherent to poetry illuminates the opening range of hope that is theology. Nashe had said poetry is the most ancient of the expressions of belief. Religion can be considered a sister art to performance.

It is an arresting argument which I have attenuated in the interests of space, but which occupies much of the second part of the book. If it is to be a useful *bona fide* theory, then the biographical paths of Spenser the civil servant and Spenser/Donne the concealed writer somehow must diverge. And they do. In fact, Edmund Spenser is another shadowy figure in Elizabethan literature, just like Greene and Oxford himself.

Mena cites Conyears Read: "Outside of what Edmund Spenser himself wrote, all that is positively known about his life could probably be written in a few short paragraphs. The rest is inference, surmise, and conjecture." Though reportedly given a small pension by Elizabeth, like Greene, he died penniless. This curious life story does not align with either the style or content of an artist who was central to courtly architectonic poetry. His funeral, fulsomely described as reverential, had a quality of external show matched only by the outpouring given Philip Sidney.

Clara Longworth de Chambrun:

On January 20, 1599, the poets gathered at the modest house where their illustrious colleague lay dead.

They carried his coffin in procession to Westminster Abbey near at hand, and deposited it in the chapel reserved for famous men of letters. His tomb was placed next to that of Chaucer, and each poet with head inclined dropped on it a symbolic scroll to which a quill was attached.

....

The identity of the eight poets who carried [Spens]er's coffin to his burial in Westminster Abbey, is revealed by the historian, who was an eye-witness of the ceremony. Camden, moreover, declares that they are the most distinguished authors of his time, and those whom future Sages will be compelled to admire: "Samuel Daniel, Hugh Holland, Ben Jonson, Tho. Campion, Mich Drayton, George Chapman, John Marston and William Shakespeare."

It is barely comprehensible that eight literary worthies might perpetrate such a hoax. All (including Campion) were associated with Oxford. But there was another event in the Elizabethan-Jacobean era that compares, the posthumous lamentations about William Shakspeare of Stratford, contrived some years after his death on the occasion of the publication of the First Folio of Shakespeare plays.

By similar comparative linguistics, Mena argues that Donne utilized the name of Marlowe and Oxford the names of his followers, Greene and Daniel. The convenience of promiscuous literary identity never had such a heyday after the late 16th century until Benjamin Franklin bought a printing press in 1728. (The comments above are selective and do not cover the extensive body of inferential evidence assembled in the book.)

III

Historical analysis insists on more than literary alignments to climb the chain of evidence into rational acceptance. Peter Dickson, notoriously contemptuous of literary inference and its advocates, has suggested that literature is not "objective." Paradoxically, art feigns more than fact can say. Is Donne as Spenser possible? Certainly. Plausible? Yes. Probable? The parallels leave us feeling persuaded. Beyond reasonable doubt? We do not have the luxury of an absolute position. The principals did not arrange things that way. The Latin phrase, *Desunt caetera* (the rest is lacking), may serve for a moral. History's contexts vanish as quickly as clouds across the valley. But we must respect the wider horizon Mena has seen and shown. It gains the more depth for wonder, perception, and study, which is exactly what *theorea* means, travel a distance and look back.

Finally, I would like to point out a couple of gold nuggets that *Ver, begin* provides. First, Oxfordian readers get flummoxed with Sonnet 136, which italicizes and repeats the word *Will* three times and adds three more *will's* for a total of six. Was it as simple as Will Shakspeare, the true author, idiotically repeating his name? Stanley Wells said so, no doubt about it. But Aristotelian adepts would look to the three-count as beyond coincidence, and the six-count as playing on Number for a message, for instance, the sum of *deux* (two) and *vier* (four) to express a hidden author's name instead.

Mena adds another reference possibility, the anonymous play *The Marriage of Wit and Science*. Wit asks his brother Will "if he would serve him in his goal of becoming a great poet. When Will answers him affirmatively, Wit replies: "Nature is on my side, and Will my boy is fast [i.e., close by]." In explaining Sonnet 136, who can deny that metaphor is a prime engine of evocation, that the sonnet's author has quoted an early self-reference when he declares he is Will?

In a companion anonymous play, *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*, Mena points out the line, "I am Ipse, he, even the very same!" Not only does this prefigure Touchstone's monologue in *As You Like It*, it shows off Oxford's self-signaling vocabulary. I is *io* in Italian, pronounced "E'O." *Ipse* is himself in Latin. "Even" is close to "ever," an anagram of Vere. "Very" is a near identity. And the commas evoke Oxford's Latin name, conveying that he, *comes*, is "our friend" from Oxford. The exclamation point is an upside down "i", indicating another *i=io=E'O*. It is to the author's credit he found these anonymous plays and assimilated them to clarify the authorship issue.

Second, John Davies of Hereford wrote Epigram 159 to the playwright Shake-speare, "Our Terence," an obviously mixed message since Terence was known as a front for others. The poem included the *non sequitur*, "Thou hadst been a companion for a King." What could it mean? Mena found a play ostensibly by Greene, *Farewell to Folly*. "In the first story, Greene tells us of a king who had a companion, an Earl (Oxford's rank), to whom the king asks what it meant to be a king." There followed a prose rendition of Oxford's poem, "Were I a King I might command content." Again, an allusion to the receptive ear identifies the subject and settles the mystery.

Highly recommended.

[Full disclosure. Ricardo Mena quoted an essay or two of mine, the gesture much appreciated. I had previously assumed that only my wife reads my work when there isn't a NASCAR race on television.]



Is Ben Jonson's *De Shakespeare Nostrati* a Depiction of Edward de Vere?

by Andrew Crider

Ben Jonson's *De Shakespeare Nostrati* is usually regarded as a brief remembrance of William Shaksper of Stratford. Yet the person described by Jonson corresponds poorly with what we know from other sources of the life and character of the Stratford man. On the other hand, Jonson's character sketch is fully consistent with the colorful biography of Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. Jonson described Shakespeare as an open and creative individual whose writing and whose conduct suffered from a lack of self-discipline. We have no evidence that either openness or poor self-discipline characterized Mr. Shaksper, but both qualities are major themes in de Vere's biography.

Jonson's Portrayal

Nostrati was probably composed in the early 1630s and subsequently published posthumously in *Timber, or Discoveries* (1641), Jonson's notebook devoted largely to his translations and accompanying commentary from classical authors. The translations are largely unattributed and interwoven with the author's own elaborations on such subjects as statecraft, oratory, liberal studies, and literary matters.¹ The remembrance of Shakespeare, embedded in a longer discussion of good and poor writing, has a three-part structure, beginning with (1) a critique of Shakespeare's writing; moving to (2) an apologia in which Jonson assures the reader of his fondness for Shakespeare the man; and lastly (3) generalizing the initial literary critique to a broader character assessment:

(1) I remember the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare that in his writing, whatsoever he penned, he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, "Would he have blotted a thousand": which they thought a malevolent speech. I have not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by wherein he most faulted, and to justify mine own candour, (2) for I loved the man and do honour his memory (on this side idolatry) as much as any. He was, indeed, honest (*candid*), and of an open and free nature; had an excellent fancy, brave (*worthy*) notions, and gentle (*refined*) expressions, (3) wherein he flowed with that facility that sometime it was necessary he should be stopped: *Sufflaminius erat*, as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power: would the rule of it had been so too. Many times he fell into those things, could not escape laughter, as when he said, in the person of Caesar, one speaking to him: "Caesar thou dost me wrong" he replied: "Caesar did never wrong but with just cause," and such like, which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned.²

The first segment hinges on an indirect reference to a well-known line from the preface to the 1623 First Folio of the collected plays of Shakespeare. Although the preface appeared over the names of two players, John Heminges and Henry Condell, it is almost certainly the work of Jonson himself.³ The line reads: "His mind and hand went together: and what he thought he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." Now in *Nostrati*, Jonson informs the reader that, despite the fawning tone he ascribed to the two players, his comment was not meant to be taken at face value, but rather was intended as a criticism of Shakespeare's writing. Thus Jonson's reply to the players: "Would he have blotted a thousand." Rather than an occasion for praise, the notion of insufficient blotting is used by Jonson to suggest an undisciplined writer whose work wanted editing, as in the self-editing of one's immediate thoughts or the de facto editing of a written draft.

Jonson does not specify which aspects of Shakespeare's work required blotting, but we know he adhered to classical hallmarks of artful writing including simplicity, concision, moderation, and balance.⁴ Elsewhere in *Discoveries* he writes: "the learned use ever election (*selection*) and a mean (*moderation*), they look back to what they intended at first, and make all an even and proportioned body." But in reading Shakespeare he was likely to find complexity, ostentation, and a fondness for word repetition, alliterative phrasing, punning word play, and run-on lines,⁵ few if any of which had a place in Jonson's critical theory and all thereby were at risk for blotting. Shakespeare broke too many rules, and Jonson was not pleased.

Jonson's blunt appraisal of Shakespeare's writing is quickly followed by a denial of any animosity toward the man himself. On the contrary, he claims to have known and admired Shakespeare, whom he praises as candid, open-minded, liberal, imaginative, creative, and sensitive. These separate characterizations point to a more general psychological trait: they are correlated markers of one pole of the bipolar personality dimension of "openness to experience," which contrasts a relatively artistic temperament to a relatively pragmatic one.⁶ Higher levels of openness are associated with creative endeavors, unconventional thinking, affective sensitivity, and permissive values; lower levels are characterized by pragmatic interests and endeavors, conventional thinking, constricted affect, and traditional values. Openness to experience incorporates these opposing characteristics into a broad personality disposition, as implicitly recognized in Jonson's deft assessment.

The final segment of *Nostrati* relies on an anecdote from Seneca's *Controversiae* regarding the Roman orator

Haterius who, once engaged in his topic, was unable to bring it to a conclusion. Just as Augustus remarked that Haterius “needs a brake,” so Jonson remarks that Shakespeare “flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary that he should be stopped.” And just as Seneca’s text provides an example of Haterius’s eventual fall into foolish remarks, so Jonson recounts Shakespeare’s laughable misquote of a line from *Julius Caesar* as a consequence of his rambling verbosity. Jonson uses Seneca’s anecdote to make a transition from his initial comments on Shakespeare’s undisciplined writing to a similar comment on his social behavior, from a literary critique to a more general characterization of the man: “His wit was in his own power; would the rule of it had been so too.”

In sum, Jonson portrays Shakespeare as a man of an “open and free nature” who had difficulty controlling both his written work and his person. But who was this man? Current orthodox opinion aligns him with William Shakspeare of Stratford. On the other hand, skeptics tend to favor Edward de Vere as the author of the Shakespeare canon. The question can be addressed by examining the biographies of each man to determine which of them more closely mirrors Jonson’s two themes of openness and self-discipline.

Openness to Experience: De Vere vs. Shakspeare

The young Oxford (de Vere) excelled at aristocratic pastimes such as fencing, dancing, and jousting. He might have become a court favorite save for his open disposition, which he expressed in flamboyant mannerisms, foppish dress, and a general indifference to courtly convention. As a more orthodox contemporary wrote to a friend: “It were a great pity he should not go straight, there be so many good things in him.”⁷ Biographer Mark Anderson makes much the same observation in rather more colorful language: “A year in Italy had transformed de Vere, twenty-six-year-old chronic pain in the ass, into a chronic pain in the ass with an astonishing capacity for court comedy.”⁸

But de Vere’s unconventionality was matched by his creative flair as a musician, poet and deviser of court entertainments. According to his Dictionary of National Biography entry, he “evidenced a genuine interest in music and wrote verse of much lyric beauty.”⁹ Similar sentiments were expressed by his contemporaries: both Webbe in *Discourse of English Poetry* (1586) and Puttenham in *Art of Poetry* (1589) ranked de Vere foremost among a number of talented courtier poets. Puttenham further praised the interludes and comedies written by de Vere during his years at court, while Meres (*Palladis Tamia*, 1598) gave him pride of place in a group of writers “best for comedy amongst us.”

In the 1580s, de Vere became closely involved with the London theater and literary world. He was patron of two companies of players, Oxford’s Boys, centered at Blackfriar’s, and Oxford’s Men, largely a touring

company. In addition he was known as a friend, employer, or patron of Spenser, Lyly, Munday, Nashe, and Greene among leading writers of the day. Little is known of his literary undertakings following his second marriage in 1591, but there can be no doubt of his sustained involvement with poetry, playwriting and the stage. Many believe the Earl of Oxford continued writing under a pseudonym designed to shield his identity, beginning with the publication of *Venus and Adonis* in 1593.

In contrast, we have no evidence of openness or creative accomplishment on the part of William Shakspeare. Although he was a shareholder and possibly a player in the Lord Chamberlain’s Men (later the King’s Men), as well as part owner of the Globe theater from 1599, these roles are not evidence of “openness,” nor do they speak to a literary career. In addition we have no record of any written work, save for six scratchy and inconsistently spelled signatures. Diana Price’s biography of Shakspeare¹⁰ includes her telling study of “paper trails” attesting to the literary careers of twenty-four Elizabethan and Jacobean writers, plus Shakspeare. Price gathered information for each person under ten evidentiary criteria, such as having been paid to write, having been the author or recipient of commendatory verses or epistles, and receiving notice as a writer at death. With one exception, the number of extant paper trails ranged from a perfect ten (Ben Jonson) to a low of three (John Webster), with a median of six. The exception? William Shakspeare, for whom there is not a single paper trail pointing to a literary career.

Shakspeare’s last will also disappoints anyone looking for even a hint of artistic sensibility. The document is a dreary, overbearing set of instructions for the distribution of his considerable assets, down to the second best bed and a silver gilt bowl. Absent is any mention of books, manuscripts, published work, notebooks, or correspondence, nor any reference to musical instruments, paintings, or art of any kind.¹¹ One looks in vain for signs of an artistic tendency or creative accomplishment in Mr. Shakspeare’s biography.

Self-Discipline: De Vere vs. Shakspeare

Although often charming and generous, de Vere could also be brusque, impulsive and tactless.¹² As a young courtier he attracted comment by curtly refusing the Queen’s repeated request to dance before visiting dignitaries and barely avoided a duel with Sir Philip Sidney after imperiously ordering him off a tennis court. De Vere may have had reason to assert his aristocratic prerogatives in court circles, but his manner of doing so did not serve his long-term interests and tarnished his reputation.

Jonson portrays Shakespeare as an undisciplined raconteur who often needed to be stopped in case he “fell into those things, could not escape laughter.” We have a remarkably similar anecdote regarding de Vere. In 1581 Charles Arundell denounced him as a liar on the grounds

that he repeatedly embellished his role in certain military adventures during his stay in Italy. Arundell wrote of one such occurrence:

This lie is very rife with him, and in it he glories greatly. Diversely hath he told it, and when he enters into it, he can hardly out, which hath made such sport as often have I been driven to rise from his table laughing.¹³

Although Arundell's attempts at defamation came to naught, de Vere was often the agent of his own undoing owing to an apparent indifference to contemplating the possible negative consequences of his actions. A good example is found in de Vere's lengthy affair with Anne Vavasour, a lady-in-waiting to the Queen, even though liaisons between members of the court and the Queen's female attendants were prohibited. Vavasour became pregnant, but a scandal was avoided when she miscarried in early 1580. By the summer, however, she again conceived, carrying the child she named Edward Veer to term in 1581. Furious at the deception, the Queen sent mother, child, and father to the Tower of London for several weeks. Oxford was in addition banished from court for two years, suffering a grave loss of position, influence, and occupation as a deviser of court entertainments. To cap off his humiliation, Vavasour took up with her jailer, Sir Henry Lee.¹⁴

The self-defeating behavior seen in the Vavasour incident was repeated many times in the course of de Vere's adult life, as seen particularly in his turbulent first marriage, his poorly considered, losing investments in attempts to discover a Northwest Passage to the East, and in an extravagant spending down—to the point of depletion—of his vast inheritance. This unfortunate history echoes Jonson's portrayal of a man whose gifts were compromised by deficient self-discipline.

William Shakspeare's father was an ambitious man. He married well, became a member of the Stratford governing elite, and petitioned for (but was denied) a gentleman's coat of arms. But John Shakspeare's fortunes began to decline when William was a boy. He defaulted on debts, was cited for illegal trading in wool, and avoided public places for fear of being summoned to court.¹⁵ Son William was also an ambitious man. He pursued a business career to become a wealthy member of the Stratford gentry through judicious investments in his acting company, the Globe theater, real estate in Stratford and London, and income-producing land in the environs of Stratford. He reapplied for, and was granted, the coat of arms denied his father. Indeed, William's career can be read as a successful endeavor to reverse his family's disgrace and, at an early age, settle into a comfortable bourgeois existence in Stratford. This life trajectory suggests considerable self-discipline marked by goal setting, deliberate planning, and long-term persistence.

Unlike de Vere, Mr. Shakspeare was skillful at keeping his money. He often sued for the collection of even small

debts and avoided taxes when possible. In 1597 and again in 1598, he defaulted on occasional personal property taxes levied by Parliament. Both defaults were reported to the local authorities for remedial action, but at some point during this period Shakspeare moved to a different jurisdiction south of the Thames. There is no record that the taxes were ever paid. It is implausible that the two defaults were due to lack of forethought on the part of Shakspeare, a successful businessman sensitive to financial issues. The infractions appear to have been deliberate and purposeful.¹⁶

Some of Shakspeare's acquaintances found him rather too ambitious. Robert Greene in *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592) warned his fellow writers away from "an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers," implying that Shakspeare was appropriating the work of others for his own purposes without permission or payment.¹⁷ Jonson himself in *Every Man Out Of His Humour* (1600) offered a scathing satire of Shakspeare as a pretentious and obtuse social climber "so enamored of the name of a gentleman that he will have it though he buys it." Shakspeare's character Sogliardo enjoys being in the company of witty people but is oblivious to being the butt of their sarcastic humor. When Sogliardo proudly shows his associates his newly acquired coat of arms, complete with a headless boar rampant in the crest, one responds sotto voce "a swine without a head, without brain, wit, anything, indeed, ramping to gentility." This is not the Shakespeare described in *Nostrati*.

Final Comments

Jonson gives us two leads for deciphering the person behind the *Nostrati* Shakespeare: He was at once an open personality and a man whose gifts were compromised by poor self-discipline. The ambitious, entrepreneurial, and successful Mr. Shakspeare is an unlikely candidate for either of these characterizations. On the other hand, the biography of Edward de Vere—poet, dramatist, and self-defeating eccentric—offers ample evidence for both. While Mr. Shakspeare was certainly not the man of Jonson's vignette, it is at least hypothetically possible that Jonson had some other open and undisciplined poet-playwright in mind. If so, that person has yet to be identified.

Jonson's motivation for writing *Nostrati* is a matter of conjecture. One possibility is that he was reminded of Shakespeare on reading or rereading Seneca's anecdote about Haterius, although this would not explain the initial literary critique. Perhaps Jonson wanted to set the record straight regarding the First Folio nonsense about the absence of blots and Shakespeare's ability to pour forth perfectly phrased lines without effort or amendment. Unsophisticated readers may have taken the passage literally, and fellow writers may have been offended by the caricature of their craft. *Nostrati* may be Jonson's revision of the First Folio preface without any admission of having written it.

Or perhaps Jonson, in his private notebook, wished to think through, even resolve, his ambivalence toward Shakespeare. As a critic he strongly objected to aspects of Shakespeare's writing; as the putative editor of the First Folio he could not have been indifferent to the monumental achievement it represented. The conflict is expressed in several "yes-but" constructions throughout *Nostrati*: "I loved the man—on this side idolatry;" "he flowed with that facility—necessary he should be stopped;" "wit was in his own power—would the rule of it had been so too;" "his vices—his virtues." Jonson attempts a resolution of sorts in the final sentence, borrowed directly from Seneca: "There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned." The ambivalence does not entirely disappear, but it was as far as Jonson cared to go.

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Endnotes

1. Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson, A Life* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 13-15.
2. Ralph S. Walker, *Ben Jonson's Timber or Discoveries* (Syracuse: SUP, 1953), 52.
3. Donaldson, 371-374; Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 170-171.
4. E.A.J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare's Impact on His Contemporaries* (Totowa: Barnes & Noble, 1982), 96-99; Walker, 14.
5. Distinctive features of Shakespeare's writing style are discussed in Sara Smith, *A New Shakespearean Poem?* (Amazon Digital Services: Kindle Edition, 2011).
6. Openness to experience is a major component of the five-factor model of personality, an empirically derived taxonomy of personality traits that also includes the superordinate categories of extraversion-introversion, neuroticism-stability, agreeableness-antagonism, and conscientiousness-independence. See Thomas A. Widiger and Paul T. Costa Jr., eds., *Personality Disorders and the Five-Factor Model of Personality* 3rd ed. (Washington: APA, 2013).
7. Richard F. Whalen, "On Looking into Chapman's Oxford," *The Oxfordian*. v. 5 (2002), 127.
8. Mark Anderson, *"Shakespeare" by Another Name* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005), 125.
9. Alan H. Nelson, "Vere, Edward de," *Oxford DNB*. Rev. ed. 2004.
10. Price, 301-305.
11. Bonner Miller Cutting, "Shakespeare's Will...Considered Too Curiously," *Brief Chronicles*. v. 1 (2009), 183-184.
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Making a Planned Gift to the SOF: Taking a First Step

What Will It Take for the SOF to Achieve Its Goal?

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship and its predecessors have been in continuous operation for more than fifty years, and have made substantial progress in gaining acceptance of Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, as the author of the Shakespeare canon.

We haven't finished the job yet, which is not surprising when one considers that the Shakespeare authorship question is the most colossal literary hoax of the ages. Exposing it has been the work of several generations of scholars—most of them Oxfordians—who are uncovering missing facts and connecting them into an indisputable whole. Today, many SOF members think that the final exposure is around the corner.

But what more can the SOF do? This question led us to launch a research grant program in 2014. It has also led us to join with allies to pressure the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust to open its gaze to the authorship facts that have been uncovered. And now we are considering additional ways to build greater public awareness and acceptance.

As the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship Board of Trustees looks to expand its efforts, it has realized that it needs some assurance that there will be sufficient funds on hand to sustain our activities until they are successfully completed. This assurance can only come from people and entities that believe strongly in the SOF mission. Recently, after hearing from Treasurer Thomas Rucker about the affordable ways one can make a major current or planned gift, several Board members have agreed to make bequests to the SOF in their wills. Tom Rucker has outlined this information below in the hope that others will be interested in making such gifts. Please let members of the Board know if you have any questions, and we thank you for your support.

Some options for making current or planned gifts

As a not-for-profit tax-exempt entity, the SOF can receive donations that entitle the donor to income and/or estate tax deductions to the extent allowed by law. In general terms, donations can be categorized as either "current" or "planned." Current gifts are those that are made to the SOF now. Planned gifts are those that are arranged at the present time, but will be received by the SOF at a later date. If you have any questions about how to accomplish any of the following gift methods, please email us at: info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org.

Options for a making a current gift

Cash: This is usually the easiest tax-deductible gift to make. A donor can send a check to the SOF or donate online by credit card using the SOF secure website. To

make a wire transfer of cash, a donor should first write or email the SOF.

Securities: A gift of securities (e.g., stocks, bonds, or mutual funds) offers a donor advantages and significant tax savings. If a donor's securities have appreciated and have been held for at least twelve months, he or she can donate them and make a charitable gift while deducting the full fair market value of the donated securities. To avoid a capital gains tax, it is necessary to donate the securities themselves rather than to sell them and donate the proceeds.

Real Estate: The SOF can accept gifts of real estate on a case-by-case basis. If the donor has owned the property for more than twelve months, he or she may qualify for a tax deduction based on its fair market value. There are a number of issues relating to real estate that are too complicated to outline here, but if you have any interest in making such a gift, please contact the SOF at info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org, and we will set up a time for a private discussion about it.

Other Assets: Assets, such as limited partnership interests and closely held stock, can also be used to make tax-deductible gifts to the SOF. Like real estate assets, donations of these assets can be more complicated, so we would be happy to discuss these options with you.

Options for making a planned gift

Bequests: In a last will and testament, a donor can name the SOF to receive a specific dollar amount, a percentage of his or her estate, or the remainder of it. If the donor uses a trust to carry out his or her estate planning objectives, he or she can make a similar provision in the trust instrument. [Note: Many states allow you to add a planned gift to your will via a handwritten codicil, which is signed, witnessed, and attached to the will. Please consult your attorney about the laws in your state.]

IRA and Retirement Plan Assets: A donor can name the SOF as the designated beneficiary of a retirement plan such as an IRA, 401(k) or 403(b). This is an effective way to make a charitable gift since it will not be subject to either estate tax or income taxes, which would be incurred if the donor left the retirement fund to someone other than his or her spouse.

Life Insurance: A donor can make a gift of life insurance by irrevocably designating the SOF as the owner and beneficiary of the policy. Paid up policies (i.e., where there are no more premiums payable) work best. A donor can also name the SOF as a partial or contingent beneficiary of a policy on the donor's life while retaining ownership of the policy.

Charitable Gift Annuity: This type of gift allows the donor to make a charitable gift and still receive income. The donor and one other person may receive immediate or deferred income through this arrangement. Age and amount limitations apply, so it will most certainly require the participation of the donor's professional advisors, but it does allow the donor to support the SOF, receive an immediate charitable income tax deduction, and lock in fixed, partially tax-free payments for life.

Charitable Remainder/Lead Trusts: The donor can realize the tax advantages of making a gift now—especially of appreciated assets—while still receiving income from the assets through a charitable remainder or charitable lead trust. A charitable remainder trust can provide income to the donor (and possibly others) during the donor's lifetime, and the remaining assets can be donated to the SOF. With a charitable lead trust, the gift “leads” in the sense that the trust distributes income to the SOF for a period of years or during the donor's lifetime, at which point the remaining assets return to the surviving family members.

As you can see, there are many options available to someone who is considering making a contribution to the SOF. Some are easy to use, while others call for input from a donor's professional advisors. We are confident that donors will be able to structure a gift that fulfills their personal objectives and will assist the SOF to fulfill its objective of having the world recognize the 17th Earl of Oxford as the true author of the Shakespearean Canon. If you have any questions, please contact us at: info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org



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Actor Michael Chiklis Comes Out as an Oxfordian

Actor Michael Chiklis is perhaps best known to audiences for his starring roles in two successful television series, *The Commish* (1991-96) and *The Shield* (2002-08); he has also appeared in a number of films. However, most Chiklis fans probably don't know that he's a serious student of Shakespeare, and has long been interested in the authorship question. In fact, after reading Mark Anderson's book, *Shakespeare By Another Name*, he purchased the option for the television rights to the book.

In 2011, Chiklis was interviewed on *Kevin Pollak's Chat Show*, a weekly two-hour interview program hosted by comedian Kevin Pollak. That show started in 2009 and is available via UStream and iTunes. Usually, Pollak has only one guest on each show, an arrangement which allows for extended discussions of many topics, rather than a quick puff piece about the guest's newest film or TV show.

During the 2011 program (which aired after Roland Emmerich's film *Anonymous* had been completed, but before it had been released) Chiklis and Pollak discussed the authorship issue for about fifteen minutes. Below is a slightly abridged transcript of their talk:

Michael Chiklis: I'm not a conspiracy theorist, goddammit. I think the biggest literary fraud in the history of mankind is that people believe that [Shakespeare] wrote the canon of plays known as Shakespeare's plays. I believe that he was a country bumpkin who wrote nothing. He wrote two things that we know: [his will is] written by someone with a fourth grade education. . . . He traveled from Stratford to London and back in his entire life. . . . People want to believe that genius can spring from nowhere. . . and certainly a boy from Stratford could have been a genius, but you cannot learn French, Italian, Latin, Greek, and English fluently though osmosis. . . . You must have access to the texts and he wasn't even gentrified. If you look at it from an investigation, a journalist's approach, or a detective's approach, it's impossible. It's impossible, he didn't write anything.

Kevin Pollak: How did you discover this?

MC: The idea was first introduced to me when I was a teenager. . . . I started to delve into it in college. . . . One of my professors was a real orthodox scholarly type and

he was like, "It was Shakespeare, end of story." It wasn't until many years later I read this book called *Shakespeare By Another Name*, and it was written by an investigative journalist.

KP: I love that.

MC: I was reading it on vacation. . . . It was revelatory. . . . I'm very grounded, I'm not a conspiracy theorist. . . . If you look at it, like if I were a juror, with arms folded—

and they say "beyond the shadow of a doubt"—unless you think O.J. didn't do it, Shakespeare didn't write s**t...

People say why. . . what was [Oxford's] motivation for it? I'll give you the two. One seems pretty vapid to us in modern day, but it's actually a very substantial thing. It was thought below a royal [noble] status to be a lowly writer of plays. . . . That is a very substantive reason. But more importantly, people don't realize that Elizabeth, a smart broad . . . was a crafty lady and she survived fifty-odd years as a queen as a Protestant in a Catholic Europe. . . . Every single day there were plots to kill this woman, and her favorite writer, her favorite scribe, was one Edward de Vere, who was the "genius poet," they called him. . . . If I were this man, and I wrote plays when she came to me and said, "Listen, you're gonna write histories, history plays"—because, remember, theater is the propaganda stage of the world at that point—"so you're gonna write love letters to

the House of Tudor, my House," and that's what you did. If I were the writer of plays like *Richard III*, I would not put my f*****g name on it. Because if tomorrow they whack this lady, the first guy they're gonna come to is "Who wrote these plays?" . . . you gotta think of it in a practical, pragmatic, grounded way.

KP: Did they find a patsy?

MC: F*****n' right. Here's this blowhard who comes down from Stratford . . . and he wants to be somebody, so they say, "OK, kid, here's what you're gonna do. You can take credit for the plays"—remember, the biggest part [Shakespeare] ever played was Hamlet's father's ghost—"we're gonna give you a coat of arms, we'll set you up. . . ."

KP: They don't even know the sort of history that'll be attached to his name at that point.



MC: I bought the rights to [*Shakespeare By Another Name*]. . . . HBO wanted to do it, but because I'm an American they insisted on having me pair with a British company, like the BBC or whatever. . . . I was happy to try. . . . Try to get a British company to agree—heroes die hard, man.

KP: Ricky Gervais and Eddie Izzard are Brits who might want to send up the great Shakespeare

MC: It was an epic failure on my part. I should have reached out to certain high profile Oxfordians at the time. . . [like Derek] Jacobi.

KP: It sounds like a great murder mystery.

MC: It's so phenomenal. This kid [de Vere] becomes a ward of the state as a child when his father dies. . . . Basically is raised in the court. He is exposed to the greatest literary scholars in the world. He is versed in law. . . and languages, which you'd have to be to have written that canon. . . . Not this kid from the countryside who never left [England]. . . . Let's say even for the sake of

argument that Shakspeare himself had a genius IQ, a crazy nutty prodigy, he still can't learn in a void. . . . This is when I knew it was true. You know as well as I do as an actor and as a comedian, everybody has a voice, every artist has a voice. True, OK? Go and read Edward de Vere's letters. When you read his letters, every hair on your body will stand on end, 'cause that's the bard's voice. That's the guy. . . . People don't realize Shakespeare is my forte. I've never been in a f****n' period movie.

KP: For anyone who studied with the passion that you clearly did with Shakespeare, I wanted to hear [this], so I thank you for that. Honestly.

MC: Now it's out. I've never spoken on it publicly. . . de Vere's story is phenomenal and matches up perfectly with the plays.



Oxford's Final Love Letters to Queen Elizabeth

by Robert Prechter

Thomas Proctor's compendium of verse titled *A gorgeous Gallery, of gallant Inventions...by divers worthy workemen* (1578)¹ contains ninety-two poems. I count sixteen of them as Oxford's. By far the most important among them are three poems that appear to be Oxford's personal entreaties to Queen Elizabeth, written after what seems to have been—and, in light of these poems, must have been—their affair of approximately 1571 to 1574, as postulated in numerous Oxfordian sources. The poems' titles and first lines are:

- 1) *A loving Epistle, written by Rupilus a yonge Gentilman, to his best beloved Lady Elriza* ("Twice hath my quaking hand")
- 2) *Narsetus a wofull youth, in his exile writeth to Rosana his beloved mistresse, to assure her of his faithfull constancie, requiring the like of her* ("To stay thy musinge minde")
- 3) *The Lover forsaken, writeth to his Lady a desperate Farwell* ("Even hee that whilome was")

(Numbers below in parentheses refer to these three poems.)

The addressee of these poems is easy to discern. The name *Elriza* is an anagram for *Eliza R*, i.e., Eliza Regina. *Rosana* is another name for Queen Elizabeth, the only woman then living whose symbol was the Tudor Rose.

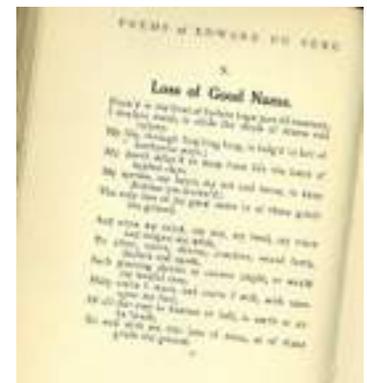
Who is addressing the Queen? One of the most revealing aspects of the three poems is how similar some of their lines are to those in the Earl of Oxford's poem, "The Loss of My Good Name." The final stanza of that poem reads:

Help gods, help saints, help sprites and powers that in the heaven do dwell,
 Help ye that are to wail, ay wont, ye howling hounds of hell,
 Help man, help beasts, help birds and worms that on the earth doth toil,
 Help fish, help fowl that flocks and feeds upon the salt-sea soil,
 Help echo that in air doth flee, shrill voices to resound
 To wail this loss of my good name, as of these griefs the ground.

The three poems from *gorgeous Gallery* resound with Oxford's words, images and parallel constructions:

Help thou Minerva, graunt I pray, some of thy learned skill.
 Help all you Muses nine, my wofull Pen to write: (1)

Let all the furies forth, that pine in Hell with payne,
 Let all their torments come abroad...



Come wilde and savadge beastes, stretch forth your cruell pawes,
Dismember mee, consume my flesh: imbrew your greedy jawes. (3)

And yee my sences all: whose helpe was aye at hand...
Yee sonne, ye moone and starres...Forbeare to show your force a while. (3)

Yet for the worldly shame...
Or for the losse of your good name.... (3)

We may reasonably conclude, then, that these poems are missives from Oxford to Elizabeth.

In keeping with changing authorship—both indicated and hypothesized—within *gorgeous Gallery*, suddenly the versification in the book leaps to a level above that of the surrounding material. The poet begins by expressing his fear and hesitancy:

Twice hath my quaking hand withdrawn this pen away
And twice again it gladly would, before I dare beewray
The secret shrined thoughts, that in my hart do dwell,
That never wight as yet hath wist, nor I desire to tell. (1)

In our proposed context, Oxford would indeed have possessed “secret shrined thoughts,” ones of which no one else was aware (“never wight as yet hath wist”) and which his beloved’s social rank would have barred him from revealing. The poet quickly employs a thoughtful comparison:

But as the smothered cole, doth wast and still consume,
And outwardly doth geve no heate, of burnyng blaze or fume:
So hath my hidden harmes, been harbred in my corpce,
Till faintyng limes and life and all, had welnigh lost his force. (1)

Shakespeare uses *coals* metaphorically fourteen times, including “dying coal” in *Venus and Adonis* (Stz.55) and “dying coals” in *Lucrece* (Stz.197).

The poet next admits, “stand I halfe in doubt,” and hesitates. He finally resolves, “I will lay feare aside” and write. Several lines in the poems link the names *Elriza* and *Rosana* to the Queen by using terms of political power. Consider:

Who yeeldeth all hee hath: as subject to thy will,
If thou command hee doth obey, and all thy heastes fulfill. (1)

I am banisht thus from thee.... (2)

I doo commend to thee: my life and all I have,
Commaund them both as hee best likes; so lose or else to save. (2)

Thou art Queene of women kinde, and all they ought obey.
And all for shame doo blush, when thou doost come in place.... (3)

And every wight on earth: that living breath do draw,
Lo here your queene sent from above, to kepe you all in awe. (2)

One comparison begins with words that imply a throne:

As highest seates wee see: be subject to most winde.... (1)

He says to his poem:

Fall flat to ground before her face: and at her feet doo lie:
Haste not to rise againe [until she] rayse thee with her hand.
...A pardon crave upon thy knee, and pray her to forgeve.... (2)

A LOVING EPISTLE.

WRITTEN BY RUPHILUS, A YONGE GENTILMAN, TO HIS BEST BELOVED
LADY ELRIZA, AS FOLLOWETH.

Twice hath my quaking hand withdrawn this pen away,
And twice againe it gladly would, before I dare beewray
The secret shrined thoughts that in my hart do dwell,
That never wight as yet hath wist, nor I desire to tell.
But as the smothered cole doth wast, and still consume,
And outwardly doth geve no heate of burnyng blaze or fume:
So hath my hidden harmes been harbred in my corpce,
Till faintyng limes and life and all, had welnigh lost his force.
Yet stand I halfe in doubt whiche of these two to choose,
To hide my harmes still to my hart, or els this thraldome loose.
I will lay feare aside, and so my tale beginne:
Who never durst assaile his foe, did never conquest win.
Lo, here my cause of care to thee unfaide I will:
Help thou, Minerva! grant, I pray, some of thy learned skill.
Help, all you Muses nine! my wofull pen to write:
So stuffe my verse with pleasant wordes, as she may have delight
With heedyng eares to reade my greif and great unrest:
Some wordes of plaint may move, perhaps, to pittie my request.
Oft have I heard complaint, how Cupid beares a sway
In brittle youth, and would command, and how they did obey:

Royal suitors had been assailing Queen Elizabeth, as they are Elriza:
 Though Princes sue for grace: and ech one do thee woo
 Mislyke not this my meane estate: wherewith I can nought doo. (1)

And in one line, Oxford seems to identify himself as her subject:

The subject Oxe doth like his yoke: when hee is driven to draw. (1)

The original aphorism shows up in Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* (I,i): "In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke."

Many Oxfordians believe that Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* describes Elizabeth's pursuit of Oxford. Echoing an equally unbalanced courtship, the anonymous author of these poems attributes romantic advances firmly to the lady. He speaks of "thy bewailing words" (3), while asserting his own innocence: "Sith first I did you know: I never spake the thing/ That did intend you to beguile" (3). Further fitting Oxford's relative youth, the poet confesses naiveté in allowing his beloved to use him:

Unskilful though I bee, and cannot best discerne,
 Where craft for troth doth preace in place, yet am I not to learne.
 And I did thinke you such: that litle knew of guile,
 But seemings now be plaste for deedes, and please fulwel the while. (2)

The poet's youth, in turn, provides a reason for the lady's reluctance to commit:

Have you thus sone forgot, the doutes and dreads you made,
 Of yongmens love how litle holde, how sone away they fade. (2)

As it happens, a report written in July 1571 to Regent Catherine de' Medici by the French ambassador to England, de la Mothe Fenelon, confirms that Oxford's youth would have doomed a permanent match with Elizabeth. He wrote (in French), "she wanted to tell me freely that, given her age, she would not willingly be led to church to be married to someone who looked as young as the Earl of Oxford and that that could not be without a certain feeling of shame and some regret."²

We may even have evidence to date the start of Oxford and Elizabeth's involvement. At the beginning of the third poem, the poet reveals the length of time he has been enthralled. Speaking of himself in the third person he writes, "thrise three yeeres hath spent & past, reposing all his trust/ In thy bewailing words, that seemed sugar sweet..." (3). Counting back nine years from the publication date of the book gives 1569. By this reckoning, we may conclude that Elizabeth first flirted with Oxford in 1569, when he was nineteen years old. On the other hand, the poet may have taken some temporal license in favor of employing the parallel and alliterative phrase, "thrise three."

The poet refers to "My absence longe" (1), implying that for a time he had left the area. This recollection corresponds with the fact that Oxford had departed for a trip through the continent that had ended just two years before the publication of these poems. Yet he begs his beloved to remember—while using another term fitting her royal prerogative—what drove him away:

But if thou call to minde: when I did part thee fro,
 What was the cause of my exile: and why I did forgo
 The happy life I held, and lost therewith thy sight.... (1)

And I in cares doo flame, to thinke of my exile,
 That I am barred from thy sight. (1)

Some sort of breakup, then, seems to have prompted Oxford to run away, without royal permission, to France in early 1575 and then spend a year on the continent in 1575-76.

Coincident with the time of Oxford's return, the poet's beloved has barred him from her presence. This "exile" confuses him. He hurls a charge of infidelity:

Well mayst thou wayle thy want of troth: & rue thy great unright
 If thou be found to fayle thy vow that thou hast sworne.... (1)

and could you gree thereto?
 Thus to betray your faithful freend, and promis to undo? (3)

Thy fawning flattering wordes, which now full falce I finde...
Yet pardon I do pray: and if my wordes offend.... (3)

He entreats her to explain,

what trespasse have I doone?/ That I am banisht thus from thee... (2)

and wonders if false rumors found her ear while he was gone, thus explaining why she won't see him:

Or if my absence long: to thy disgrace hath wrought mee
Or hindring tales of my back freends: unto such state hath brought mee.
...Yet blame mee not though I doo stand somewhat in feare
The cause is great of my exile, which hardly I do beare. (1)

The poet reminisces about their intimate time together:

And then I call to minde, thy shape and cumly grace,
Thy heavenly hew thy sugred words, thy sweet enticing face
The pleasant passed sportes: that spent the day to end.... (2)

He flatters his beloved by declaring that Venus "Shall yeeld the palme of filed speche, to thee that doth her staine." (2)
Eloquence is one of Elizabeth's well-known traits. He entreats her to answer a heartfelt, personal question: *How are you?*

But oh Rosanna dere: since time of my exile
How hast thou done? and doost thou live: how hast thou spent the while
How standeth health with thee? and art thou glad of chere? (2)

The poet richly describes the anguish of his feelings for his beloved:

O thou Elrisa fayre, the beuty of thine eyes
Hath bred such bale within my brest, and cau'sde such strife to ryse. (1)

Awake, asleape, and at my meales, thou doost torment my brest. (1)

Thus Joyfull thoughtes a while, doth lessen much my payne
But after calme and fayer tides, the stormes do come agayne. (1)

Thy bewty bids mee trust, unto thy promise past,
My absence longe and not to speake: doth make mee doubt as fast. (1)

Despite his hurt, the poet vows eternal loyalty:

But oh Elrisa mine, why doo I stir such war
Within my selfe to thinke of this: and yet thy love so far?
...No length of lingring time: no distance can remooove,
The faith that I have vowed to thee: nor alter once my love. (1)

the greatest care I have,
Is how to wish and will thee good; and most thy honor save. (2)

Though time that trieth all, hath turnde the love you ought,
No changing time could alter mee: or wrest awry my thought. (3)

I doo commend to thee: my life and all I have. (2)

I am all thine, and not my owne. (1)



and begs her to reciprocate:

Bee faythfull sound therefore, bee constant true and just
If thou betray thy loving freend, whom hensforth shall I trust? (2)

But she will not, and perhaps cannot, do so. Befitting our case that the Lord Great Chamberlain is speaking to the Queen of England, the poet understands that their public eminence restrains her and admits they must be discreet, because the world is watching them:

Though Argus jelus eyes: that daily on us tend,
Forbid us meat [meet] and speech also, or message for to send. (2)

But as the third poem's title indicates, the young man by 1578 had finally realized that his quest was futile. He bids his wished lover "a desperate Farewell." In the first poem he had begged her,

Let not thy freend to shipwracke go: sith thou doost hold his helme (1)

yet by the third poem he is resolved to the futility of his hopes:

And I thus tost and turnd: whose life to shipwracke goes.... (3)

The poet proved prescient. Elizabeth ignored Oxford's entreaties, and after her demise the Earl of Oxford wrote to his brother-in-law, Robert Cecil, on April 27, 1603, lamenting,

"In this common shipwrack, mine is above all the rest."³

Shakespeare uses *shipwreck* as a metaphor three times: in *Henry VI Part 1* (V,v): "driven by breath of her renown/ Either to suffer shipwreck or arrive/ Where I may have fruition of her love"; in *Titus Andronicus* (II,i): "This siren, that will charm Rome's Saturnine./ And see his shipwreck and his commonweal's"; and in the positive in *Twelfth Night* (V,i), when Duke Orsino celebrates, "I shall have share in this most happy wrack."

We may be sure that these three poems form a united group, as all of them are linked in terms of theme and language. In addition to the parallels cited above, the term *pistle* meaning *epistle* is in the first two poems; and the image, "hollow lookes, the pale and ledy hew," in the second poem is repeated in the third poem as "pale and lean with hollow lookes." At the outset of the first poem the poet sighs, "Twice hath my quaking hand withdrawn this pen away," in the third poem his hesitancy is augmented: "Thrise hath my pen falne downe: upon this paper pale."

The anonymous poet's writing fits Shakespeare's proclivities. There are parallel constructions, serial questions, metaphors of fishing, birding and sailing, "as...so" comparisons, a mention of Ovid, and effective alliteration, for example: "Then should my sorowes seace, and drowne my deepe dispaire." To shape his entreaties, the poet cites a bevy of classical figures, including Pyramus and Thisby and Troilus and Cressid, whose stories Shakespeare treated in two plays.

The poems are full of Shakespeare's terms and phrases. The line, "A thousand deathes I do desire," echoes Shakespeare in *Henry IV Part 1* (III,ii): "I will die a hundred thousand deaths"; and in *Twelfth Night* (V,i): "To do you rest, a thousand deaths would die." The lines "time too long doth try mee" and "Though time that trieth all" echo in Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* (I,i): "as time shall try." Variations of "when time shal serve" appear eight times in six Shakespeare plays as well as in Sonnet 19 of *The Passionate Pilgrim*. The metaphor, "Lament unlustie legges: bee lame for ever more," calls to mind Shakespeare's line, "So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite" in Sonnet 37. The Bard, moreover, links two of these words in *King Lear* (II,iv): "a man's/ over-lusty at legs," and two others in *Henry VIII* (I,iii): "They have all new legs, and lame ones." The poet worries, "stand I halfe in doubt," but resolves, "I will lay feare aside," and muses, "Who never durst assaile his foe: did never conquest win"; Shakespeare offers the same ideas in similar words: "Our doubts...make us lose the good we oft might win/ By fearing to attempt" (*Measure for Measure*, I,iv) and "To outlook conquest and to win renown" (*King John*, V,ii). The line, "No more then water soft, can stir a steadfast rocke," is the flip side of a theme that Shakespeare employs in *Troilus and Cressida* (III,ii): "When waterdrops have worn the stones of Troy"; in *Othello* (IV,iii): "Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones"; and four times in *Lucrece*, including the mixed-image line, "Tears harden lust, though marble wear with raining."

What may be interpreted as paired *Ver* self-references appear several times in these poems:

I never will agree to like, or looke on other wight.
Nor never shall my mouth consent to pleasant sound.... (3)

Let never soyle bringe forth, agayn the lusty greene
Nor trees that new despoiled are, with leafe be ever greene. (3)

Beleeve this to bee true: that now too true I prove... (3)

and a possible signature also appears to lie within the final line in each of the first and last poems:

And that my love doo never fleet out of thy secret brest... (1)

A better hap and that hee may, a truer Mystrisse finde. (3)

I think these are Oxford's last love letters to Elizabeth before he gave up on being her lifelong companion. Yet as Oxford's and Shakespeare's activities demonstrate, the anonymous poet stayed true to his promise of devoted service.

¹ Proctor, Thomas, ed., *A gorgeous Gallery, of gallant Inventions...by divers worthy workemen*, London: Richard Jones, 1578.

² Fenelon, De la Mothe, July 1571, report to Catherine de Medici. Quoted in Elizabeth Imlay, "Scoop in the Bibliotheque Nationale," *De Vere Society Newsletter* (July 2006): 25.

³ De Vere, Edward, Earl of Oxford. "Personal Letter to Robert Cecil." April 27, 1603. *Letters and Papers of Edward de Vere 17th earl of Oxford: Personal Letters* (#39). Ed. Nelson, Alan H. <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~ahnelson/PERSONAL/030427.html>.



(Wells and Edmondson, cont. from p. 1)

disagree. Yes, some say that the Earl of Oxford wrote Shakespeare and some say that Mary Sidney wrote Shakespeare. Many people out there refuse to accept the basic premise that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare. Some of these people are actually good scholars like Diana Price. But those who are adamant that Shakespeare didn't write Shakespeare are absolutely wrong. People like Alexander Waugh and John Shahan don't want to have William Shakespeare involved at all. Then there are others—Marlovians and Baconians. People who would rather it be anybody in the world other than Shakespeare who wrote Shakespeare. This book is intended to make it clear once and for all that it really was Shakespeare who wrote Shakespeare. We are dealing with this head-on.

Q: That comes across loud and clear. What also comes across is a huge amount of animosity toward anyone who questions that position. And sarcasm and personal attacks. Why can it not simply be an intellectual debate? Why does it have to be so divisive? Why can't we look at the question from various points of view?

SW: Because there is no question. There is simply no proof that anyone other than Shakespeare wrote the plays. And by Shakespeare I mean William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon no matter how many different ways his name might have been spelled.

Q: The fact that the medial *e* in his name never appears anywhere in the family history (as A.J. Pointon has noted) and that it is never spelled with a medial *e* in anything he ever signed, that doesn't bother you?

PE: That proves nothing. We find spelling inconsistencies even today. Should the adjective be spelled Shakespearean (with an *e*) or Shakespearian (with an *i*)? I don't see that it matters very much. We know who we are speaking about. It's simply a difference here of American spelling or British spelling. It means nothing. Of course British usage is losing out here to American usage because of the number of American scholars writing. But so what? If *-ean* is the generally adopted form today it changes nothing at the center of Shakespeare studies. Usage and spelling change. There's no plot here.

Q: Perhaps this idea is too contemporary, but it's hard to imagine any author being casual with the spelling of his or her name. If you spell it one way on a published edition, why would you spell it differently on a legal document?

PE: In some editions he is called "W. Shakespeare" and in some he is called "William Shakespeare." In some it is hyphenated and others not. I don't think the consistency argument proves anything. We are dealing with 500-year-old spelling and printing conventions and the like. It's a cul-de-sac, one of many followed by anti-Shakespeareans.

SW: You are the ones saying an author should care about how his name is spelled. In the 16th century some authors obviously didn't care that much. The greatest writer of the period didn't care that much. Surely that should tell you something.

Q: Or perhaps it tells us that one William of Stratford—

rather than the author—didn't care that much about how the author's name appeared in print.

PE: The fact is the anti-Shakespeareans—or anti-Stratfordians, if you prefer—are saying that you can have Shakespeare without Stratford. We are saying that is not possible. You can't have one without the other. That's the crux of it.

Q: In the Waugh-Shahan book, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? An Industry in Denial*, they ask you to debate this position and they offer money to the Birthplace Trust if you can prove your position "without doubt." Why won't you accept that debate?

SW: The position has been debated many times before. I have participated in such debates. There was even one that also sought to raise money for charity. It has been decided. One more debate will prove nothing. I certainly won't be involved in any more debates on the subject.

Q: Can we speak about Diana Price's chart [in her book, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*] comparing Shakespeare with a dozen other writers of the period? For every one of the others there is some proof that they were writers. There is nothing connecting the man from Stratford with the works of Shakespeare.

SW: Her position only makes sense if you refuse to accept posthumous references. You can't simply ignore the Folio. If we ignore posthumous evidence we could ignore many historical figures of note.

PE: The real question here is how does one approach history of any sort. How does one establish any historical fact? Where is the starting point for our knowledge of Shakespeare? Anyone wishing to show that Shakespeare of Stratford didn't write the plays has to ignore huge amounts of evidence to show he did. There is evidence that he lived, he worked and he had a real life. Add into that the posthumous evidence of his work as a writer. You have to deal with it all.

The posthumous evidence is enormously valuable. It can't be ignored. Are we denying the wife and family and the church in Stratford? You can't ignore it. I find it frustrating and worrying that some are willing to ignore all that. As for the Folio, It took seven years to get into print. That's not an unreasonable amount of time when you think of how long any public tribute takes today. I can't understand why anyone would think those involved in it were trying to hide the identity of an author who died seven years earlier. It's a curiously skewed way of reading history.

Q: No one is denying that William of Stratford existed. The question is simply whether or not he wrote the plays. It's hard to connect him to the plays based on contemporaneous evidence. It seems there is a debate and we're wondering why we can't get that debate into our schools and universities? Why can't the varying positions be put up for discussion? Why are academic careers put into jeopardy if someone wants to even open up this question? It seems that could be a way to clear it up once and for all.

PE: I have my doubts. Five hundred years of expertise has spoken.

Q: Five hundred years ago the perceived wisdom was that the sun revolved about the earth. The church was the ultimate authority then and that was their official position. It turned out to be wrong. Galileo tried to challenge that error but was denied the opportunity to do so. In fact, it took the church five hundred years to admit that it was wrong. How much good science did we lose in the interim? How many good scientists? Isn't there a similar issue here? If yours is a correct position, doesn't it too need to be tested and validated?

SW: It has been tested and validated. And if others want to continue to argue against all logic, they are free to do that. Human folly goes on. I'm sorry, the position is not similar.

Q: But there are arguments that won't go away. Shouldn't you as an academic be involved in the public conversation?

SW: That's why we wrote this book. We are in those conversations.

Q: But the two *Beyond Doubt* books are like two monologues. They are not answering the same questions. That's why the debate format makes some sense. Your book and the Shahan-Waugh book pretty much ignore one another's points.

SW: I just don't see any value in going back over the established positions. It's a huge waste of time. I have written quite specifically on the issue and I don't think spending more time on it is warranted. Things like hyphens have no bearing on anything whatsoever.

PE: Do we really need a debate on whether Oxford wrote a series of juvenilia before he supposedly wrote the plays of Shakespeare? We would have to get rid of a whole lot of hurdles like that before a new debate could be properly targeted. "Oxford visited Venice and therefore he wrote *The Merchant of Venice*?" There is too much to scrap before any debate would make sense. I just think that too many of these anti-Shakespeareans close down before a word is said. They are not open to simply hearing facts. That's not helpful.

Q: And yet many on the other side would say the same thing about your position, that Stratfordians are closed to anything that might endanger their officially held position. That seems like something of a draw there.

Let's move on to a different topic if we can. There have been numerous suggestions of late that Shakespeare—whoever he was—did not work alone, that many of the plays show multiple hands. Is that a position you can accept?

SW: Yes, of course. We have long been aware of different voices in the different plays, even different hands. The research in this area is important and ongoing.

PE: These are serious academic issues. Too many of the anti-Shakespearean debates are put forward by people who are not academics or are working outside their fields of expertise. Lawyers and scientists rather

than specialists in Elizabethan literature or theatre of the period. If the arguments were coming from people in those fields, from people working within the academy, they might make more sense. But the arguments are coming from amateurs.

Q: Some of those so-called amateurs are extraordinarily knowledgeable in the field. They are bringing fresh eyes. And they are open to exploring new ideas in ways that many so-called specialists in academe are not. To be a doubter within an English or a humanities department, or even in a theatre department, is to run the risk of being held back from advancement or not getting support to do one's research. We are suggesting as academics that academe is not welcoming to authorship doubters. It's an area of inquiry that universities seem to be afraid to get into. Shouldn't you both be trying to stop that?

PE: If the majority in academe are in agreement, perhaps there is no question.

Q: Ibsen once said, "the majority is always wrong."

PE: These people should be pleased that we are publishing on this topic. We have oxygenated the discussion. We've given all of these people an opportunity to parade all of their ideas and their candidates out in public again—Delia Bacon to the 17th Earl of Oxford. Personally, I find the whole thing a bit scary, the idea that there are so many people out there trying to hide the identity of someone who lived five centuries ago. It makes no rational sense to me.

Q: Perhaps the real problem here that there is no smoking gun on either side. We don't have anything from William of Stratford saying "I wrote the plays" and so doubters keep looking around to see if there could be an alternative author.

SW: What it ultimately suggests is that there is a longing for a fuller biography of Shakespeare. Obviously, none of us have all the information we would like. Until that changes—and I don't think it will—I believe we need to accept the traditional position and stop wasting all this energy on plots and nonsense.

Q: Will a smoking gun ever be found for either side?

SW: I have my doubts. So many of us have looked for so long in so many possible places. I don't think anything new will be turned up. If anything new is to be found, it will probably happen accidentally. A letter in a music book or something. The obvious places have been examined. But will a music scholar understand what he or she has found? Will it be ignored? That's a question, too. Or something tucked behind a painting of the period. Who knows? The fact is there are still thousands and thousands of manuscripts all across England that have never really been examined by scholars in the field.

Q: Perhaps we have to go deeper into letters and papers connected to the Cecil line or Ben Jonson.

SW: I can't say what might be found in the future. But I repeat, I don't think things will be found as a result of

setting out to find them. It will be an accident. Something will be found by someone doing other work. I did research when I was a graduate student and turned up things totally unconnected to what I set out to find—letters and the like.

PE: My position is that if any evidence is ever found to prove that Shakespeare of Stratford didn't write the plays it will be a Shakespeare scholar who finds it. And that is very, very unlikely. I don't think an amateur from another field will be the one to change history.

Q: Will the animosity between the positions ever ease up?

SW: One must allow people to express their opinions even when those opinions are wrong. If others get angry at what they feel are untruths or gross exaggerations then they get angry. That is human nature.

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